

From Charlottesville to Houston ...

Commentary by Drew Zahn

In Charlottesville, we saw some of the worst of humanity and of America. In Houston, we have the opportunity to witness some of the best. And this should give us hope.

In Charlottesville's racial protests, we saw hatred and the complete breakdown of civility. We saw violence and death by human hands. In the aftermath, we witnessed the fallibility of our leaders, finger pointing, partisan bickering, and the relentless division-mongering of our national media. In the face of all this ugliness, it would be easy to despair.

And now in Houston and surrounding areas hit by Hurricane Harvey, we are witnessing the devastating destruction of nature and some of the human suffering it causes.

But herein is the glimmer of hope.

Because Houston is also bringing us images and stories of neighbors sheltering neighbors. Of police, military, and first responders serving to the point of exhaustion to aid complete strangers. Of churches and charities opening their arms, their facilities, and their pocketbooks for those in need. Of "the American spirit" personified in rescuing, sharing, comforting, and caring.

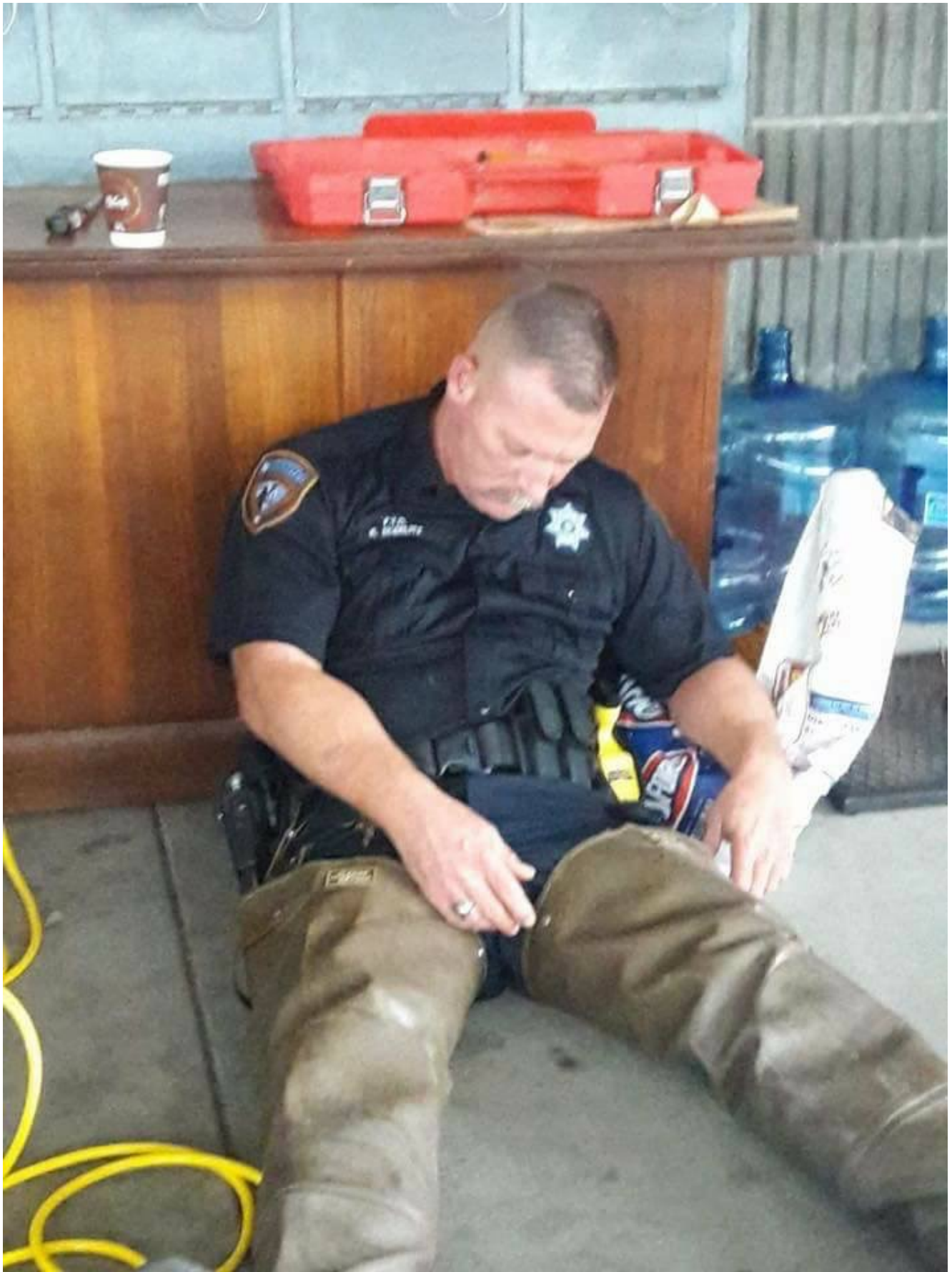


Image from Harris County (Houston) Sheriff's Office

Yes, Houston will also bring blame-shifting and division-

mongering. Ugly people in politics and media will seek to darken this day as well ...

... if we let them.

But why should we?

As a former news reporter and editor myself, I can tell you from experience inside the biz that the stories that get play are the stories that generate tweets and Facebook posts and “hits” when you open them on the Internet.

In other words, if you read it, we’ll all get more of it.

And based on what you and I do, Houston in the wake of Harvey will either be remembered for its heroism or its partisanship. More hope, or more despair.

So let me propose we take a stand. That you and I do something tangible that can actually “make America great again” in the narrative our children and grandchildren will read about. When you see a story about a politician condemning the other side, don’t click on it. But when you see a story about a firefighter’s bravery, “like” and “share” that story to the ends of the earth. When you see talking heads debating who is to blame, turn it off. But when you see the story of neighbors reaching out to neighbors, watch it and share it with your neighbor.

If America is ever going to recover her civil spirit that was so lost in Charlottesville, it’s going to have to start with you and me. And I propose we start with Houston.

Of course, we should also pray for the people of Texas. Give to those who are providing tangible aid. Consider traveling and serving in the recovery effort. People need you to do more than just tweet and “share.” But while you’re praying and giving and serving ... “the American spirit” needs you and me to exemplify it on social media as well.

Charlottesville and Houston reveal the human condition is capable of such dramatic extremes of evil and good. Let us, as the Scripture says, “overcome evil with good.”

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” – Romans 12:17-18, 21

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