

ROTARY DISTRICT 5440 NEWSLETTER FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING

MAY 2021 NUMBER 45

**HATE, VIOLENCE, RECONCILIATION AND HEALING**

William Timpson, Del Benson, Lloyd Thomas, Bob Meroney and Kip Turain

Fort Collins Rotary Club

Steve Mumme, PhD, Political Science, CSU

In these newsletters of the Rotary District Peacebuilders, we want to invite readers for contributions and ideas, suggestions and possibilities for our efforts to educate others by promoting the foundational skills for promoting sustainable peace and civility, i.e., nonviolent conflict resolution, improved communication and cooperation, successful negotiation and mediation. We also want to encourage the critical and creative thinking that can help communities move through obstacles and difficulties among people in more sustainable ways, i.e., with the interconnected health of their people, their economies and their environments. In this issue we focus on the ideas and skills that can help us better deal with conflict with restorative principles.

**NOTE: Professor Steve Mumme (Political Science) and Kip Turain (U.S. Air Force) will speak to our Sustainable Peacebuilding Fellowship**

**Wed. May 5 from 1:30-2:30 MST**

All are invited. Share this newsletter with a friend or colleague.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/494943309?pwd=SmtTUDYzTlZrcVBhblVLRmdvbVh6dz09>

**CIVIC EDUCATION FOR THE ARMED SERVICES**

***Steven Mumme, PhD, Professor of Political Science at Colorado State University whose research has focused on border areas and their conflicts. Vietnam Veteran, U.S. Army, 1968-1971***

Among the many disturbing reports issuing from the assault on the nation's capital on January 6, the active participation of two dozen or more ex-armed services members was among the most disheartening and appalling. The ranks of these assailants spanned the armed services, with ex-marines, ex-army, ex-air force and navy, and national guardsmen joining the rampage [[Capitol rioters included highly trained ex-military and cops \(apnews.com\)](#)].

Many were found to be affiliated with White nationalist and so-called "patriot" organizations, the Oath Keepers, Proud Boys, and other self-described militias disaffected with aspects of American society. Drawn to Trump's nativist rhetoric and driven his false "stop the steal" claims of widespread election fraud these individuals, by all accounts, saw no conflict between respecting the norms of constitutional democracy and storming the halls of congress to overturn Congress's lawful certification of Joe Biden's Electoral College victory on November 3, 2020.

That former service personnel with military experience would so casually disregard the law and long-established constitutional norms and practices governing the peaceful transfer of power in this country is on one level mind-boggling, even in the context of an autocratically inclined president and his "drain the swamp" rhetoric.

On another level, however, it is quite explicable given a prevailing military training regime that centers on obedience to the Commander-in-Chief and military chain of command, emphasizing mastery of the technology of military force, while paying scant attention to educating service personnel on the norms of democratic governance (see Table 1). The mastery of democracy, with a

small exception at the armed services academies, is effectively consigned by the military services to the K-12 schools and American colleges and universities.

You needn't be a political scientist (as I am) to understand this may be a serious mistake. Our K-12 schools are already woefully deficient on civics education and essential social science offerings on American history and institutions.<sup>1</sup> Those students lucky enough to advance to a college or university education may get a couple semesters of introduction to American politics and history—many universities make this optional in their general studies requirements for graduation. It is not too strong a statement to say that civics education in the U.S. is given short shrift by the public at large.

If this is the case, our current military basic training curriculum offers little to fill the void—service academies and officer training excepted. In fact, it may actually undercut the little education on democracy and the rules and procedures of representative government that American servicemen bring with them.

If the American public is deficient in its awareness of democratic norms and practices, and the armed services hone to their present curriculum, it is hardly surprising that some ex-military and military personnel would buy on to facile claims of institutional inadequacy or government failure when endorsed by a Commander-in-Chief contemptuous of these same institutions and bent on clinging to power.

It is certainly time to seriously rethink how we train our military personnel, the very ones charged with defending Americans and their government at home and abroad. Adding a week to the basic training curriculum to review and reinforce basic knowledge concerning our system of government and its core institutions and procedures may not be a panacea or sure preventive of military participation in the sorts of events we witnessed on January 6.

