

## OUR HOPE IS IN THE THICK OF THE BATTLE

This is not what I intended to write this week. I wanted to share with you something uplifting — perhaps about the happy helpers in the olive groves. But there is too much happening outside this little island of sanity to be ignored.

In a rare statement, the NEW YORK TIMES Editorial Board wrote a few days ago about “The Hate Poisoning America.” It began with the poignant question, “What is going on in this country?” That piece appeared the day after 11 people had been murdered in a Pittsburgh synagogue. This hate-fueled violence is born from an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory that Jews are trying to destroy the “white race” through immigration.

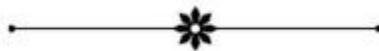
We cannot ignore the explosive devices sent to people who are critical of Donald Trump. The first device went to a man who is a person of Jewish background and who survived the Holocaust. The real reason for the explosive devices mailed around the country is an irrational fear of “the other.”

In 2015, it was the fear of blacks that led to the murder of African-Americans at a

Charleston church. Before that, it was the fear of Muslims that led to the killing of six at a temple in Wisconsin. Just a few days ago, a bigot shot two black people at a Kentucky grocery store after he unsuccessfully tried to enter a black church. This domestic terrorist had recently written on social media "It's the filthy EVIL Jews, bringing the filthy EVIL Muslims into the country." The TIMES editorial speaks to how Donald Trump, "has failed to consistently, unequivocally reject bigotry, and he has even encouraged violence at some of his rallies." This is the man who blamed "both sides" for the neo-Nazi and white supremacists violence in Charlottesville last year. They were chanting, among other things, "Jews will not replace us." A young counter-protester was run over and killed by one of these supremacists.

The funerals for those who died in Pittsburgh are ongoing. The mayor of the city as well as the families of those who were murdered asked Donald Trump not to come until after they buried their loved ones. He came anyway. Why did they ask Trump to stay away while they grieve? Those reasons are deeply personal.

But I say this: Donald Trump has normalized hate speech by using the rhetoric of white nationalists. He has not held those accountable who spread this message of hate and violence against "the other." In fact, he has emboldened them. The Anti-Defamation League estimates that anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. rose by 57 percent in 2017. We cannot have this. Our constitution begins with the consequential phrase, "WE THE PEOPLE..."



Unbelievable as it seems, some alt-right individuals are calling for the removal of a plaque from the Statue of Liberty. At the helm of this effort is Steven Miller (1985- ), White House senior policy advisor with the strong support of David Duke (1950- ), former Imperial Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan.

I would like to go backwards in history for a little hope. The words of Emma Lazarus (1849-1887) are on the offending plaque. It's part of a sonnet she wrote. Who was she? Although she herself was not particularly religious, she was born into a family of Sephardic Jews who had migrated to the United States from Portugal about the time of the American Revolution. She was certainly an early feminist and follower of Henry George (1839-1897), the American political economist and journalist. If you think back to a history class, you'll remember George as a working class man who believed that people were entitled to the value of what they themselves produced. Workers have as much financial right to profits as

CEOs. He also held that all of us had a right to natural resources and public lands. He was against monopoly and unfair distribution of wealth. He was also in favor of women's suffrage.

Now over a century later the alt-right are attacking Henry George and people who followed his thinking, such as Emma Lazarus. Why? Partly because they feel George and Lazarus were early socialists, but primarily because their attitude rejects the presumption of "white supremacy" and any threat from "the other." So get those words off the Statue of Liberty!

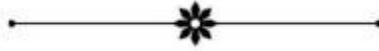
As I write this, 5,200 United States Army soldiers have been sent to our southern border to keep out "the other." Most of these people have traveled many miles to escape persecution and seek asylum. The man who sent the soldiers to block them, also wants to change the XIV Amendment of the Constitution so that "the others" who were born in this country will no longer be considered citizens. That, at least, I am confident will not happen!



Let us read with care the whole sonnet Emma Lazarus wrote. It is called "The New Colossus." The references is to the alternatives that the United States offers to the classical Colossus of Rhodes,

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.  
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips.*

*"Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*



Like many others, I and our friends harvesting olives in this peaceful place, and those all over this country living honorable lives — stand with the quiet yet mighty woman beside the golden door. We shout out with our lives “there is no ‘other’!”



Do not give up hope dear friends. We may have our disagreements but we are neighbors, not just political numbers. As bad as these times seem, there are not only malignant forces at work. Under the surface there are many people working steadily and resolutely against these forces of hate. These times have brought out the worst in some, but they have also led ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Let us ponder some words from the existential philosopher Albert Camus (1913–1960), spoken long ago during another bad time:

*One may long, as I do, for a gentler flame, a respite, a pause for musing. But perhaps there is no other peace for the artist than what is found in the heat of combat. “Every wall is a door,” Emerson correctly said. Let us not look for the door, and the way out, anywhere but in the wall against which we are living. Instead, let us seek the respite where it is – in the very thick of the battle. For in my opinion, it is there. Great ideas, it has been said, come into the world as gently as doves. Perhaps then, if we listen attentively, we shall hear, amid the uproar of empires and nations, a faint flutter of wings, the gentle stirring of life and hope. Some will say that this hope lies in a nation; others, in a person. I believe rather that it is awakened, revived, nourished by millions of solitary individuals whose deeds and works every day negate frontiers and the crudest implications of history. As a result, there shines forth fleetingly the every threatened truth that each and every human, on the foundation of her or his own sufferings and joys, builds for us all.*

***Brother Toby***