

Republicans are failing the latest litmus test on Trump

BY GENE NICHOL



Donald Trump's longest serving chief of staff, Gen. John Kelly, has confirmed reports that the former president said, in Kelly's words: "...those who defend their country in uniform, or are shot down or seriously wounded in combat, or spend years being tortured as POWs are 'suckers' because 'there's nothing in it for them.'" (Deep breath.)

Kelly's words echo

2020 reports in The Atlantic that Trump said he didn't want to visit the graves of American soldiers buried in the Aisne-Marne Cemetery near Paris. "Why should I go to that cemetery," he reportedly asked, "it's filled with losers." On the same European trip, Trump said the 1,800 Marines killed in the Belleau Wood were "suckers."

Almost beyond comprehension, he uttered similarly dreadful phrases to Gold Star father Kelly at Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day 2017, not far from Kelly's son's burial plot, saying, "I don't get it, what was in it for them?"

The Atlantic also re-

ported in a profile on Gen. Mark Milley that Trump protested seeing severely wounded Army Captain Luis Avila sing "God Bless America" at a welcome event for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. "Why do you bring people like that in here," Trump berated, "no one wants to see that, the wounded." This was before Trump said on Sept. 22 that the remarkable Milley had committed acts for which, "in times gone by, the punishment would have been DEATH!"

There is more, of course, including Trump's famous statements about John McCain and George H.W. Bush. But I'll stop before you vomit.

I listened to an interview about these outrages last week with Gold Star father Khizr Kahn. He asked, "What do we expect from someone who thinks that service can only be self-service?" Trump has "no concept of living and dying for others." He knows "nothing of sacrifice."

Kahn went further: "A person who has never sacrificed is incapable of love. Love of country. Love of purpose. Love of human beings. There is nothing but appetite and ego. He is incapable of leadership. Especially of being commander-in-chief."

Kelly, who worked intensively at the former president's side, day by

day, month by month, concluded that Trump is "a person that has no idea what America stands for and no idea what America is about. (He) has nothing but contempt for our democratic institutions, our Constitution, and the rule of law."

Our Republican leaders, in Washington and Raleigh, know that what Kelly and Kahn said is true. I'm guessing most Republican voters know it too, as they prepare to renominate him for president. That is, I'll concede, hard to grasp. Or forgive.

Trump's existential, narcissistic, violence-laced threat to the American democracy is, without conceivable doubt, the most important issue faced by this state and this nation. Each of us will be called to account for our actions, in this moment, to, in Richard Rorty's words, "achieve our country."

Trump's crusade is no doubt congenial to Proud

Boys and White supremacists. But are money Republicans willing to trade all, to surrender everything, for a few thousand, or even a few million dollars? Are evangelical Tar Heels so committed to imposing their religion on everyone else that they will, literally, abandon morality, decency, and the American promise? Are libertarian Republicans, after enjoying their web of subsidies, willing to fly under this vile banner to supposedly assure they are left alone? Are each content that an ensuing totalitarian government will protect their money, their denominations, their estates, and their (already surrendered) dignities? They shouldn't be.

Contributing columnist Gene Nichol is a professor of law at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

NC Rabbis on Israel attacks: This is our 9/11

BY RABBI ASHER KNIGHT AND RABBI JUDY SCHINDLER

Saturday, on what was meant to be a day of celebration, marked by observing our Sabbath and concluding the harvest festival of Sukkot, tragically transformed into a day of darkness and sorrow. The morning brought a horrifying nightmare, as Israel faced a massive, meticulously coordinated terrorist assault targeting its civilians. These attacks spared no one, striking on the roads and even within the sanctity of homes.

Israel now grapples with an orchestrated onslaught from sea, air, and land. The blaring sirens serve as a constant reminder of the imminent danger, with thousands of rockets raining down on Israel. Not since 1973, exactly 50 years ago, has Israel experienced such a massive and violent assault, plunging it into the depths of war. Close to two dozen towns and communities were infiltrated. Men, women, and children have been kidnapped and held hostage by terrorists. Even the Iron Dome, symbolizing Israel's technical advantage, has been overwhelmed.

Our hearts ache with worry, sadness and uncertainty as we receive continuous updates from our Israeli loved ones through phone calls and texts. As this Sabbath comes to a close, reports from our counterparts, Israeli rabbis and lay leaders, suggest that this harrowing ordeal has claimed more than 600 Israelis and left thousands wounded or captive. It is a heart-breaking reality we confront as we absorb these devastating numbers.

In these challenging times, we stand resolutely united with Israel, sharing in their fear and crisis. An attack on Israel poses not only a threat to its people but an existential threat to the entire Jewish community and our collective identity. With approximately 7 million Jews out of a global population of 15 million residing in Israel, this threat strikes at the core of our Jewish family. Today, we are reminded of our historical vulnerability.

The establishment of Israel was intended to provide a safe haven, and now even that safety and existence are under challenge.

In the days ahead, Israel will exhaust every resource to protect its citizens, prevent further loss of life and destruction, and secure its borders as the homeland of the Jewish people. The foremost duty of any government is to safeguard its citizens from physical attack. Israel is no exception. We hope that the world will comprehend the necessity of Israel's armed response and refrain from hasty condemnation, choosing instead to support efforts aimed at restoring peace and security to the region.

