

Timothy Snyder's fourth lesson from the twentieth century in his book *On Tyranny* is this: "Take responsibility for the face of the world." He explains that this means to notice the signs of hate, do not look away, and do not become accustomed to them. He urges us to remove those signs ourselves from anything over which we have control.

So, that brings up a question. What are the signs of hate in our society these days? Swastikas, Confederate flags, homophobic and racist remarks, and demeaning comments about women are still too often present. And dividing the world into "our people" and "others," making "others" fair game for our marginalization, our lack of concern, and our downright hatred is not the action of empathetic and fair people.

Putting up a sign now before election to show our preference is certainly not an act of hatred. Whether that sign says "Biden" or "Trump" should not make any of us an object of disdain by others. But, there are other signs, some of them seen in our community, that cross a line. These symbols are the action of people who, for some reason, are exhibiting open hatred. When I see a sign that calls our very competent and respectable governor an "idiot," it does not reflect on her at all, but it does indicate something very negative about the person who has displayed it. And, when I see a Confederate flag in front of a house, on a license plate, or on the back of a motorcycle, I see racism, one of the most endemic problems our country faces. We Americans come in many colors, have various—or no—religions, are heterosexual or homosexual or any of the many manifestations of our view of sex and gender. We have all kinds of differences.

That should not result in hatred for those who don't think as we do or don't look like us. And, we must not let these differing views of the world interfere with dependence on common sense and science. When we know, for instance, from the words of doctors and researchers, that masks and social distancing can help protect us and others from contracting Covid 19, we should not their use become a political statement. I wear a mask when I must go out into a public place because I don't want to get sick and don't want to infect others. And yet, this health practice has become a "we" or "others" symbol.

So, whenever I can, I hope I will refrain from displaying any symbol of hate, and when I have an opportunity, I will also make others aware of my feelings when I see or hear signs of hate in our own community. It is my responsibility and that of all of us.