

Pressing Forward and PUSHING THROUGH



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Many occasions, I have described current students of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary as pressing forward and pushing through. I marvel at the tenacity, the resilience, and the resistance that is evident with each checkpoint reached and each day still fighting to remain by this particular body of students. Admittedly, this has also been my personal mantra. The adoption of this “Pressing Forward and Pushing Through” philosophy has been my mechanism for survival these past fourteen months. Through grief, associated with so many COVID-19 implications, I pressed forward. Each stage of grief cycles in like the tide in a constant state of persistent, unrelenting flux. Through the loss of life, through the destabilization of mental, physical, and even spiritual health, we have pressed. We have pressed through the dismantling of common culture and we have accepted the reality of a novel navigation of this American experiment just to survive. In terms of the storm, this wave, though unfamiliar, treacherous, and capricious, there lies a hope that with collective intention, and collective series of action, that we could and would withstand even if it were merely on broken pieces of the wreckage of our lives.

The irruption of this deadly virus into spaces once thought safe, set in motion a warranted pause in life-as-usual and collective panic replaced any sense of normalcy. Even through this, we press. Even through this, we push.

In this wee hour, with deadlines and due dates coming and going, I am awakened from my slumber after a series of days with violent rest. I am currently fighting to restrain a wave of tears. My heart is broken, my path is blinded by the fog, I am battered by the storm.

God, when will the storm end? Can this too pass?

A violent storm, with waves so treacherous, so unrelenting and so partial is raging. This storm is man-made and has employed a perpetual assault on black bodies some 400-plus years old. This wave is way too familiar. This wave is consuming us all.

In its wake, another black man’s life has been taken. Daunte Wright has been forcibly ascended to the ranks of ancestor far too soon. Daunte, this young father, this son, this brother, this cousin, this friend, this black man made-in-the-image-of-God has been murdered.

His lifeless body lay on display for hours further contributing to traumatic memory and unforgettable imagery of lynchings, only corporately ended recent decades ago. His life, taken by a member of a feral society that was founded in offense to black bodies since its origination and inception. His light snuffed out, never to shine again in this realm. The potential fruit of his life will now never make it to harvest. His name is now inducted into a cloud of witnesses forcibly comprised of countless others that include



Louisville Seminary Student Body President Adrian Baker (right) with Seminary President Alton B. Pollard, III at a rally for justice in downtown Louisville.

Continued on next page.

Continued from previous page.

unarmed black people killed by police with impunity. We now say Daunte's name with Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Xzavier Hill, and Donovan Lynch who were all killed by police or white supremacist vigilantes during this pandemic. I feel as if I can no longer press. I feel as if I no longer have the strength to push.

God, when will the storm end? Can this too pass?

The silence of the night is now breached by the physical embodiment of lament and sorrow. The groans of a struggle to breathe is now paired with tears now cascading from the lowest point of my chin. My vision is impaired, my song is forgotten.

God, when will the storm end? Can this too pass?

In this moment, it is not a time to press nor a time to push, but it is a time to mourn. A time to take proper time to sit with our grief and to sit with our anger. It is the divinely inherited characteristic of God's compassion and God's righteous indignation.

I also name the reality that is a time to assess. The prognosis is bleak, and the spread is terminal. American mainstream culture and those for which its construction intentionally benefits has a collective responsibility to hold itself accountable for this storm. This is a storm made by man's hands. The affliction of this storm is in your hands. The blood of this storm has power to remain on your hands. The sin of this storm is forced forward into your hands. Will you wash your hands? The storm can end. The storm can pass and return no more. It's in your hands.



Master of Divinity Student Adrian Baker presses forward in his advocacy for those who have been marginalized and oppressed by racist systems and powers.

I find solace in knowing that God is calling, compelling, and constraining us all to a beloved community. This truth is born out of love for all. It is up to you to muster the courage to live out God's love and justice for your brother. It is up to you to live out God's love and justice for your sister. It is up to you to live out God's love, God's justice for all of our siblings. It is up to you to cast a new vision and up to you to write a new song.

If we must push, if we must press ... it is now time and only time to push past indifference to push beyond the complicity of silence, to push past the barriers of your heart. We must press toward restoration, we must press toward repair, we must press toward justice, and we must press toward radical love for all people ... for this is the Word and Work of the Lord.

The Word of God for the People of God.



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