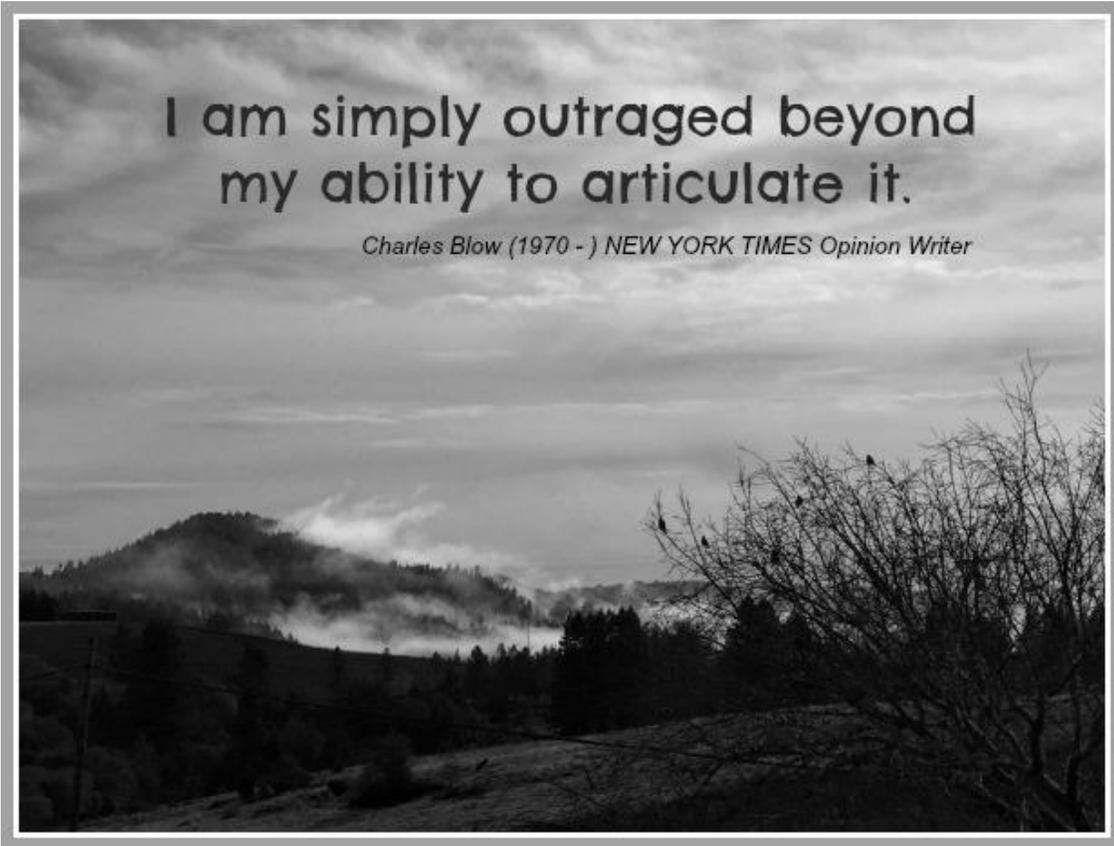


I am simply outraged beyond  
my ability to articulate it.

*Charles Blow (1970 - ) NEW YORK TIMES Opinion Writer*



## WE CAN BE BETTER THAN THIS

Two days ago we celebrated the 242nd anniversary of the signing of The Declaration of Independence by a radical group of undocumented immigrants. That declaration states in part,

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men [people] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*

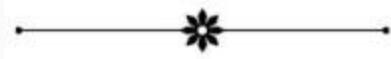
We were very grateful and surprised by the large number of people who responded to Sister Julie's request to share what was concerning them. An overwhelming majority of you were deeply concerned that the present administration and its supporters are deprecating those words quoted above. Separating children from their parents shows not only how far some politicians are willing to go, but also how much disregard they have for the values that many of us grew up



believing were essential to our country. One humanities professor went so far as to say,

*I've seen several messages comparing this to Nazis/Holocaust and saying things like "this is how it begins." I teach Holocaust Literature so let me be clear – this ISN'T how it began. This is already several stages along the way.*

That thought has been echoed very strongly by a number of you who lost grandparents in the Holocaust.



OK, so what can we do as individuals? Sometimes we happen to be at a place where something cruel and ugly is happening. Perhaps you saw the video that took place a few days ago in Southern California. Esteban Guzman and his mother were doing some landscaping when a woman came up and called Esteban a rapist, animal, and drug dealer and told him to go back to Mexico. He is an American citizen. Esteban asked, *Why do you hate me?* The woman replied, *Because you are a Mexican* and she made reference to what the president had said.

