

A Message to the Orthopaedic Family

The past few months have led to unprecedented hardship, now followed by unimaginable strife. A pandemic followed by needless and senseless deaths through fear, ignorance, intolerance, subliminal prejudice and overt racism. Joblessness, despair and economic strife provide a platform from which intolerance feeds. We must not allow this to persist, to expand or to happen at all!

Edmund Burke over 200 years ago stated “*the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men [and women] to do nothing.*”

Burke’s expanded version is even more pertinent today. It echoes 21st century values of recognizing the inherent value of all regardless of race, creed, religion, gender, sexual preference or disability. It engenders the concept and importance of **affirmative value**.

Whilst men are linked together, they easily and speedily communicate the alarm of any evil design. They are enabled to fathom it with common counsel, and to oppose it with united strength. Whereas, when they lie dispersed, without concert, order, or discipline, communication is uncertain, counsel difficult, and resistance impracticable. Where men are not acquainted with each other’s principles, nor experienced in each other’s talents, nor at all practiced [sic] in their mutual habitudes and dispositions by joint efforts in business; no personal confidence, no friendship, no common interest, subsisting among them; it is evidently impossible that they can act a public part with uniformity, perseverance, or efficacy. In a connection, the most inconsiderable man, by adding to the weight of the whole, has his value, and his use; out of it, the greatest talents are wholly unserviceable to the public. No man, who is not inflamed by vain-glory into enthusiasm, can flatter himself that his single, unsupported, desultory, unsystematic endeavours, are of power to defeat the subtle designs and united cabals of ambitious citizens. When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall, one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle.” Edmund Burke

The events of the past several weeks have been disturbing and intolerable. The senseless murders of three African Americans—George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor—are only the most recent examples of an unjust and inexcusable narrative that has replayed for generations in the Black/African American community and is expanding in other ethnic areas spurned by exclusion of those that are “unlike” and flamed by “false nationalism,” elitism and intolerance. These occurrences highlight the presence of prejudice, racial discrimination and cultural intolerance which still persist in the culture of the United States.

Nelle Harper Lee, author of “To Kill a Mockingbird” stated aptly that “*You never really know a man until you understand things from his point of view, until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.*”

As medical professionals and as caring humans, it is important for us to express our continued commitment to equity and to inclusion with Orthopaedic Surgery in particular and within our society in general. We also express to our Black/African American colleagues, trainees and friends that we acknowledge the pain and unrest you may feel from both recent and distant incidents and images and from your own personal stories and perspectives.

In addition, we must commit to treat all equally without prejudice, oppose injustice and reject intolerance. Seek opportunities to make substantive change against these and many other societal injustices. Inclusion, compassion and commitment to recognize and support **the affirmative value in all** is crucial and requires active participation.

“*The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.*” Martin Luther King, Jr.

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