



“Too Busy to Love”
Sermon by Eric Liu • Civic Saturday
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I’m so grateful to you for inviting us to Atlanta and for showing up this morning for Civic Saturday. Let me thank especially my friend Ayesha Khanna, whose work at Points of Light’s Civic Accelerator exemplifies the spirit of service and innovation that runs like a bright thread through so many institutions here, like our partners at Hands On Atlanta and the Center for Civic Innovation. You all embody a spirit – some call it the Atlanta Spirit – that is more than can-do; it is *must-do*. More than self-help, it’s *selves-help*.

Atlanta, I have come to realize, is like America in all its complexity and contradiction.

It is, as W.E.B. Du Bois said, south of the North but north of the South, challenging the assumptions and mores of each half of the nation. It’s a city that General Sherman had to burn to the ground so that Doctor King could rise from it a century later. A capital of slavery and a hub of black liberation. A city of rising prosperity and inequality, of suburban sprawl and status anxiety and immigrant influx and persistent poverty – and beneath it all, a web of faith communities and a corporate power structure that dominates civic life. This is a city with global cultural clout, where *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and Donald Glover’s *Atlanta* and *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*, to say nothing of Coke and Home Depot, all feed and form the American public imagination.

Taste the feeling. More saving, more doing. You all made that.

This is a city with boosterism and salesmanship in its DNA, a place defined by ambitious slogans that become narratives that become agendas that become the actual ambitions of the people of the place. Though it was founded a century after Savannah and other ports of the region, Atlanta even as a small town claimed to be “Gate City.” After Reconstruction failed, it named itself the capital of the New South. In the 1920s, your chamber of commerce launched a national ad campaign called “Forward Atlanta” that led national corporations to locate here. Then in the 1960s, as other Southern cities became infamous for resisting civil rights violently, Atlanta came up with the its most famous slogan yet: “The City Too Busy to Hate.”

The pragmatism and tolerance of that slogan are deeply American. It could've been the slogan for the Dutch and English who built the polyglot markets of New Amsterdam and New York. It's more realistic than "The City of Brotherly Love," which Philadelphia truly was in the age of Franklin – but we're not in that age anymore. And relative to cities like Selma that found *plenty* of time to hate in the 1960s, it's downright admirable. It was admirable in January 1965 when Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen and Paul Austin, the CEO of Coca-Cola, pushed a reluctant white business community to host a gala to honor the newly minted Nobel Laureate Martin Luther King, Jr.

"It's embarrassing for Coca-Cola to be located in a city that refuses to honor its Nobel Prize winner," Austin told his peers. "We are an international business. The Coca-Cola Company does not need Atlanta. You all need to decide whether Atlanta needs the Coca-Cola Company." The elite fell in line and the gala was sold out and made national news. Some say that was the night Atlanta truly became too busy to hate.

But let's be honest. "Too busy to hate," admirable though it may be, still sets a pretty low bar. It sets the same low bar that the idea of tolerance does. Tolerance, after all, implies irritation or distaste – some *other* to be suffered, overcome, and *tolerated*. Being too busy to hate doesn't mean the desire to hate has been eradicated. It just means we don't have time to indulge it. We are prioritizing busyness – business – over hate.

There is a higher bar. And a place like Atlanta, that has so often led the South and the nation to face its flaws and fears, should lead us over that bar. The question in Atlanta and America is not whether we're too busy to hate. It's whether we are too busy to love.

I've been thinking about this question the last few weeks and especially the last few days as we've all been awash in images of agents of the United States government separating infants and toddlers from their mothers and fathers and incarcerating them.

Are we too busy to love? Some of us have hardened our hearts, either because they think there's too much pain and too little power in this situation or because, as some Trumpists believe, the images are fake and photoshopped and can be ignored.

Are we too busy to love? I've marveled at the commentary from the president on up in which these children, whose immigrant parents seek asylum or yearn for a chance to pick your lettuce or empty your mother's bedpan, are described not as humans but as an infestation, as animals subject to "catch-and-release," to be caged and kenneled.

