



AT THE LORRAINE MOTEL

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National Civil Rights Museum Statement on Charlottesville, Virginia 2017

The ugly underbelly of America exposed itself this weekend as “white nationalists” marched on Charlottesville, Virginia in opposition to the removal of a confederate statue. A 20-year old Nazi sympathizer was arrested for using his car to ram through a group of counter protesters, killing a 32-year old woman. Their mission was just as clear in 2017 as it was when Nathan Bedford Forrest founded the KKK in 1865 — hate and terror.

It's puzzling to me how our president can easily call the use of a car as a weapon by an ISIS sympathizer terrorism, but doesn't call out domestic terrorism by a white supremacist! Frankly, his lack of direct comment, singling out not just hate, but those specifically perpetrating the hate, gives life to those terrorist actions.

Not being one who believes in coincidence, the occurrence of these protests, the demand for symbols of oppression to be removed from our cities, and the rise of hate crimes nearly 50 years after Dr. King's assassination requires us to not simply take notice, but to take action. Over these past few days, we've seen some of the absolute best of America. Neighbors rallying to support neighbors against hate, recognizing that we are far stronger together than we are as a fractured nation. And demonstrating that the fringe does not represent the majority.

The homogenous crowds of the “alt right” have no interest in the future, but want to see our country move backwards, to a time when separatism was legally sanctioned. Newsflash — it will be the diverse threads of our community, joining together in protest to this racist ideology, that will design a beautiful tapestry of a future that we can be proud for our children to inherit.

Dr. King would implore each of us to be one of those threads and to use peaceful means, but he would also encourage us to be tenacious and persistent in our efforts. Yes, we must be prayerful, but faith without works is dead.

The Board and Staff of the National Civil Rights Museum