

## A Response To The Recent Violence In Our City - Silence Is Not An Option

Charlottesville, our home, was recently attacked by individuals who were inspired and organized by hate; whether they be Nazis, white supremacists, the KKK or defenders of the Confederate legacy their behavior was inhumane and un-American. Their fear and hatred, bigotry and violence were visited upon this city, commonwealth and country simply because they refuse to accept anyone who is different from them as an equal. They do not recognize Charlottesville or these United States as a diverse, multi-cultural society.

Their egregious thoughts and behaviors were exacerbated when the leaders of this country did not call evil by its name and opted to conflate the violence of this hateful movement to those who fight against hatred and injustice. The bigotry displayed in Charlottesville, by a repugnant few, is the dark underbelly of this country, but it is not America. It is the embodiment of hate and the return of a treasonous darkness that threatened to rip this country apart before it could truly begin, but it will not define us. Those who stand against intolerance cannot stand for silence. We must speak light to darkness.

In recent days, many Americans have let their light shine by speaking out against the hateful rhetoric of the so-called alt-right. The majority of Americans understand that different does not mean unequal: that a diverse nation, state, city and workplace strengthens us. No one deserves to be viewed as less than anyone else by virtue of their race, religion, gender, or national origin. We must continue to drive out this darkness with our light. We can and should take our country back. It's a country that has roundly rejected the ideas of the Confederacy and become a melting pot for people of all descents for generations.

We join the good people of Charlottesville who see evil, call it by name and stand against it. We love our town and the generous, warm-hearted, open people who reside here and make it the place we call home. Outsiders will not define us, but it is moments like this that sharpen our understanding of who we are. It is not about right or left, it is about RIGHT and WRONG. We will separate truth from politics and give voice to truth. Rede can and will lead the way. Charlottesville can and will lead the way. No one of good conscience can or should remain silent.

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