Are we too busy to love? What strikes me as I travel the country doing this work of fostering powerful citizenship is how many people flat out don't have time for this. They are at Terminal B in Hartsdale walking past the CNN screen about migrant children being separated from their mothers and incarcerated. They are on a MARTA train to work their second job and there is no CNN. They are stuck Atlanta traffic trying to get their own kids – not some foreign lawbreaker's kids – to soccer practice.

Citizen University started organizing Civic Saturday gatherings in Seattle in 2016 because we sensed that people in this age of radical inequality and social fragmentation *are* too busy to love – but that people will respond to an invitation to make the time for love. And here we are. We’ve organized such gatherings in other places that asked for them, like Nashville and Des Moines and New York. And we’ve started a Civic Seminary to prepare other Americans to lead Civic Saturdays and build these communities – congregations, if you will – and they are now doing so in Indianapolis and Tucson and Georgetown, Texas and Southern Pines, North Carolina and the South Side of Chicago.

Our first class of Civic Seminarians learned all about the American creed, about what young Abraham Lincoln called America’s “political religion” and what I call civic religion, about the teaching and practice of power and character in public life, and they boiled down all their learning into a simple compact idea: *civic love*.

This morning I want to explore this idea of civic love with you. What does it mean to love like a citizen? To love your country. To love your neighbor. To love your enemies. I want to probe beneath these three ideas – clichés, really – to ask what choices we make or avoid when we practice civic love. What does it cost to love – to choose to love even when you don’t have time for it or when no one really cares whether you do or don’t?

1.

Let’s start with love of country.

Thirty years ago, when I was 19, my father drove me to LaGuardia Airport and he put me on a Delta Shuttle to National Airport in Washington. From there I boarded a bus that took me an hour and a half to Quantico, Virginia. The moment I got off that bus that night, large muscle-bound men began screaming at me and the other passengers, pushing us around and making us dump our bags to get in line and get our heads shaved. So began my embarkation into Marine Corps Officer Candidates School.

I spent six weeks that summer at OCS in what was called Platoon Leaders Class (Junior) and I went back the next summer for six more weeks of PLC (Senior). Those twelve weeks shaped me profoundly. I learned so much – about the history and culture of the Marine Corps, of course, but also about what it felt like to be part of something greater than oneself, connected to a line of service that goes back to the creation of the nation. The red and the gold, the anchor and the globe, the cadence calls, the tales of uncommon valor, the brutally honest leadership coaching we’d get from peers and instructors alike, the physical and mental hardships that I endured with a group of other students from South and North, rural towns and inner cities, rich and poor families.

I was the only Asian American in my company, the only Ivy Leaguer, one of two with glasses, and definitely the smallest. In that swamp crucible, I did more than survive. My unit the second summer, Fox Company, Second Platoon, began with 43 candidates and after attrition ended with 25. I ranked eighth. And when I graduated from OCS in August 1989 and marched with the battalion across the parade deck, snapping EYES RIGHT at the brass in the reviewing stand with my immigrant parents in the bleachers, listening to the band play the Marine Corps Hymn, I thought what a miracle this country is.

Later that year, when I was back at college, I chose to decline the second lieutenant's commission I had earned. I chose instead to serve in government, where I came to work with leaders like Georgia's Senator Sam Nunn on foreign policy and later with his daughter and my friend Michelle Nunn on volunteerism and national service. I've never regretted my choice. But I often marvel at how much my sense of patriotism was shaped by the Marines – and how little of it is about the military or warfighting and how much of it is about core ethics and values. About a set of ideals.

To love this country is to love its ideals. And to love its ideals is not to shout about them, to have a parade about them, to wave or hug the flag. To love the ideals of this country is to force the country, in the company of others, to live up to those ideals.

This week many citizens are swarming to LaGuardia Airport, not to send their sons and daughters off to OCS like my father did in 1988 but to show support to the terrified undocumented parents and toddlers who've been separated and dispersed to various holding facilities across the nation. These citizens are swarming to airports and detention centers, just as they did after the first Muslim travel ban, to make what John Lewis calls "good trouble": to warn the government of the United States and of the several states that we the people, using the freedom of the press and freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, will keep defending the disfavored.

