

## SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH EVERYDAY ACTIONS

This handout was originally created for a session run by author [Janet Wong](#) and [Dr. Sylvia Vardell](#) of [Pomelo Books](#) at the [International Literacy Association](#)'s annual conference

*“If you think you are too small to be effective,  
you have never been in bed with a mosquito.”*

*~ Betty Reese*

### 7 SMALL CHANGES...reconsider what you do each day:



1. BYO chopsticks, straws, spork to restaurants. One friend adds: “I always choose cones over ice cream in a cup. Can’t beat an edible container.”
2. Science says save the toilet seat liner. 2 min video: <http://bit.ly/2tCg6UX> [bonus: my body sculpt teacher reminds me that squatting is great for thighs!]
3. A teacher I know donates art supplies and books to teachers in poorer districts at the end of the year.
4. One of my friends gives a magazine to give to a child or teen when he travels. He brings a National Geographic, saying it’s one that those from a disadvantaged culture will understand. He says, “If all overseas travelers to Asia do this, nearly 5 million young people per year could benefit. (Estimate based on National Travel and Tourism Office’s (NTTO) Visitor Arrivals Program).”
5. One of my friends joined three neighborhood free-sharing sites—there are many! (My 95-year-old Uncle Davie needed a special kind of walker. I posted a request for one on a local site called NextDoor...and within two days, three people offered exactly what Uncle D needed.)



6. Do your friends and family really need more stuff? (see: [www.storyofstuff.com](http://www.storyofstuff.com)) Instead, consider honoring birthdays, anniversaries, etc, with a donation to a non-profit in their name. (I donate to each of these organizations depending on which friend and for what occasion: [Committee to Protect Journalists](#), [National Resources Defense Council](#), [Peace Action](#), [Southern Poverty Law Center](#), [Snopes.com](#), etc.)
7. Please buy or order your books from your [local independent bookstore](#) (or go to [IndieBound](#), which will direct you to your local store.) If you don't—if *we* don't—local indies will wither and die. The extra bucks you spend are an investment in our future. If people aren't informed, they don't vote.

## EDUCATE.



- Ask [Authors for Earth Day](#) to come to your school! Director/Founder Brooke Bessen has created an amazing way for authors to connect to students—each author “does one school visit a year with a unique twist: the author donates at least 30% of that day’s speaking fee to a non-profit conservation organization as directed by a student vote. Students research a list of five conservation nominees selected by their author and then vote for their favorite—the author writes a check to the winning organization. Our mission? To empower young readers to shape the world around them!”
- Check out [50 Books about Peace and Social Justice](#) compiled by the [CCBC](#).
- I finally admitted that I don’t like precinct walking door-to-door—it scares me. So I created [www.AprilsBallot.com](http://www.AprilsBallot.com) (the site may not be visible until a month before each election), where I post how I plan to vote (yes, even those confusing judges) and why, with links to more information. (In California, there were 17 propositions on the 2016 ballot—yikes!). I only endorse candidates and take positions on issues that are on my own ballot. Some people print my ballot and take it with them to the voting booth.
- One friend writes: “Something I try to do is to be caught reading a book with an obviously diverse cover and content. For children’s books I love re-reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. One of the big downsides of electronic reading is the loss of incidental public sharing of reading content.”

## USE EXISTING TOOLS.



- Register to vote...and then vote: <http://www.vote411.org/register#.WYEncoTyvIV>
- Join a group of like-minded individuals, such as a huddle <http://bit.ly/2jGTtIo> or local Indivisible groups: <https://www.indivisibleguide.com/act-locally/>
- Try the free app [www.5Calls.org](http://www.5Calls.org) to call legislators; it offers scripts & one touch dialing.
- [ResistBot.io](http://ResistBot.io), an exceptional tool, is also free. Its tag line is, “I’ll help you contact your officials.” Using your phone, draft original content, then send an email, fax, etc. The more you use it, the more “privileges” you unlock (now it will send my content as an actual letter with a stamp and my signature upon my request; sometimes it offers to try and place exceptional letters in my local papers)



## ASK A FRIEND OR TWO TO HELP YOU.

- In January, 2007, we organized a simple candlelight vigil for peace on the Manhattan Beach, CA pier. And just before Valentines Day, 2007, four of us organized the “No More Broken Hearts” rally and march for peace. In preparation, 45 volunteers gathered at my house to cut out 3,000 red hearts, writing the name and age of a fallen U.S. soldier on each. The next week, after the rally, 350 of us held those hearts high as we marched towards the center of town. Afterwards, a friend wrote: “These gatherings allow people to stand up...to feel they are NOT powerless to speak up.”



