



**OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF THE WACO NAACP
ON
THE “UNITE THE RIGHT” HATE RALLY IN CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA**

For Immediate Release: August 24, 2017 **Contact:** Dr. Peaches Henry @ 254-733-5261

To be clear, this is not a Right or Left, Republican or Democratic, North or South, or Black or White issue. This is a matter of right or wrong. We are confronted with a life and death moral dilemma. We must decide whether to take a stand against those who advocate racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia. A united body of Blacks, whites, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Democrats, Republicans, and like-minded individuals willing to reject purveyors of hate will defeat their attempt to take this country back to a very dark place.

We must publicly denounce these attitudes and behavior. To remain silent is to condone it. To equivocate is to give it cover. This must not be the message of our nation or of our leaders.

The Waco NAACP condemns the blatant, heinous acts of hate groups and so too should those who respect our country’s most treasured values. To many African-Americans, Jews, and others, the images of armed Ku Klux Klanners, white nationalists, and neo-Nazis marching in Charlottesville seemed like a horrific nightmare that recalled decades of intimidation, violence, and murder. Tragically, those scenes were all too real as these groups gathered in a so-called Unite the Right rally to “take America back.” In 2017, carrying guns, knives, and other weapons, the KKK marched on Charlottesville. White supremacists with torches surrounded a church filled with African-American ministers and their allies. Intending to evoke the 1930s Hitler Youth marches, Neo-Nazis conducted a torchlit parade through the campus of the University of Virginia shouting Nazi slogans: “Blood and soil!” “You will not replace us!” “Jews will not replace us!” Minus the hoods of the twentieth century, these mostly white young men instead proudly exposed their faces and wore white polo shirts and khaki pants. Former KKK leader David Duke and white nationalist leader Richard Spencer were conspicuously present at the events.

The intimidation of the parade and march was followed up the next day by actual violence. White supremacists savagely beat African-American Deandre Harris in a parking lot. Two state troopers, who were monitoring the event from a helicopter, crashed and died. The KKK, white nationalists, and neo-Nazis armed with shields and wooden clubs charged and attacked a group of counter-protestors. The protestors fought back. Ultimately, a white nationalist (allegedly) deliberately drove his car into a crowd of counter-protestors killing Heather Heyer and wounding 19 others.

The president’s repeated refusal to unequivocally condemn these hate groups demonstrably serves to embolden them. The president must be called out for failing to show moral leadership. To do so is not a partisan tactic. It is simply right. Casting blame on the counter-protestors, who chose to defend themselves, is reminiscent of charges brought against civil rights marchers in the 1960s who were called violent when they were attacked by white citizens, law enforcement, and the KKK. The president must not give quarter to the KKK, white supremacists, and neo-Nazis through ambiguous rhetoric or false moral equivalency. African-Americans, indeed all Americans, need the president to unreservedly side with us against the purveyors of hate. Period.

We must all stand together against those who are uniting for hate. Make no mistake. Richard Spencer and his cohorts will not stop with Charlottesville. While Texas A & M has prevented a rally “inspired by [Charlottesville’s] "Unite the Right" event, that will probably be a temporary situation. The hate groups are coming.

The racist damage at Willow Grove Baptist Church demonstrates that they are already among us. Those who would minimize the incident at Willow Grove as teenaged vandalism, misjudge the case. If the damage was perpetrated by teenagers, that is both tragic and dangerous. Tragic, because it means young people have imbibed racist, bigoted ideas. Dangerous, because youth can be violently impulsive. We must engage our youth and teach them that the KKK terrorized and lynched African-Americans and burned their churches for decades. We must teach them that the Nazis exterminated homosexuals, the intellectually disabled, gypsies, and six million Jews. And we must love them, because love transforms and redeems. However, to reclaim these young people we must recognize that evil is among us.

My own personal experience proves that hate groups are already here. On Sunday July 16, while sitting in church, I started to open the Bible app on my phone and was inundated with racist text messages calling me “nigger,” likening me to images of monkeys, declaring that the texter had “the power to keep niggers down,” and referring to the “NAAC Pee Pee.” [And no, I will not use the “n-word.” The writer of those texts did not call me the “n-word.” He repeatedly called me “nigger.”]

This moment in our country requires us to face hard truths about our racial history. For instance, we must face the fact that most of the Civil War statues and memorials around this country were erected with the express purpose of re-asserting white supremacy over African-Americans after Reconstruction, during the Jim Crow era, and after the Civil Rights Movement. Some may argue that they were erected to recognize our history. Yes, the Civil War is a part of our history. It is the history of people who left the United States and waged war against it in order to keep Black people enslaved. That objective was written into the constitution of the Confederacy. Some may argue that the Civil War was fought over states’ rights. States’ rights to do what: to enslave Black people. The Nazi era is a part of Germany’s history. You do not see statues of Hitler sprinkled around that country. Whether these statues remain, come down, or are removed to museums, they represent a flashpoint of conscience which this country must confront. The purveyors of hate have made their position clear. The rest of us must decide which side of history we are on.

The Waco NAACP will continue to be steadfast and immovable in the fight against discrimination, prejudice and hatred. The Waco NAACP is prepared to meet, march, and hold rallies that counter the racist, white supremacists ideologies that these groups espouse. The Waco NAACP will persist until we drive out racism and racist actions. We will accept all people of good will who are willing to stand with us. And we are not afraid.

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