

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: FW: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 7.9.20
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From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 9, 2020 9:36 AM
To: MOJO210AL <MOJO210AL@aol.com>
Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 7.9.20

No WAGON WHEEL CENSUS today either(different route)

When I was a congregational rabbi I was blessed with many members who grew up in Brooklyn and whose loyalty to that borough remained strong long after the Dodgers left their environs. In fact, one former congregant of mine wrote to me last night from his retirement digs in San Diego. He lovingly reminded me that my early identification with the Yankees was unfortunate and that had my father been able to take me to Ebbets Field and not Yankee Stadium, my identification with the downtrodden and not the elites would have been secured for life. My response, of course, is that anyone who lived through the CBS years of Yankee ownership knows what identifying with the downtrodden really means. But the truth of the matter is, as I explained to another reader in Bexley, Ohio, my choice of the Yankees as the team of my youth(I have grown from those days) is a result of my mom teaching me to read when I was 4. Having used obituaries as her teaching tool, who could blame me for taking those new found skills and reading the sports pages. And so my favorites were indeed the winners—Yankees, Celtics, AJ Foyt and Arnold Palmer. If only my mom would understand what her own version of “Head Start” wrought. But I digress..

Our identification with teams and places is a serious part of many peoples lives. But in truth, our identification with a place is an organizing principle for all of us that has little to do with teams and winners. We identify with a place for a variety of reasons, and while having a winning team might be one reason, there are many other factors that make that identification possible. We have seen evidence of that identification play itself out in serious ways in the last few weeks. The entire debate around the flying of the Confederate flag is but one example. Those folks who proudly displayed that flag were identifying with a country that lasted but a few years and a philosophy that remains, sadly, all too evident in their hearts and minds 150 years after its disappearance. The last state to still have an official symbolic representation of the confederacy on its flag just last week decided to retire it. But as we all know, while this country is finally coming to terms with the traitorous legacy of that failed southern experiment in country making, it is doubtful that we have seen the last confederate flag flying inside this country. In fact, I imagine that were one to drive on many hiways inside America-both north and south- there might be a few trucks on the road with that flag flying high. Indeed our President in one of his most recent pronouncements said that flying that flag is simply a matter of free speech. In all but asking that his supporters feel free to fly it at his gatherings and in their homes, he has decided that symbols of hate and violence are more important than national healing and reconciliation. In his embrace of free speech being hate speech, he, ironically, joins hands with so many folks recently in the news. Just yesterday it was noted that a Philadelphia Eagles football player posted horrific comments about the Jewish people and was supported by other athletes who embraced his right to “express his truth.” Curiously, the very people who condemned, rightfully so, the President for his embrace of hateful symbols have been uncomfortably quiet in condemning this anti-Semitic outburst. Might it have something to do with the comment that was made to me about identifying with “the downtrodden and not the elite”?

I know my friend in San Diego had no such intention when he made that humorous comment to me. He was simply reminding us that certain teams, and by extension certain places, connote different things for people. Cheering for the Yankees was an expression of support for money and power. Cheering for the Dodgers was an expression, when they were in Brooklyn, of support for the little guy. How many of these now older folks were also conflating the “downtrodden” with the fact that it was the Dodgers who broke the color barrier in baseball? I would imagine they had parents that made sure they understood the significance of that action from the time they were old enough to understand the word baseball. I don't know for sure, but I imagine the fact that another former congregant— and

still dear friend— told me once that her grandparents lived on the same street or next door to Jackie Robinson is an indication that it may be true. I tell you all of this because places and teams represent many things to people beyond the sport they play or the place they are found. We ascribe meaning to teams or places that meet our needs and fit into our own narrative. If we overly identify with downtrodden, we see the potential for a team OR a country to be representative of everything we don't stand for at all. When it comes to sports team we can laugh about it, when it comes to places or States-it is no laughing matter. And often times that comes with a heavy price. In the case of the Confederacy, it is deserved. In the case of the Bronx and the Grand Concourse- maybe not so much. Morris

Sent by my iPad