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## 2 SPEAKERS

Speaker1

Speaker2

## START OF TRANSCRIPT

**[00:00:00] Speaker1**

The following is a message from Wellspring's congregation.

**[00:00:05] Speaker2**

Good morning, Wellspring's. It's good to be with you again. Late this past April and the president said something that none of his predecessors had said in more than a century. President Biden issued a statement, a statement explicitly recognizing the Armenian genocide that began in 1915 at the hands of the Turkish authorities and what was the old Ottoman Empire? Read you part of what that statement is, because it serves to frame provides a frame for my message this morning. This is what the president said beginning on April twenty four, 1915, with the arrest of Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Constantinople by Ottoman authorities, one and a half million Armenians were deported, massacred or marched to their deaths in a campaign of extermination. We honor the victims so that the horrors of what happened are never lost to history. And we remember so that we remain ever vigilant against the corrosive influence of hate in all its forms today as we mourn what was lost. Also also let us turn our eyes to the future towards the world that we wish to build for our children, a world unstained by the daily evils of bigotry and intolerance, where human rights are respected, and where all people are able to pursue their lives in dignity and security. Let us renew our shared resolve to prevent future atrocities from occurring anywhere in the world and let us pursue healing and reconciliation for all people of the world.

**[00:02:09] Speaker2**

We honor those Armenians who perished in the genocide that began a hundred and six years ago today. Now, let's leave aside for a moment, I think those words are beautiful and powerful, and we might, of course, you want to ask the question, what's the deep commitment to that or is there a deep commitment to that? But just let's let those words stand right now, because I want to share with you the response from the country of Turkey and their foreign ministry, which said, we reject and denounce in the strongest terms the statement of the president of the US regarding the events of 1915, which were made under the pressure of radical Armenian circles and anti Turkey groups. You kind of can see that right there, the recounting of a history, at least part of it, which most mainstream historians do fully recognize happened. And on the other side, the immediate condemnation and pushback. That this these words from the president, this recognition of genocide that no other US president has done since the Armenian genocide. That it could only have arisen because of a desire to harm Turkey or by radical elements. On the one side, history, on the one side, a push back to recounting that history. This is what today's SpiritFlix movie documentary actually is all about, Spirit Flicks, which is our summer series here at Wellspring's about the stories that we watch on our screens and the meaning that we derive from those stories.

**[00:04:09] Speaker2**

It's called Exterminate All the Brutes. It is directed by Woolpack Raupach also did one of the movies I preached on last summer movie based on the life and works of the late and truly great James Baldwin, the black writer respec who grew up in Haiti, was born in Haiti and actually grew up formative here in the U.S., in Brooklyn, in New York, and has lived at times on the continents of both Europe and Africa. His work. Four hours, a whole miniseries, actually sprawling, encompassing, painful and challenging. It is an attempt. To wrestle with the reality and the legacies of imperialism and colonialism, white supremacy and, yes, genocide. He mostly focuses on forms of European colonialism and. American colonialism here as pertains to the indigenous people, the original people of this country. And he also does mention that genocide beyond just Europe or the US, that genocide is something that happens throughout human history. And he spends a great deal of time also analyzing the Nazi Holocaust as the terrible and logical consequence of centuries of oppression and centuries of believing that certain people are lesser inherently than other people. I believe that this particular moment of being alive, especially in this country, that exterminate all the brutes, which is a line that he takes from Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, which many of us know, perhaps more famously was turned into Apocalypse Now and reset in Vietnam during the war.

**[00:06:25] Speaker2**

I think that exterminate all the brutes is the kind of history and wrestling with history that is really powerful right now, especially because we see so often the pushback to this kind of I don't even like to say historical revisioning as if it wasn't there in the first place. It was seen. It just wasn't acknowledged. It's more like historical reclamation reclaiming what has been lost. We see in the pushback to this kind of more encompassing, more enlarging historical storytelling, the very reason why it's so important in the first place in this country right here, right now. Again, this was about the Armenian genocide, genocide that opened with the Turkish pushback against honestly reckoning with it. Maybe it's a little easier to see when it's kind of outside of us, but the reckoning with cruelty, oppression, legacies of death and destruction. We see that when this encompassing, more inclusive form of storytelling kind of gets a foothold. How fierce the pushback is, as if it denies all the elements that have been valuable in our own civilization, indeed, to tell a larger, more encompassing history is seen by some as a direct assault. Upon who we are. And seeming to say that if this more encompassing history stands, that somehow we won't be able to adapt. It is indeed in the kind of not so helpful meaning of that word, a very fragile response.

