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What does it mean to *resist* injustice? When is resistance morally justified, and when is it meaningful? These are the central questions driving my research program. For decades, philosophers have approached these questions by assuming the narrow framework of a largely just society. Following John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, they have typically treated resistance as a response to isolated injustices within an otherwise stable and well-functioning democracy. As a result, the literature has focused almost exclusively on nonviolent protest and civil disobedience, overtly communicative acts that are cast as fulfilling citizens' civic duties. The celebrated features of these practices—nonviolence, civility, conscientiousness, and public communication—have come to be elevated as the defining traits of resistance itself, and as the standards by which its value is measured.

My research breaks from this paradigm by advancing an account of resistance grounded in the recognition that injustice is pervasive, surfacing not only in public law but also in the quieter workings of daily life. Just as injustice takes many forms, so too does resistance—often diverging sharply from the familiar paradigms of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience. Resistance, I argue, need not be public, communicative, or morally excellent to count or to carry value. Many acts of resistance lack the celebrated features of nonviolent protest and arise instead when such traditional modes have proven ineffective or out of reach.

Consider, for example: Frederick Douglass, who while enslaved secretly taught himself to read; Suffragists who shattered shop windows and bombed golf courses with acid to demand the vote; closeted queer people who entered "lavender marriages" and constructed hidden lives to pursue romantic interests without persecution; civil rights activist H. Rap Brown, who stole from the White House after President Johnson dismissed SNCC's concerns about police brutality during Selma; Painters who used coded symbols to critique tyrannical rulers; Indigenous communities who pass down outlawed traditions in the face of erasure; and workers who resist exploitative conditions by scaling back their labor and refusing to give more than the bare minimum.

These acts lack the traits traditionally held to define resistance. Yet they remain significant ways in which people push back against the oppressive forces that structure their lives, and an ethics of resistance is incomplete without addressing them. By presuming a largely just and stable political order, philosophers have too often overlooked such acts or misconstrued their significance. My research confronts this blind spot directly, examining resistance in its subtle, unconventional, and at times morally fraught forms. More specifically, my work pursues three major branches, each outlined below.

(1) What is Resistance? Beyond the Paradigm of Protest

What does it mean to resist oppression, and how do oppressive conditions shape what resistance can look like? **The first aim of my research is to shed light on forms of resistance that are often overlooked, misunderstood, or undervalued**—such as resistance that is not intended to be a mode of public address (what I call *Quiet Resistance*), resistance that involves violence beyond the standard limits of self-defense (what I call *Violent Resistance*), and morally fraught forms of resistance (*Imperfect Resistance*). I examine how these acts compare to more paradigmatic and well-theorized forms of resistance, such as protest and civil disobedience, and what they reveal not only about the nature of oppression, but also about the values, experiences, and perspectives of those who struggle against it.

Quiet Resistance

In my 2019 publication, "Eight Dimensions of Resistance" (in *Pacifism, Politics, and Feminism*), and my 2020 "Quiet Resistance: The Value of Personal Defiance" (*The Journal of Ethics*), I introduced the concept of *Quiet Resistance* to highlight the ways in which individuals challenge the conditions of their oppression without engaging in public or explicitly communicative acts. In Quiet Resistance, individuals engage in activities that oppressive forces attempt to block or prohibit, motivated primarily by love or deep attachment to the pursuit itself rather than by a desire to send a political message. Thus, *Quiet Resistance* is "quiet" only in the sense that, unlike protest and civil disobedience, it is not intended as a mode of public address and lacks the communicative aims that define those more paradigmatic forms of resistance.

A vivid example, which I discuss in my 2020 article, comes from the life of Frederick Douglass, who, as a child, secretly taught himself to read despite his enslaver's determined efforts to keep him illiterate. The young Douglass befriended white children in the street, trading bread for scraps of literacy. Each time his enslaver discovered his efforts, he faced brutal punishments, including whippings. Yet, as he later recounted in his autobiography, his "intense love of knowledge" had been "fanned into a flame," compelling him to persist—not primarily as an act of political protest, but from a profound love of learning. For the young Douglass, literacy was a form of Quiet Resistance, one that expanded his conception of the world and his place within it, even as oppressive forces sought to shroud him in mental darkness.

Another striking example is the Wadi Climbing community in the West Bank. These rock climbers return repeatedly to the area's spectacular limestone cliffs despite facing immense barriers. To climb there, they must navigate tense military checkpoints, regain access to land from which they've been forcibly displaced, and risk violent targeting by soldiers and settlers. When asked why they continue to climb, they do not describe their actions as protest; instead, they speak of their love for rock climbing, the unique experiences it offers, and the deep value it brings to their lives. I argue that for the Wadi Climbers, climbing constitutes a form of Quiet Resistance, one that enables them to create a new relationship with their land amid ongoing attempts to expel them from it. I discuss this case in my 2024 article, "Wadi Climbing: Quiet Resistance in the West Bank," published in *The Radical Philosophy Review*.

