

WE CAN ONLY BE HUMAN TOGETHER

The title of this piece is the words Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu uttered when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize. His point was, and is, that "*My humanity is bound up in yours.*" Some people, perhaps a growing number of people, refuse to accept that ethical principle.



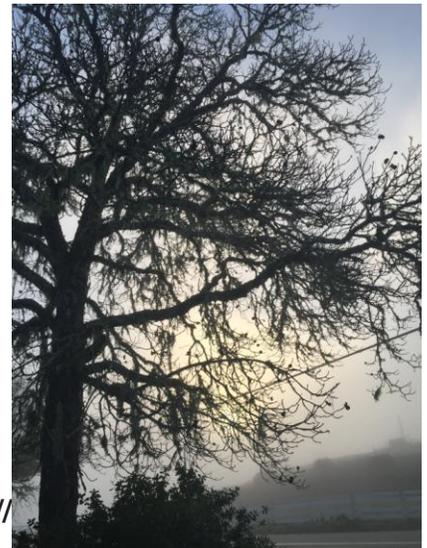
In its recent "Intelligence Report" The Southern poverty Law Center warned of a spike in hate groups in the United States. A hate group is an organization that, based on its rhetoric or principles has beliefs that attack an entire class of people. They list 1,020 known hate groups, an all time high. Most of them are quite leaderless. Adherents find each other via the Internet. But they are a movement — a very dangerous movement.

It is true that many who hate, and vote for candidates who hate, are concerned about shifting demographics in our

country. They have a fear of immigration and a desire to hold on to what they see as the privileges of being white. But I recently heard a historian warn against calling them White Nationalists. She strongly preferred to label the international rise in hate crimes and organizing around supremacy as, the “White Supremacist Movement.” I think she is right. Unfortunately, I've forgotten her name. A historian friend of mine shrugged and said *“We’re used to being forgotten.”* That comment reminded me of something that the poet and philosopher George Santayana (1863 – 1952) wrote, *“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”*

Let us be aware of what is happening around us. Our society is changing fast. There are changes most of us would consider good, such as greater acceptance and appreciation of diversity. But there are also those amongst us who are increasingly resistant to threats against the white supremacy which has existed since the beginning of this country.

I did not take these resisters to change very seriously until the events of August 12, 2017 in the peaceful university town of Charlottesville, Virginia. Having spent the early part of my 88 years in Mississippi, this was not the first time I saw the KKK and others march. When 32-year-old Heather Heyer was murdered that day in Charlottesville, there were many of us who felt like history was rolling backwards. Much more was to come. This was the point at which Mr. Trump made his famous, or infamous, comment that there were *“very fine people on both sides.”* Both sides? On one side you had the KKK and other hate groups shouting, among other things, *“Jews, you will not replace us.”* On the other side were counter-protesters like Heather Heyer.



It is unnecessary to make a list of what appears to be a liberated sense of violence in this country. As one commentator put it, “There is more change (in our society) than human beings are designed to digest.” I dispute that. I will never forget, nor will you I suspect, October 27, 2008 when a gunman burst into a Pittsburgh synagogue, beautifully named The Tree of Life Synagogue, during Shabbat services. He killed 11 people and seriously wounded six others.

You probably have other recent events which are seared in your memory. These are all things we must not forget. But there is more to some stories. Let us jump to peaceful and beautiful New Zealand.



March 15, 2019 — a gunman entered two mosques in the city of Christchurch and began killing people at prayer. 50 have died as of the time of this writing. A policeman said a river of blood was flowing out of one of the mosques.



The killer, a young man of 28, was taking video pictures of people as he was killing them. On his shotgun he had written, *“We must secure the existence of our people and a future for our white children.”* He intended to kill many more people but quick action on the part of citizens in the street and police resulted in his capture. Even when in custody he was shouting, *“I’m going to kill you all.”* He had posted on social media a lengthy statement before he went out on his killing mission. He expressed his appreciation to people who had inspired him, including

Mr.Trump who the gunman called *“a symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose.”*

