

It's Time to Listen *continued from page 6*

“white supremacy” is an ugly designation, reserved for people who hate minorities and want to harm them – who are terrorists. No one wants to be seen through that lens. Instead, white supremacy is really an ideology that is embedded in our system of structural power and is both implied and taken for granted, and rarely examined or acknowledged. It is an ideology that is internalized, unconscious, and fundamental to America – that we live in a system that benefits whites and that our dominance is entitled.

While these ideas of white privilege and supremacy make many white Americans uncomfortable, being willing to consider them provides an opening – an opportunity to investigate our assumptions about race and our culture, and particularly the inequalities in our justice system.

For some people the riots and ongoing demonstrations following the deaths earlier this year of Ahmaud Arbery, the unarmed jogger in Georgia; Manuel Ellis in Tacoma, Washington; Breonna Taylor, the EMT in Louisville; and George Floyd have appeared to be an overreaction. While for others the intensity of the response is justified. People might point to America as the land of opportunity, where everyone has a fair chance to better themselves, but the reality is that Black Americans continue to face discrimination and barriers to equality across almost every sector of our society in a system stacked against them. Underfunded schools, disproportionate unemployment, voter suppression, barriers to home ownership, and inequitable sentencing, are just some of the ways Black Americans have been made economically vulnerable. According to the Pew Research Center, in 2016 the average black household had a net worth of \$17,000 while the average white household was worth ten times that amount.

Unequal access to quality health care is another issue for minority communities: black women are three to four times more likely to die during child birth than white women. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the health care disparity: minority's lack of access to quality foods and health care make them more predisposed to underlying conditions, and people of color often work in jobs considered essential or are unable to work from home. According to the Oregon Health Authority Black Oregonians are three times more likely than white Oregonians to be positive for the disease; Native Americans are nearly four times more likely; Hispanic Oregonians are 4.5 times more likely; and Pacific Islanders are nearly 10 times more likely.

Unfair and violent interactions with the justice system and a lack of police accountability have led to frustration and have historically been the boiling point for black communities, as they were this time. Police officers accused of crimes in this country are often protected by their departments, their unions, and the justice system. The court's failure to convict four police officers in the beating of Rodney King in 1992 led to violent riots in Los Angeles.

On my way home from the march in St. Helens, I listened to an interview with Wes Moore, author of the book *Five Days: The Fiery Reckoning of an American City*. The book is an account of riots that took place in Baltimore in 2015 after the death of Freddie Grey while in police custody, which helped launch the Black Live Matter movement. Grey was arrested for possessing an illegal knife



after making eye contact with police and running away. He was put into the back of a police van and one hour later was taken to the hospital in a coma, with injuries to his spinal cord. He died one week later. Six officers involved were arrested, but prior to the case going to court charges were dropped against two of them, one trial ended in a mistrial, and the other three were acquitted.

A Black American resident of Vernonia recently addressed racial injustice and the outcry from black communities in a Facebook post, “...when you have a culture that has been given a 300 year late start into the game to succeed after sacrificing without choice, their freedom for the comfort and liberties of another race, while our masters, whom are also our grandfather's grandfathers, and their children are allowed to succeed, and have your nose rubbed in it at every turn, what do you expect?”

Another friend, a white, middle-aged male, offered this: “We have lost the right to expect black America to protest in a manner acceptable to us. They have used many different ways to try to talk to us, and have been reviled or ignored. This is the last way to communicate. It's born of desperation, as it should be, as we watch black men and women being murdered by the police over and over. It is our turn to listen now...”

Looking at systemic violence in law enforcement

Most people understand not all police are bad, but many can see there are some serious systemic issues within our police departments and our society that need to be examined and changed.

Here are a few facts:

- About 10 million people are arrested in the United States each year, one arrest per every 32 citizen in the country.
- When confronted or arrested, police are four times more likely to use force on Black Americans than white citizens, and black men are almost three times more likely than white men to be killed during a police encounter. In Minneapolis, where George Floyd was murdered by police, Black Americans make up

19% of the population but just 9% of the police force, and black residents are the subject of 58% police use of force incidents.

- The United States has the largest prison population in the world, as well as the highest incarceration rate per capita, and the gap is especially sharp when compared to other G7 nations: U.S. – 655/10,000 residents, UK – 140/10,000,

vironments,” said Rosin in an interview. “It attracts people with that mentality and that desire. Not all police officers are the same, but the more authoritarian police officers are, the more likely they are to be violent at home. These men aren't losing control. They are maintaining control. That's different. The inequalities of society force us to empower police. And that empowerment results in the hiring of abusers.”

- Powerful police unions across the country have a history of standing up for and protecting fellow officers accused of crimes. An article published by the *Portland Mercury* on February 27, 2020 by journalist Alex Zielinski notes that, “In Portland, every time a police chief or mayor has decided to discipline or fire an officer for inappropriate use of deadly force, the PPA (Portland Police Association) has challenged the decision, thus sending the matter to arbitration. And every time, the arbitrator has overturned the police chief or mayor's decision.”

- Author Wes Moore, who wrote about the Baltimore riots after

Freddie Grey's death, says he doesn't believe the problem is “bad apples” in departments, but instead it's bad systems that are in place that allow inequitable policing and don't promote accountability. Moore sees the mandatory use of body cameras by all officers as one reform that has made a difference. He says police are not treated the same as other citizens when they are charged with crimes, and regularly receive more time to prepare their statements. He suggests another way to hold police officers accountable for each other's conduct might be the use of Felony Murder when charging police officers, a law that expands the crime of murder to include the offender's accomplices, so everyone involved may be found guilty of murder and receive a similar sentence. Moore says if this were applied to police it could encourage officers to step in and hold themselves accountable to each other. The three civilian men accused of killing Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia have all been charged with Felony Murder.

Canada – 114, France – 100, Italy – 98, Germany – 75, Japan – 41.

- Black people in the U.S. are jailed at a disproportionate rate; while they make up 12% of the total population, they are 33% of the prison population.
- U.S. police fatally shoot about 1,000 people each year – or 31 people for every 10 million, compared to 1 per 10 million people in Germany, 8 in Australia, 6 in Sweden, and 1 in the UK.

Those statistics are alarming and there appears to be a number of reasons why police violence might be so prevalent, and why accountability is often lacking:

- In his book *Police Wife: The Secret Epidemic of Police Domestic Violence*, author Alex Rosin examines the little studied issue of violence in the homes of police officers. Referencing one of the only studies from the 1990s which were based on anonymous surveys that officers and their families participated in, Rosin concluded that 40% of police families experience domestic abuse; studies have shown that domestic abuse occurs in about 10% of families across the U.S. Both those numbers are startling. “The more honest officers will tell you that policing is a job about control – controlling people and controlling chaotic en-

vironments,” said Rosin in an interview. “It attracts people with that mentality and that desire. Not all police officers are the same, but the more authoritarian police officers are, the more likely they are to be violent at home. These men aren't losing control. They are maintaining control. That's different. The inequalities of society force us to empower police. And that empowerment results in the hiring of abusers.”

The code of silence among law enforcement officers, protection by police unions, and a lack of accountability from the justice system have created an environment that helps shield law en-

continued on page 10

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Massage Therapy

Heather Lewis
New Day Massage

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doTerra Aroma Touch
Trigger Point Therapy
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Myofascial Release
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503-429-5180
#5495

503-429-4677
#10732

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