**[00:08:17] Speaker2**

In fact, there's all kinds of national initiatives and state bills and local ordinances, and I believe in one state, it's even been signed into law already that, in fact, outlaws the teaching of the very kind of historical. Re envisioning reclaiming. That exterminate all the brutes represents. I think that this kind of work. Of being able to open to the painfulness of our past, to the death and destruction and cruelty. Is profoundly ethically. And spiritually important, coming to understand the fullness of what makes us us. Recognize how these legacies of dehumanization continue to show up and in fact, how the resistance to tell this bigger story is really about the inflexible holding of just one story. And so often, like it's often said, the the history that's just written by the winners. And, of course, what that leaves out and who that leaves out. Are all the people who did not live or thrive enough? To be able to have their story included in that larger story, at least not until now, as much as something like Exterminate All the Brutes wants to tell us this history and their histories belong just as much as anyone's history. I mentioned that Raupach. The director of this work, this sprawling, tremendous, vital, important piece of work, he also did a movie about James Baldwin. And it brings to mind for me again James Baldwin's perceptive, insightful quotes. They are, I think, too many to list.

**[00:10:34] Speaker2**

But one that comes to mind is this. He writes or he wrote, to accept one's past one's history is not the same thing as drowning in it. It is learning how to use this history. By one, he might mean an individual or a collective or a country or a culture to accept one's past one's history is not the same thing as drowning in it. It is learning how to use it. To me, this is the most important part of committing to be a part of telling and living a more encompassing, more inclusive story to do the work of anti-racism and anti oppression. Because as we build that muscle, as we build the strength of that moral muscle. Even something like exterminate all the brutes, which, trust me, if you haven't seen it, is painful to watch. But instead of turning away from the pain or denying the pain or saying that the pain will only lead to the destruction rather than to a reconstruction, better ways of being alive when we do this work. Beyond just shutting down something much more skillful happens, we allow ourselves to stay with the pain. My experience in watching this four hour miniseries that Raoul Peck has offered us. Is this. Not guilt. And there was pain as a white skin person. It's not easy. To recognize the systems of cruelty. That have privileged my own life living in this color skin. But it wasn't primarily guilt.

**[00:12:40] Speaker2**

It was Greif. Sadness. Deep sadness. To learn to relate to our own sadness as a reflection of our values, as Steve Hayes, a psychologist who I deeply admire, has been a great teacher for me, is to learn to trust when he says we hurt where we care. That if we can learn to relate to our pain in loving and compassionate ways, then there we can find our values and where we find our values, we find our individual even more a collective resistance to keep on moving forward and toward the kind of life more suitable. For all of us to truly thrive. I don't believe that pain in and of itself. Is productive, so often it's completely destructive when it's just re traumatization. But pain that is met with compassion and open heartedness. Especially the kind of pain that comes from watching a movie like this, what it can do is it can open up a gap productive gap. The gap between the reality and our aspirations and if we learn to live in that gap in a flexible, open hearted, kind way, committed to the values that this movie points towards as opposed to the values, if you can call them values, the cruelties that this movie exposes. If we can stand in that gap, if we can be in that gap, then there can be the possibility of growth and healing and a new way. One of the things we see in this documentary is how the very definitions of progress.

**[00:14:50] Speaker2**

Inevitability in the eighteen hundreds and 19 hundreds, actually, progress is what justified those who committed atrocities against others. And so, yes, I in so many ways am a progressive, but I also know that in the name of progress, we can't just move quickly through pain or discomfort. And it's one of the things that this movie does really well. In addition to demonstrate the historical record, how in the name of progress, cruelty and oppression was justified, it also demonstrates. Who and what that cruelty looked like. Some of you might know it's one of the most imaginative part of this movie. Some of you might know the name Josh Hartnett. He was kind of a in the 90s, a kind of teenage heartthrob, good looking guy, starting a lot of kind of teen focused movies. And I guess he's still an actor. I'd seen him in anything for quite a while. But the way that Raoul Peck uses Josh Hartnett, who is white throughout this movie, is fascinating. He never, if ever, maybe rarely once speaks, but at one point he is a U.S. cavalymen. Committing a massacre against the native peoples of the US, the indigenous people here at another, he is an officer in the Belgian Congo. Committing the atrocities on behalf of King Leopold and if you don't know King Leopold's story, the millions and millions and millions of people.

