

What we do in the wake of uncertainty will define who we are

By Kevin Vance, Military Veteran, IAFF L3631 Firefighter

We have been here before. Eras of humanity have been defined by plagues, disease and catastrophe. Pandemic events have troubled mankind since the dawn of civilization. Time and time again, humanity has proven through instincts, innovation and resiliency that through embracing hardship, we can endure the famines, disease, and catastrophic wars. Like our ancestors before us, this will necessitate resolve and unwavering commitment to deal with this global threat.

In recent history, the ports in southern England were built as major embarkation points for American troops during D-Day. The construction of the harbor demanded continuous activity to facilitate the passing of 418,585 troops, 144,093 vehicles and hundreds of ships. It was, at the time, the greatest industrial collective human effort – that took years.

Never doubt that there are foreign governments and our allies worldwide sharing information on containment methods, genome sequencing of the virus, research, treatment methods and results. Tens of thousands of federal, state and local agencies filled with dedicated people who are committing themselves to erasing this pandemic. Thousands of virologists, infectious disease specialists, researchers, and scientists working to stem and ultimately break the tide. Alongside them, hundreds of thousands of our brethren, ER nurses and physicians heeding the call. Each of these professions are a part of the other in this massive human collective effort.

For us, this will define our generation. And the call of our generation dictates how we act. Under normal conditions, the community has always looked to us time and time again for strength. For compassion and patience. For understanding and direction. Most of all, they look to us for leadership. Someone to guide them out of the storm. Everything else in your professional career is but corollary to this vital dedication.

We are now, more than ever, needed to answer the call to Duty, Honor, Country. It is our rallying cry.

We touch every thread of our communities: homes, grocery stores, restaurants, and businesses. We, as leaders of our communities, are now subject to our greatest test of our character. We are the front line as our Country looks for hope.

This is the call to **Duty**.

We are witnessing an unprecedented level of anxiety and fatigue born of fear of on our public's faces. The financial stress of those displaced or strained by the economic downturn. Millions of jobs have been lost or are floating in uncertainty.

Given the difficulties, strength must be drawn and spread for those we serve, for we are blessed and grateful for our own personal stability, family's financial safety and future secure. This is only the beginning for millions.

This is the call to **Honor** the people.

The unified force of Physicians, Nurses, Firefighters, Law Enforcement and EMS personnel are on an incredible mission. During this period, our greatest asset will be perpetual optimism. As we are charged to instill hope, to provide calm – we need to have faith in those who we are collectively serving alongside. This must remain a constant.

These times will also test our faith in each other and our duty to our communities. It requires having the wear-with-all to withstand and regain faith when facing the many hardships that lie ahead. Individual leadership demands it.

This is our call to **Country**.

Hawaii was only discovered after generations of hard work, belief, perseverance, and determination. After years of uncertainty and doubt the Polynesians finally reached their goal.

But what they did to get there makes the story even more amazing.

Reaching Hawaii meant paddling across 2500 miles through the Pacific. They observed birds flying in the direction of Hawaii and deduced that land was there. Navigating over the open water and making sure their boat didn't sink were huge obstacles. The Pacific seafarers followed the birds closely, but they always flew faster than the Polynesians could paddle. They could only keep up with their aerial guides for short distances

At some point, they would lose track. And have to adjust.

As **we** wade through uncertainty to overcome the tide of the pandemic, perseverance will get us through it. Our "Hawaii" is there and we have faith that all your dedication and constitution will get us to our destination.

It is with great pride and humility knowing in the coming months we will have some of our biggest challenges and greatest opportunities of our careers. It will cement the culture of the OCFA. This is our chance to be a lighthouse of hope; a beacon in the night to the less fortunate.

At this point in history, the pandemic will place challenges on us, our families and communities, but never to our sense of purpose.