*signs created at our work party before the 2007 “No More Broken Hearts” rally and march*

## **BECOME A CONDUIT.**

- People want to find out what can they *do*. I send emails to citizen activists sorted by where they live, so I only send what’s relevant in their part of the country (to join my list, email aprilwayland [AT] {A O L}.com).

## **LIGHT A FIRE.**



- In 2008, author Bruce Balan and I founded Authors and Illustrators for Children [www.AiforC.org](http://www.AiforC.org): over 1,000 authors & illustrators dedicated to a free, truthful, and safe America for *all* children.

## **SPEAK SOFTLY.**



- Be mindful of how we use language. Linguist George Lakoff advises (paraphrased): *No more helpless/hopeless talk. No more anger, fear and cynicism. Remember: Don’t think of an elephant! Don’t use the opposition language, or repeat their positions, even to negate them. Use ideas you believe and real facts that are contextualized and morally framed. Avoid isolated facts and numbers. The best resistance is positive persistence.*

- Understand that how we speak, how we frame ideas, can change lives. Consider reading linguist George Lakoff’s book, [Don’t Think of an Elephant!](#) Lakoff’s concept of framing changed the way I think, speak and the way I take in new ideas. (And please check this book out of your library or order this book from your local indie—see last item under “Reconsider Everyday Actions,” above.)

***HEAL YOURSELF FIRST, AND THE WORLD SECOND.***



- One friend, a professor and expert on immigration law, writes: “This may seem either too Zen or too goofy, but I think of the past eight months as a constant conversation between two versions of “me”. One is trying to respond quickly and effectively to crises as they happen...The other “me” has to take a long-term or at least medium-term view of things. We’re in this ...for the long haul. I don’t just mean 2018, or 2020 — it’s the arc of U.S. history, and of world history for that matter...This requires not only self-care... but also self-awareness. Here I’m thinking first about taking stock — understanding what you do well, and doing those things where you’re able to make a difference by virtue of contacts, skills, or just being in a certain place at a certain time. But I’m also thinking about understanding what you don’t (yet) do well, and working on those things. As a simple example, I used to be pretty uncomfortable working with media, but I resolved to get better, and I think I am (at least somewhat), and I’m more comfortable with it and have a better sense of how working with media matters. Sometimes, you do what seems to need doing in the moment. At other times, you need to step back and think long-term, and that includes self-care (think music, or whatever else allows you to reflect and rejuvenate).
- Meditate. Check out my favorite (free!) meditation app, [Insight Timer](#). You have the option of quiet, timed meditations of any length, or meditating with various sounds (I love sound of monks chanting in a hall), or any of the 5,000+ guided meditations from one minute to more than an hour recorded by meditation teachers from all over the world. I’ve used many of the sleep meditations, a terrific 12-minute meditation for headache pain led by an Australian teacher, as well as meditations on anxiety, forgiveness, gratitude, morning, etc. This is Insight Timer’s logo:



- A friend writes: “The next time you see someone using their phone to film something outrageous, instead of gawking, use that as a visual trigger to actively shape the situation for the positive.” Read more: <http://bit.ly/2uWZyX5> It ends:”How much love are you willing to give the next time the opportunity presents itself?” *See poster below.*

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE WITNESSING ISLAMOPHOBIC HARASSMENT

*A bystander's guide to helping a person who is being targeted*



- 1 Engage in conversation**  
Go to them, sit beside them, and say hello. Try to appear calm, collected, and welcoming. **Ignore the attacker.**



- 2 Pick a random subject and start discussing it**  
It can be anything. A movie you like, the weather, saying you like something they are wearing and asking where they got it.



- 3 Keep building the safe space**  
Keep eye contact with them and don't acknowledge the attacker's presence. The absence of response from you two will push them to leave the area shortly.



- 4 Continue the conversation until the attacker leaves & escort them to a safe space if necessary**  
Bring them to a neutral area where they can recollect themselves. Respect their wishes if they tell you they're ok and just want to go.

This guide was originally written and illustrated by Saefi (safi1984) and was translated into English for the Middle Eastern Females. It was reformatted by the City of Boston with the artist's permission.

CITY of BOSTON



Mayor Martin J. Walsh

- Be inspired to act by David Hernandez's poem in [Alison McGhee's blog post](#).

*I am only one, / But still I am one. / I cannot do everything, / But still I can do something; / And because I cannot do everything, / I will not refuse to do the something that I can do. ~ Edward Everett Hale*