

**August 2016 Trestleboard article by Wor. Greg Cherry, Master of Santa Monica Palisades (CA) Lodge No. 307**

*“Practice, out of the lodge, those great moral duties which are inculcated in it.”*

I struggled with an appropriate Trestleboard post this month, but with all of the recent headlines in July dominated by shootings, mass killings, acts of war, and political debates, I would feel remiss not to address our current state of affairs.

Most Worshipful Russ Charvonja used his platform as the Grand Master last year to address civility, or the lack thereof, in our society. He wrote that “When we are uncivil to one another, we silence the other person; we take his or her voice away.”

At this point, it often feels like the incivility, the dangers, and the brokenness of this world have reached such a fever pitch that there is no turning back. Earlier this month, Brother Brent Thompson was a police Officer killed by a sniper in a violent act in Dallas. He was a Master Mason of Corsicana Lodge No. 174 in Texas, and the father of 6 children. The week prior, 33-year old Philando Castile was shot dead by Police Officers during a routine traffic stop. And while he was not a Mason, his Uncle Clarence is a District Deputy Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Minnesota, who made an impassioned Masonic plea during a CNN interview, which can be found on Facebook.

In the face of so much violence and vitriol, I often feel powerless to do anything. I am not able to prevent a single, disturbed, young individual from bringing a semi-automatic into a nightclub, or driving an armored truck through a crowded street celebration in France. There is already too much anger and hatred towards a system that is perceived as corrupt, imbalanced, and beyond repair. It is hard to know where to begin.

But as a Freemason, I already have the tools and resources to help make the world a better place. As a leader of this lodge, it is my duty to shine a light on the darker places of society with my moral and social virtues. Through the tenets of brotherly love, relief, and truth, I can move past prejudices and injustice, and treat others with respect and compassion. The language and the values of Freemasonry were vital to the development of democracy in America. This is a country that was absolutely founded on Masonic principles. It is possible to return to those principles again. It will take the example and leadership of every Mason out there.

I can't stop every killing. I can't fix our political system. I can't change the world in one lifetime. But I can improve myself. And I can improve those around me. And in doing so, I choose to be a part of the solution, rather than the problem. Of all the threats to our society, one of the most insidious is apathy, or inaction. We all have a part to play. And as Freemasons, it is our duty to pass along those great moral duties which are inculcated within the lodge.

It is time that we look to the trowel – the tool we all receive as Master Masons – to

remind us of our role in spreading the cement of brotherly love, which forms the foundation of a stronger society, and unites us on the fraternal chain.

To learn more about the Civility Project, please visit <http://www.civilitycenter.org/>

*“I violate no secret when I say that one of the greatest values in Masonry is that it affords an opportunity for men of all walks of life to meet on common ground where all men are equal and have one common interest.” - Theodore Roosevelt*