The body politic has an immune system. People of conscience are the antibodies. And we will keep swarming the virus of hate that is loose in the land and we will contain it.

All these years later, I don't remember how to take apart an M-16A2 rifle. I don't recall the ins and outs of small-unit infantry tactics. But my idea of what it means to be a citizen was formed by that list of leadership principles for Marine officers that I learned in 1988. I took that list seriously. I internalized it and retain it to this day.

So when I observe people today, whether it's a high school student in our Youth Power Program who emigrated from Guatemala last year and is still learning English, or whether it's the president of the United States, who is also still learning English, or his chief of staff or secretary of defense, both former Marine generals, I judge them by their bearing, yes, but more by their bent for justice, which means not justice for the strong but justice for the weak. I judge them by their moral courage, which the Marines taught me is harder to sustain than physical courage, especially when the crowd encourages

cowardice. By their unselfishness, which is not only about letting the men and women in your charge eat before you eat but is also about leading in a way that does not increase their fear of scarcity and their every-man-for-himself scapegoating of outsiders.

To love this country, in short, is to lead and to live with a sense of humanity, humility, responsibility, and decency that is in short supply in national politics and utterly absent in this administration's execution of the laws. A nation must have borders and be able to regulate them. There must be consequences for those who evade those borders and the law of entry. And nothing in those two statements permits, much less requires, the intentional tearing apart of families and the intentional traumatization of children calculated to gain negotiating leverage or to please the base or trig the libs or *whatever*.

We've heard often in the last week the earnest claim, "This is not who we are." I beg to differ. Our history – from the Thomas Frazer and Company Slave Auction House that once stood on the site of the Five Points MARTA station a block from here to the expulsion of the Cherokee from Georgia to the abusive assimilation practiced at Indian boarding schools to the Fugitive Slave Act to the incarceration of Japanese American citizens after Pearl Harbor – our history shakes its head and replies, "This is *exactly* who we are." The more plausible claim, then, is that this is not who are called to be.

We are called to be bigger. We are called by the creed we profess to believe. The creed of the Declaration and the Preamble of the Constitution and the 14th Amendment and young King's Letter from Birmingham Jail and Reagan's speech at the Berlin Wall and Susan B. Anthony's speech at her trial for the crime of attempted voting. That creed is not blind reverence for law, for evil is often legal. The creed is liberty and justice for all.

We are called to renounce any religious institution, as Frederick Douglass did, that contorts itself to rationalize hatred and weaponize bigotry. And the same is true of our American civic religion. Any movement or party that contorts itself to become an authoritarian cult of personality, is one that true patriots must challenge and reclaim. We are called to do this – to live up to this creed – not just as faithful citizens of the United States, for those of us lucky enough to have that status, but as citizens of our towns.

2.

This brings me to the second dimension of civic love I want to explore today: To love your neighbor. That is the injunction of Scripture and it is a decent starting point for any notion of civic love. We can convince ourselves we believe it. Then we take note of life in the city and we face ourselves more candidly.

Last week I was in Kansas City, Missouri and I saw a man die. I was on the 15th floor of the Holiday Inn Aladdin Hotel. It was Thursday around 3:30 PM. I was working on my laptop – actually, I was writing a tweet about Romans 13, the part of the Bible that Jeff

Sessions and Sarah Sanders cited as authority for their policy of separating migrant families, which, it turns out, is the part of the Bible that slavery advocates cited as authority for the Fugitive Slave Act. Getting that tweet phrased just right seemed so important in that moment. Then I heard a sound outside like a gunshot. It was midafternoon in the heart of downtown. Must've been construction in the big plaza across the street by the convention center. I kept on crafting my tweet. Twenty seconds later, BANG BANG BANG BANG. There was no mistaking the noise now. I ran across the room to the window overlooking that plaza and saw four cops in tactical formation, handguns drawn, approaching a person who was on the ground and on his back.