Yet few could argue that it would not be a valuable investment enabling our service personnel and military veterans to have a sound understanding of what they are fighting for, and what they are tasked to defend. Absent such knowledge, our service personnel are particularly vulnerable to emotionally charged nationalist rhetoric favoring personalistic leadership in contravention of the constitutional and statutory norms and practices that sustain American democracy.

---

<sup>1</sup> . See, for example, the recent report from the Center for American Progress: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2019/12/14/478750/strengthening-democracy-modern-civics-education/>; Also see, Rebecca Winthrop (Brookings Institution), "The need for civic education in 21<sup>st</sup> century schools," at: <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/bigideas/the-need-for-civic-education-in-21st-century-schools/>.

**Table 1. Basic Training 9-Week Curriculum: U.S. Army National Guard\***

<b>First Three Weeks</b>	<b>Next Two Weeks</b>	<b>Final Four Weeks**</b>
<p>First three weeks, you'll get a thorough introduction to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Army's Core Values, traditions and ethics</li> <li>• Assembling, disassembling and caring for your M16</li> <li>• The Nuclear-Biological-Chemical (NBC) chamber</li> <li>• Security and crowd dispersion discipline</li> <li>• Combatives: hand-to-hand combat and guerrilla exercises</li> <li>• Barracks inspections</li> <li>• Running, tactical daylight marches and fitness training</li> </ul>	<p>Next two weeks: Here's a rundown of what you'll cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Rifle Marksmanship (BRM) and Rifle Qualification</li> <li>• Zeroing a rifle</li> <li>• Engaging targets at various distances and from different positions</li> <li>• Prioritizing multiple targets simultaneously</li> <li>• Hand-to-hand training</li> <li>• Rappelling the Warrior Tower</li> <li>• More barracks inspections</li> <li>• Continued study of Army Values, ethics and traditions</li> <li>• Night training and more fitness training</li> <li>• Map and compass reading</li> </ul>	<p>Last four weeks are spent on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced Rifle Marksmanship (including aiming tools, e.g., lasers)</li> <li>• Maneuvering and engaging targets as part of a team</li> <li>• Guard ethics and standards, with continued study of Army Values</li> <li>• Convoy operations</li> <li>• Additional weapons training: machine guns, grenade launchers and mines</li> <li>• Defeating improvised explosive devices/mines</li> <li>• Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOU—city fighting)</li> <li>• 10- and 15-kilometer tactical foot marches</li> <li>• Field training exercise on bivouac, where training is tied together</li> <li>• The End of Cycle Test (EOCT): 212 tasks, which you're required to pass</li> <li>• The Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT), which you must pass in order to graduate from BCT</li> </ul>

\*Source: U.S. Army National Guard at [Army National Guard - Basic Training Phases](#)

\*\*A tenth week is devoted to final fitness testing, graduation, and assignment to advanced individual training.

## FIND WAYS TO USE FAITH

**William Timpson, Ph.D.** is Professor Emeritus at Colorado State University in its School of Education and a member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club. He can be reached at [william.timpson@colostate.edu](mailto:william.timpson@colostate.edu).

In *Learning Life's Lessons* (2019), I wrote this about my trip to meet with peace activists in Israel and Palestine. Given what Steve Mumme wrote, ask yourself if more civics education have helped to mediate the conflicts I describe in what follows.

In August of 2017, a tour group from the U.S. made a stop at the *Tent of Nations* in Palestine where a working farm and orchard now doubles as an educational enterprise with a goal of inspiring sustainable peace, reconciliation and development. Outside their gates and carved into a stone is their commitment, *We Refuse To Be Enemies*. (See the photo below.)



Working with his sister and brother, **Daoud Nassar** (on the left in the photo above) serves as the Director for this project. The land itself is owned by his family who registered the property in 1924-1925 during the British Mandate period when they grew grapes, fruit, and olive trees. Despite this long history of documented ownership, the family has been fighting a legal battle to keep hold of the land since it was classified as 'Israeli State Land' and thus threatened with confiscation in 1991. Apparently, the Israeli military sees strategic value in this hilltop land.

