

# Triumph in the midst of tragedy

Pure evil.

That's how our commander in chief described it last week.

Carefully planned.

That's how police investigators and news pundits described it.

Questions continue to swirl around what prompted Las Vegas Madalaya



**Eric Pilgrim**  
Editor

Bay Hotel shooter Stephen Paddock to kill 58 and wound nearly 500 more at the Route 91 Harvest music festival late Oct. 1. He was highly educated, a multimillionaire, and, according to his girlfriend, a kind-hearted, law-abiding citizen with little more than a minor traffic citation in his record. He didn't even have a history of bashing others on social media.

The reality of this historic mass murder grieves me, as it has many.

Paddock capitalized on a traditional military tactic — owning the high ground. He capitalized on an inhumane tactic, too — raining bullets down on unarmed, unsuspecting people: like shooting fish in a barrel, according to one news pundit.

Like 9/11, the Columbine High School massacre in 1999 and the 1966 University of Texas tower shooting, Sunday's massacre will mark yet another gut wrenching moment when extreme violence marred the American soil. Another soulless act of rage and hatred.

Rage. And hatred.

In the midst of all last week's fear and grief stood a defiant voice — a shirtless man who told reporters he had given parts of his clothing to cover those who had died and his full effort to help those still alive. He then told reporters, "This is not America."

Actually, unfortunately, it is.

Our nation was founded on superb ideas about freedom and liberty and happiness.

Thankfully, the bones of the American dream haven't changed over the years. We seek a land of hope and opportunity and prosperity, and that dream still exists. Problem is, there are realities we must face every day: facts about the condition of the human heart we sometimes want to forget. One of those is the ravenous appetite of hatred.

We all harbor anger at times, and that anger can boil up within us, quicker for some than for others. But focused anger can fuel us to charge the enemy in the heat of battle. It can motivate us to stand up against tyranny and oppression against the odds. When led in love, anger is a great motivator. It can help us accomplish impossible things. Devoid of love, no greater evil exists; no greater failure follows. And unleashed, out-of-control anger can feel suffocating.

However, acts of kindness free us to thrive in the face of hatred. Acts of bravery inspire greater hope, greater endurance. Case in point the many stories coming out of Vegas about the men and women who seemingly ignored the bullets raining down on them in order to help those who were injured. Some of these men and women were trained first responders who do this sort of thing on a regular basis. Others were military warriors. But many were neither — just ordinary U.S. citizens doing extraordinary things out of love for others: coming to the aid of friends, family members and even total strangers.

One thought continues to shine bright in the midst of all this horrific tragedy: Love conquers hate. It always will.

Pure love.

Recklessly poured out. ■