This is Israel's 9/11 and coincides with advances in the peace process with Saudi Arabia which some commentators say is purposeful. At this time of grief and terror, we are also cognizant of the innocent Gazan civilians trapped in an unending cycle of devastation brought on by the policies and practices of the Hamas-run government - including this invasion.

As Israel faces this relentless assault, we stand in unwavering solidarity with our Israeli brethren. Our hearts are heavy with sorrow and shock over the relentless attacks orchestrated by Hamas during sacred times.

Our profound grief extends to the innocent lives tragically lost on both sides of the border, and our fervent prayers go out for the swift recovery of those injured in these devastating attacks. Our thoughts and solidarity are with the courageous defenders of Israel, and we earnestly hope for the safe return of those who have been taken captive.

In these trying times, we invoke the blessings of the One who makes peace, praying that tranquility may descend upon us and encompass all of Israel. May peace prevail amid the turmoil and adversity.

Rabbi Asher Knight is Senior Rabbi of Temple Beth El. Rabbi Judy Schindler is Rabbi Emerita of Temple Beth El.



KATHLEEN PARKER The Washington Post

On Jan. 9, 2021, Steven and Nancy Hales were murdered in their home in South Carolina. A memorial dedicated to the couple is in a park near where they lived. The Haleses had no children and they lived private lives.

The dead live on until last person who remembers them is gone

BY KATHLEEN PARKER
The Washington Post

CAMDEN, S.C.

They say our lives go on after death only as long as the last person who remembers us. Except for a few notables of history, this means we live for a couple or three generations before photographs fade and family stories are forgotten.

But what about people who die with no family or friends to remember them? I'd never given the question much thought; I'm busy worrying about and, lately, burying my own people, whose lives I try to hang onto.

My thinking changed on Jan. 9, 2021, when a couple in my neighborhood were murdered in their home and their house was set ablaze.

I didn't know Steven and Nancy Hales, but I've become a bit obsessed with them, not out of morbid curiosity but out of respect for lives so horribly extinguished - and the real possibility that any memories of them will be short-lived. The Haleses had no children and they lived private lives. "They weren't social," as one neighbor described them to me.

As far as I know, I never laid eyes on them. I'm told by acquaintances that they were active in local Republican politics. They loved antiques and often visited a destination shop, Camden Antiques Market, which is something of a social hub for locals who love a good story as well as old treasures. Owner Patricia Richardson, a.k.a. "the Queen," is the main attraction. Elegant, tall and lanky, she's a raconteur who knows everything and everyone, including Steven and Nancy Hales.

The Haleses bought a lot, Richardson told me. Steven, especially, had an educated eye. She recalls a time when he noticed a heavy, etched-glass pitcher inside a cabinet and exclaimed, "Oh, where did you get that 18th-century English pitcher?" When she opened the cabinet for him, he said, "I have to have it."

"He was very knowledgeable about a lot of things," said Richardson. "He was very discerning."

For several months after the murders, yellow crime tape surrounded the property on the corner of Chestnut and Lytleton streets. A few flowers lay on the front walk below the tape. A white pergola stands vigil on the side

yard next to the walk. Presumably, a path led to a back door of what used to be a pretty, yellow two-story house. The second floor was badly burned after the murderer spread gasoline throughout the house the day after the killings. Neighbors noticed the flames on Jan. 10 and called authorities.

First responders found a large pool of blood in the driveway, and the bodies of Steven and Nancy Hales in the kitchen. Their throats had been slashed.

It would be an understatement to say that the murders shocked the town.

It didn't take long for police to make an arrest. Neighbors had pointed them in the direction of Thomas Dwayne Knotts, 46, who had done odd jobs for the Haleses. Steven helped Knotts start a roofing business and frequently loaned him money. Tag readers set up throughout the county tracked Knotts and the white Toyota Tacoma he had taken from the Haleses' residence to his mother's house. His pockets were stuffed with jewelry, and more jewelry was found outside in a shed.

Knotts was scheduled for trial during the week of

Sept. 25, but he decided instead to plead guilty. Calling him "evil personified," Judge Donald B. Hocker sentenced Knotts to two consecutive life sentences for two counts of murder, two counts of desecration of human remains, possession of a weapon during a violent crime, arson in the second degree and grand larceny.

For a few bucks he got from an ATM using the Haleses' stolen cards, and a pocketful of jewels, Knotts killed two people who had tried to help him. He deserves no recognition for what he did and should die in prison, but, as these things often go, he will be remembered by the community, his mother and no doubt others.

There's little left to remind anyone of the two people who once lived in the pretty yellow house, now demolished.

Someone has already bought the lot where the home once stood. Maybe when the next house is built, the owners will include a brick in the foundation engraved with the Haleses' names. Some folks have planted a tree in the park across the street with a marker reading: "In Memory of Nancy & Steven Hales / Good Friends." In these small ways, perhaps, the Haleses can live on a while longer - until the last person who remembers them is gone.

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