

# ‘Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much’

- Helen Keller

*How Helen Keller’s words inspired a veteran to speak out against his former commander-in-chief*

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June has just started and I already find myself at wit’s end—torn between trying to stay abreast of what’s happening in the world on social media, and yet trying to distance myself from viewing the world’s dueling health and social ills simultaneously.

During my usual virtual scrolling, I came across a quote from American author and activist Helen Keller, in which I found a rather profound meaning, solace, and significance in what’s happening with and around me.

“I cannot do everything, but I can do something,” Keller wrote. “I must not fail to do the something that I can do.” As if these words were a call to arms, I simply could not get this quote out of my head.

Reading these words over and over again until inspiration struck me like a bolt of lightning, how could I apply these words to what’s happening in the world around me? When I heard that our

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president suggested using the military to quell protests of police brutality, it disturbed me to my core.

The fact that I vehemently disagree with a man elected to the highest and most powerful position in my country does not sit well with me. But that *is* the beauty of our nation’s democracy.

I have the freedom to voice my opinion without the fear that I may be persecuted because of it—the very same freedom I volunteered to defend when I enlisted into the Navy in 2014.

However, the notion that my country’s military strength might be used against its very own citizens seems absolutely traitorous to even imply *prima facie*.

In what Godforsaken parallel universe would American soldiers ever be used against the American people, and for what reason?

“I am mobilizing all federal and local resources, civilian and military, to protect the rights of law-abiding Americans,” President Trump proclaimed in a public address from the White House Rose Garden.

While these words initially seem brave and forthright, the reality is that police have taken to the streets to meet peaceful protesters with violence. It’s shocking that our president has blatantly voiced his eagerness to use proud American soldiers as a show of force against our precious American citizens.

These are the same citizens that have the freedom of choice and fortitude to risk their own lives to protect others by joining the military themselves. The only way my brain would allow me to rationalize his thinking is by believing that he is either blind to the social injustices in our county or that he flat out doesn’t care.

Thankfully, Helen Keller has a quote for this as well—“The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.” Donald Trump’s blindness and reluctance to address the social and racial injustices in America have wounded and torn the moral fabric of our country deeply.

Trump continued his substantiating suggestion to use military force by saying, “Today I have strongly recommended to every governor to deploy the National Guard in sufficient numbers that we dominate the streets. Mayors and governors must establish an overwhelming presence until the violence is quelled.”

This “overwhelming presence” and willfulness to “dominate the streets” have emboldened law enforcement across the country. Police have begun to disregard the humanity of the protesters and bully thousands of people for using their first Amendment rights to protest a flawed legal system.

A system that allows abusive police to act without the fear of being held accountable must be held accountable. It is imperative that this be addressed immediately in order for our country to begin to heal.

But...President Trump strongly proclaimed, “As we speak, I am dispatching thousands and thousands of heavily armed soldiers, military personnel and law enforcement officers to stop the rioting, looting, vandalism, assaults and the wanton destruction of property.”

Yes, it is understood that some have used the protests as an excuse to loot and destroy property in an attempt to discredit those who cry for justice. However, let it not be forgotten that all of this carnage may have been avoided if four officers were held accountable for their role in the death of George Floyd.

Accountability seems to be at the heart of our country’s problems, at least in this latest debacle and with the president himself. There is a grave lack of accountability in America’s racist history toward its own people, and perhaps a lack of accountability on the behalf of law enforcement and the citizens they are sworn to protect in this instance.

However, the more unfortunate lack of accountability through “checks and balances” rests with our current presidential leadership that feels liberated to execute heartless decisions of consequence unilaterally, reveling in partisan and complicit cronyism.

Social media platforms are flooded with images and videos of both militant and empathetic police responding to protesters with violence and compassion. How can one justify using brutality against people peacefully protesting that same brutality?

There are mitigating factors as to why and how many people in communities of color end up resenting cops and further enforcing feelings of enmity. There are complicated reasons why they welcome the police presence in their communities, as well.

So poetic are the words of a deaf and blind activist that ring loud and true amongst the chaos embroiling us today — “*Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.*” Even now, Helen Keller reminds us that when *we come together as one, we are most powerful as one.*



Jonathan C. Scott attends Hampton University and is a rising junior broadcast journalism major from Brooklyn, New York. A third-generation “Hamptonian” and a veteran of the United States Navy, he spent four years serving as an Aviation Electrician’s Mate from 2014-2018. While on deployment overseas in Greece and Dubai, he realized the impact that media has on people’s lives and the importance of representation for every walk of life—experiences that are the driving force of his journalism pursuit.