The plaza is a wide open concrete space divided like a grid by small shade trees every twenty feet or so, and near some of the trees are little tables and chairs. The man who had been shot was partially in the shade of one of those trees. His face was obscured but his right arm was not and I will confess to you that in that instant of realizing what I was witnessing one of my first thoughts was to see whether that arm was white or black and then immediately after that, a flash of something like relief, ashamed relief, that it was not black. This is where we are today. The policemen approached him cautiously, then nudged him with their feet, at which point his arm began to move, as if he were weakly reaching for something. Or waving something away.

I walked back to the desk to get my phone, unsure of what I was present for but sensing I should document it, and by the time I came back to the window a few seconds later the man was receiving CPR. A few minutes later he was dead. So many emotions washed over me. Shock. Sadness, profound sadness that this person had lost his life looking up at scraggly branches and a hazy sky in 96-degree heat as men with guns and armor stood over him and strangers behind the curtains of hotel windows watched. A feeling of impropriety, even *impiety*, a sense that I should not have seen that – that someone this man knew should have witnessed his body's last movement and the passing of his soul.

I say all this without knowing who this man was except, as a police officer later told me when they were taking down the crime scene tape, that he was a "bad guy." There were in fact two men, as the local TV news would soon report, who'd gotten into a loud fight about a stolen golf cart. One had a gun and was pistol-whipping the other. An observer called the police. The police say that when they arrived on the scene the one with the gun fired at them. That was the first bang. The cops fired back. The next four bangs. And in that blaze they killed not just the man with the gun but the other man too. I never even saw the other man, who was entirely obscured by the tree, and didn't realize there was a second body until two separate tarps were laid on the ground.

What was the fight about? Were they both, as the cop said, bad guys? Or only one of them? Did they both have to die? Who knew them? Who mourns them? These are the kinds of issues that local news did not probe on Twitter or TV or in the Kansas City Star. It was just another day in America. In fact, that was the second police-involved killing of the day in KC: that morning a woman wielding a sword in a residential neighborhood

had been shot by police. A few days later both stories were swept from the headlines by an inmate who escaped transfer and killed two sheriff's deputies.

The next morning, I saw something nearly as chilling as the death of a stranger. I pushed aside the thin curtain and looked down into the plaza and where that unnamed man had bled and breathed his last, there was now just an irregular patch of sand on the gray surface of this plaza. Right by that patch of sand, under that same shade tree and in one of those dinky little chairs sat a man in a dress shirt and khakis sipping his morning joe and looking at his phone. He had no idea what had happened there less than a day before. No one did. The plaza was its near-empty prosaic self.

This story is not just about how we've normalized the epidemic levels of gun violence in our country. It is about the overall coarseness of civic life. We take that for granted in America now, the same way we accept strip malls and billboards everywhere selling us crap. This state of degradation long precedes Trump, though it also begat Trump.

After fifteen years of war fought by a subcontracted one percent of us, after forty years of concentration of wealth into the hands of a very different one percent, after the thinning out of Elks and Rotary Clubs, after twenty years of reality TV and cage fighting, after ten years of social media narcissism, while despair and addiction have shortened the average American lifespan and white lifespans in particular, what we have is a civic culture in which we don't know our neighbors except as they might irritate us and we don't know ourselves except as Facebook friends might validate us. We don't serve together. We don't play together. We don't sing together. We don't fix things together.

To love your neighbors doesn't require that you like them. It does require that you know them. Gentrification makes that harder. Politics makes that harder. Busyness makes that harder. Which is why we who have gathered here and decided to show up on a Saturday morning – we have to be the ones to make a habit of neighborly love.

