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Teens can't forget their rights, freedoms in wake of attacks

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DeWarren Langley Columnist

No words can adequately express the sadness and grief caused by the acts of terrorism last Sept. 11.

When faced with such evil, we must look for the good to get us through.

We can gain hope from the multitude of police officers, firefighters, doctors, survivors, iron workers, plumbers and construction workers who risked their lives attempting to save others.

In this time, we must come together and give all we can while remembering those who died that tragic morning.

While it is natural to feel fear and anger, we cannot let those emotions define us nor control our actions.

We must continue to act with the courage that the American spirit has shown and not let our society continue to limit the civil liberties of American citizens, including youth.

We are in a battle against hate.

As a result of Sept. 11, security has become the top priority in the United States and civil liberties are being disregarded.

The hate that caused terrorist attacks against this nation is no different than the hate that exists in our communities, schools and homes - discrimination, segregation and racism.

By committing acts of hate, verbal or physical, we rise no higher than those who committed the cowardly crimes against humanity on Sept. 11.

We must contribute to America's fundamental rights of equality and justice.

We have to increase our respect and understanding for those we do not know.

Sept. 11 was a call to activism. We all need to exercise the rights we hold as Americans.

Honor your rights to freedom of speech, freedom to peacefully assemble and the freedom to vote. Let us trust in our government but not forget to hold it accountable to make decisions that reflect the opinions of all the people it represents, including youth.

Elected officials of all levels of government and party affiliation cannot continue to use the catastrophic events of Sept. 11 as a way of secretly presenting and passing legislation not for the good of the people.

We have learned that not all leaders are those we see on television.

Courageous leaders have emerged from the rubble - the everyday people on the frontlines repeatedly exerting their last ounce of hope.

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. ... You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love."

Although Sept. 11 was a disaster, it also showed that not all of those who are great have to be first in their high school class, or have a master's degree.

They simply need a heart that allows them to care for others and do what is right for all.

The actions we choose to take in this moment will define the future of generations to come. In response to this unprecedented time upon the world's stage, we as the leaders of today and tomorrow must rise within this tragedy and call to activism for not only homeland security, but also global security. We must ensure that people not be labeled as terrorists simply because of their nationality.

Sept. 11 was an act of hate, but America has grown stronger because of love.

Many weaknesses remain to be overcome.

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