



# REFLECTIONS ON CHARLOTTESVILLE CONTINUED . . .

Charlottesville was an electric shock that revived hearts and minds that reject bigotry. Behind this pivotal national moment, there are deeply personal feelings and thoughts.

**Here are some excerpts from comments we've received:\***

## ***Tough Stuff...***

"This is tough stuff. Those of us who believe that "all men (and women) are created equal" live this credo at all times in our day-to-day dealings with those with whom we come in contact. But, I also believe this is inherent in our growing up and education, which we strive to pass along from generation to generation.

As we have seen, many in our own American society have felt victimized by our economic, social and political culture. And as a result of a very weak election process on all sides, both Democratic and Republican...I think these masses saw no hope but to reach out toward what they wanted (and needed) to hear.

As a Society, we blew it, at least for the moment, and what we need is for our leaders to stand up for what is right...and put down a potentially escalating civil conflict. ... [What happened at Charlottesville] is not about politics; it's about right and wrong...

We may see a shift in attitude since last weekend, whether it's for self-preservation or other selfish needs. But as Corporate America [stands up for diversity and minorities] ... hopefully the [hateful] minority will recede in its rhetoric.

But, in all this, we still have to focus on the needs of the forgotten masses, because strengthening their economic and other values should quiet the ugliness that surrounds us today. It is embarrassing to have the rest of the world see us in such disarray and turmoil, not as the moral strength that we have stood for and displayed for over 200 years.

This will not come easily, but the voices of those in high economic, cultural, religious and political power must form a united voice to start to rebuild our values. I am frightened and saddened with what I hear and see, and I try to shelter my children and grandchildren from all this ugliness."

- *RON RIES*

## ***A Shocking Time...***

"This is a shocking time in America. A woman is murdered in a terror attack and our President can't find the words to properly honor her or the two policemen who died monitoring the march. Our country's moral

gyroscope is teetering as... false equivalencies [are declared] between white supremacists, the Klan and even Nazis on the one hand and those who bear witness to their bigotry, hatred, intimidation and violence on the other.

There can be no excuse for pretending those who carried torches reminding us of the Klan and Hitler's minions and who chanted the Nazi slogan "blood and soil" and "Jews will not replace us" were "innocently" and peacefully expressing their cultural heritage...

Our nation's economic, cultural, religious and political leaders bear the heavy burden now of helping our society cleanse itself and heal by restoring its moral equilibrium, relegating the haters back... [from where] they emerged, removing their enablers from positions of power and leading us to once again live our values. This is not an "enduring disagreement" between two mainstream views. Right and wrong could not be clearer. This moment requires moral clarity and the restoration of America's tarnished reputation as a light unto the nations.

I know several religious leaders are rising to the occasion, and I hope others in all walks of life will as well."  
– BOB HELLER

### ***It's a Moral Issue...***

"I absolutely agree that the central issue in the Charlottesville marches is a moral one. Racism is wrong and morally abhorrent. The idea of some sort of blood superiority based on skin color is incomprehensible at a moral level, and shockingly ignorant of human origin, people migrations through time, and genetics.

[The current U.S. President]... has captured not only the hearts and minds of extremists, but also the hearts and minds of others who see him as the voice for their economic and perhaps spiritual concerns. We have to ask why, not to judge but to support conversation and dialogue. Something has gone wrong in our society and polarization is not the fix. Tanenbaum's work is more important than ever."  
– MONIKA MACHON

### ***Flabbergasted and Heartbroken...***

"I am flabbergasted and heartbroken by some conversational oversights. Instead of addressing the hate on display in Charlottesville, some are more interested in discussing whether Confederate statues should be removed and whether the Civil War was about state's rights or slavery. Knowing our history is important, but what is lost in that discussion is the fact that a statue became a rallying cry for people who want me, the people I love, and others either expelled or DEAD.

These white supremacists think we are inferior— "filth" to quote one man at the Charlottesville rally. A rally held because of a statue people are debating. Sure, taking historic statues down may be provocative. But that doesn't change the fact that white supremacists identify with confederate soldiers like General Robert E. Lee. Or that General-in-Chief Lee in fact said that slavery, although an abhorrent institution, was "necessary for the instruction" of slaves. In 1865, Lee decided that state's rights superseded human rights. So, what really is there to debate?

I wish that instead of prioritizing the past, in this moment, some people were more concerned with the present and future. I wish everyone had watched the video of the very long train of people holding torches and chanting, "Jews will not replace us" and "Blood and soil," the English translation of a Nazi slogan of

the 3rd Reich. Then, maybe instead of debating dead white men, they would discuss white men—and women—alive today who want others, based on their religion, race and ethnicity, dead.

Because I was raised in a liberal U.S. city, I was "lucky" enough to have faced - literally to my face - anti-Semitic statements three times. This is the first time in my life I fear for being a Jew in America. I know I am not alone.

Sure, people debating monuments might say their discussions aren't about the rally. Yet, to only discuss statues right now is look the other way and to slight our civic duty. To feel unconcerned by how our leaders respond to hate is a luxury. Hate-filled elements among the President's base are not out for you."

- ANONYMOUS

### ***Fuel that Builds a Raging Fire...***

When comparing opposing sides, the point that violence is wrong no matter by whom is almost always correct.

But there is additional, and critical, analysis that must be considered. In addition to condemning violence by whomever, we must also assess the ideas that stimulate the violence—and *ideas that perpetrate* it. All ideas are not equal, and all ideas don't equally result in violence. That was crystal clear in Charlottesville.

The Alt-right that came to march in Charlottesville came with a philosophy founded/grounded/fueled by anti-Semitism, racism, anti-LGBT, and anti-immigrant philosophy. That philosophy is not about respecting whites *and* all people. It is about lifting up whites and about hating non-whites (and by their definition, that includes Jews like me.)

In contrast, the counter-protestors including fringe/violent/condemnable counter-protestors, came with a VERY different set of values and messages. Their underlying values including welcoming all. I choose those values although not their violence nor any shutdown of free speech. I believe in those values. And I believe that the values of inclusion do not fuel violence in the same way as the values of the white supremacists who marched in Charlottesville. And that matters.

I have also learned from Tanenbaum *Peacemakers* that some types of violence are ethically different than other types. In Bosnia, Friar Ivo felt vengeful when his uncles were murdered and his family home was burned to the ground. Yet, after spiraling downward, he concluded that violence and revenge were not his path. He chose to continue his pursuit of peace. However, he also reached the conclusion that he would not condemn those who chose to defend their families from violence. That was a conclusion he could understand. Likewise, I have heard and agree with the statement that those who rounded up Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto, starved them and took them to Auschwitz, were guilty of violence designed to annihilate. Their violence was thus qualitatively different from the violence of those who participated in the Warsaw uprising.

For me, these are distinctions that are significant. And distinctions that should not be conflated by the obvious and right belief that violence is wrong. It is. But violence, and life, are complicated. And we must also address the fuel that builds a raging fire. That fuel is hate.

- JOYCE S. DUBENSKY

\* *All opinions expressed are solely those of the original writer.*