Along with geometry, philosophy, the Olympics, and theater, the ancient Greeks birthed the idea of philanthropy. The Greek playwright, Aeschylus, likely coined the term “philanthropy,” which simply means, “love of humanity.” How simply sublime.

That we – as members of the human race – should all unconditionally aspire to philanthropy seems unnecessary to even mention. To purely love each other is a prescription for the good health of all humans, and who doesn’t want – or need – that?

But we humans are a contradictory sort. We far too often fall short of our ideals. Recent events highlighting our proclivity to racism – both explicitly and implicitly – has unmasked that inadequacy all too plainly.

There is much evil in the world, all of which is produced by we humans. Perplexing, isn’t it? That we humans can inflict harm against one another when inflicting love would be so much more fruitful.

Another perplexing fact is that acts of evil always get more attention than acts of love. Consequently, it’s easy for us to come to a conclusion that we humans are, as a whole, a nasty sort. That conclusion, however, is dead wrong.

No doubt, we have our horrible side. Every one of us. It’s that horribly contradictory part of us as to why we have law enforcement officers – people who want good things, like justice – sometimes do unjust acts. That’s why we too often make judgments about someone based on irrelevant things like skin color – or the uniform one wears – rather than the content of one’s character. People of color have a right – and a reason – to be angry. Inequity and injustice are too prevalent and too persistent.

Although any single act of evil should not be overlooked, we, as humans, are much more loving of each other than not. The idea – and practice – of philanthropy is strong. We witness the love of humanity every time following acts of injustice. Good people doing good things in order to right a wrong and increase our love of humanity. The result is not always successful, but the intent is always clear. The goal is not often reached, but the effort is always there. When we see people of all different colors standing in unison to object to a wrong and to fight for justice, we know philanthropy is strong. When we see daily acts of kindness, protection, and service from our law enforcement officers, we know philanthropy is strong.

I’m in the business of philanthropy, so I see philanthropy in action every day. Our modern notion of philanthropy is layered with actions of giving monetary gifts, our time, talents, or voices to causes we care about; it is generosity in all its shapes and forms. At Marion Community Foundation, our donors give their money to help others give of their time, talents, and voices to our fellow humans. That kind of philanthropy explodes exponentially. And it makes a positive difference. On the local level, there are countless examples of how the generosity and philanthropy of our donors have created positive change.

Clearly, however, more positive change is necessary. Change is often slow and imperceptible. And, regrettably, sometimes we think we’re making a difference when we’re really not. Take for example, the idea of equality (not just racial equality, but equality in every form). We all know that unequal access to opportunities is not just. In response, we try to evenly distribute tools and assistance to those suffering from that inequality. Have we made a difference? Not necessarily. Another step is important: the tools and assistance that are distributed must be customized to address the particular needs of the people involved and the situation at hand. But even then, we may not have effectuated change or made a difference. The crucial last step is to fix the system to offer equal access to both tools and opportunities. That’s called “justice.”

That last step – justice – is what today’s protesters want. It’s what any protestor of any generation or any cause ever really wants. It’s what all of us want. Doing it is not easy – but, as the axiom goes, nothing worthwhile is ever easy. But we keep trying; keep moving society and humankind forward.

Marion Community Foundation condemns any and every act of inequity and injustice. Inequity and injustice must be corrected. We must stand up and speak out whenever we see those two evils. As Deborah Aubert Thomas, president and CEO of Philanthropy Ohio, recently quoted Dr. Mark Lomax, II, “We need to use our access, privilege and status, politically and economically, to engage systems of oppression on behalf of people whose voices don’t get into the conversation.”

Marion Community Foundation commends any and every act of philanthropy. Kathleen Enright, president and CEO of the Council on Foundations, puts it this way: “We have an obligation to redouble our efforts to admit to what is wrong, fix what is broken, and help communities heal. The only way we can live up to our promise of advancing the greater good is by working to rebuild and recreate systems in a way that provides safety, economic security, justice, and health for all.”

Philanthropy – love of humanity – has always been, and will always be, the very fabric of our existence and a central part of society’s desire to be just.