Neighborly love is well below MLK's exalted ideal of *agape*, the Greek word he favored describing selfless all-inclusive love. Neighborly love has some of what Ben Franklin would have promoted, a reciprocal spirit of mutual interest. It also has some of what the social scientist Marc Granovetter called two centuries later "the strength of weak ties" – bonds of trust and affection strong enough to make you care about common concerns but not so strong that they become blindly tribal. It is an agreement to see each other: to recognize and be recognized, to not let another human fall into the anonymity of a message board or the grim grid of that concrete plaza in Kansas City. Do you see your neighbor? And I don't mean just the person next door. I mean the homeless man on the sidewalk. The immigrant woman cleaning your bathroom or preparing your lunch.

There's a new documentary out about Mister Rogers called *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* For those of you who have no idea what I'm talking about, I was going to say Google it later but I have a better idea. Ask the person next to you later. Those of you

who do remember the PBS children's show, and Fred Rogers' soothing and subtly radical message that you are loved and capable of loving, will recall that when white Americans did not want black Americans to put their black bodies in the blue waters of public swimming pools, Mister Rogers and Officer Clemmons, the black police officer character, took their shoes off and sat in lawn chairs with their feet in a wading pool, and spoke as friends. And a generation watched and learned.

To love your neighbor is to see them. To humanize them. To share the gift of believing in their dignity. To rescue them from the noisy loneliness that plagues American life. To save them from the social death that often leads to actual death. This may seem a long way from the troubles of our democratic institutions in Washington and the assaults of today's angry populists against the rule of law. But it's not a long way. It is right there. You get neo-Nazi and white supremacist rallies – and you get masked antifa activists – when nobody knows your name or nobody loves their neighbors. You fall into the habit of justifying evil when evil is the nearest path to belonging.

3.

Let me come now to the third and final dimension of civic love, and maybe the hardest: Loving your enemies. Recently I was at a very interesting two-day meeting with many homeless conservatives. I don't mean they are without physical shelter. I mean they have been left without a party now that their party has become a cult of Trump.

One of them was the columnist Mona Charen, who had the guts at CPAC, the annual conservative conference, to call out the hypocrites there who had defended Roy Moore and embraced French neo-Nazi Marine Le Pen. She was booed forcefully, threatened, and needed a security escort to leave the building. Another was David French, a writer for the conservative magazine *National Review*, a devout Calvinist who grew up in small-town Tennessee and still lives there, who served in Iraq as an Army JAG, and who has had friends and neighbors literally turn their backs on him at church and social gatherings because he has had the temerity to warn that Trumpism is at odds with true conservatism. A third was Sarah Longwell of the Log Cabin Republicans, who knew she was conservative long before she knew she was gay and who has fiercely argued that an embrace of liberty should mean an embrace of her and her wife. And she has watched one GOP operative after another capitulate to bigotry.

What struck me most about these folks was their courage. They have paid a price for their stance. They have been ostracized socially and professionally and are reviled by many Trumpian true believers who regard them as infidels. They've been forced to hang out with the likes of *me*. Which then made me think: who are *their* enemies?

There was a time not long ago when I might have been their enemy. I've been a Democrat all my life and I generally have progressive views. Mona and I disagree on

affirmative action. David and I disagree on the Colorado baker who refuses to make a wedding cake for a gay couple. Sarah and I don't see eye to eye on tax cuts for the rich.

But we've been brought together by a shared concern for the health of the republic and a shared commitment to defending democracy against rising authoritarianism and tribalism and polarization. We've been brought together by a crisis. And because we are at the same table now with some common purpose we have humanized each other. Mona and David have kids about the age of my daughter and stepdaughter. Sarah has a fighting spirit, a solid core, a get-it-done attitude and I just want to be more like her. David's wife has written books with Sarah Palin, which you literally could not pay me enough to do, yet we discovered we have a dear friend and colleague in common.

I can tell you that if the United States ever gets to a saner politics, where it's just about arguing over our philosophies and recognizing that democracy is a meant to be a game of infinite repeat play, not a finite scorched-earth contest – if we get to that saner place, where I'll be debating with David and Sarah and Mona and others like them, winning some and losing some, I can tell you these people will not be my enemies. Not because I love everything about them or everything about their beliefs. But because I found *something* about them and *something* about their beliefs to love.

