



These are trying, even scary, times for America and the entire world we all share. The COVID-19 pandemic with all of its challenges, the economic downturn, small family businesses shut down, and now an explosive social crisis where underlying racial tensions have boiled over after the senseless loss of George Floyd. America, the land of the free with a vibrant economy, is now in lockdown. The question is – what are we going to do about it?

As hard as it is to witness the turmoil in our communities and in full view on the omnipresent national news, this is no time to be wringing our hands. Instead, this is the time when we need to be rolling up our sleeves and resolve to be part of the solution. We need to be reaching out to our family, friends, neighbors and each other. What we do, right now in this moment, matters. We cannot do it alone. We cannot expect others to do it for us. We must dig down deep in our hearts and souls and try to make a difference. We must all do the right thing for the right reason, what we know to be morally and ethically right.

I believe that every person counts. Every person has something to offer, no matter how big or small – a smile, a compliment, a job, a tip, or a blessing. Together, and only together, can we beat the odds and put this country on solid footing and secure the future for all. It will take dogged determination to protect the values we know to be true and to protect the Constitution of the United States that we hold so dear.

For our younger Americans, we are counting on you. You are the future. You offer new and innovative ideas, new ways of solving problems, new ways to collaborate and communicate. You offer creative ways to bring people together. You will have opportunities to achieve things that none of us here today can even imagine. You will help us figure out what the new normal looks like for our country – better, smarter, more effective ways to bring our country back.

When I was growing up, I never ever dreamed of becoming a Four Star General. It just didn't seem possible. Today, elementary school girls send me pictures of themselves wearing a small replica of my uniform as Four Star General and they explain they did a report about me and my career. It's humbling and inspiring to know that these children believe they can be anything they want to be with hard work and determination. Dreams can become reality.

Let's not wring our hands, let's roll up our sleeves. Most people I know really do want to make a difference, and the good leaders I know want to inspire and encourage people with strong, principled and ethical leadership. Together we can do it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann E. Dunwoody". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

*Ann E. Dunwoody,
General, US Army, Retired*