

Cornel West Quotes

*People, Thinking, Kings, Black, Mean, White, America, Believe, Brother,
Christian, Self, Justice, Moving, Way, Talking, Struggle, Trying, Suffering, Soul,
Integrity*

There is a price to pay for speaking the truth. There is a bigger price for living a lie.

~Cornel West

You can't lead the people if you don't love the people. You can't save the people if you don't serve the people.

~Cornel West

Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public

~Cornel West

Empathy is not simply a matter of trying to imagine what others are going through, but having the will to muster enough courage to do something about it. In a way, empathy is predicated upon hope.

~Cornel West

Too many young folk have addiction to superficial things and not enough conviction for substantial things like justice, truth and love.

~Cornel West

None of us alone can save the nation or the world. But each of us can make a positive difference if we commit ourselves to do so. (p. 109)

~Cornel West

The greatest gift you can give someone is the gift of inspiration.

~Cornel West

We have to recognise that there cannot be relationships unless there is commitment, unless there is loyalty, unless there is love, patience, persistence.

~Cornel West

We are who we are because somebody loved us.

~Cornel West

A fully functional multiracial society cannot be achieved without a sense of history and open, honest dialogue.

~Cornel West

The condition of truth is to allow suffering to speak, it means then that if you have a prophetic sensibility, you are committed to loving others and if you love others, you hate injustice.

~Cornel West

You've got to love yourself enough, not only so that others will be able to love you, but that you'll be able to love others.

~Cornel West

Justice is what love looks like in public.

~Cornel West

You must let suffering speak, if you want to hear the truth

~Cornel West

If the Kingdom of God is in you, you should leave a little bit of heaven wherever you go.

~Cornel West

It takes tremendous discipline, takes tremendous courage, to think for yourself, to examine yourself.

~Cornel West

To be an intellectual really means to speak a truth that allows suffering to speak.

~Cornel West

To get up in the morning & do the monumental tasks that face us, our labor is best fueled by love.

~Cornel West

Courage is being true to yourself, true to a sense of integrity.

~Cornel West

The blues aren't pessimistic. We're prisoners of hope but we tell the truth and the truth is dark.

~Cornel West

You've got to be a thermostat rather than a thermometer. A thermostat shapes the climate of opinion; a thermometer just reflects it.

~Cornel West

Music is what we need when language fails us, but we cannot remain silent.

~Cornel West

I loathe nationalism. It is a form of tribalism--the idolatry of the 20th century.

~Cornel West

We have to be militants for kindness, subversive for sweetness and radicals for tenderness.

~Cornel West

When ordinary people wake up, elites begin to tremble in their boots.

~Cornel West

You don't begin by dehumanizing those who are dehumanizing you, because it contributes to the cycle of dehumanization in the world.

~Cornel West

The aim is not for me to be right. The aim is to make sure that we keep the focus on the people who are suffering. That's what we're here for.

~Cornel West

You keep folks so intimidated. You can give them money, access, but they're still scared. And as long as you're scared, you're on the plantation.

~Cornel West

We are intent on building a movement. The next step is grassroots town meetings. We must keep alive the dialogue around the covenants.

~Cornel West

The only countervailing force against organized money at the top, is organized people at the bottom.

~Cornel West

White supremacy is so deep-seated that it's hard to see it eliminated. But we could definitely push it back.

~Cornel West

Black people have always been America's wilderness in search of a promised land.

~Cornel West

Patriarchy is a disease and we are in perennial recovery and relapse. So you have to get up every morning and struggle against it.

~Cornel West

We [Americans] have to get beyond the greed-run-amok. We have to get beyond indifference to the poor and working people. We have to get beyond polarized politics.

~Cornel West

Nihilism is a natural consequence of a culture (or civilization) ruled and regulated by categories that mask manipulation, mastery and domination of peoples and nature.

~Cornel West

There are three dominant tendencies in a neoliberal society: financialized, privatized, militarized. And when it comes to black poor people, we get all three.

~Cornel West

No community dictates to any individual how to live their lives. You can criticize and you can push but people freely choose.

~Cornel West

Clever gimmicks of mass distraction yield a cheap soulcraft of addicted and self-medicated narcissists.

~Cornel West

Reelection ought not to be the primary preoccupation of any politician. It ought to be standing up for truth and justice.

~Cornel West

We live in a predatory capitalist society in which everything is for sale. Everybody is for sale, so there is ubiquitous commodification - be it of music, food, people, or parking meters.

~Cornel West

It is very difficult to sustain a high-quality relationship that has the kind of mutual intensity, that has a kind of mutual respect, without putting in time.

~Cornel West

Of course, the aim of a constitutional democracy is to safeguard the rights of the minority and avoid the tyranny of the majority. (p. 102)

~Cornel West

We have to be self-critical even in context that we might be critical of,

even as we - our pieces appear in it.

~Cornel West

The black agenda, from Frederick Douglas to Ida B. Wells to Martin King, has always been the most broad, deep, inclusive, embracing agenda of the nation.

~Cornel West

Barack Obama has domesticated the left in such a way that we feel as if we have no alternative but him...I refuse to accept that.

~Cornel West

And when I talk about love, I'm talking about something that's great, though, brother. I'm talking about something that will sustain you.

~Cornel West

One of the things I love most about Martin Luther King is that he was willing to sacrifice his popularity in favor of his integrity. He was an honest man, and he would tell the truth.

~Cornel West

You can't move forward until you look back.

~Cornel West

There's a certain pleasure of the life of the mind that cannot be denied. There's a certain pleasure about being around people who enact a playfulness when it comes to the world of ideas.

