

FORUM

United States: a nation wrestling with open wounds



Derwin Montgomery
Guest Columnist

Earlier this year, I preached a sermon series titled "Wrestling With Open Wounds". The premise of the series was to

value in the lives of those he murdered. The lives of the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, the Rev. Sharonda Singleton, Myra Thompson, Tywanza Sanders, Ethel Lee Lance, Cynthia Hurd, the Rev. Daniel L. Simmons Sr., the Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor and Susie Jackson. His actions are an expression of this Nation's infected wounds. This is why people feel the need to remind the Nation and the world that Black lives do matter.

As an African-American pastor and an elected official, this could have happened to my congregation, my colleagues, my father or my friends.

This act of domestic terrorism serves

as an example of what can happen when we refuse to treat our wounds. We must acknowledge as a nation, and as a people that while we are indeed injured from our past, we must not persistently move forward and accept our calamities as our future.

This hate is a reminder of the now puss-filled wound, self-inflicted by a group of people within our nation who have historically dictated whose lives would be valued. This practice was internalized, stitched into the fabric of our day-to-day existence, and built on the backs of the marginalized. So when faced with acts of malice to an unfathomable degree, what

would lead anyone to believe, 150 years later, a nation would be fully healed from such a sickness?

Still today some are taught that they have privilege, because of the color of their skin. It is here where the wound grows deeper. When individuals witness members of their beloved community recklessly gunned down by some law enforcement officers, that wound grows deeper. When people of color face a criminal justice system that seems to be built for their entrapment rather than support, the wound grows deeper.

My prayer is that we do not use this moment to push political agendas that only treat our wound on the surface. Yes, there is a need to address issues of gun violence, and yes, churches may need to implement security ministries to make sure their parishioners are safe, but this does not treat the primary wound of internalized hate. We must commit ourselves to reconcile our hearts and face the truth: that we are injured and must begin intensive treatment of our wounds. This is the only way we will extricate the infectious hate that has grown in our open wounds.

It is a true statement that "darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that." Likewise, "hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Derwin L. Montgomery is a Winston-Salem council member who represents the East Ward and is pastor of First Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem.

convey that all of us have injuries that have often been neglected and left untreated. Whether it was the wound of a broken home, a broken heart, or even wrestling with depression or the trauma of rape, we all have wounds. I admonished the congregation to realize that before healing from any wound, it was first necessary to acknowledge that they were in fact wounded. Failing to acknowledge these injuries will delay the healing process. Have you ever gone to the emergency room and told the nurse I am here, because everything is OK?

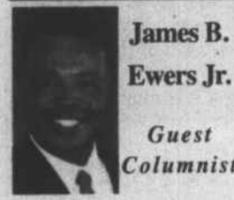
Today we look at this Nation, a great nation in many aspects — a worldwide political force with great military power and a leader in the world economy — but in spite of its strengths, we are a wounded nation.

Our past and our present have wounded us. And over time, these wounds have been left open and untreated. When wounds are left open, they are subject to infection, and become much more difficult to treat. The only way a person like Dylann Roof could commit such a heinous attack against humanity is because he saw no



Ron Rogers illustration for the Chronicle

The killings in South Carolina are a setback in American race relations



James B. Ewers Jr.
Guest Columnist

Racial tension in this country took an unexpected turn for the worse on Wednesday [June 17]

with the killing of nine African-Americans in Charleston South Carolina.

The accused killer, Dylann Roof, 21 years old, was apprehended in Shelby, North Carolina the very next day. It appears this will be tried as a hate crime. In my opinion it should be.

When you are brazen and bold enough to go into a Wednesday night prayer service and Bible study, sit through most of it and then open fire, hate is the word that should characterize your actions.

The city of Charleston has come together to condemn this act of violence. The descendants of slaves and slave owners joined hands as prayer vigils were held all day into the evening.

The mayor and the governor of South Carolina have asked for prayer and peace for the citizens of the city and the state.

Nikki Haley, governor of the state, said, "The heart and soul of South Carolina was broken." President Obama offered his condolences to the families, in particular to that of Reverend Clementa Pinckney, who

was the pastor of Emanuel A.M.E. Church, where the shooting took place. Reverend Pinckney was one of the nine people killed.

I listened to the breaking news in shock and disbelief. Didn't America learn anything from the Birmingham, Alabama, church bombing that killed four little black girls 52 years ago during the Civil Rights era?

I have always thought of churches as safe places. Yet again, I always thought of schools as safe places. We know now from the school shootings in Colorado and Connecticut that they are not safe places for students. As a result, in cities across America, we have school resource officers with guns who protect our children and teachers.