Most of us don't get a chance to engage like this. Think about the countless missed connections in our lives as citizens, missed chances to make friends out of enemies. Let me close now with a tale of two drivers.

The week before last I was in Wichita, with the folks at the Kansas Health Foundation and the Kansas Leadership Center. The man who gave me a ride to the airport was about 65 years old. White, Kansas native, Air Force veteran, used to have a good job in aircraft maintenance. When he learned that I ran an organization called Citizen University, he could not wait to share his views about how "illegals" had taken away jobs at the factories. He told me about a woman he knows who is here illegally and had gotten free tuition to get certified in phlebotomy, the field he had once hoped to enter. He said he'd told her she should get U.S. citizenship. When I explained that there is no way for her just to "get" citizenship, he was unmoved. I said Congress needs to create a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented people because, among other reasons, we could not possibly deport them all at once. He replied, "Not all at once."

Then on my way to the airport yesterday, I met his opposite number. A woman who grew up in the Seattle exurbs, got herself emancipated at sixteen so she could live on her own in the city, was a voter and a left-wing activist from the get-go, marching against Vietnam, against Reagan's embrace of the religious right, against the Iraq War, and now against the people who put immigrants in concentration camps and who, as she put it, hate dykes like her. She is an artist and photographer and she and her partner dream of retiring to the Oregon Coast. But she is over 60 and is barely breaking even as a Lyft driver. After a long career in telecom, she encountered the silent ageism

of the tech workplace. She took English and math courses to get her AA but says that unless her degree can take her back in time forty years, it's not going to help her. So, after years of applying for jobs and not getting interviews, for her final English 106 assignment she wrote a break-up letter to corporate America. She posted it to her LinkedIn page. A big FU to the big businesses she says have screwed Seattle.

These two Americans have never met and likely never will. But they think they know each other. They have pictures in their minds of each other: the coiled racist who wants to build a wall and take us back to the 50s; the pierced-nose socialist who cares about everyone but Americans. Their minds are set to Enemymode and Enemymode makes two-dimensional characters out of three-dimensional humans. Enemymode is flattening and blinding and all-consuming. Like a good video game, it trains you to focus and filter out complication and just keep score. I am naturally good at Enemymode. You are too.

But if I could bring these two American enemies to the same town and introduce them, they would discover they are living the same story. They would recognize the sadness, the disappointment, in each other's stories, as well as the determination and resilience. They would see that they face a common adversary of free market fundamentalism and of globalized capital that's free to exploit local labor. They would discover they both have been treated as outsiders in their own land. They would see that they don't have to pass down that pain to other outsiders, that they can help each other and not fall for demagogues of either the right or the left. They would realize they are not alone. They would discover civic power – and the possibility of civic love.

Here's the thing: I *can* bring these two Americans together. So can you. We are surrounded by them. We *are* them. We just need to make the time to listen to their stories – and each of us to our own conscience. We cannot be too busy to love in Atlanta or America. In fact, we've got to be in a hurry to love. There are migrant babies in cages screaming for their mothers. Be in a hurry to love. There are angry white men blaming nearby immigrants for the sins of faraway capitalists. Search for something in them to love. Be in a hurry to love. There are inflamed liberals who cannot or will not distinguish between a conservative and a Nazi. Love them still. Be in a hurry to love.

Flannery O'Connor, daughter of Georgia and great storyteller of the South, warned us to resist tidy redemptive narratives. I offer no promise of redemption. Our country's soul is on fire the way this city was at the end of the Civil War, and what will douse the flames is not more hating but more loving. That is our only hope. To love like citizens: to cherish our creed, our neighbors, our enemies.

Hurry up and love. Our country calls us.

Readings to Precede the Sermon
June 23, 2018

Flannery O'Connor
From *Mystery and Manners*
Published 1969

There is something in us, as storytellers and as listeners to stories, that demands the redemptive act, that demands that what falls at least be offered the chance to be restored. The reader of today looks for this motion, and rightly so, but what he has forgotten is the cost of it. His sense of evil is diluted or lacking altogether, and so he has forgotten the price of restoration. When he reads a novel, he wants either his sense tormented or his spirits raised. He wants to be transported, instantly, either to mock damnation or a mock innocence.