**[00:16:32] Speaker2**

That he butchered and the millions more that he enslaved all to enrich himself and the colonial era, Belgium. All throughout this movie, Josh Hartnett keeps showing up and we see so often his body grimy, dirty, covered in his own blood, covered in other people's blood. And we see how miserable he is. In the carrying out this awful work of oppression. And again, I don't think Raupach wants us to say, oh, look at poor Josh Hartnett, I think he's trying to demonstrate that systems of cruelty. Are a misreading. They create misery for all of us, but in very different ways. It brings to mind for me one of the people who has been a really helpful teacher these last few years in terms of staying with anti-racism work in a sustainable way, it's . Some of you know him. Some of you actually know quite a lot about him. He is a clinical social worker who as a black man, specifically focuses on the body and how it holds historical and racialized trauma. His most well-known work, although there's tons of interviews with him, is called My Grandmother's Hands, in which he kind of kind of recognizes the legacy of how his hands look like her hands and how her hands were deformed by by the grueling, painful work of picking cotton. He says that white supremacy is not just white supremacy, it's white body supremacy. And because America is a profoundly generous person.

**[00:18:27] Speaker2**

In telling the historical truths of racial trauma and gender violence and all other forms of trauma. He also commits to what is profoundly a universalist vision of wanting all of us to be healed and to be well. And he asks those of us who are white to look into our own collective histories and family histories as well and see how the the continent from which many of us have come was drenched in. Horror. For generations, for centuries. And how many of us willingly or unconsciously brought that collective trauma here to this country and have perpetuated. Again, willingly or unconsciously. This is what he asked us to wake up to and specifically how it shows up in our bodies. It got me thinking over this past year about how one of my grandparents, my grandmother on my dad's side, arrived in this country. Long time ago, she told me a story that my dad has since repeated it because I don't think I remember the first time I heard it, she emigrated from czarist Russia, but she really didn't emigrate. She escaped. There were stories about how the Russian authorities and looking for Jews looking to escape from czarist Russia would plunge Pitchfork's into bales of hay. In case they were Jews hiding in it, trying to escape the country, that's actually how my grandmother, at least in part of her journey out of Russia, got out by hiding under bales of hay.

**[00:20:22] Speaker2**

And try to remember this history and what she must have experienced and what so many of our ancestors under very different circumstances, perhaps may have experienced what they were fleeing from. I think of my own almost lifelong struggle with anxiety and an anxiety disorder. And it kind of has anxiety for me is a very important thing. I run fast, I run hot. Sometimes it's really tough for me to. Slow down. And I look back on that history. And hearing that story and doing the work that resume, Omnicom and others have invited all of us to do, and especially those of us with white skin. It has actually, for the first time in my life, made me really, really grateful for anxiety and my anxiety. Because you know what, if my grandmother hadn't had an accurate threat system, hadn't had some level of anxiety. That her life was. Under duress and threat. I wouldn't be talking with you right now. So, no, I don't like the anxiety. But now I can peer into it and I can see into it. No form of sensitivity and opening to collective historical pain. That, yes, it does help to create me. And now I can work with it more skillfully. This is just one small example of what Riesman Minicam and exterminate the brutes and Raupach and all kinds of people are asking us to. Dig a little deeper now.

**[00:22:26] Speaker2**

Not to shut down because the truths that we watch now being shared. We don't like it. So just push away, we're saying they're they're too threatening where we can't hold different parts of truths. What is most powerful and positive about the traditions that we hold and alongside of that within those same traditions? Deep pain and cruelty and suffering. Again, like Baldwin says, it's not to drown in it. It's to decide how to use it. And so I wanted to end by going back to just a few selections of the president's words from this last April. We remember so that we remain ever vigilant against the corrosive influence of hate in all its forms. As we mourn what was lost. Let us also turn our eyes to the future towards the world that we wish to build from for our children. Let us renew our shared resolve to prevent future atrocities from occurring anywhere in this world. This, of course, is the furthest thing from easy work. But to be part of the community that is committed to playing a part in this work. To inviting all of us, please myself ongoing included, I'll be doing this my entire life. I think all of us will as long as we live. To be able to engage. To become part of the more loving, more healing story. I think, in fact, there can be no more divine and holy invitation

**[00:24:31]**

Than this one. Amen.

**[00:24:36] Speaker2**

And may you live in blessing. I would ask, if you would, to please join your heart with mine in this little prayer. First, just noticing where we are sitting and how the spirit reaches us, how the breath reaches us right here and right now from all kinds of causes and conditions that have created our lives, the helpful ones and the harmful ones, the skillful ones and the hurtful ones, the ones we would wish to hold on to as close to the beating of our own hearts and the ones that we would now wish to release. And we recognize that each moment of this being alive is a choice. What values, what virtues, what helping, healing, holding ways of being. Do we want to direct our efforts towards. In small ways, sometimes in large ways. May our lives continue to move towards the speaker.

**[00:25:55] Speaker1**

Amen. If you enjoy this message and would like to support the mission of Wellspring's, go to our Web site. WellspringsUU.org. That's Wellsprings the letters UU dot ORG.



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