

Hope as a matter of choice

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The history of civilization as recorded in books is usually expressed in terms of the crossroads, the grand, decisive turns of events. But in truth, we have always been shaped more in the shadows than in the light of day. If we become the objects of our own current dread, it will not be because we made it happen but rather, because we allowed it to come to pass.

There always have been and always will be predators howling in the darkness. And hearing the cacophony, there have always been and will always be those among us who step forward to defend 'home,' who steadfastly step up to the ramparts, putting aside their differences and distances to stand shoulder to shoulder in common cause.

There have also always been and will always be those who cower, pulling the comforter closer about them as the sound of the running feet echo along the streets outside.

Neither of these – the courageous or the craven – will determine the kind of society in which our children's children will flourish or flounder. Nor taken together will they determine the outcome.

A society's character is determined in part by aspiration but in even larger part by silent consent. Those who neither cower in bed nor run toward the walls, those who watch and comment from behind closed windows are the true shapers of our destiny. Those who hear the troubling comment and say nothing. Those who watch the rights of others being trampled. Those who see but decline to take notice.

Evil exists as the province of those who promote it and those who allow it, in equal measure.

The final attack will come not with fangs bared and talons extended. The worst of this battle will be fought in murmured obscenities, in hidden hatreds. It will be a battle not for our property but for our souls. And it will be fought in the minds of people of good will who choose to stand up for themselves and for others.

I believe we will collectively stand up. Because it's the right thing to do and I believe most people are basically good. But also because hope resides in believing we are not alone. And I need hope as much as anyone.