

Symbols of Oppression

August 17, 2017

Why are we protesting the events of August 12, 2017? Why does the fact that our country elected an overt white supremacist strike terror in our hearts – a man who spent years trying to prove that a non-white president had to prove his legitimacy by producing his birth certificate? What does it say about our future when the ruling elite tries desperately to tarnish the legacy of a dignified, qualified, brilliant statesman and president like Barack Obama? Why do we lament the rise of overt misogyny by the white men who are strengthening their hold on our country's levers of power?

Why was it important for the Charlottesville City Council to vote to remove a statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee from what was then called Robert E. Lee Park? This question has been obscured by the pace of events since August 11. The bigotry, hatred, intolerance and violence that was unleashed by this act can be traced to Civil War rhetoric and the empowerment of fringe extremist groups by the current Administration. Chants of "White Lives Matter" and the Nazi-sponsored phrase "blood and soil" rent the air when white nationalists marched through the UVA campus, provoking both fury and fear in those who thought the US had begun to leave the bloody and shameful legacy of slavery and discrimination behind.

August 12, 2017, will be remembered as a day of shame and ignominy forever in the annals of US history. The culmination of the day-long violence between marauding supremacists and marching protesters was the murder of Heather Heyer, who became a victim of a white terrorist as he drove his car into the protesting crowd. Once again a woman paid a price for her courage.

James Alex Fields Jr. of Maumee, Ohio, has been charged with murder. But there were far too many James' in the crowd with murder in their hearts. The president's denunciation of these hate-filled cowards was too little and came too late. He calls racism evil but condones it at every step. His tacit encouragement of white terrorists, even as he equates white supremacists with those who oppose them, shames us in the eyes of our country and the world. The United States of America stands for equality and liberty. It stands for justice, domestic tranquility and the general welfare of ALL citizens. Our elected leaders – and all Americans – need to speak with one voice to denounce not only the actions of white supremacists but also of this president. Only then can we begin to heal the still raw wounds of our past.

Nuchhi Currier

President