

# FRIENDSHIP AT ITS FINEST

Forge Alumni Reunion



Winter 2022

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Winter 2022 Newsletter



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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

“On-mission” friendship changes lives and nations.

Young conservatives today often feel alone, but not those in Forge. Forge builds life-long friendships between young leaders and invests in fostering those friendships for years after our Summit and year-long Academy. As Forge builds the “farm team” to raise up a pipeline of young leaders in the states, we want to facilitate ways for our graduates to reconnect, strategize, and inspire collaboration in their efforts in policy and culture.

Almost 50 alumni from every Mentorship Academy class (2016 through 2022) gathered in Charleston, S.C. to tour the historic city and connect with old and new friends. What a time we had!

We had two interconnected goals for the trip: A.) provide an exciting, fun environment and location for fellowship and B.) do it in the context of learning and wrestling with America’s founding principles and history.

During our three days in Charleston, we visited historic landmarks throughout Charleston that tell pivotal stories of America’s colonial history, revolution, Civil War, and even World War II. All the while, we soaked up some much-



appreciated February sunshine.

You also cannot experience the history of Charleston without wrestling, as our nation did, with a complicated and even contradictory mix of ideals and institutions. As our guide for the trip, Michael Hamilton, said, “While America may have been born in Boston, Charleston is where lovers of liberty confront the root causes of slavery alongside the issue of states rights. Pound for pound, no city in America contributed more to the American heritage, spanning four centuries, from its first settlement in Indian Territory through the Cold War.”

We are confident that Forge Alumni Network experiences like this will foster alumni who encourage, challenge, and inspire each other in communities across the nation.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam'.

ADAM JOSEFCZYK

PRESIDENT & CO-FOUNDER  
FORGE LEADERSHIP NETWORK



Welcome to Charleston: The Boston of the South!

As you are keenly aware, American history has no difficulty finding examples of leaders—prominent and insignificant, principled and despicable, wealthy and poor, remembered and forgotten. In Charleston we find stories of the best of the best and the worst of the worst. Leaders to follow, leaders to question, and leaders who are contradictions. We challenge you to learn from all of their triumphs and defeats.

But more than that, we challenge you to use these examples in your own “laboratory of leadership.” What did these leaders get right? What did they get wrong? What should they have done differently? For in these contemplations you’ll find the answers of how to become the next principled leader in the public square—a square that desperately needs you.

I’d like to challenge you with a question as you begin this journey: Who will be your “eight”?

In 1938, Germany annexed Austria, an action which caused many Austrian Jews to flee to nearby countries. Among those who fled were eight Austrian Jews who arrived in Finland seeking asylum. At the time, the Soviets were concerned with the expansion of Nazi Germany and began to pressure Finland to give up prime real estate to ensure the Soviet Union’s security. When Finland pushed back, the Winter War of 1939 broke out. This conflict on the eve of World War II created some bigger problems: Germany viewed it as an opportunity to observe the weaknesses of the Soviet force, and Finland became an enemy of the Soviet Union.

By becoming an enemy of the Soviets, Finland became an ally of Germany. During this time, the eight Austrian Jews



were turned over to the Gestapo by the Finnish police. Immediately after, there was an outcry from Lutheran pastors, the Social Democratic Party, and ordinary citizens of Finland. Their public outcry prompted a public policy change: no more Jews were to be deported or given over to the Nazis—and none were. Now history offers up for lifelong learners the example of a critical mass of Finns who stood up to their government upon the principle of universal human dignity. They changed the course of history for thousands of Finnish Jews and hundreds of Jewish refugees who sought asylum in their country. (Finland's alliance with Germany finally ended in 1944.)

What has Finland in 1939 got to do with 48 Forge alumni in Charleston, South Carolina? One answer is the world's need for citizens to hold their government accountable to unchanging principles, such as each person's equality

and possession of natural rights. Who will be your "eight"? What will you choose to stand for in uncertain times? We need leaders with conviction, integrity, and honor. We need leaders who stop at memorials; who visit museums, ships, and plantations; and who contemplate the higher things, using the memory of history to form a future grounded in firmly shaped principles.

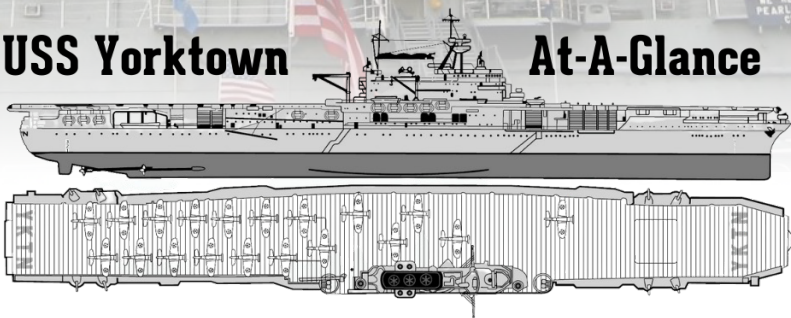
Good Comma Classroom believes that such leaders have descended on Charleston this weekend. We wait with anticipation to see where this weekend falls on the map of your journey as a leader.