From their website is this language, “Our mission is to build bridges between people, and between people and the land. We bring different cultures together to develop understanding and promote respect for each other and our shared environment. To realize this mission, we run educational projects at our organic farm, located in our hills southwest of Bethlehem. Our farm of 100 acres is a center where people from many different countries come together to learn, to share, and to build bridges of understanding and hope.” (See <http://www.tentofnations.org/>)

The struggle is ongoing, however. With a commitment to peaceful resistance—remember that their slogan is “we refuse to be enemies”—and with the support from those who have visited here, Daoud insisted to Bill Timpson and the touring peacemaking study group that much has been achieved. “The Tent of Nations continues to work to protect and develop the farm as a place where people can meet, learn, work together, and inspire one another.”

For a part of the world that has long felt the heavy boot of military occupiers down through history, the commitment from the *Tent of Nations* is to seek to embody a positive approach to conflict and occupation. Daoud continued, “Faced with great injustice, we know that we should not hate, despair, or flee. We can channel our pain and frustration into positive actions which will build a better future. We aim to help the oppressed and marginalized realize that they are powerful. We all have a role in creating the future we want to see.

At *Tent of Nations*, we seek to work with others in the local area to lay the foundations for a future Palestine, in the belief that justice and peace will grow from the bottom up. We work to reconnect people with the land. Through mixing our hands with the soil, we learn to value and understand the significance of our environment.”

This commitment has a very practical element, Daoud insisted. “We are working towards becoming completely self-sustainable in regards to food, water, and electricity, and we hope in the long-term to be able to support other local projects with proceeds from our farm. Our vision is to develop a vocational training and education center on the farm which will provide a space for children and young people to learn about alternative energy, organic farming, and community building.

We hope, ultimately, to be able to prepare the young people of Palestine for a positive contribution to their future and culture by bringing values of tolerance and understanding into their life experiences, and to facilitate a respect for the environment by increasing awareness of our reliance on the land. In moving onwards with the development of this vision, we look forward to continuing to welcome many more volunteers and visitors to *Tent of Nations*, and teaching hope and faith in action to an international community.”

Nassar put this project within a historical context. “The message of peace and love that started from Bethlehem more than 2000 years ago should continue to shine out from here. Our journey for justice will continue with faith, love and hope, carrying our cross, refusing to be enemies, transforming our pain into a positive energy that is able to change hearts, lives and build a better future.’

However, he acknowledged that they face real challenges. “The Jewish settlers in the area have built a road through our land. They bulldozed 200 of our olive trees on this historic farm our family has owned since 1924. They have threatened us with guns.” According to Nassar, there are

four groups of settlers: “First, the ultra-orthodox Jews who see our land as their ‘promised land’ and that they are the ‘chosen people.’ Second, those who see the settlements as an economic investment. Third, the new immigrants from Eastern Europe who are simply seeking more affordable housing (housing in settlements is subsidized by the State of Israel). And fourth, the ideological who come with a bible and a gun and also believe that they have a divine right to the land.”

But his hopes were also tied to very practical realities. “Our future is very much tied to the international guests we can invite. In Spring of 2016, 150 came from other countries to plant trees. Importantly, when we have international guests we do not get attacked by settlers. We have interns here today helping out on the farm but,” he cautions, “we have no access to electricity or running water from the government. Fortunately, solar panels now provide the electricity we need. Sadly many of the best educated people in this region have been defeated and have left.”

There are certain principles that Nassar insisted guide their work at the *Tent of Nations*. “First, we refuse to be victims. We act in our own collective best interests. Second, we refuse to hate in the image of God. Third, we rely on our faith to help us through. And fourth, we believe that justice will rise again. Our commitment is to actions that are nonviolent, constructive and creative.”

