

November 9, 2016

Dear Friend:

“Love is among us.” That was the message of the elderly African-American woman standing as a silent witness at a Trump rally in September. We reaffirm that message today as a summary of our mission, as a declaration of our resolve.

In this brutally dispiriting political season, civic norms, honored traditions and even bedrock values seem to have been cast aside. Much of the progress that the Tennessee Justice Center – and millions of other Americans – have worked so hard to achieve over decades is under threat. It feels as if, “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold.”

Although today’s politics are without modern precedent, the peril to those we serve is all too familiar. We have been there before, when politics have cost hundreds of thousands their health care, their food assistance, their homes – even their lives. We have seen how political shifts can have deadly consequences for the poor and disfranchised. We fear what the future holds for our most vulnerable neighbors.

Even as we struggle to grasp the new realities, our clarity about the basics is unshakeable:

- “Love is *still* among us,” – among the families we serve, the generous partners who sustain TJC’s work on their behalf, and the colleagues who share our passion for justice. That love can and will overcome bitterness and division.
- It is TJC’s mission – and privilege – to turn love into action by protecting the most vulnerable through the turbulent times ahead. The world has never had a greater need for compassion, creativity and grit – all qualities that TJC has in abundance.
- The diverse community of staff, volunteers and donors who comprise TJC is determined and resilient. We may not know yet how to be most effective, but we will figure it out, as we have always done in the past.
- Our work brings us together every day with people of all political loyalties striving to make our nation more just. As a private charity founded and sustained by ordinary Americans, TJC reflects the recognition that it is not politicians but *We the People* who must ultimately fulfill the nation’s promise of Liberty and Justice for All. With your help, we’ve been at it for 20 years, and we aren’t about to quit now.

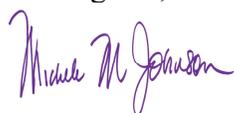
Our resolve is fortified by having learned to take the long view. It is more than a wan hope that, “This, too, shall pass.” More often than we can count, we have seen how seeds planted and tended through difficult times bear unexpected fruit long afterwards. Years ago, Rebecca McKelvey Casteñeda was one of hundreds of thousands of kids who received health coverage through TJC’s efforts. Rebecca’s dad had returned from Vietnam, still a young man, to take over the Coffee County farm that his father and grandfather had tended and that, at age 76, he continues to farm to this day. As Rebecca’s mom puts it, the family found it “unbelievable, how expensive health

insurance got to be,” and Rebecca’s proud and responsible parents found they just couldn’t afford it any longer. Haunted by the fears that burden all uninsured families, they worried that any medical crisis could bankrupt the family and cost them the farm. They were relieved when TennCare became available and grateful that it saw Rebecca through a childhood with its share of illnesses and injuries.

Today Rebecca is a respected lawyer and TJC Board member recognized for her pro bono service. We cannot know which of the many seeds we plant today will bear similar fruit in the years ahead. We do know that, as described in the enclosed summary, TJC has touched tens of thousands of lives this year. For many, our help is felt at a crucial moment, for others the effects are lifelong. To all, our work says, “*You are not alone. You matter to us. We are with you.*”

We take hope from your years of generous support and ask you to continue to partner with us at a time when TJC is more needed than ever. We are deeply grateful.

Best regards,



Michele Johnson  
Executive Director