Fourteen Principles of Marine Corps Leadership
From *Marine Corps Values: A User's Guide for Discussion Leaders* (2016)

Justice: Giving reward and punishment according to the merits of the case in question. The ability to administer a system of rewards and punishments impartially and consistently.

Judgment: The ability to weigh facts and possible courses of action in order to make sound decisions.

Dependability: The certainty of proper performance of duty.

Initiative: Taking action in the absence of orders.

Decisiveness: Ability to make decisions promptly and to announce them in a clear, forceful manner.

Tact: The ability to deal with others in a manner that will maintain good relations and avoid offense. More simply stated, tact is the ability to say and do the right thing at the right time.

Integrity: Uprightness of character and soundness of moral principles. The quality of truthfulness and honesty.

Enthusiasm: The display of sincere interest and exuberance in the performance of duty.

Bearing: Creating a favorable impression in carriage, appearance, and personal conduct at all times.

Unselfishness: Avoidance of providing for one's own comfort and personal advancement at the expense of others.

Courage: Courage is a mental quality that recognizes fear of danger or criticism, but enables a Marine to proceed in the face of danger with calmness and firmness.

Knowledge: Understanding of a science or an art. The range of one's information, including professional knowledge and understanding of your Marines.

Loyalty: Faithfulness to country, Corps, unit, seniors, subordinates and peers.

Endurance: The mental and physical stamina measured by the ability to withstand pain, fatigue, stress, and hardship.

Frederick Douglass

From an 1846 speech before the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society Finsbury Chapel, London, England

Instead of preaching the gospel against this tyranny and rebuking this wrong, ministers of religion have sought, by all and every means, to throw in the background whatever in the Bible could be construed into opposition to slavery, and to bring forward that which they could torture into its support. This I conceive to be the darkest feature of slavery, and the most difficult to attack, because it is identified with religion, and exposes those who denounce it to the charge of infidelity....

I love that religion that sends its votaries to bind up the wounds of him that has fallen among thieves. I love that religion that makes it the duty of its disciples to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction. I love that religion that is based upon the glorious principle, of love to God and love to man; which makes its followers do unto others as they themselves would be done by. If you demand liberty to yourself, it says, grant it to your neighbors. If you claim a right to think for yourselves, it says, allow your neighbors the same right.

It is because I love this religion that I hate the slaveholding, the woman-whipping, the mind-darkening, the soul-destroying religion that exists in the Southern states of America. It is because I regard the one as good, as pure, and holy that I cannot but regard the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked. Loving the one I must hate the other, and I, therefore, proclaim myself an infidel to the slaveholding religion of America.

Martin Luther King, Jr.
From “Loving Your Enemies”
Sermon Delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama
November 17, 1957

[S]ometime ago my brother and I were driving one evening to Chattanooga, Tennessee, from Atlanta. He was driving the car. And for some reason the drivers were very discourteous that night. They didn't dim their lights; hardly any driver that passed by dimmed his lights. And I remember very vividly, my brother A.D. looked over and in a tone of anger said: "I know what I'm going to do. The next car that comes along here and refuses to dim the lights, I'm going to fail to dim mine and pour them on in all of their power." And I looked at him right quick and said: "Oh no, don't do that. There'd be too much light on this highway, and it will end up in mutual destruction for all. Somebody's got to have some sense on this highway."....

Toynbee tells that out of the twenty-two civilizations that have risen up, all but about seven have found themselves in the junkheap of destruction. It is because civilizations fail to have sense enough to dim the lights.... And we will all end up destroyed because nobody had any sense on the highway of history. Somewhere somebody must have some sense. Men must see that force begets force, hate begets hate, toughness begets toughness. And it is all a descending spiral, ultimately ending in destruction for all and everybody. Somebody must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate and the chain of evil in the universe. And you do that by love.