

VOICE

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/66671/10-facts-about-horton-hears-who>

<http://harvardpolitics.com/books-arts/oh-dr-seuss-didnt-know/>

https://www.nv.k12.wa.us/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=748&dataid=1269&FileName=Horton_Hears_a_Who.pdf

Can you tell me who said this?

"In response to the letters defending John Haynes Holmes... sure, I believe in love, brotherhood and a cooing white pigeon on every man's roof. I even think it's nice to have pacifists and strawberry festivals... in between wars.

"But right now, when the Japs are planting their hatchets in our skulls, it seem like a hell of a time for us to smile and warble: 'Brothers!' It is a rather flabby battlecry.

"If we want to win, we've got to kill Japs, whether it depresses John Haynes Holmes or not. We can get palsy-walsy afterward with those that are left."^[1]

This comment was in response to a political cartoon from the 1940's. The cartoon pictures a statue of Uniterian minister John Haynes Holmes. Beside him is a character of a Japanese man holding a large knife in one hand and the severed head of John Holmes in the other.

Can you tell me who said it?

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While you are thinking, I want to acknowledge that we have faced our country's biggest moral crisis of our life time. I believe the very heart of our democracy is at risk...but many of us are tired. I am tired. Some among us may feel frustrated, resentful and resigned. Our voice is getting weaker.

It's been a year...and it only seems to be getting worse.

And yet even as I write I am forced to think in a historical perspective, that I acknowledge that the moral crisis that I sense is not the same crisis as the

black community faced for hundreds of years, or the Native American. So even now my words are couched in the context of white privilege.

There are days like this when I hear Richie Haven's version of Motherless Child in my ears. And I'm reminded how long that moral battle has gone on. I hear Billie Holiday singing Strange Fruit.

"Southern trees bear strange fruit
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees."

When you hear her sing those words you get a better glimpse where 'soul' comes from

For those of us who are growing tired of the moral decay we sense in our country we have lessons to learn from those who have been at this longer than we.

The theme this month is voice. And my goal this morning is to encourage each of us not to lose it. Some among us are already weary...it's understandable. But we have before us a history of those who have stood longer against stronger and we should lean on that example.

And I want to suggest to you that it's time for the voices of moral indignity take up the call once again.

But, if you are like me, you are tempted to think that your voice may not matter anymore.

You look around and you are told that truth is a lie, and a lie is the truth. You are told that up is down and down is up. You see that the order that is our democracy has been exchanged for chaos and we are told that chaos is good. Our country has been painted over with violence which seems to be becoming acceptable. The land is being torn open for the purpose human wealth and gain.

Pristine environments like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is being open for drilling and oil exploration. Bear's Ears National Monument is yanked back from protection and open for consumption. And the entire East Coast is open for seismic testing and oil exploration.

When families are torn apart by immigration officers.

Deaf ears are turned to teenagers pleading with adults to fix a broken system that is killing them.

We have become a country or perhaps we are discovering we live in a country where it has become 'normative' behavior for a president and porn star to agree to a 130,000 payoff and that news become page 3 below the fold.

We are tired. You and I, we may be tired. We might be feeling that nothing we do matters. We have voiced our indignity at what we see is a moral decay but the rot rolls on.

Many in our country are utterly baffled at the silence, complicity or full support of the evangelical church. Not all, of course, but 80% of white evangelicals voted for this administration. Most, if not all of that 80% would confess to a literal interpretation of the Bible.

So when...

Leviticus 19:33-34 and 24:22 – When the alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

Deuteronomy 10:18-19 – “For the Lord your God...loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

I am stunned...

When warnings from thousands of scientists express dire imperatives about ecological concerns and climate change the church is silent and complicit once again...and I'm stunned when the OT says..

And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you." (Leviticus 18:26, 28)

Ezekiel asks the rhetorical question [Ezekiel 34:18](#) ESV / 60 helpful votes

Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet?

The church has biblical injunctions and the silence seems deafening.

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Well, this has been cheerful so far....

But...who knows who said the quote I offered earlier?

"But right now, when the Japs are planting their hatchets in our skulls, it seem like a hell of a time for us to smile and warble: 'Brothers!' It is a rather flabby battlecry.

"If we want to win, we've got to kill Japs, whether it depresses John Haynes Holmes or not. We can get palsy-walsy afterward with those that are left."^[3]

Theodor Geisel...Dr Suess.

If you could see the political cartoon which prompted this comment you'd immediately recognize the artist.

If you know Suess and his writings it's ALL about inclusion, peace, and kindness. So what happened to Suess?

In 1953, Seuss visited Japan to research an article for *Life* magazine. He wanted to write about the effects of the war and post-war efforts on Japanese children. With the help of Mitsugi Nakamura, dean of Doshisha University in Kyoto, Seuss went to schools all over Japan and asked kids to draw what they wanted to be when they grew up. What Seuss saw made a deep impression, and when he returned to America, he started work on *Horton Hears A Who!* The book is dedicated Nakamura. He said in an interview, "Japan was just emerging, the people were voting for the first time, running their own lives—and the theme was obvious: 'A person's a person, no matter how small,'

The reason why this message has taken a turn to a children's book about about very small people living in a very small world who are being blown around by every wind and circumstance is because it is TODAY.

