



People are Resisting. I Am Doing Nothing.

Paralyzed by the trauma of the last few months, I am doing nothing to fight Trump.

February 20, 2025 By [Mark S. King](#)

The phrase sat there on my Facebook feed, staring back at me like an accusation.

“If you aren’t resisting, you are assisting,” the post read.

I felt flush with self-conscious guilt. It wasn’t a familiar feeling, not after nearly forty years of speaking up and staking my ground as a long-term HIV survivor. And yet somehow, in this new surreal era of governmental upheaval, the slate of our past contributions has been wiped clean and replaced with a new query.

What have you done lately?

The answer is not much. I have no excuses. But I do have reasons. Enumerating them feels like a copout but I will do it anyway, in case you’re in a similar boat and need a lifeline about now.

The trauma – there’s no other word for it, really – of the last few months continues to weigh heavily on my psyche and my energy level. Just as this administration clearly planned, the events are happening faster than I can process them. I have been thrown back on my heels.

I am also the husband of a federal employee, and that has completely hijacked my time and emotions. The shocking headlines about the gutting of our institutions hardly do justice to the daily fear, intimidation, and cruel insults hurled at our civil servants.

“We want the bureaucrats to be traumatically affected,” Russell Vought, the new director of the Office of Management and Budget, [said in a video revealed](#) by the research group Documented in October. “When they wake up in the morning, we want them to not want to go to work, because they are increasingly viewed as the villains. We want their funding to be shut down... We want to put them in trauma.”

Mission accomplished. My husband has devoted his entire professional career in the public sector to improving the lives and health of the people of this great nation. He seriously considered the Musk buy-out deal before deciding to stick it out and continue his work as best he can. His workplace is demoralized and key employees have been fired without warning or cause. How they

will manage to continue to deliver services for the American people is beyond me. It is, in a word, awful. Supporting him as best I can has been my priority.

Through all of this, aside from attending a few organizational meetings on Zoom as an observer, I have done nothing. I have not protested in the streets, written letters, called my elected officials or even watched much cable television news. I am stunned into paralysis.

The contrast between my own current reaction to events and the response of others is striking.

In [Tim Murphy's recent piece for Positively Aware](#), in which he gathers tips and responses from various HIV community leaders, I alone appear to be up to, well, not much. From the article:

“I’m feeling every day of my nearly 65 years right now,” says King. “I’ve been here before. I made it out of the 1980s alive. But I was also in my twenties then and perhaps now I am older and sadder and more protective of what limited resources I have.”

In the 1980s, I was young enough not to give a shit about how my social justice work or shouting in the streets might affect my job prospects or community standing or financial security.

Well, plus we were dying and didn’t expect to live to see the age of thirty.

This time around, I know how much my privilege allows me to tend to the garden, watch horror movies and make dinner with my husband in an effort to shut out the brutality of the current administration. It has been a safeguard for my mental health, even if I might anxiously peek at the news occasionally through my fingers, taking in my modest fill of it before I reach for chocolate or switch to the latest episode of *The White Lotus*.

Thankfully, there is a dizzying array of responses coming from our community. My inbox is filled with announcements about protests and how to respond to the latest outrage and invitations to Zoom events. I delete most of them, or might attend with my camera off. It’s as if I can’t look my own community in the face right now. I’m ashamed of my own inaction.

I have noticed that criticism of our organizing efforts has begun, because blowback is part of the game, I suppose. HIV icon [Cleve Jones recently posted](#) that he’s frustrated by the “scattered protests called by anonymous individuals, incoherent messaging and little media coverage.”

Umm, okay. I might not be in a position to remark on the quality of our current response, but I remember plenty of scattered responses back in the day, and it produced, eventually, a coherent and effective shared strategy. People coalesce, given time to absorb our common priorities and choices.

Maybe that's what I am waiting for. Someone to point heroically in a promising direction and say, "That way!" Or maybe my paralysis will withstand even that.

We'll see.

Mark

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<http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/people-resisting-nothing>