

## Let No One Pull You So Low

by Bentley de Bardelaben

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*“Anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.” – 1John2:11 NIV*

As I read, watch, and listen to news reports, I am sometimes frustrated when the topic of “hatred or hate crimes” is covered. Whether a story is about the misuse of Native American tribal lands in North Dakota, Jewish American cemeteries being desecrated in Missouri, Indian men shot in Texas, or officers attacked for attempting to corral crowds who are picketing anywhere in our nation, reports like these slowly erode my spirit.

Have the lessons of my childhood about sharing and being kind, that many if not all of us were taught by our elders, evaporated? Generosity of heart, not scarcity, was a cultural mantra of those times. People took care of one another, some even dared to cross racial, religious, and ethnic lines. Communities mattered. Has “fear of the stranger” destroyed this important human concept?

According to a recent report by the Southern Poverty Law Center there were 917 active hate groups in 2016. This is an increase from 784 active groups in 2014. Included in that elevated number are 130 factions of the KKK, 197 black separatists, and 52 anti-LGBTQ groups. Sadly, Anti-Muslim groups grew most dramatically rising from 34 in 2015 to 101 in 2016. That’s 197 percent! The SPLC defines a hate group as an organization that engages “beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics.”

In a 1956 essay titled, “Paul’s Letter to American Christians”, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. penned these prophetic words, which still ring with truths in our current American context: “May I say just a word to those of you who are struggling against this evil (of injustice). Always be sure that you struggle with Christian methods and Christian weapons. Never succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter. As you press on for justice, be sure to move with dignity and discipline, using only the weapon of love. Let no man pull you so low as to hate him. Always avoid violence. If you succumb to the temptation of using violence in

your struggle, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and your chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos.”

Wow! The more things change, the more things stay the same. While some of us struggle to adjust to a constant stream of bedlam dispensed from a newly forming federal administration, let us, Christians and non-Christians alike, try to remember King’s admonition.

The one constant we can all expect to encounter in life is change. Although we may not like it, resisting it is futile. Responding to it in ways that injure innocents simply because we fear their difference only creates additional layers of chaos that further lead us down a dark path separating us from the light of the Creator. Let us try to embrace and learn from the gifts that change presents. We may find that it is less traumatic. Then we can begin to usher in the world we truly want and rightfully deserve.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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