

Susquehanna Valley Progressives

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August 25, 2017

The Honorable Robert Casey
The Honorable Patrick Toomey
The Honorable Lou Barletta
The Honorable Tom Marino
The Honorable John Gordner
The Honorable Lynda Schlegel Culver
The Honorable Fred Keller
The Honorable Kurt Masser
The Honorable Gene Yaw

SUBJ: WE NEED OUR LEADERS HERE IN THE SUSQUEHANNA VALLEY TO DENOUNCE RACISM AND REJECT ANY EQUIVALLANCE AMONG THOSE WHO HATE AND THOSE WHO SEEK EQUALITY

We are writing to you to appeal to your moral leadership.

The events this month in Charlottesville, VA underscore Americans' need for our leaders to disavow hate, racism and bigotry. We need to hear from our leaders and know that they reject the message of far-right hate groups and denounce the idea that celebrating white supremacy, slavery could be in any way morally equivalent to seeking equality and peace.

On Friday August 11, dozens of self described white nationalists bore torches, a symbolic nod to Ku Klux Klan marches of yesteryear, and chanted phrases like "Jews will not replace us" and "Blood and Soil" (a favorite slogan of Adolph Hitler) as they marched in Charlottesville. The march organizers maintained that the event was intended to oppose the removal of a Robert E. Lee statue in what is

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now called Emancipation Park. However, racist, anti-Semitic chants quickly revealed the true purpose of the gathering.

The Unite the Right rally, held the following day, no more ambiguous. The event was organized by members of the Nationalist Front and openly invited the Ku Klux Klan, Neo-Nazis and other white supremacist members of the far right. Prominent attendees included Richard Spencer and former KKK Imperial Wizard David Duke. Many rally attendees, emboldened with semi-automatic weapons, carried swastikas and confederate flags and chanted racist and anti-Semitic mantras.

The escalation of tension prompted the city leaders to cancel the rally. Unfortunately, the day ended in tragedy when a white supremacist drove his car into a crowd of counter protestors, killing one woman and injuring 19 others. A clear act of domestic terrorism.

The events of this weekend were dreadful enough without the heartless and callous comments of our president, who failed to immediately call out racism and even suggested that both sides were to blame.

On the Saturday that the deadly terrorist attack occurred, he failed to condemn the hate-inspired rally and even suggested some level of equivalence between those who marched and those who protested. He never called the mother of Heather Heyer, the 32-year old who was killed in the attack, to offer his condolences, nor did he call the event a terrorist attack. He failed to denounce white supremacy in his remarks and instead suggested that blame lay on all sides.

On Monday, Trump read a prepared statement denouncing white supremacy and hate groups. Unfortunately, his compassion was short lived.

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In a press conference the following day, Trump defiantly claimed both sides were to blame for the deadly attack and sympathized with the white supremacists and neo-Nazis. He went so far as to suggest that many who marched on Friday and Saturday, with swastikas, confederate flags, Hitler quotes and other Nazi-inspired symbolism, were “fine people”. He implied that the white supremacists who marched are the same as those who were protesting against hate, intolerance, anti-Semitism, racism and bigotry.

The events that occurred in Charlottesville are sad and troubling. We expect our leaders to denounce such hatred and acts of terror. Instead our president sympathized with members of far-right hate groups.

Regardless of party affiliation or ideology, we all must stand against hate and racism. Our forefathers fought the Civil War to end slavery and keep our nation united; millions of Americans (with over 400,000 giving their lives) fought fascism in WWII. Have we forgotten?

We need assurance that our local leaders represent American values: freedom, equality and unity.

Susquehanna Valley Progressives is calling on our political leaders here in the Susquehanna Valley to reject the ideology of far-right hate groups and denounce the idea that those who seek equality and peace are not equivalent to those who celebrate white supremacy, slavery and antisemitism.

This letter is being sent to members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly and Congressional Delegation to request that they speak out publicly to denounce racism and white supremacy and to reject the comments made by President Trump.

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We are asking you to please come out publicly and denounce racism and white supremacist and reject any equivalence among those who hate and those who seek equality.

If you don't stand up against hate and injustice, you are complicit in standing up for hate and injustice.

Sincerely,

Susquehanna Valley Progressives

Nicole Faraguna, Herndon

Lana Gulden, Northumberland

David Hafer, Lewisburg

Dwayne Heisler, Bloomsburg

Lynn Palermo, Lewisburg

Regina Russell, Sunbury

Susquehanna Valley Progressives is a nonpartisan organization united for the betterment of the whole community. We envision a community that empowers individuals to be engaged in and educated on the democratic process; promotes equality and appreciation of diversity; improves the living and working standards of all that live in Susquehanna Valley and actively protects our natural world.