

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: FW: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 6.5.20
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From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Sent: Friday, June 5, 2020 9:30 AM
To: MOJO210AL <MOJO210AL@aol.com>
Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 6.5.20

WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 3 Walkers 3 People fishing 2 Dog Walkers 2 Trucks 1 bicyclist 1 Car No ISD#197 School Bus

A quick observation. Rev. Al Sharpton knows how to write a eulogy. He also knows how to deliver one in a cadence that resonates with his congregation. He successfully left the mourners with a vision of the deceased man's life that they could hold onto moving forward into their healing from their grief. Remember when I first started writing these exercises in typing? I kept saying that the column I intended to write on a Sunday would have to wait. There was always something more pressing that either popped into my mind or an event that I thought I should address. And finally, that column was never written—until today. There is a time for every column under heaven.

At the time, my heart was breaking watching the bodies piled up in Italy of people who had died of Covid-19. The rapidity of their death and the unprepared nature of their society overwhelmed the morticians, the cemeteries, the hospital morgues and the society itself. And probably never stated, but always present in my mind, it overwhelmed the burdened clergy who would normally have had to bury each and every one of these precious individuals whose lives were now lost. There is nothing that we do as clergy that is more important than delivering a eulogy—but the fact was that these people were most probably buried without too many words being shared about them. And for me that was just too sad to imagine. At the end of each person's life, the mourners congregate to understand the frame by which they must hold onto their memories. Our only role at that moment is to leave the mourner with something to hold onto—not facts that have been shared with the clergy about the deceased's life, but a frame, a story that takes those facts and creates an enduring picture of a life lived. Too many eulogizers fail to understand that truth. My experience in listening to Rev. Sharpton yesterday was that he knew what his job was and he did it with clarity, the right touch of humor (roaches and turning the lights on), and left his listeners with a clear frame around which to understand George Floyd's(zl) life and his death.

I am not big on martyrs. It is certainly a concept that is evident in Jewish teaching. Indeed, on Yom Kippur we have an entire section of the service devoted to the ten ancient rabbinic martyrs who died for their beliefs. However, martyrdom is not a concept that easily resonates with many of us. We are more likely to see a person as being one of the 36 righteous individuals in every generation whose presence sustains the world. (A eulogy frame that must be used very sparingly, or by a rabbi who moves from community to community every couple of years). That being said, for the

mourners and for all of us who listened, Rev. Sharpton framed Floyd's(zl) life with the robes of martyrdom. And in truth, perhaps his death will serve as THE call for racial justice and healing and for the knees of society to finally be lifted off the backs of minority communities inside our country. The scowling face of a white man with his knee on the neck of a black man is an image that will not easily be forgotten by any caring and compassionate human being. What a powerful image that Rev Sharpton then used in collapsing all the African American experience into the experience of the unspeakable death that has been seen by all of us time and time again. And in his final framing moment, asking that Floyd(zl) find the rest he now deserves, Rev Sharpton declared that with his death, he changed the world. God, I hope that is true. But if history is any judge, I am not yet convinced that it will. Indeed, just the other day, someone I know and care about sent a video to me that trafficked in racist bigotry and hurtful imagery. I am sure they thought it was funny, but it spoke to the depths to which racism has infiltrated into our own people and communities.

In any event, my point today is twofold. My heart grieves for the continual racial divide so evident inside our country and I am grateful that Rev. Sharpton provided a vision-- even one that I am not a big fan of-- for seeking the repair that must take place inside our country and in our hearts. And I pray that if there is any reason for this senseless murder done by a police officer, that that reason is that the shackles of societal bigotry are finally destroyed. But also so very true, we can never forget that among the hundreds of thousands of people who have died as a result of Covid-19, that each of them were also deserving of a eulogy by which their lives were framed. And I grieve that I will not know their stories, understand the purposes of their lives, and that they are simply part of a number of fatalities that is overwhelming and their lives and deaths are fairly anonymous. My heart breaks for them for different reasons, but one thing I know is that as a collective, their deaths must also teach us a lesson that we must continue to search for fully. If only there were enough skilled clergy to eulogize each and every one of them.... Morris

Sent by my iPad