He continued. “We are also committed to educating others. We want to connect the land and the people. Denied electricity, we find independence through different technologies and actions. For example, we save \$75,000 per year on fuel costs. We collect rain water. We use composting toilets. We use bio-gas. We are committed to bringing hope to hopeless situations. In our children’s camps we use music and theater to bring Martin Luther King’s message in his classic ‘I Have a Dream’ speech into practice.

We also have women empowerment programs. And a harvest camp where we collect our almond crops. And recently we are seeing more Palestinians returning to farm. There has been the threat of Israelis taking over abandoned farms. It seems that we have always lived under pressure but we know that we cannot stay in that fear. We hope for the best and prepare for the worst.” The following idea is adapted from Tip #50 in *147 Practical Tips for Teaching Sustainability*.

Identify religious allies. Find inspiration in the collective ideas and actions of Judeo-Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and indigenous peoples and others committed to sustainability or the “triple bottom line” of environmental, economic, and societal health. For example, the National Council of Churches offers “Eco-Justice Programs. (See <http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/shared-ministry/justice-advocacy/>)

*Each one of us can do more to care for the creation and conservation of our natural resources and the collective health of our communities. Ask yourself and others: What are faith-based groups doing in your community and beyond that is truly inspirational?*

## ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE RECONCILIATION

**Lloyd Thomas, Ph.D.** is a longstanding member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club, a licensed psychologist and a life coach with a long history of writing regular columns. He can be reached at [ljtddat@aol.com](mailto:ljtddat@aol.com)

The term, “reconciliation” has a variety of meanings. It can define a process (verb) or an outcome (noun). Today, I use both definitions as necessary and critical elements involved in peace building. In *The Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence* (edited by Eugene Weiner), Louis Kriesberg writes, *“The term ‘reconciliation’ generally refers to the process of developing a mutual conciliatory accommodation between antagonistic or formerly antagonistic persons or groups. It often refers to a relatively amicable relationship, typically established after a rupture in the relationship involving one-sided or mutual infliction of extreme injury.”* What are some of the elements used to create such a “relatively amicable relationship.” Here are but a few.

**CONTRITION AND FORGIVENESS.** The perpetrators of “extreme injury” need to acknowledge their harmful actions and feel “contrite” for them. The “victims” of such injury need to be willing to forgive the perpetrators for the same actions. Keep in mind that forgiveness is not condoning or approving of such actions. It is necessary in order for victims to avoid maintaining anger or resentment and relinquishing any notions/actions of retaliation or vengeance.

**HONEST DIALOGUE AND ANALYSIS.** The environment where honest dialogue can safely begin, must be secure for both parties and any third-party mediators catalyzing the process. In 1999, Ronald J. Fisher writes, *“...full, successful reconciliation between alienated groups cannot take place without an adequate degree of genuine dialogue and conflict analysis of a mutual, interactive nature...”* (*The New Agenda for Peace Research* edited by Howon Jeong). This environment/group is often referred to as “Truth Commissions.”

**BOTH PARTIES MUST BE PROACTIVE.** Each party seeks to actively create and focus on a relationship wherein they can share their genuine perceptions, feelings and experiences of one another with the intentions of creating *new* perceptions and *new* shared experiences.

**A DESIRE TO MOVE INTO A NEW AND MUTUALLY SATISFYING RELATIONSHIP...** wherein conflicts are resolved without war, violence, or “winning at any costs.” Critical to creating and sustaining any peaceful outcomes include: Learning and practicing new habits/attitudes of problem-solving, maintaining dignity and respect for everyone involved, sharing the benefits derived from reconciliation and sustaining outcomes that satisfy all stake holders (*e.g.* cooperation, collaboration, mutual support, etc.). Malvern Lumsden writes, *“...violent attitudes, and their consequences, need not be perpetuated if the right peace building strategies can be implemented but they will persist if nothing is done to counter their influence.”* (*Breaking the Cycle of Violence: Three Zones of Social Reconstruction*. In Howon Jeong, ed., *The New Agenda for Peace Research*).