JENNIFER RENO  
EDUCATION DIRECTOR  
GOOD COMMA CLASSROOM



## USS Yorktown

## At-A-Glance



- Tenth aircraft carrier to serve in the U.S. Navy
- Named for USS YORKTOWN (CV-5), which was sunk at the Battle of Midway
- Nicknamed "Fighting Lady"
- Received 11 Battle Stars for service in WWII
- Received 5 Battle Stars for service in Vietnam
- In 1968, she recovered the Apollo 8 astronauts

*For sources or other information, contact  
Good Comma Classroom (GoodComma-  
Classroom.com).*

# Why Am I A Fighter?

Ellen Fischer

If I had the choice between hiking a mountain or touring a city, I would pick the mountain every time. However, after a weekend of touring the historic city of Charleston, you just might tempt me to put a raincheck on that hike. Charleston is full of such rich American history, gorgeous scenery, and weather that would tempt any person from the north to pull out summer clothes in the month of February.

Most of the stops we made during the weekend led back to a time in history that America was at war. As I walked among the gardens of the Middleton plantation or on the deck of the USS Yorktown, I could not help but wonder why these men fought and why did many die for America? When they signed up for their fight, why did it matter so much to them that they had to be a part of it?

Beginning with the Civil War, we toured various locations such as an old slave mart, a submarine used in the war, and a prosperous slave plantation. Each time I walked among these historic places, I searched for why these people believed fighting against the Union was right. Was it more than slavery? Why did they die for something that in today's world is so clearly wrong?

One of my favorite stops was the USS Yorktown and Vietnam memorial at Patriots Point. Being the daughter of an Air Force man, the military holds a special place in my heart and



walking among memorials such as we did immediately sobers me up as I remember the families we know who have lost loved ones serving our country. One of the best sections on the USS Yorktown is the Medal of Honor Hall that has rows and rows of plaques telling the stories of military heroes in the midst of battles. One told the story of a young man who jumped on a grenade and died but saved his whole cohort. He was only 19. Why? What compelled him to die for his country? My mind was spinning with thoughts like these as I walked among the memorials.

So why do we go to places like this? What should be my takeaway from the weekend?

It is to remind me why I must fight my battles back home. Battles to protect my values and faith for my community, for my work, for my life and the legacy I want to leave behind. Where is God calling me to fight and what do I need to be fighting for? The weekend challenged me to look at my life and ask God to reveal to me where I am lacking in the fight. And now I challenge you to ask the same—where is God calling you to fight?

**Across Left:** *The U.S.S. Yorktown with a blueprint of the craft.*



SEE MORE

[ForgeLeadership.org](https://ForgeLeadership.org)



E PHOTOS

g/CharlestonGallery



## PARADOX OF PRINCIPLE

America is no stranger to paradox. The very founding of our country was predicated on the truth that all men are created equal – yet some of the same men who risked their lives for this principle were slave owners. These are hard truths to hold in tension.

Charleston is more than just a beautiful tourist destination. Walk down the cobblestone streets and tour the magnificent mansions and you will see this paradox rise off the dusty pages of history books and take the shape of the real men and women who lived there. Charleston is where the principles of liberty and the reality of slavery collide at the intersection of ideals and the broken human condition.

Forge alum Josh Willis remarked: “Throughout this trip I experienced different, even conflicting emotions, from being in awe of the bravery of the (Confederate) sailors of the submarine Hunley, to struggling with how a signer of the Declaration of Independence like Arthur Middleton could have one of the most profitable slave plantations in the south.”

## Old Slave Mart

The Old Slave Mart opened in 1856, just after the slave trade was made illegal in the city. Public auctions were no longer held at the Old Exchange Building but continued for another ten years at this privately owned building. According to the South Carolina Encyclopedia, there were several slave acts passed that impacted the enslaved people of South Carolina:

- **1690 “Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves”** - Required a passport for any travel off the plantation.
- **1712 Act** - Children followed the condition of their mothers.
- **1740 Negro Act** - Further codified slaves’ lack of rights, including reducing the penalty for a white person killing a slave to a misdemeanor while ensuring execution of a black person for killing a white person, plotting rebellion, running away, or instructing others on the use of poisonous plants.

*Courtesy of Good Comma Classroom. For sources or other information, contact Good Comma Classroom (GoodCommaClassroom.com).*

Frederick Douglass, in his 1852 speech *"What To The Slave Is The Fourth of July"* famously recognized the chasm and hypocrisy between exceptional American ideals and the reality of southern slavery. Not even a decade later, the fault lines of this contradiction could not hold any longer, and Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor represents where the bloody reckoning unfolded in the Civil War.