~Cornel West

If you view life as a gold rush, you're going to end up worshipping a golden calf.

~Cornel West

To live is to wrestle with despair, yet never allow despair to have the

last word.

~Cornel West

Racism is a moral catastrophe, most graphically seen in the prison industrial complex and targeted police surveillance in black and brown ghettos rendered invisible in public discourse.

~Cornel West

Philosophy is in fact a quest for wisdom based in sophia; that quest for wisdom has everything to do with a love of wisdom.

~Cornel West

We have a market-driven society so obsessed with buying and selling and obsessed with power and pleasure and property.

~Cornel West

I'm not saying that President Obama should be exempt from criticism, nor do I believe it is some act of racial treason for a black person to hold our president accountable for his actions.

~Cornel West

A rich life consists fundamentally of serving others, trying to leave the world a little better than you found it.

~Cornel West

We've been talking about this for a good while, the immorality of drones, dropping bombs on innocent people. It's been over 200 children so far. These are war crimes.

~Cornel West

I cannot be an optimist but I am a prisoner of hope.

~Cornel West

It's no accident that most of the great black spokespersons and leaders

understood the centrality of self-affirmation, self-respect and self-love.

~Cornel West

When you place a high value on truth, you have to think for yourself.

~Cornel West

You can't talk about truth unless you talk about yourself.

~Cornel West

Love and trust and justice, concern for the poor, that's being pushed to the margins, and you can see it.

~Cornel West

As long as hope remains and meaning is preserved, the possibility of overcoming oppression stays alive.

~Cornel West

The powerful have no monopoly on greed, hatred, fear, or ignorance.

~Cornel West

The evil is so ubiquitous in terms of objectification of all of us, that one can say that almost about any TV and even radio show.

~Cornel West

Martin Luther King was a victim of surveillance, and had great solidarity with victims of surveillance.

~Cornel West

Wealth inequality has increased.

~Cornel West

Being a Christian is not a political orientation for the president, but he is a centrist.

~Cornel West

Profound music leads us beyond language...to the dark roots of our scream and the celestial heights of our silence.

~Cornel West

He who learns death unlearns slavery.

~Cornel West

The condition of truth is to allow suffering to speak - that gives it an existential emphasis.

~Cornel West

The capitalist culture of consumption... does not provide meaningful sustenance for large numbers of people.

~Cornel West

We can't have a freedom struggle without free choice.

~Cornel West

We want to bear witness today that we know the relation between corporate greed and what goes on too often in the Supreme Court decisions.

~Cornel West

Part of the problem is we had so far to go, given the deep homophobia in our society. But, the movement is very real. The movement is very real.

~Cornel West

If you can't have a good time and smile and relate to people across race and class, then the success that you have ultimately is just sounding brass and tinkling symbol.

~Cornel West

I'm a bluesman, which means that I put an emphasis on the minor keys.

~Cornel West

I'm black, so, you know, I'm again with black folk, but it's a love that spills over to vanilla suburbs and red reservations and brown barrios and yellow slices.

~Cornel West

It takes more courage to examine the dark corners of your own soul than it does for a soldier to fight on the battlefield.

~Cornel West

Success is such a relative thing for me. I'm fundamentally a Christian which means that ultimately all of the penultimate titles and things you just had to wear with a loose garment. Really.

~Cornel West

what I think separates me from most philosophers probably is that I'm a bluesman in the life of the mind, I'm a jazzman in the world of ideas.

~Cornel West

We must never so thoroughly disrespect someone that they are beyond the pale and, therefore, have no possibility of being changed.

~Cornel West

Sometime you just need to be silent, have a drink and crack a smile or somethin', because the human condition, in general, is just overwhelming in so many ways.

~Cornel West

I have tried to be a man of letters in love with ideas in order to be a wiser and more loving person, hoping to leave the world just a little better than I found it.

~Cornel West

When you are fundamentally committed to something that is right, you just decide to go down fighting. Period.

~Cornel West

Education is soul crafting.

~Cornel West

The most dangerous thing in American society is a self-respecting and self-loving black person, because they're on the road to freedom and that means they're gonna run up against the powers that be.

~Cornel West

We're beings toward death, we're € two-legged, linguistically-conscious creatures born between urine and feces whose body will one day be the culinary delight of terrestrial worms.

~Cornel West

The capacity to produce social chaos is the last resort of desperate people.

~Cornel West

All individuals have the same value, not to be determined by market price. They're made in the image and likeness of God.

~Cornel West

Faith is stepping out on nothing and landing on something.

~Cornel West

I like to be multi-contextual, which is much more important than being multicultural.

~Cornel West

You can't have a high-quality relationship without time and without trust.

~Cornel West

When you love people, you give them a priority. You have a sense of urgency about their pain.

~Cornel West

We had a much deeper sense of community in '67 than we do in '97. This is important to say that not in a nostalgic way because it's not as if '67 was a time when things were so good.

~Cornel West

Part of the challenge of the Barack Obama campaign was to try to neutralize that white backlash, and of course, he was masterful in doing that.

~Cornel West

The women can always choose the patriarchal models, and you end up with a Margaret Thatcher.

~Cornel West

Martin King was fundamentally committed to the least of these [poor, working people]. Of course, he was a Christian soldier for justice from the 25th chapter of Matthew.

~Cornel West

The legacy of [Martin Luther] King is the very thing that must be expanded if America is to be free and democratic in the 21st century. It's just as simple as that.

~Cornel West

Homophobia is very, very difficult to root out, to extricate. That's why we have to bear witness. That's why we have to be so public about it, and that's why we can't just play footsie with it.

~Cornel West

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