

YOUR OPINION: Courageous people needed in times of divide

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(Photo: Getty Images)

Courage is the basis of moral virtues. Although it is an admirable quality, unfortunately it is becoming a rarity in modern times. Yet every once in a while, there is a sublime act of courage that transcends the mundanity of our modern life.

The recent terror attack in Portland, Oregon, is actually not a surprise. In the current political climate, all American Muslims are subconsciously expecting a hate incident either open in the public or insidious discrimination which is not so apparent. If there is anything extraordinary about this attack in Portland, it is that there were men who found the harassment of the two young teenage girls (one of them wearing a headscarf - "Hijab") so repugnant that they put themselves in the harm's way to protect them. Two men died and the third one grievously injured for strangers, not because it was their job or part of their religion to care or to speak up or to try and protect the two girls, but simply because it was the right thing to do.

This repulsive terror attack on the train has brought awareness to this hibernating quality of fortitude and courage that is sorely in need of revival in these hate-filled times of ours. When it comes to hatred, whether it be from a bigot, Muslim, Jew, Christian, Buddhist, agnostic, secularist or atheist, we need to stand against it in every conceivable way, and condemn it and shame it publicly in the harshest way, until it becomes a deterrent to anyone who even thinks of expressing their hate.

Just as most Americans disavow that supremacist bigot's ideology, so too the vast majority of Muslims disavow the Islamist extremists' ideology. Collectivizing the sins of a few on all others is what caused this tragedy and many others. And this is the ideology we must all fight against within ourselves and around us that we do not blame all for the actions of a few, no matter what group they may belong to.

Tragedy gets a meaning and becomes consequential only if we learn from it. Otherwise, it is just another headline and another story. And what we should learn from this tragedy is that the best of America stood up against the worst of America. Even though the best died — in their death, there should be a collective affirmation and resolve from all of us that the America of Jeremy Christian is not the America that we want. The America we celebrate is that of Ricky John Best, Taliesin Myrddin Namkai-Meche, and Micah David-Cole Fletcher—the America that defends the weak and not the one that preys on them.

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