**JUSTICE FOR ALL MUST BE THE END GOAL.** The common goals of reconciliation must include “equal justice under the laws of the land.” In an article by Charles Lerche, there appears the following: *“Here again, there is need to see reconciliation in a context where, instead of replacing or undermining retributive justice, it can potentially serve as a “bridge” from a past where such justice was denied and a present where it is not yet practically and politically possible to a future where, hopefully, it can become an integral part of the social order...Put more simply, successful peace building should include establishing an effective legal system, or reinforcing the foundations of one that already exists. Over the longer run, however, the legal system must itself come to reflect and reinforce human needs.”* (“Peace Building Through Reconciliation” by Charles Lerche in *The International Journal of Peace Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Autumn/Winter 2000) Can we build a legal system that includes “restorative justice” for non-violent/lesser crimes?

Finally, I want to share a couple conclusions by Lerche when he wrote in *The International Journal of Peace Studies*, “National reconciliation, as a political exercise, may through ‘coming to terms with the past,’ save the state but not necessarily heal the society; and post-conflict societies run the risk of exchanging political for criminal or structural violence. Unless specifically and directly addressed, violence as a symptom of a violent culture will remain.” (Ibid above) As U.S. citizens, we need to ask ourselves, “Are we willing to address the symptoms of our violent culture (awash in guns created for military conflicts)?”

Lerche concludes: “reconciliation should include the search for a model of governance and social relations that enables all groups in society to deal equitably and creatively with conflict. This is a long term project involving hit or miss efforts to found and perfect new institutions in both the public sector and civil society.” Everyone who wants to build peace in the world needs to become more proactively involved in ameliorating inter-group tensions *before* violence erupts!

**DO NOT BE A LAND OR HUMAN SUPREMACIST:  
LEARN TO EXPERIENCE, UNDERSTAND, AND TO LOVE**

*Del Benson, Ph.D. is a Professor and wildlife specialist for Extension at Colorado State University. His work is with wildlife and recreation enterprises on private land, conservation education, hunter attitudes and behavior, public input to resource management decision making and campus environmental management. He can be reached at [Delwin.Benson@ColoState.EDU](mailto:Delwin.Benson@ColoState.EDU)*

Racial hatred was elevated during summer racial protests and riots. Conservative white, anarchists, and disinformation fomented the insurrection at the U.S. Capital in the name of democracy. Human supremacists are not of one color, one location, or of one time in history. At the dawn of humans, several hundred sub-Saharan black Bantu races moved around and out of Africa. They displaced brown Khoisan peoples in Southern Africa. Whites from Netherlands in 1600s and England in 1800s added to southern Africa colonization while other oceanic and overland exploration was taking place around the world. Before that time, many races with white skin populated Europe and eastern peoples were expanding their influences around North Africa, Persia, Europe, and Asia. North and South America had visitors of Asian ancestry who boated and walked from the Alaska land and ice bridges before Scandinavia and Central Europe visited via ships.

The web of visitors from around the world sought adventure, commerce, control, and riches. As they expanded, they made friends and enemies, took slaves, lives, and land. They cherished valuables and reduced liabilities including other humans and nature that negatively affected them.

Nature provided fire, salt, gold, silk, grains, shelter, water, animals to domesticate or to eat on the spot, and other valuables. Nature also provided diseases, unwanted predators, threatening human neighbors, and climates where proper adaptations meant life and death. Adaptive strategies in nature included keeping the valuables and eliminating the problems.

“Hatred” is a word used to engender concerns with nature and peoples and to gain support from friendly tribes, neighbors, and races. Humans seem to need something about which to complain! It becomes easy to complain about those who are not the same as the accuser with skin color or other phenotypic features as easy identifiers. Fear, prejudice, and hatred are assigned to different religions, socio-economic statuses, political affiliations, and unaccustomed behaviors.



New insights and experiences, whether true or imagined, alter impressions and behaviors. Unintended biases foment implicit biases with positive or negative reactions.

One could accuse world invaders from the earliest humanoids to current land developers as being sources of environmental and social ills ranging from climate change, endangered species, contaminated ecosystems, and unfair human treatments in society. In my conservation field, we worry about poachers, land converters, and traffickers of wildlife outside of management controls. One can easily point fingers at colonizers, communists, and con artists who defaced lands and defrauded peoples around the world. Yet we can also show how world parks, natural areas, and elevated socio-economic status resulted from persons and nation states who sought to advance their presence and “progress.”

