

August 16, 2017

To the UConn Community,

Last weekend, the world watched in horrified shock as scenes of brutality fueled by racist, hate-fueled ideologies played out in the town of Charlottesville, Va., home of one of our country's greatest public universities. By the end of the day Saturday, three people were dead: two Virginia state troopers who had been monitoring the march from a helicopter, and a peaceful protester who had come to courageously bear witness against the noxious philosophy of white supremacy.

As our nation struggled to process these horrific events, we learned that groups motivated by the despicable ideologies of fascism and racism are planning more such rallies, particularly targeting public universities as symbols of all that they most despise: diversity, inclusion, and a relentless pursuit of the truth.

Let me be very clear: as a university, we are committed to fearless intellectual debate and to the free speech that makes it possible. Those commitments are essential to another elemental aspect of our identity, which is our determination to create an intellectual community composed of dignity, compassion, and respect, which constitute the foundation of a free society.

As I watched Americans in 2017 march in a torchlight procession in imitation of similar displays in Nazi Germany, and saw them raise their right arms in salute to the Third Reich, I thought of the more than 2,000 UConn students and alumni who went to war against that regime, and especially the 114 who lost their lives fighting it. Their memories are sacred here, now and forever.

The University of Connecticut will never yield to the poisonous ideas and attitudes we saw last weekend, and which are attempting to gain strength throughout our country. It is my commitment – it is my promise – that this will always remain a university that stands firmly for the virtues of democracy, equality, civil discourse, and human rights.

Our values as a university – and, even more importantly, as a nation – are being tested right now. The ways that each one of us responds will reveal before the world our true character and the depth of our commitment to a democratic society.

Sincerely,



Susan Herbst