



I have been reminded in a spectacular way why I am so honored to be in this struggle with all of you. The news has been dominated by the clashes in Charlottesville as emboldened white supremacists were confronted by protesters. I am thankful to the protesters who showed up to meet such a hateful message with resistance. But I am also mindful that the forceful show of hate in Charlottesville is simply a symptom of a much deeper problem in America. It is the latest visible blemish of a history that has been defined by “otherizing” and oppression. And whenever America seeks to legitimize the hatred and oppression directed at an “otherized population,” it does so through its criminal justice system. It creates rules that make it easy to target oppressed communities and uses prisons, electric chairs, deportation, and social exclusion to rid society of those it deems expendable.

Of course it is important to meet these outbursts of hate with equally strong displays of resistance. But the greater threat to our country is the normalized, routine, accepted oppression that happens in our criminal justice system every day. It is not splashed across the front pages of newspapers. It is not met with an outpouring of outrage. Rather, it largely goes unnoticed as it decimates our poorest communities and rips families apart. It is engineered by “respectable” criminal justice professionals and “legitimately” does the work that these white supremacists desire. It “lawfully” incapacitates and banishes those who do not look like those in power.

If we are to win this struggle, it will not be because of those who take a break from their everyday lives to protest (although I certainly appreciate those that do). Rather, it will be because of those of you who have made resistance a part of what you choose to do every day. This fight is least publicized, least applauded, and most critical. Public defenders choose to interrupt the system at the point where it attempts to legitimately label those it does not value as “criminals” and banish them from society.

If this ongoing battle is to be won, it will be because of those of you who make resistance part of your every-day purpose. It will be because some of you choose to stand up to oppression every day; to insist on humanizing those in the crosshairs of historical hatred.

There will be national incidents thrust into the headlines that may make you wonder if you should be doing more. But please never underestimate the importance of waking up every day and maintaining a steady-sustainable push against this routine injustice. Nothing could be more important to the resistance.

You are the key to resisting a steady, ongoing, normalized current of injustice that runs through our criminal justice system every single day. This current of injustice is literally the life’s blood of oppression in America. But because it is under the skin and deep in the veins of our nation, no one notices.

Fight against it. Individually, we are all amazing. Collectively we are powerful beyond belief.

Jonathan Rapping