Theories of resistance often overlook or disqualify acts like *Quiet Resistance* because they lack the public, communicative dimensions and overt political aims typically associated with protest. In contrast, I argue that such features are not necessary for an act to qualify as resistance. While protest is a vital and irreplaceable tool in the fight against oppression, there are genuine and meaningful forms of resistance that do not conform to its standard model. An ethics of resistance is incomplete without acknowledging these less visible forms. Though more subtle and differently structured in their value, they are no less significant as ways in which people push back against the oppressive forces in their lives.

My work on Quiet Resistance is reshaping discussions in social and political philosophy and has been cited in articles addressing diverse topics—from debates about the obligation to resist oppression, to the value and limits of protest, to the nature of trans resistance, and even to writings on the ethical value of veganism. Beyond academia, it has gained traction in creative and activist communities, notably through my involvement with the New Arab American Theater Works in Minneapolis. There, I have shared my ideas through community dance and drumming events and am helping to design workshops that put Quiet Resistance in practice by mobilizing art and culture to confront injustice.

(2) Reasons to Resist: Enriching the Normative Grounds for Resistance

It is common to assume that resistance is always motivated by paradigmatic moral reasons, such as a desire to uphold principles of justice, or fulfill one's obligations to others. However, in reality, a variety of human values can significantly influence whether or not individuals have reasons to resist. Alongside justice, for instance, considerations of love, honor, community, and self-realization can play a crucial role. What reasons do people have for and against resisting their oppression, and how should those reasons shape how we evaluate their actions? **The second aim of my research is to broaden philosophical discussions of the normative reasons that drive acts of resistance and contribute to their ethical value or meaningfulness.** I argue that the reasons for, and against, resisting oppression are more diverse than is typically acknowledged. These motivations can be deeply personal and often extend beyond the paradigmatic moral considerations—such as fulfilling obligations or upholding moral and political principles—that tend to dominate the existing literature.

Violent Resistance

The most vivid illustration of this aim is my work on violent resistance, particularly women's violent responses to sexual abuse. What distinguishes my approach is that most philosophical discussions of violent resistance focus on explicitly political actions, like war, armed rebellion, or revolutionary struggle, whereas I examine its occurrence in people's personal lives, where violence arises in response to injustices within ordinary social encounters and intimate relationships.

My 2022 article, "Violent Resistance as Radical Choice" (*Feminist Philosophy Quarterly*), and my 2025 article, "Violent Resistance to Sexual Violence" (*Hypatia*), analyze cases in which survivors fight back—sometimes seriously injuring their abusers—not only in self-defense but also to reclaim power or seek retribution for oppressive treatment. Consider, for example, Egyptian feminist writer Mona Eltahawy, who used disproportionate force against a man after he groped her on a dance floor, or Adrienne Bennett, the first Black woman Master Plumber in North America, who struck a colleague on the head with a pipe wrench after enduring workplace harassment.

My papers challenge the dominant view that violent resistance must be either wholly condemnable or wholly justifiable according to narrow, traditionally defined notions of self-defense that have historically excluded women's experiences. By contrast, I argue that violent acts like Bennett's and Eltahawy's demand evaluation through a broader constellation of ethical considerations, rather than confinement to the binary of moral blame or justification. As I show, survivors may resist violently not only for traditional moral reasons but also to preserve their ties to core commitments and life-shaping aims that abuse threatens to erode. These personal considerations, I contend, are essential to understanding the significance of their acts.

Imperfect Resistance

My work on violent resistance has led me to explore a wider range practices that depart significantly from familiar moral ideals of resistance—such as those most vividly expressed in Dr. King's political thought. My current research focuses on what I call *Imperfect Resistance*: cases in which individuals push back against their oppression through actions that are morally fraught and may arouse blame or serious moral censure. These acts may or may not involve violence, but they nonetheless raise pressing moral concerns. They include actions that would ordinarily be considered morally wrong or suspect—such as stealing as a form of payback for unjust treatment, or systematically deceiving others in order to pursue personal desires that have been obstructed by oppressive conditions. Among

the cases of imperfect resistance I examine are *lavender marriages*, where queer individuals conceal their sexual identities by entering into sham heterosexual partnerships, and an incident from the life of H. Rap Brown (now Jamil Abdullah al-Amin), who stole from the White House after President Johnson dismissed SNCC's concerns about police brutality during Selma.

Crucially, such acts are not always matters of survival, nor are they necessarily the only viable means of resistance. In some cases, morally cleaner alternatives are available, yet individuals still opt for morally compromised forms of resistance—sometimes, as I argue, for good reasons. I show how *Imperfect Resistance* diverges not only from the ideal of nonviolent resistance, as developed by King, but also from two non-ideal forms that have recently gained attention in the philosophical literature: Tommie Shelby's *impure dissent* (2016) and Candice Delmas's *uncivil disobedience* (2018). I further examine what this phenomenon reveals about the role resistance can play in living a good life, the diverse motivations that underlie different resistance practices, and the broader ethical complexities involved in confronting injustice.

(3) Double Binds and Radical Choices: Ethical Conflicts in Resistance

Resistance is inherently risky, and many individuals encounter complex ethical challenges as they push back against the injustices shaping their lives. Sometimes, oppressive systems place people in dilemmas where, whether they resist or not, they remain entangled in aspects of their own oppression. In other cases, resisting injustice requires compromising personal projects or other deeply held values. Faced with these difficult situations, what should someone do?

