A Prologue to Our Future

Comments from Guest Columnist Nick Allard
Outgoing Brooklyn Law School President & Dean

(Columbia's Note: Once again we are pleased that Brooklyn Law School [BLS] President Nick Allard has agreed to provide a guest column while we're in Pasadena visiting Els and grandkids.)

(During the past six years, Allard has diligently and effectively garnered recognition for BLS as one of our nation’s leading legal institutions. As he steps down at the end of this month, he should know that he has earned the undying gratitude of multitudes of BLS graduates and students, including this writer, a member of the Class of 1967. Below are Allard’s comments.)

“Last July, my wife Marni and I paid our respects at the terrifying and unforgettable military cemeteries in Normandy, France. At the very same time when we were touring the flowered beaches and cliff-nest
ted, President Trump was in Paris. He was behaving oddly toward the French first lady and, unexpectedly, seemed to lose dimension in the prescence of the young French president.

“Incidentally, the command-in-chief of America’s military might—the largest, strongest and most feared armed forces in the world—was acting as if the annual Bastille Day military parade celebrating the overthrow of the monarchy, national unity and the sacrifices made to preserve freedom, individual rights and equality was a parade in honor of his own derisive self-image.

“We could not fail to notice as we walked among the thousands of pristine white crosses and six-pointed stars that marked the graves of American soldiers, how incredibly young most were of the fallen. Indeed, the very first group we passed was literally delicately clad closely beneath the name of a 17-year-old Jewish man from New York City who had died coincidentally on the very day of our visit 75 years before.

“Most of the other markers we viewed were of men and women of that age or hardly much older. It was indeed, by any measure, a heroic army of America’s youth. Many from this truly great generation made the ultimate sacrifice for the future benefit of their families and people who they would never know.

“In that precise moment we felt the full weight of the magnitude of what is at stake in the epic struggle now underway in our nation and around the world for the heart and soul of our way of life and democr
cy. It is nothing less than a war over whether our cherished values and the ceaseless pursuit of justice, equality and peace through our limited form of constitutional self-government under the rule of law will endure. On the historic systemic conflict will determine whether, instead, we will fall into a dark dystopian chaotic state of existence where the rule of law is replaced by outcomes determined by autocratic power, influence, force, ignorance, hatred, bigotry, immorality and lawlessness.

“We were both simply overcome with the idea that we should be unable to waste the enormous, selfish price paid by so many people in order to preserve and enhance democracy since the founding of our Republic, by fasting today to engage fully with others to fight the good fight. We must act now, rather than after it is too late, and act well below the point faced by those brave souls of Operation Overlord when it had become almost impossible to secure the beaches against the terrifying defenses of the barbarism of those who were overzealous and excit
ing of chaos, of destruction.

“At this very same moment, we were taking in the tip of the monument of the monumental
t military fields of youthful soldiers, were also filled with hope and pride.

“Hope, realizing how effectively our young people, like the young people of generations past, including, recently, young lawyers, are already their equals and their peers, the first lines bit
ting over the issues of our day to uphold the Constitution and rule of law. And, pride, realizing how our very own Brooklyn Law Law students, inspired and guided by our faculty and alumni and local practitioners, are not waiting until they have earned their degrees to jump into the controversy and to contribute.

“Last year, in the wake of the pres
tident’s first executive order banning travel from seven Muslim-majority countries, several Brooklyn Law

School professors and dozens of their law students descended on major area airports in support of ACLU lawyers who prepared a case to stay the ban in federal court. And, many of our stu
dents and faculty members were standing outside the U.S. Courthouse in Downtown Brooklyn on a cold January night, cheering with thou
sands of others as the lawyers bound
d down the stairs with the court-ordered stay in their hands.

“Similarly, the recent round of sweeps across the country, designed to deport undocumented immigrants, but affecting some legal residents as well, has tested further the laws of our nation and again put young law
gers and civic-minded law students at center stage in what is sure to be a protected and robust national debate. Our motivated activist future lawyers also championed “Black Lives Matter,” #MeToo, Time’s Up, Parkland Strong, and other causes that touch their hearts using the power of a legally trained mind to make a difference. The participation of our regulated lawyers and aspiring lawyers in what I see as an

exciting and engaging national civic

lesson inspires and energizes me to keep on pushing on.

“On that same Bastille Day last year, after the unity parade down the Champs Elysees, President Macron traveled south to Nice on the French Riviera. There he honored the memory of the hundreds of people killed and on the sad first anniversary of the terror attacks driving a large truck through an unsuspecting, helpless holiday crowd on the sidewalks of

prominent.

This reminded Marni and me that here in America we are not alone in our problems, and the existential threat we face, ranging from climate change to pandemics to poverty to sexual acts by vicious nonhuman monsters, make visible
effective leadership at home and cooperation with civil societies abroad even more acutely necessary. This is hardly a time to withdraw and alienate the rest of the civil
desired, or even to abandon any peace and lead as America has done for so long.

“Perhaps you have heard about the political ad in a current congressional campaign that declares, ‘Aker, 9-11, the greatest threat to America is in a car.’ Today, the greatest threat to America resides in 1000 Pennsylvania Ave. As for many people, it is tempting and, at times, hard to resist agreeing with such a harsh sentiment, but it is simply insane. Rather than factions of our political field, the greatest threat to our democracy is, with respectful apologies to Louis Brandeis in his famous Ohioan days, people born to freedom who fail to be alert and speak in their liberty by elected leaders. And yes, harpists, Brandeis must also not fail to respond before it is too late to the crude, cumulative erosion of freedom in the name of worthy purpos
e people of zeal who lack understand

ing.

“At the dawn of the Cold War of my early childhood, George Kennan warned us about another most mili
tious challenge, a challenge that we still face today. In his stark, tough message about the Soviet threat, sent in his famous long telegram from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, Kennan argued for tough containment of communist expansion. However, Kennan cautioned us to beware that in vigorously pursuing determined foes who abhor what we stand for and who seek to weaken and even destroy us, we must take care not to be like the Siren.

“So, this is the time when the state of our country and the world is at stake. Meanwhile we are, as we always have and always will be, a nation comprised of good people:

Striking white crosses and six-pointed stars fill the military cemeteries in Normandy, France.

Nick Allard will resign as president and dean of Brooklyn Law School at the end of June after leading the school for the past six years.

Photo courtesy of Nick Allard

Pro Bono Barrister

By Charles F. Otey, Esq.

PRO BONO BARRISTER is a weekly column dedicated to telling the good about the good lawyers do. Send your comments or suggestions to this writer cares of this newspaper or to COTVEYES@jail.com.

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Allard’s wife Marni stands in the foreground at the memorial to those lost in the terror attack in Nice, France.

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