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Are we now forfeiting our national soul?

**By Staff | Jun 5, 2016**

On Memorial Day, when we stop and honor those who had the courage to bravely risk the ultimate sacrifice, I found myself wondering if it is not now our turn to stand for those very principles here at home. I believe so, as I am feeling compelled by the criticality of our national condition. And, contrary to the popular view, what is at stake here is not the upcoming elections. No, what is at stake is much more crucial to our survival. It is, indeed, the very soul of our nation. We might well recall Mark 8:36: "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit his own soul?"

We would do well to ask, "What is happening to our national soul?" For, at this juncture, I barely recognize the nation I have long loved. The years of gridlock in Washington have created the backlash we are witnessing today from both political parties. And people from both sides of the political divide would, of course, offer very different reasons for this. But at this juncture, in light of the swiftly deteriorating condition of our national soul, I am sounding an alarm to turn our attention to what needs to happen now.

As an interfaith community, we embrace the sanctity of human life beyond religious difference. We seek to see all people as our sister and our brother. Still, it is critical we see, as well, the forces that would threaten such an

ideology and not hesitate to rise up strong standing for our beliefs. This is not a time for silence or hesitation. As Krishna reminded Arjuna in the great Hindu epic the Bhagavad Gita 2:3: "Yield not to weakness. It does not suit you. Shake off the petty faintheartedness. Stand up, Scorcher of foes, wake up!"

We must become warriors – yes, warriors – fighting for the greater good with action aimed at restoring our national soul to health as opposed to simply reacting perpetuating and reinforcing the growing divisiveness.

This is our challenge as we turn to auspicious examples for guidance, to the great ones who have looked into the face of injustice, bigotry, prejudice and political oppression and answered the call. We look to Gandhi, who reminded us: "We must be the peace we want to see in the world." And we seek to emulate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who reminded us in his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize for Peace that if peace and brotherhood are to be achieved, "We must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love."

Ah, but make no mistake. Becoming a warrior for peace and brotherhood among all people is not for the fainthearted, for it requires we lead by example. It requires we see clearly the hate and fear fueling the divisiveness before us and respond with a power born of faith in the inherent goodness of our fellow man. It is only in this way our weakening national soul may be restored to the health expressed in its fundamental values. As it says in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Yes, all men. What can you do to help in this timely restoration? One way is to join with us, faith communities of the New Hampshire Souhegan Valley Interfaith Council, in the first Interfaith Peace Walk planned for Oct. 1.

Wherever you are, just imagine Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Native Americans, to name just a few, walking together in solidarity as fearless examples of what is possible – celebrating unity over uniformity, hope over despair, inclusion over alienation, love over hate.

Let us rise up and become brave warriors for what is possible and, together, restore our national soul to health.

It is time.

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