

## EHASO: Lessons for the Future

R. Scott Conley

A recent blog<sup>1</sup> has cast a shadow on the Edward H. Angle Society's namesake, which in turn casts a shadow on our profession and our journal. Attached to the blog are two letters from Dr. Angle to Dr. Tweed in May and July of 1929 both of which refer to a mutual colleague, Dr. Ottolengui, in an unfavorable manner. In Angle's first letter, aspersion is cast upon his colleague's religious and cultural beliefs. In the second letter, Dr. Angle quotes Charles Dickens when he refers to Dr. Ottolengui as "Fagin the Jew".<sup>2</sup>

As students of history (both global and orthodontic), it is essential that each of us reflect upon our past and learn from it. Noted Harvard and Oxford philosopher George Santayana penned, "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."<sup>3</sup> There is no disputing that racism, religious intolerance, bias regarding sexual orientation... existed in the time of the Angle Society founding, and unfortunately continues throughout civilization today. In the present age in which we live, there is far too much division. The events of Charlottesville, Chicago, Charleston, Ferguson, are each poignant reminders that we have a long way yet to go.

The blog is correct; **none** of our heroes is infallible **nor** should we follow them blindly. Rather it is with full knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses that we must individually and collectively choose to move beyond whatever limitations they had. From the dawn of human civilization, innumerable and unspeakable horrors have been committed in the name of religion, race, tribe, and sexual orientation. To be abundantly clear, there is no appropriate place for one person to discriminate against another.

In 2017, the Edward H. Angle Society of Orthodontists is an incredibly diverse group representing many races, cultures, religions, ages, genders, or whatever descriptor one chooses. It has members who hail from

each of the six habitable continents who not only get along but also genuinely enjoy one another's company. Through this rich panoply of experiences and backgrounds and the interactions each component has each year, the members learn and grow not only professionally but also personally. I will not and cannot speak for others, but as a member of the Edward H. Angle Society and Component Director from the North Atlantic Component, I choose to celebrate and learn from colleagues with backgrounds different from my own, and believe this has enriched me and forced me to value and embrace the opinions of those different from me.

Yes, Angle (and others) have communicated inappropriate attributions to others. 86 years after his death, the diversity of the Edward H. Angle Society demonstrates the tremendous growth within our profession, our country, and the world. Are any of these perfect yet? NO! Nor will any of them ever be. However, we are each better from interacting with others who are different from ourselves.

In a time when politicians from opposing sides yell, scream, libel and slander one another, and governments threaten nuclear annihilation, the Edward H. Angle Society's diversity and camaraderie should serve as an example of all that is correct in this world and a model for moving beyond our individual biases and limitations.

### REFERENCES

1. <https://orthopundit.com/bigots-beware-history-will-not-forgive-or-forget-you/>
2. Dickens, C., Cruikshank, G., & Lea & Blanchard. (1839). *Oliver Twist*. Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard.
3. Santayana, G. (1905). *The life of reason: Or, The phases of human progress*. New York: C. Scribner.

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