

Resisting as a way of life

For Kaitlin Curtice, resistance is no mere buzzword—it's a mighty calling.

by [Allison Backous Troy](#) in the [October 2023](#) issue

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## In Review



## Living Resistance

An Indigenous Vision for Seeking Wholeness Every Day

By Kaitlin B. Curtice

Brazos

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*Resistance*, like *woke*, is a word that has become misused to the point of mockery. Scroll Instagram, and you will find #resist, #resistance, and #betheresistance, the word hashtagged and diluted past its powerful meaning. It has been used to peddle a particular brand of armchair activism, something to which I am prone. (It is much easier to share a meme than to show up for a committee meeting.)

But for Kaitlin Curtice, resistance is too mighty to become a buzzword. It is “a basic human calling,” a way of living that not only fights against unjust systems but restores both ourselves and the world around us. It is “the beautiful work of wholeness-making,” and no matter your history, your heritage, or your background, resistance is your calling. *Living Resistance* helps us to hear that call and, more importantly, to answer it.

Curtice’s book is a response to the gut punch of COVID and the rise of right-wing extremism. It is also Curtice’s map of her inner life and transformation. She is one of many Native Americans who are discovering their roots, naming historical traumas, and reclaiming Indigenous teachings and identity. Curtice is a member of the Potawatomi tribe and of the Bear Clan, the “keepers of the medicine” in Potawatomi culture. She sees words as her medicine, and in laying out her journey of resistance, she offers her words and her life as a way to heal from the poisons of White supremacy, environmental decay, and personal trauma.

Curtice’s path is one of integration. She offers an image of overlapping concentric circles, each representing an essential part of our humanity—the personal, the communal, the ancestral, and the integral. Her categories provide a way to explore who we are in our current moment, and they redefine our self-understanding. Whether we acknowledge these realities or not, we are tied to the earth, to our ancestors, and to embodied life. Resistance, for Curtice, is slow, purposeful, and all-encompassing; it shapes how we eat, how we relate to our children and our neighbors’ children, and how we speak about people who are different from us. Resistance is just as much about how we notice the trees in our neighborhood as it is about the marches we join and the votes we cast. It is a journey away from exclusion and hierarchy, a movement toward wholeness and love—both for ourselves and for the fragile, hurting world in which we live.

Much of Curtice's writing will resonate with readers whose faith lives are focused on holistic transformation and kingdom building. At the same time, Curtice's book is a struggle against her evangelical upbringing and its whitewashed versions of American history. It is brisk in its definitions of Whiteness and its records of brutality against people of color and the LGBTQ community. Curtice is deeply formed by progressive theology, and for readers who come from more conservative Christian backgrounds, the book will provide struggle.

But the struggle is the point. Resistance, as Curtice finds, helps us find more than common ground with people we disagree with: it clarifies our vision to look beyond "us versus them," in all sorts of contexts, and it brings us away from suspicion to curiosity, which Curtice says is the primary step in resisting hate.

And hate is exactly what resistance fights. Curtice's journey of reclaiming her Native heritage helps her face the ways she was taught to hate her brown skin and her "heathen" roots. Her words are her own medicine. If we listen to them, we too might find ourselves more curious about our own histories, our identities, and our longing for a life that seeks restoration, a life that truly resists.