The character Horton (elephant) makes a moral commitment that needs to be reclaimed. In the story the elephant brought compassion to an alien world that drifted into his life. And he made promises to protect the alien and NOTHING would prevent him from doing all that he could to keep that small and peculiar world safe.

It may seem silly...but you and I need the character of Horton. Is it silly?

As Suess creates the story Horton is IMMEDIATELY attacked by those around him that said he was crazy and needed to be stopped. (sound familiar)

“Horton fought back with great vigor and vim but the Wickersham gang was too many for him. They beat him! They mauled him! They started to haul him into his cage! But he managed to call to the mayor: “Don’t give up! I believe in you all! A person’s a person, no matter how small! And you very small persons will not have to die if you make yourselves heard! So come on, now, and TRY!”

It’s not the time to fail. It’s not the time to give up...it’s not the time to wring our hands and say, what can we do. It’s time to make ourselves heard. How?

First: Embrace a bigger picture of those with whom we disagree and offer them that picture. While anger is our default emotion sadness is superior. Here’s why.

Sadness for the man, for the woman made smaller by their actions and attitudes. You and I need to do the hard work of painting a better picture of who “the other” can be. Bigger, broader, more compassionate, more merciful (more Biblical?) And communicate sadness for the person they have missed and point them to a better home.

Second: Embrace a bigger picture of our local community which will lead to a better picture of our country. Embrace an image in which all members of that community have become better or will become better when that goal is reached and the benefits which come as that goal is approached. Do the hard work of asking and answering the economic, relational, and cultural questions which lead to a better us.

Third: “I don’t speak because I have the power to speak; I speak because I don’t have the power to remain silent” - Rabbi A.Y. Kook

Believe that your voice matters. We can't allow ourselves to exercise the power of silence. Your voice will be heard when it's driven by strong, powerful, compassion and kindness. Insist that the better man listen, insist that the better woman listen, insist with all the love you have that there is better for each of us, each of our communities and our country as a whole.

Small voices have spoken in the past. They were shouted down ... for a time.

Rosa Parks
Clara Barton

Small voices are speaking still. They are being shouted down...for a time

Emma Gonzolas
Collin Caperneck

Next Sat 10s of thousand of small voices will be in the streets again...

Those of you who are school teachers or parents that have read Horton Hears a Who you might remember the small character Jo-Jo.

Horton, as he's ready to die for an unseen city, urges all the voices to call out and prove they actually exist.

Suess creates the character of the Mayor on a quest...who finally discovers...

"Quite hidden away in the Fairfax Apartments (Apartment 12-J) a very small, very small shirker named Jo-Jo was standing, and bouncing a Yo-Yo! Not making a sound!

And the mayor climbed with the lad up the Eiffelberg Tower. "This," cried the mayor, "is your town's darkest hour! The time for all Whos who have blood that is red to come to the aid of their country!" he said. "We've GOT to make noises in greater amounts! So, open your mouth, lad! For every voice counts!"

They've proved they ARE persons, no matter how small. And their whole world was saved by the Smallest of ALL!"

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Conclusion

The irony should not be lost that over 60 years ago a cartoonist wrote a children's book that resonates right now...

"This, is your town's darkest hour! The time for all who have blood that is red to come to the aid of their country!" he said. "We've GOT to make noises in greater amounts! So, open your mouth, lad! For every voice counts!"

Keep speaking...don't become weary and resign. Speak with your voice, speak with your pen, speak with your vote...Speak

"We are here! We are here! We are here! We are here!"

One Voice, Voices two, Voices three...all of us...We Are Here. We Are Here. We Are Here.

Amen and amen.

Closing Words:

On the 15th of May, in the Jungle of Nool, In the heat of the day, in the cool of the pool, He was splashing... enjoying the jungle's great joys... When Horton the elephant heard a small noise. So Horton stopped splashing. He looked toward the sound. "That's funny," thought Horton. "There's no one around." Then he heard it again! Just a very faint yelp as if some tiny person were calling for help. "I'll help you," said Horton. "But who are you? Where?" He looked and he looked. He could see nothing there but a small speck of dust blowing past through the air.

When they got to the top, the lad cleared his throat and he shouted out, "Yopp!" And that Yopp... That one small extra Yopp put it over! Finally, at last! From that speck on that clover their voices were heard! They rang out clear and clean. And the elephant smiled. "Do you see what I mean?... They've proved they ARE persons, not matter how small. And their whole world was saved by the Smallest of ALL!" "How true! Yes, how true," said the big kangaroo. "And, from now on, you know what I'm planning to do?... From now on, I'm going to protect them with you!" And the young kangaroo in her pouch said,...

“...ME, TOO! From sun in the summer. From rain when it’s fall-ish, I’m going to protect them. No matter how small-ish!