

August 14, 2017

Dear MSW students, alumni, colleagues, and fellow activists,

I am compelled to respond to the tragic events that occurred in Charlottesville, VA this weekend. As an activist, I understand the risks taken when engaging in public protests, but even when death is the price one pays for standing up for what one believes, I will remain steadfast and not step back due to fear. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said “The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people.” Therefore, I will not be silent. I will honor the lives of Heather Heyer, VA State Police Lieutenant H Jay. Cullen, and Trooper-Pilot Berke M. M. Bates and I will use my voice to confront hate and bigotry.

The National Association of Social Workers’ (2008) Code of Ethics does not give social workers the option to be silent. In the Preamble, our Code of Ethics demands that we “strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice.” We are mandated to respond to conditions that allow *others* to be oppressed and marginalized regardless of our practice setting or focus. The events in Charlottesville this past weekend compel us to respond to and raise awareness of the ongoing racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and other forms of hatred still prevalent and emboldened in the United States of America today.

We must not be silent and should collectively raise our voices to let it be known that social workers will continue to advocate for the end of racist ideologies. During the Civil Rights Movement, activists faced fear of violence in order to shift the paradigm. We must learn from history that we can overcome hate and fear. Social workers must be part of the change.

I encourage you to reflect on a poem entitled, *We Should be Furious*, by Cali Chacon (2017), recently published online in [The New Social Worker](#). Chacon’s words are so relevant today. As social workers, we should all be furious that white supremacy is even remotely tolerated in this country.

I also encourage you to utilize the Southern Poverty Law Center’s (2015) [Speak Up: Responding to Everyday Bigotry](#). This resource provides examples of responding to bigotry in a variety of scenarios as well as reflecting on personal biases.

I ask you to stand together with me as a united front of social workers for social justice. Show the world that hate has no place in our profession.

Not in silence, but in solidarity,

Dr. Tina

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