The Colorado Health Foundation™

Violence and hate are unacceptable… And we are speaking out about it

The violence that erupted this weekend in Charlottesville, Va., paints a vivid picture of why it is time for us to speak out against the hate, injustice and inequity that is plaguing our nation, our communities and our homes.

It was just a week to the day of the conclusion of the 2017 Colorado Health Symposium where we talked about the public health inequities caused by discrimination. The spotlight is now on Charlottesville. As a nation, we witnessed unacceptable acts of hate. And in the aftermath of this violence, we must come together and use our voices to speak out against hate crimes that we refuse to turn a blind eye to.

Symposium keynote speaker Sally Kohn, a columnist and political commentator for CNN, boldly put forth a call to stop hate. She shared three strategies to bridge the hate and division that we face in America today: counter-networks, counter-speech and counter-spaces. Her key messages: Don't perpetuate hate. Surround yourself with people who are unlike you. Respond to hate speech with kindness, or even humor, and advocate for structural reform that integrates and connects us to each other.

Also during the Symposium, the Foundation's President and CEO Karen McNeil-Miller spoke about a specific kind of hate—racism. When discussing health and inequity, McNeil-Miller shared, "We have to start somewhere. And we believe race is the most persistent, most pervasive and most poisonous of all inequities.

It’s the granddaddy of all undiscussables.”

It is time to push boundaries, discuss the undiscussable and embrace our civic responsibilities to speak out against hate and inequity.

Citizen University founder and keynote speaker Eric Liu who has built his career on practicing and teaching civic power urged Symposium attendees to accept the “citizen power” they already possess, but have not yet learned how to wield. The current polarized climate may seem daunting, he said, but think of movements once radical that are now in the mainstream: higher wages, community policing, universal health access and more.

“Power plus character equals citizenship,” Liu said. “Be fluent in the ways of power and how stuff gets done.”

The Foundation is dedicated to ensuring that health is in reach for all Coloradans given any and all diversity in their midst. We cannot underestimate the long- and short-term health effects of hate on both the perpetrator and the victim. It’s critical that we that we focus our efforts on uniting our communities, rebuilding trust and working together to ensure all people are safe, respected and have all they need to live healthy lives.

Though difficult to discuss, the recent tragedy in Charlottesville and other hate crimes give us the opportunity for authentic, and necessary, community conversations. We urge you to talk with your families and friends about why there is civil unrest. We urge you to underscore that an injustice to any people is an injustice to all people. We urge you to be resolute in the notion that violence and hate is not the solution.

To support you in your brave and bold conversations going forward, we offer the following resources:

- The Public Health Consequences of Hate

- HealthBeat; The Health Effects of Hate
- Psychological Effects of Hate Crime
- El Paso Community College: Psychology of Hate Crimes
- University of Minnesota: The Damage of Hate
- Hate violence is a global problem – and a crime against humanity
- ACP: Hate crimes are public health issue

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Announcements

POST DATE

Aug 16, 2017