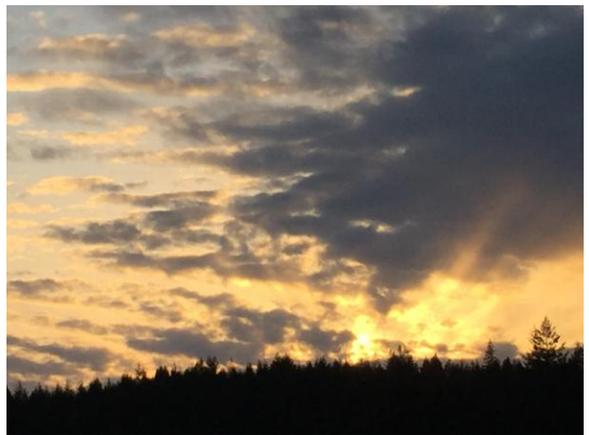
So what is left to do? Just the funerals and the slow process of forgetting? Not in New Zealand! Enter 38-year-old Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. She went on television and called this the darkest hour in New Zealand's history. And she said, *“Many of those affected will be members of our migrant communities — New Zealand is their home — they are us.”* Then she called for a meeting of Parliament, put on the headscarf worn by Muslim women and immediately went out to personally comfort those whose family and friends had been killed. When Mr. Trump contacted her to ask if there was anything the United States could do, she told him the way he could support New Zealand was to personally offer “sympathy and love for all Muslim communities.” He has yet to do that.

On the forthcoming Sunday most if not all of New Zealand's churches, synagogues, temples, and spiritual centers began their services with the congregation standing and singing New Zealand's soaring national anthem which speaks about people “of every creed and race” gathering before God's face in a “free land.”

On Tuesday while speaking in Parliament the prime minister asked a Muslim Imam to give

the opening prayer. Then she said to the grieving families, *"We cannot know your grief, but we can walk with you at every stage."* Ms. Ardern announced that she would never mention the name of the killer. He may have wanted notoriety but he would get none from New Zealanders. She called upon her fellow citizens *"to speak the names of those who were lost rather than name the man who took them."* The citizens and media of her country have followed her lead. In this moment of grief this prime minister, the youngest of the world's heads of state, was giving the moral leadership to this planet that we so badly need. The result was that New Zealand's darkest hour also became perhaps its finest hour. As *THE NEW YORK TIMES* put it, *"New Zealand's Prime Minister is emerging as the progressive antithesis to right-wing strongmen like Trump, Orban, and Modi, whose careers thrive on illiberal anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant rhetoric."*

Following her lead, the Prime Minister's fellow New Zealanders took to the streets. Huge numbers of people – tattooed bikers, schoolchildren, executives, the elderly – gathered all over the country with eyes bulging to perform impromptu haka dances in a show of solidarity with the Muslim community. They thumped their chests, stomped their feet, stuck out their tongues to an amazing length, and shouted the traditional words of the Maori dance which begins with "I Live! I Die." Some



of you may have seen the haka performed at the beginning of international sporting events but it is not only an aggressive ritual and threatening dance, it is often performed as part of the mourning process. It comes down roughly to something like "death will not be the final word." At these times, according to a haka expert, Professor Kahautu Maxwell, *"Haka is used to show love and compassion and to uplift the spirits of bereaved families."* One survivor from a mosque attacked on that dreadful day says she cries every time she sees the people dance the haka. She said simply, *"It touches my heart."*

Ms. Lisa Tumahai, head of the main Maori tribe on New Zealand's South Island, stated recently,

No matter how angry or scared we are feeling at the moment, we must come together as one strong community to show care and compassion for those who make Aotearoa [New Zealand] their home and who have lost precious loved ones.



I will close with some words from New Zealand's National Anthem, *GOD DEFEND NEW ZEALAND*,

*People of every creed and race,
Gather here before Your face,
Asking You to bless this place,
God defend our free land.
From distention, envy, hate,
And corruption guard our state . . .
God defend our free land,
From dishonor and from shame.*

It is a privilege to share the planet with these people — these Kiwis.

Brother Toby

PS. I could not resist the temptation, even in this solemn moment, of sharing this photo of a few years back where our David, representing the "Violin Tribe" before a performance is entering into a sort of treaty with a Maori chief. David tells the chief where each violinist comes from. Then the chief tells David where the Maori come from. Then they touch heads and are one people. That process would certainly simplify and humanize our U.S. immigration process!

