

Jennifer Sanders

### **Choosing Love in the Face of Hate**

When our world is rocked with an event like the unthinkable bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, we are confronted with both the absolute worst and best of humanity. We see the face of hate and evil on full display and witness the utter destruction it wreaks on innocent souls. And yet, in the midst of all the tragedy, trauma and pain, we also see so much of what's right with humanity. We see selfless acts of valor and sacrifice and an enduring spirit of resilience that refuses to submit to the hatred. We see love triumph over evil.

Even though this historic event took place years before I was born, I think I can relate on some level to how people felt in its aftermath. You see I came into the world just a few days after September 11, 2001. For my entire life, I have been exposed to the images and stories of hate, violence, and war that permeate so much of our world. At times, it's easy to believe things are getting worse in my generation than they have ever been. However, I also believe some of that feeling is directly correlated to the effects of the endless media coverage that seems to prefer to emphasize the bad, while often not giving much attention to all the love and good that abounds in our world.

Just like the bombing in Oklahoma City, with every new headline that tells yet another dreadful story of hate and violence somewhere in the world, there is something even more powerful at work that often goes unreported. It's the stories of human beings rushing to the scene of danger and destruction to bring help. It's people like Oklahoma City Firefighter Chris Fields, whose image was captured in an iconic photo standing with a child in his arms,

responding to the hate with love and compassion. I have grown up in a first responder family. My dad serves as a full-time firefighter and EMT. I have grown up hearing stories of how not only my dad, but an entire profession of selfless men and women stand guard to protect their communities and respond at a moment's notice to bring help, hope, and comfort to people who need it most.

I don't believe our world is really any worse today than it ever has been. Is there evil among us? Absolutely. Do we still hear far too many stories of man's capacity for evil? For sure. But I believe love wins out over evil every time. We all have a choice to make. We can either be a part of the problem, or part of the solution. I choose to be on the side of love. I choose to move toward hurting people and meet them in the midst of their pain with loving compassion, support, and understanding. I know that I alone cannot change all that's wrong in our world, but I choose to be a part of all that's right.