Now looming large on the American landscape will be an effort to have a police presence in and outside of our places of worship. America, what are we becoming? Slowly in the eyes of some, we are becoming a police state. One day we might be carrying guns into the church house. It will be like the cowboy channel that I watch on Saturday morning. It will be the Wild West in 2015. God is not pleased with us!

Why does it take some major tragedy to happen before we see the races coming together? It should not take mass murder for us to understand we are our brother's and sister's keeper. Can't we have com-

munity meetings about the way we treat one another? Maybe learning more about our neighbors would be a start. I knew everyone in my neighborhood in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Doors left open and windows unlocked didn't mean robbery, it meant trust. Now, we triple bolt our doors, tell our children not to speak to anyone and if we run out of sugar at night, too bad.

The bond for the weapons charge against Dylann Roof has been set at one million dollars. How can you kill nine people in a church no less and have a bond set at one million dollars?

Is that the highest that it can be set? If not, that is a sad commentary on the state of South Carolina. With South Carolina being one of the country's leaders in having hate groups, he could possibly get the necessary bail money. Now if that happens, shame on the Palmetto State.

How about no bail and place him in an undisclosed location on suicide watch until he needs to appear in public. And how about not letting anyone see him until absolutely necessary.

Unfortunately, there are more Dylann Roofs out here. They are simply waiting for the right opportunity to strike unsuspecting victims. Hate groups have as their primary objective to extinguish whatever is good about this great land.

Symbols in this land have a great influence on what happens in a particular

region. South Carolina has the Confederate flag flying high atop the State Capitol in Columbia. [The flag has been taken down from that place and is now on the grounds of the State Capitol.]

The flag represents a time in history for black people that we would like to forget. Yet each day we see that flag brings back the memories of slavery, injustice and inequality. It is difficult for me to see how justice and equality can prevail when there is a symbol of injustice that serves as a constant reminder.

Nine people were killed by a handgun. Guns and gun violence could stop in South Carolina. Just maybe it could be a signal for other states to act. Is this the time to mount the effort? I hope so.

Let us pray for the families of those affected by this senseless tragedy. Our country is the greatest country in the world. Let's act like it.

James B. Ewers Jr. Ed.D. is a former tennis champion at Atkins High School and played college tennis at Johnson C Smith University where he was all-conference for four years.

He is the President Emeritus of The Teen Mentoring Committee of Ohio and a retired college administrator.

He can be reached at ewersjr56@yahoo.com.

Salvation Army's Center of Hope offers help to get back on feet



Tanisha Moreland
Guest Columnist



My name is Tanisha Moreland, and my family is homeless. We are currently residing in the Salvation Army's Center of Hope.

We have a 12-year-old son who is our world. He is a very bright and sociable middle school student. You wouldn't be able to tell we were homeless just by

looking at us.

You've probably seen us in a store or maybe at church. My husband and I both have some college experience. I am a nurse, and my husband studied Computer Information Systems. I haven't worked for four years due to a disability. My husband is

totally blind, but loves working. We were evicted from our apartment because my husband's salary did not cover all of our expenses, including increasing medical bills.

We had to sleep in our van for four nights, which was the scariest and most humbling experience. We moved from parking lot to parking lot hoping to not be asked to move by the police. We stayed with different friends after that and moved around between two cities.

Our son attended four middle schools before we left the state. My husband lost his job last September

after his company changed their billing system, which wasn't compatible with his screen-reading software.

We moved to North Carolina after researching the best places for employment opportunities for visually impaired people. We stayed with people again but things didn't work out. We called all of the shelters within a 50-mile radius, but they were either full or wanted us to split up. We were determined to stay together as a family because that's all we had.

We eventually connected with the Interactive Resource Center in

Greensboro, which helped us with an address for mail, job references and social support. They also helped us get into the Salvation Army's Center of Hope in Winston-Salem. We commuted between the two cities until it became too exhausting physically and mentally.

The Salvation Army provided our needed refuge. It was very difficult living with 80-plus other people. There were some longer-term residents, but most people left within two to three months. We arrived during the winter months to an unfamiliar cold. We were given three hot meals

a day, a family room where we could stay together, and a Case Manager. Our Case Manager, Noemi Toro, has been the catalyst for emotional support, job leads and problem resolution. We are connected to various community resources, which are helping us find permanent housing. My husband is still unemployed, but is interviewing for jobs. Our son is very resilient and glad to be promoted to the seventh grade.

I am very thankful for the Center of Hope because that is exactly what they have given us.