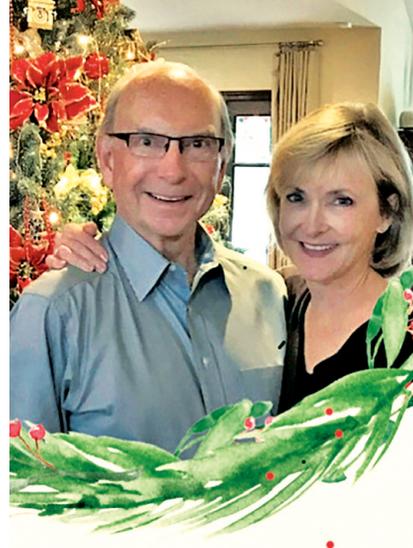


Abate the Hate and Prevent Unnatural Disasters



"Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." —Martin Luther King Jr.

At my inauguration in June, I spoke in part about what I call "unnatural disasters." On August 1, 1966, I was witness to a very unnatural disaster.

My former wife, Susan, and I had just emerged from the basement of the University of Texas Tower when the shooting started. Charles Whitman killed 16 people and injured 31 others on that day the nation will never forget. A date that begat the modern era of massacres.

We were lucky to survive.

Since then, these unnatural disasters occur almost bi-monthly in our streets, homes, at concerts, movie theaters, schools where we educate our children, and even churches and synagogues where we pray.

They go by one- and two-word names—location markers like monuments to madness forever planted in the soil: Columbine, Sandy Hook, Pulse nightclub, Luby's, Virginia Tech, Fort Hood, Parkland, Charleston, San Bernardino, Las Vegas, Sutherland Springs, Santa Fe, Squirrel Hill, Thousand Oaks.

Being decent, educated individuals, we must figure out a way to stop this madness.

Many of us have ideas of laws that could be enacted and policies that could be created—but the truth is we have not yet found a singular answer that will end that list.

I submit that there are as many answers as there are people reading this column. As many answers as there are members of the State Bar of Texas.

But to bring light to the darkness, each of us must resolve to stand up and speak out against hate in any form. We can no longer politely turn our heads at hate speech, just as we would not stand by and let one person batter another. We have to stop considering hate speech a "difference of opinion." It is not.

We can no longer stand at a party, a family gathering, or be the recipients of an email chain and think, "Well, I don't think I'd have said that." No, we have to speak up against hate or we tacitly enable it.

If we've learned anything from the list above, it's that hateful speech allowed to fester becomes justified violence in the minds of unstable individuals.

Idly allowing hateful speech to go unchecked endangers the very beliefs we hold so dear. We owe it as our professional duty to promote peace, civility, decency, and adherence to the rule of law.

Hate settles on a crowd in darkness and not on an upturned face seeking the light.

Please join me this holiday season by truly embracing peace on earth and being a light in the darkness.

Maggie and I wish each of you peace, life, liberty, and the free and unrestricted pursuit of happiness—all protected by the rule of law.

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