

Charlottesville starts to heal

On Aug. 11, the white supremacist group Unite the Right organized a rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, to protest the removal of a statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee. Attendees came from various states and brought Confederate flags, swastikas, and signs filled with hatred.

Soon enough, counter protesters joined. Fights broke out among the two contrasting groups.

The situation turned deadly when James Fields, a man from Toledo, Ohio, associated with the alt-right, drove his car into a crowd of counter protesters, killing Heather Heyer and injuring 19 others.

Charlottesville and its residents are unsettled and need time to heal. Not only was there physical pain, but what happened was emotionally traumatizing. The counter protesters were peacefully protesting for what they believed was right, but instead they were attacked. During this time, there are many things that we can do to help not only them, but the nation too.

Over 40 people were injured during the rally. There have been many fundraisers on websites like GoFundMe to help pay for Heyer's funeral expenses and the medical bills of the injured, some which do not have health insurance. A simple Google search or scroll through Twitter and you will find many links. Giving even a dollar will help make a difference in someone else's life.

Another way to help is by learning and understand the history behind Confederate statues. The obvious reason why people want to them down is because they represent the hatred and anti-blackness of Confederates, another reason is why most of them

were put up to begin with.

While they have been put up since the Civil War, the erections of these statues erupted during the Jim Crow Era and Civil Right Movement.

They were used as a tool to intimidate those aiming to get rights for people of color. Add these two together, and it is evident that these statues incite fear in black people and reinforce the fact there have been, and currently still are, people who do not believe that they deserve rights.

Supporting local, state, and national social justice organizations is also key in helping. There are many that are located specifically in Charlottesville, some that are statewide, and others that are nation wide. Examples include IMPACT Charlottesville. The Legal Aid Assistance Center provides legal aid to people who cannot afford it in Virginia. Black Lives Matter has many chapters nation wide, our local one being located in Washington, D.C. You can look for more online and pick which ones you want to support.

“The violence of intolerance and bigotry, intended to hurt and intimidate someone because of their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or disability.” That is the U.S. Department of Justice’s definition of a hate crime. If you witness or experience a hate crime, then you should report it. Trying your best to prevent them before they happen is essential, too. Something as simple as rejecting stereotypes can be significant.

The sole job of the members of Congress is to represent their constituents and what they want for the country. Exercise your First Amendment right to petition them. Call and write to your senators and representatives; tell them that there must be a change. Get them to take action.

Sometimes, doing something as simple as easy as giving your name and email address can make a difference. Sign Color of

Change's petition to take down all of the statues of Confederates in the U.S.

While the situation in Charlottesville was racially motivated, there are many issues that are fueled by sexism, homophobia, transphobia, anti-semitism, Islamophobia, along with many other issues. Do not separate them as they are all forms of bigotry and need to be eradicated.

Lastly, while many people are forced to suffer because of who they are, many people do not have to go through that.

If you are white, male, cisgendered, or straight, please recognize that you have a certain amount of privilege in this country.

Instead of ignoring the upper hand that you have or saying that you did not ask for it, try your best to take advantage of it and bring light to social issues, even though you don't have to personally deal with them.