Charleston might teach us that, instead of avoiding troublesome history or trying to scrub all references to the past, maybe the most sobering reminders and useful convictions of our complicated nature as human beings (created both in the image of God and yet marred by sin) come from not avoiding or explaining away history, but by staring it in the face, in all its messy reality. If we pause and risk shining a light into the good, bad, and ugly, we may discover an even more uncomfortable reality – that our fallen human nature is misaligned with truth and an expert at deceiving others as well as ourselves; we may say one thing, and do precisely the opposite. How are we to be governed when we can barely govern ourselves?

This is not a problem that the American founders created, rather they inherited the eternal question of how to govern human nature. Their great experiment begged the question: *can a republic flourish if it is made up of people who govern their own hearts and from that*

*discipline learn how to govern others?*

Ever since those founders, American leaders have been striving to answer that question in the affirmative. That is why we need leaders who are not only exceptional in their field, but who are principled in their actions and aware of our own inherent power of self-deception. We need leaders who hold themselves to the standard of their words and seek out accountable friendships and mentors who will hold them to their best hopes, "the better angels of our nature" as President Lincoln said in his first inaugural. In fact, we need leaders like the 50 Forge alumni who packed their bags and spent a weekend in Charleston – not just to have fun – but to learn from the past and strengthen each other with mutual resolve to do justice and love mercy.

## Middleton Place

The Middleton family settled in Charles Town in 1678 and owned 19 working plantations over 63,000 acres, including The Oaks, Crowfield, and Middleton Place. Over a 187-year period the family owned over 3,500 enslaved people. Enslaved labor was responsible for cultivating many products at Middleton Place: timber, tar, turpentine, pitch, indigo, cattle, deer hides, and rice.

*Courtesy of Good Comma Classroom. For sources or other information, contact Good Comma Classroom (GoodCommaClassroom.com).*





KNOW SOMEONE WHO SHOULD ATTEND THE

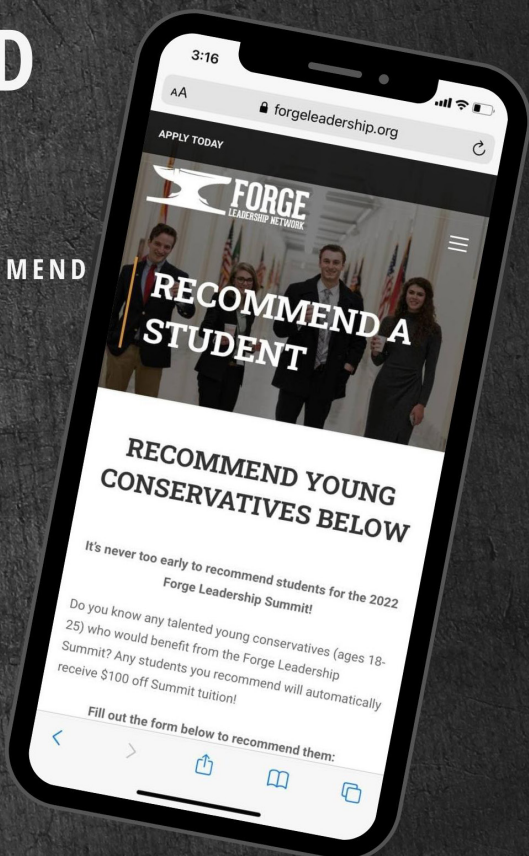
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## PURPOSEFUL FRIENDSHIP

By Jeremiah Martin

WWI shattered the optimism of the long-anticipated 20th century. The industrial advancements of the 19th century had led many to believe that the proceeding decades would continue to build on this progress into a new era. Instead, new technologies like the machine gun and trench gas meant that the war was heightened by these recent advancements. In the wake of WWI, little optimism remained and what did was thrown into the frantic partying of the roaring twenties. It was as if the naive world had grown up and put away

childish things, preferring instead to numb themselves and forget.

But across the Atlantic from America's speakeasies was a small pub in the heart of Oxford where two veterans of the first war dared to believe in the power of magic. We know these men as C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. The worlds they created were not whitewashed depictions of a fairyland, but instead places where good and evil battled. These stories were in direct defiance to the pessimism left after the Great War. They gave back to the culture what had been taken: hope.

What some don't know is that these stories almost never came to be. If it



were not for the friendship of Lewis and Tolkien, neither the Narnia series nor the Lord of the Rings would have landed on a publisher's desk. Lewis once said to Tolkien, "If they won't write the kinds of books we want to read, we shall have to write them ourselves." Together, they formed a literary club called "The Inklings" who took it upon themselves to dare to reignite the culture with hope.

Today, hope is again threatened in our culture, our country, and our churches. That is why we bring together young leaders from around the country so that their friendships can foster renewed perseverance and character. The Forge vision goes much deeper than a conference or a single training: we

are connecting and equipping the next generation of leaders with a network of people who are dedicated to influencing the public square for good. As a Forge alum myself, I have seen this deep sense of friendship first-hand.

Hosting the first Annual Alumni Reunion has been a passion project that was made possible by our many Champions. In Charleston, I got to see other alumni from different years meet for the first time and old friends reconnect. When we left, we were more invigorated in our personal missions and unified in our callings. This is why Forge exists and how true friendship can change communities, states, and nations.

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