Do not be a hater. It is harder to hate and easier to love that which you understand. Step out of the comfort zone and read books, watch television shows, and talk with persons who are not like you. Seek them out and do not wait for them to come to you. To delay is to demoralize and to disenfranchise. Keep the mind open. Have empathy. Understand! Listen. Learn. Love.

### THE BELHAR CONFESSION

**Robert N. Meroney, Ph.D.** is a Rotarian and an Emeritus Professor of Fluid Mechanics and Wind Engineering with a long career at Colorado State University. He can be reached at [Robert.Meroney@ColoState.EDU](mailto:Robert.Meroney@ColoState.EDU)

As early as 1652 Dutch traders had imported slaves to South Africa to help develop farming. In 1835 the descendants of these traders, known today as the Boers or Afrikaners, seeking freedom from British control traveled northwards with their slaves to establish their own nation in southern Africa. Even after the Boer War in 1899, the Afrikaners were promised there would be no votes for the black majority population and strict racial separation. In 1948, to the surprise of the English-speaking South African leadership, the National Party of Afrikaners won 70 districts in a free election that gave them the political power to enforce what many of them perceived as a God perceived mandate to order society on racial lines: Apartheid.

The consequence was by law in South Africa:

- Strict separation of the races,
- No interracial sex or marriage,
- All public facilities such buses, schools, hospitals, beaches were segregated,
- People of color had to carry passbooks containing information on the holder,
- No colored person could live, work, or travel without a passbook,
- Police could detain any persons of color at any time,
- Afrikaans, rather than English, was not the official language, and all colored school children would be taught only in Afrikaans; hence, many teachers who did not know the language were fired. Result, one quarter of a million children were out of school.

As one might expect, the rigid enforcement of Apartheid led to resentment and protest. Any opposition was met with brutal force by the government. In 1960 at Sharpsville Township, south of Johannesburg, blacks gathered to burn their passbooks. White police fired on defenseless men, women, and children, 67 Africans were killed, and 186 were wounded, more than 80% were shot in the back. In 1964 student leaders Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu were arrested, tried,

and given life sentences. Then on June 16, 1976, there was an uprising in Soweto, a shanty town outside Johannesburg, involving many children, unable to attend closed schools, who had gathered and were met by policemen carrying machine guns. The police fired into the crowd, and unofficial estimates later found 500 were killed. On June 19, the UN Security Council condemned the South African Government and Apartheid. In 1977, the UN voted a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa. Yet Apartheid continued for ten more years!

Between 1987 to 1993 negotiations occurred between the white minority led National Party government and the anti-apartheid African National Congress (ANC). In 1990 Nelson Mandela and other black leaders were released from jail, and in 1991 most of the apartheid legislation was repealed. Multiracial elections including universal suffrage were finally held in April 1994.

In 1982, twelve years before Apartheid was banned in South Africa, a group of members, students, and ministers of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) of the Belhar Synod, Cape Town met to discuss the impact of racism, separation, and suffering on the black and brown communities of South Africa. Their charge was to put into writing the conclusions of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) which had met earlier in 1982 in Ottawa, Canada, that Apartheid was anti-evangelical, and racism was a structural and institutional sin.<sup>2</sup> The Belhar synod prepared a draft confession, that became known as the **Confession of Belhar**.<sup>3, 4, 5</sup>

Apartheid is the human context for the Confession of Belhar, yet it is never mentioned in the confession. The Belhar Confessions has three central points: Unity, Reconciliation, and Justice. The original confession was accompanied by a letter explaining the context of the document.

