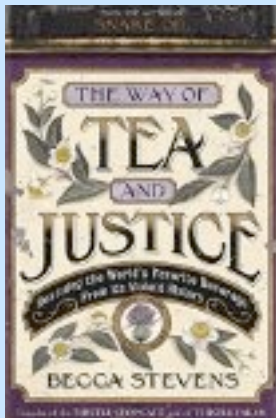


The Way of Tea and Justice: Rescuing the World's Favorite Beverage from its Violent History

Author: **Becca Stevens**

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Review written by Nelle Howard (Resource Center Director)
for The Presbytery of West Virginia



Prepare a cup of tea. Commit an act of justice.

How are the two related? What does tea have to do with being just?

If you know much about the history of the world you have to know a little something about the history of tea and then you must realize that the history of tea includes one unjust act after another.

The history of injustice in tea production became global with political and corporate espionage in 1848. That is when Robert Fortune disguised himself as a Mandarin in order to gain access to a Chinese tea production facility. From there tea made its way to several British colonies where forced labor produced most of the tea that the world drank. To feed our tea addiction today most tea plantations continue to over-work and under-pay tea producers.

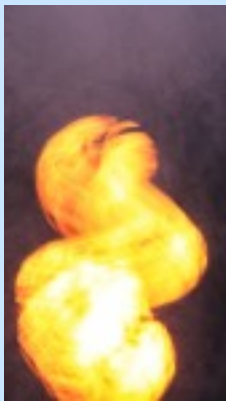
When we drink a cup of tea we are connected to the worker who picked and processed the leaves. We are connected to the plantation owner who decides how to hire and treat workers and we are connected to the countless men and women who have put on kettle of water to heat and who, then, wait. The author of Tea and Justice wants us to consider these connections and how much better that tea may taste if it includes a significant amount of care and justness.





Green tea was first harvested for drinking 3500 years ago, followed a 1000 years later by the cured product we know as black tea. This black tea is the most common tea for Europeans and Americans and is what you probably use to make your ice tea.

In Africa a woman puts a heavy pot onto a hotplate burner to heat water for her afternoon drink. At the same time a woman in West Virginia puts a copper teapot on her electric stovetop. Together they wait. . . Through their waiting they are connected to the thousands of others who, through the centuries, have waited.



Our waiting connects us to the woman who hunches over a small fire in a circle of stones; it connects us to the soldier, rubbing his cold hands together as he watches his breath and his water slowly begins to bubble. Each of us waits with the same anticipation, the same longing for something good.

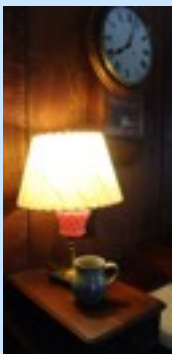
According to horticulturists there is only 1 specie of tea plant in the world, *Camilla Sinensis*. Like us, all tea is connected by heritage. We are all from the same source but we each have unique attributes like the aromas and flavors of various types of tea and, much like tea leaves, we are formed through our individual experiences - where we grow, what is around us, what type of nourishment we receive.





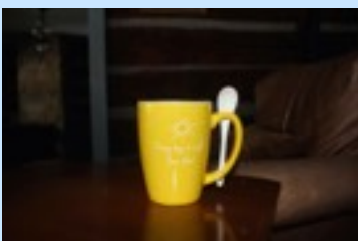
Through the pages of *Tea and Justice* Becca Stevens reminds us of these important connections and how the intentional act of choosing, brewing and savoring a cup of tea can be an act of justice.

Becca Stevens is an Episcopal Priest who founded *Magdalene*, residential communities of women who have survived prostitution, trafficking and addiction. She also founded Thistle Farms in Tennessee a place employing about 50 women and graduates. Thistle Farms provides employment and safety to the women who live and work there.

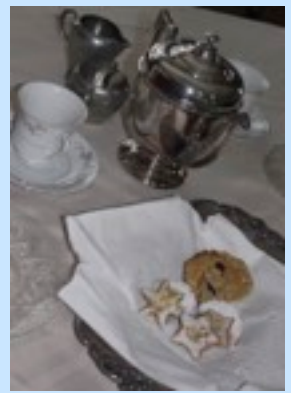


Recently, Thistle Farms has opened the Thistle Stop Café. a place to slow down, have a cup of justly produced tea and perhaps tell your story.

Each tea cup used in the cafe comes with its own story, some of which are written, framed and hung on the walls of the café.



The author sees a cup of tea as an analogy for life,
a chance for friendship and conversation or contemplation
and renewal.



So put a kettle on . . . have your cup ready . . . and connect.