I am personally amazed that anyone can believe everything coming out of the White House to be the truth. But, apparently that is how some people think. Anyway,



I believe any one of us who witnessed a scene like that would be morally bound to confront the racism and, if possible, to record it.

A person who has been a friend and helper of Starcross for many years wrote, *We have hotspots of hate, bigotry and racism in this country that are fanned by lies and fear.* People like the woman who accosted Esteban seem to feel that they now have a green light to act on that hate, bigotry, and racism. And there are people in Washington who seem to feel they have a right to fan those flames. More than one of you has mentioned that most of our elected representatives are literally doing nothing to stem the tide.

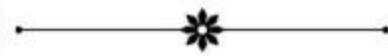


Several of you pointed out that almost all the domestic terrorists have been young white males. These are the people walking into schools, churches, restaurants, newspaper offices, and shooting up the places and killing people. No one is suggesting that all young white men should be considered dangerous. But in fact, protecting white supremacy seems to be a priority for more people than in the past. I know what that looks like.



I was born in Mississippi and watched the KKK hack up part of the little Catholic church which my family attended. I thought those days were over after the Civil Rights struggles. I was wrong.

When we hear of bad things coming out of Washington people like to say, *That is not who we are*. But I'm beginning to think that maybe it is who we are for many of my fellow citizens.



What can we do? Well, of course we can vote. And we can encourage others to vote. It is very easy to become so discouraged that we feel nothing will really make a difference, but it does make a difference. Now or eventually. Also, we need to encourage young people, women, and minorities to run for office. I was one of many who rejoiced in the congressional primary victory of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez — a 28 year-old, Latina!



A friend in rural California pointed out that for 20 years elementary schools in his



district have maintained a program called “Character Counts.” It really does count and we seem to have a lack of it today. Character traits like honesty begin in the home and the school. We need to put a much higher priority on that training. We also ought to be more careful about being faithful to those characteristics in our own private lives and relations with other

people. And, we need to call politicians out for lying.

During the AIDS pandemic I knew, and worked with, a very energetic African-American who was a member of the California legislature. She has since gone onto become a member of Congress. She has encouraged people to vigorously resist what they don't like coming out of Washington. As a result, a message came from the White House that she had a low IQ. Having worked with this woman, Maxine Waters, I know that this was just a convenient falsehood. Maxine is an intelligent, courageous person. But in an age where lies are acceptable, she became a target for someone's bile and perhaps racism. Maxine has also received very serious death threats.

Is this what we have become? If it is, let us each work in every way we can to correct this situation. But how?

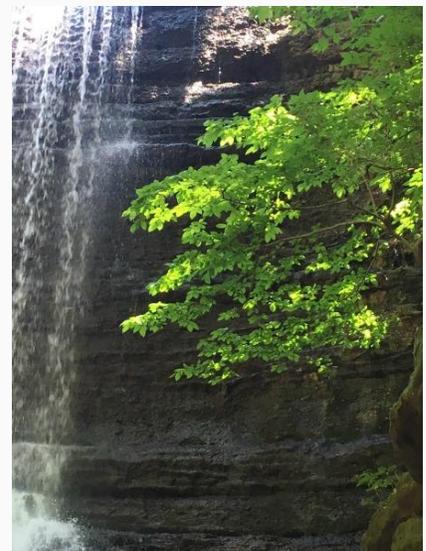


A few days ago Margaret Talbot, in the lead editorial of THE NEW YORKER, wrote concerning the separation of children from their parents,

*This theater of cruelty unfolding at the southern border last week was the purest distillation yet of what it means to be governed by a president with no moral center.*

OK, that is our problem. How do we turn things around? Let us look to Chapter 67 of the good old reliable, and ancient, TAO TE CHING. And let this guide every one of our actions. Let us teach it to our children, our grandchildren, and strangers we meet on the street!

*I have three treasures that I cherish.  
the first is compassion,  
the second is simplicity,  
the third is not striving to be first among all things under heaven.  
Because of compassion I am able to be brave.  
Because of simplicity I am able to be generous,  
Because of not striving to be first I am able to lead.*



Well, perhaps we cannot expect that from many politicians, although some do act and live that way. But, more importantly, you and I can try to live and act that way. In so doing perhaps we may help restore the moral and ethical balance that is so lacking at

the present.

***Brother Toby***