*This confession is not aimed at specific people or groups of people or a church or churches. We proclaim it against a false doctrine, against an ideological distortion which threatens the gospel itself in our church and our country. Our heartfelt longing is that no one will identify himself with this objectionable doctrine and that all who have been wholly or partially blinded by it will turn themselves away from it.*

A short synopsis of the main points of the confession follows:

UNITY: We believe,

- Church unity is a gift and obligation of the Christian Church,
- Any separation, enmity, and hatred between groups is a sin, and must be resisted, and
- Unity can occur only under conditions of freedom and not constraint; therefore,
- We reject any aspect of human descent or social factor as a consideration for membership.

RECONCILIATION: We believe,

---

<sup>2</sup> Based on their judgement, the WARC concluded that the white dominated South African Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) ceased to be a true church, and the DRC was suspended from membership. The DRC had previously professed a heretical theological stance that used the Bible and earlier Confessions to justify the harsh and unjust system of Apartheid.

<sup>3</sup> The Afrikaans text of the Confession of Belhar:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20091229095250/http://www.ngkerk.org.za/documents/BelharBelydenis.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> An English translation of the original Confession of Belhar: <https://www.rca.org/about/theology/creeds-and-confessions/the-belhar-confession/>

<sup>5</sup> Each article in the confession is accompanied by references to Biblical texts that support the statement.

- The church was entrusted by God with a message of reconciliation,
- Any teaching which encourages separation out of prejudice, fear, selfishness, and unbelief, must be considered ideology and false doctrine; therefor,
- We reject any doctrine which sanctions separation in the name of the gospel or the will of God on the grounds of race and color.

JUSTICE: We believe,

- God has revealed himself as the One who wishes to bring about justice and true peace,
- God is, in a world full of injustice and enmity, a God of the destitute, the poor, and the wronged,
- The Church must stand against injustice and with the wronged and against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control or harm others; therefor,
- We reject an ideology which would legitimate forms of injustice and doctrine unwilling to resist such harms, and
- We believe and confess the church is called to do all these things even though human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence.

The consequences of the Confession of Belhar were immediate and continuing. In South Africa writers of the confession were jailed and tortured. Supporters of apartheid attacked the confession as ungodly. The Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) itself adopted Belhar as its confession of faith. After apartheid ended in 1994, the DRMC (now the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa, URCSA) invited the white Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) to unite with them, but that offer was rejected. In 1997 a DRC theological commission admitted that apartheid was a sin and repudiated its support for apartheid, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) reconsidered its 1982 suspension of DRC membership, and in 1998 the DRC was readmitted into the international world alliance.

Several churches in other nations have adopted the Confession of Belhar as a confessional standard.

- The Evangelical Reformed Church in Africa, Namibia, 1997,
- The United Protestant Church in Belgium, 1998,
- The Reformed Church in America, 2009,
- The Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2012,
- The Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 2016.

**Summary: The Confession of Belhar is a glorious example of how people suffering persecution can rise above their suffering to identify universal truths, reject hate, seek justice, and further reconciliation and healing.** <sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> The Confession of Belhar (1982) has much in common with the Barmen Declaration (1934). The Barmen declaration was written to illuminate the religious interference evils of Nazi Germany. It was written by delegates to a Synod in Wuppertal-Barmen to oppose how the Deutsche Christen movement had been corrupted by the Nazi government who had introduced Nazi ideology into German Protestant churches. It was mostly written by Reformed theologian Karl Barth who also wrote the Darmstadt Statement in 1947, which specified the German guilt and responsibility for the Third Reich and the Second World War. Another contributor was Lutheran pastor and anti-Nazi dissident Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was also a key founding member of the German Confessing Church. He was later arrested in 1943 by

## BE AN EXAMPLE AND CONTINUE TO SERVE

*Kip Turain is a Rotarian and retired Colonel from the U.S. Air Force.  
He can be reached at [ruftrain@aol.com](mailto:ruftrain@aol.com)*

I recall in my high school football locker room a poster of a man walking away from the camera, holding his son's hand. The caption read, "Who will he follow?" To me, it was a powerful picture and the words resonated deep with me. It certainly had a significant impact on my being at the time, as I realized that others are watching our actions, words, and non-verbal cues. Ever since then, my words and actions have consciously and subconsciously been shaped by that poster. A famous quote from Field Marshall Erwin Rommel that we were required to memorize at the U.S. Air Force Academy further cemented this concept for me.