The third aim of my project is to examine the *ethical conflicts* that arise in resistance and the ways people can navigate them. Building on my first aim—broadening the concept of resistance beyond its paradigmatic forms—and my second—expanding the range of reasons that can motivate it and shape its value—this third aim asks what happens when those reasons come into tension. I focus on two kinds of conflict: double binds and radical choices.

In *"How to Resist a Double Bind"* (under review), I analyze dilemmas in which individuals are forced to choose among limited and conflicting options, all of which reinforce injustice. Whereas existing scholarship has largely emphasized how double binds constrain agency and serve oppressive ends, I offer the first sustained philosophical account of how they can be resisted. I argue that, by reinterpreting the available options through counter-oppressive values, individuals can disrupt the logic of double binds and mitigate some of the harms they are designed to inflict—for example, by rejecting the shame imposed on those who defy their demands. I show how this form of resistance arose in Civil Rights, Feminist, and decolonial movements, and I emphasize the essential role of supportive communities in fostering and sustaining it.

In my 2022 article in *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly*, my 2025 article in *Hypatia*, and my 2025 article on "Imperfect Resistance" (under review), I examine a different, though related, dilemma that occurs when the oppressed are forced to choose between incommensurable ethical values, such as between the demands of social justice and personal wellbeing, or between maintaining one's integrity and preserving love for one's family. What I have called *imperfect resistance* can, at times, emerge from these dilemmatic conditions, where every option requires compromising something of deep ethical significance. I refer to these as circumstances of *radical choice*, borrowing a term from Sartre, to capture the depth of the conflict and the gravity of the decisions they entail.

Part of my book project *Reasons to Resist* considers how we ought to evaluate acts of resistance that are not clearly supported by moral reasons. My investigation applies a distinction between ethics and morality found in the philosophical tradition notably represented by Bernard

Williams (1985) and Susan Wolf (2015). Ethics is broadly concerned with the question of how to live a good life. Morality is one system of human values among others that bears relevantly on the fundamental ethical question "how should one live?". Thus, morality is one dimension of ethics. It is more specifically concerned with the question of what we owe to others by virtue of the fact that everyone, independently of any special traits or qualities, is equally deserving of respect and wellbeing. Morality focuses on matters of obligation, right and wrong action, and the pursuit of impartial values like justice, equality, and the common good. Ethics, however, includes a variety of other human values alongside morality, e.g., beauty, love, knowledge, strength, honor, self-realization, creativity (among others). Since doing the right thing and fulfilling our obligations is a part of living a flourishing life, morality is one important dimension of ethics. However, since there is more to living a good life than being morally good, responses to the ethical question of how to live need not appeal exclusively to considerations of morality.

The ethics-morality distinction allows me to consider how resistance may be integral to living an ethically good life and not merely a morally upstanding one. Morality does not alone decide the merits of resistance. Acts of resistance can be evaluated from the point of view of different ethical values, which may at times come into conflict. An act of resistance may be valuable from the point of view of one ethical value (e.g., from the perspective of love or self-realization); while it may appear flawed or imperfect from the point of view of another (e.g. from the perspective of fairness or respect).

In considering how to evaluate acts of resistance that are not clearly supported by moral reasons, one influential approach in philosophy is to adopt a moralistic stance, rooted in longstanding traditions such as Kantianism and Utilitarianism. On this view, impartial moral reasons are treated as overriding: they are presumed to trump other kinds of considerations, such as personal attachments, desires, or non-moral values. From this perspective, acts of resistance that violate impartial moral demands—such as those I call imperfect resistance—are often deemed unjustified, or even irrational.

Alternatively, an anti-moralistic approach challenges the authority of impartial morality in assessing resistance, particularly in the context of oppression. Drawing on a tradition that includes Nietzsche, this stance is radically skeptical of the primacy of moral obligation over other forms of normative value. It emphasizes the ethical significance of personal projects, intimate relationships, and the concrete needs of oppressed individuals—holding these as more normatively salient than abstract, impartial moral demands. From this perspective, acts of resistance that conflict with an individual's well-being or self-interest—especially when they involve profound sacrifice or self-denial—may appear not only unreasonable, but unduly self-abnegating.

My book seeks to articulate a middle ground between the moralistic and anti-moralistic stances described above, both of which risk oversimplifying the phenomenon of imperfect resistance. I argue that resisters need not conceive of their commitments in strictly hierarchical terms. In many cases, there is no single, objective standard by which moral, personal, and relational values can be ranked. Conflicts of radical choice—wherein deeply held but incommensurable values collide—often resist tidy resolution. Moreover, examining how such conflicts arise within systems of oppression reveals an overlooked dimension of systemic injustice: oppression can create and exacerbate conditions in which moral and non-moral values come into deep and painful conflict. For victims facing these dilemmas, the surrounding context of their oppression helps explain why morally fraught actions may emerge as relevant—or even the only viable—forms of resistance.