

## Affirming Our Shared Values

Our shared religious and human values are the basis of the IFFA. Among those is a belief in the worth and dignity of every person often expressed in some variation of the Golden Rule. We believe one purpose of religion is to help each person develop to his or her full rational, emotional, and spiritual potential. That requires us to work together for a society that provides the resources and conditions for each person to realize that potential.

This shared commitment to human flourishing causes us to recognize President Trump's derogatory comment about black-majority countries as a moral matter as well as a political one. It shows complete disrespect for dignity for a group of people whose only fault is they do not have financial or military power.

Unfortunately, it is not a surprise; he made similar, though less vulgar, statements both as a candidate and as president. Indeed, the frequency of racist, misogynistic, anti-LGBT, anti-disabled, and anti-non-Christian statements threatens to deaden our moral sensibilities. We are tempted to think, "There he goes again. That's horrible." We may express our outrage to some friends, but that's as far as we go.

We cannot respond to every outrageous statement coming from this administration, nor should we. It simply adds to the cacophony that distracts from more serious political actions that attempt to overturn laws and regulations that protect or civil rights and our health and safety. However, we must periodically affirm the values that are the basis of a just and decent society. Remaining silent establishes a 'new normal' in which open racism and bigotry are accepted and acceptable. The notable rise in violence against ethnic and religious minorities since he became the Republican nominee is evidence we are already moving in this direction.

The worth of each individual is a fundamental value shared by all world religions. This value is expressed through tolerance, inclusion, and respect for every person. Statements that incite hatred, division and nationalism based on color of skin, place of birth, sexual orientation, and gender are a particularly egregious offense against the universal religious values of the inherent worth of each life and living in peace.

We stand for human equality and the respect for all people regardless of their religion, ethnic identity, country of origin, gender, sexual preference or any other categorization. We stand against stereotypes that paint entire groups of people with negative images. We stand for simple human decency based on our common sisterhood and brotherhood. Each of us is of infinite value. When we fail to affirm and act on that understanding, we are all diminished.