



# The Society for the Study of Social Problems

Publishers of the Journal *Social Problems*

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August 24, 2017

Senator Mitch McConnell  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McConnell:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), one of the oldest and most respected social science organizations in the country, we are writing to express our disappointment with the President's response to the recent neo-Nazi and white supremacist rally that occurred in Charlottesville and upcoming rallies planned in various parts of our nation by these and similarly-minded groups. We are appalled as well by the muted or absence of a response by many members of Congress to the President's failure to condemn white supremacy and white nationalism swiftly and unambiguously. We applaud those in Congress and other elected offices who *did* speak out.

Further, we fundamentally disagree with those who argue that the violence in Charlottesville was, and is, solely about the removal of a statue in honor of Robert E. Lee. If this were solely about statues, there would be no need for the racist, anti-Semitic, and homophobic chants that took place during the rally. In any event, what society honors in this way individuals who engaged in a treasonous act to protect the right to own human beings? Yes, what these statues represent is a part, albeit a shameful part, of our history, just as Nazism was a part of German history. But in Germany you will be hard pressed to find a statue of Hitler, Himmler, Göring, Goebbels, or Eichmann. We can disagree on what to do with the statues after they are taken down, but we should not disagree on whether they *should* be removed. Even descendants of Stonewall Jackson, Jefferson Davis, and Robert E. Lee have stated that the statues should be removed from the public spaces where they stand.

We also wish to extend our condolences to the family of Heather Heyer and to wish others injured in this domestic terrorist attack a speedy recovery. We agree that there should be no place in the United States, and world, for the kind of hatred purveyed by these terrorist groups. Consequently, we feel compelled to join other groups and individuals, including members of your respective parties, in expressing disappointment in the President's reluctance to condemn neo-Nazis and white supremacists swiftly and in the most unambiguous and unequivocal terms possible. Anything less gives aid and comfort to an internal enemy that we have been trying to defeat since the Civil War. Our history is one of slavery, Jim Crow, the near extermination of indigenous populations, the internment of Japanese-

Americans, and racial and ethnic segregation. Unfortunately, these white supremacists – domestic terrorists – represent who we have been, and clearly still are in some measure, but which we cannot continue to be if we are to be a truly free and democratic society.

Finally, we beseech you to join us in urging the President to distance himself from all white nationalist groups and individuals who applauded his ambiguous response to events in Charlottesville (a response replete with false equivalents). And while we understand Steve Bannon has now been removed from the White House, we ask you to urge him to remove other advisers, such as Stephen Miller and Sebastian Gorka, who in the past have promoted and endorsed racist ideologies and policies. While we remain disappointed with the selection of Jeff Sessions as Attorney General for the same reason, we are pleased with his reference to the murder of Heather Heyer as an act of domestic terrorism, which to our knowledge the President and many members of Congress have yet to acknowledge in comparable terms. An unambiguous position against white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups does nothing less than fuel more hatred, violence, and terrorism. Where the President failed in this instance, we hope you succeed and thereby hasten the death of neo-Nazism and white nationalism in the United States. We realize the pressure on many members of Congress not to criticize the President, but at the end of the day, they must remember that their oath of office is first and foremost to serve and protect the United States of America, not a political party or their political ambitions.

As a professional, non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to the analysis and resolution of social problems and committed to social justice, we felt a special obligation to send this letter. We hope and trust that you will receive this letter in the constructive spirit in which it is written; and we stand ready to help you or any of your colleagues to address these issues in a more constructive and effective manner.

Sincerely,



Luis Fernandez, Ph.D.  
President, Board of Directors



Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D.  
Executive Officer



David G. Embrick, Ph.D.  
Vice-President, Board of Directors