"Be an example to your men, in your duty and in private life. Never spare yourself, and let the troops see that you don't in your endurance of fatigue and privation. Always be tactful and well-mannered and teach your subordinates to be the same. Avoid excessive sharpness or harshness of voice, which usually indicates the man who has shortcomings of his own to hide."

While at the US Air Force Academy, this aspect was further explored as I experienced the military and academic training regimen of the institution. The Academy experience further propagated the lesson, to be a positive role model to others.

Another part of the experience was to integrate with others from all walks of life and society. Integrating did not mean 'liking' or agreeing with everyone. But it did necessitate being respectful and open to other's opinions. The finesse part was to continue to overcome or set aside differences, continue to communicate, and operate together towards a common goal or purpose at hand. This was crucial, as there is 'no backup for the military's mission.'

Another significant part of the Academy experience was The Fourth Class System, where each year built on the previous in growth, responsibility, and character development of the individual. Training your replacement was an integral part of this and an awesome responsibility that was not to be taken lightly!

"The purpose of the Fourth Class System at the United States Air Force Academy is to lay the foundation early in the cadet's career for the development of those qualities of character and discipline which will be expected of an officer. These qualities must be so deeply instilled in the individual's personality that no stress or strain will erase them."

As I took these concepts through my 30-year active-duty military career in the Air Force, I grew accustomed to and comfortable with these foundations that provided the foundations for the Service's culture. Because I viewed these attributes as unequivocally foundational, I never questioned them, and I still believe they exist across and deep in the military.

I also had the pleasure and honor to mentor many throughout my Air Force career. In mentoring one individual who was at a juncture on whether to continue college Reserve Officer Training Corps (and in doing so, extending college for an extra year) or walk away from ROTC and graduate

---

the Gestapo, imprisoned in the Flossenburg concentration camp, and hanged on 9 April 1945 just before the collapse of the Nazi regime.

on-time, we explored the attributes of the program.

The first question, “Do you enjoy ROTC?” was met with a “Yes” response. Then, we explored what he liked about it. Camaraderie, serving something bigger than themselves, physical exercise, being part of a ‘club’, the organizational structure and time management were some attributes that surfaced. I mentioned that he could go to other organizations on campus to fulfill those, but they would not be under one umbrella, as ROTC provided. Also addressing that ROTC was but a steppingstone to ultimately take the Oath of Office to serve his Nation, his decision was to continue with ROTC, and he currently serves in the active duty Air Force, experiencing the same institutional attributes I witnessed.

The stomach-turning events that occurred on 6 January and some other recent events revealed former or current military members who have taken a different path than I described above. They are the extreme minority and do not represent what the military espouses. Hence, the military took swift action to train and discuss extremism with its members, review policy and institute change.

The Christian Science Monitor provided a piece, calling on military veterans to fight extremism (1 March 2021). In the article, retired Army Colonel Carl Castro stated “...the allure of nationalist groups relates to a sense of purpose and kinship reminiscent of the military.” To combat this, he “...urged veterans to instead find purpose in reconnecting with their communities...”

I submit, that Rotary can fill that charge! It is a valuable organization to fill this call to service! The assignment for Rotarians is to find and engage veterans. Help them make the connections of the positive attributes of serving in the military with how they blend with Rotary characteristics. An example of this is that each Service component’s Core Values can be linked with The Rotary Four Way Test. So, go forth and recruit!

\*\*\*

### **PRIORITIES OF THE ROTARY FOUNDATION**

See the RI website: <https://my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/about-rotary/our-priorities>. If you would like to respond to one of the pieces in this newsletter, check out our blog [www.rotarypeacebuilder.com](http://www.rotarypeacebuilder.com) and join the conversation! You can find some of our past issues at the Rotary District 5440 website: <https://www.rotary5440.org/sitepage/peace-building-newsletters>. Past issues have explored the following: APRIL: **CROSS CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON HEALING**

If you have ideas for future topics, please send them to any of our writers.