

INDISPUTABLE TRUTHS

In light of recent shootings, we can do better

BY JAMES MANNING

As a former police officer, I recall that each day I went to work my family expected me to return home after my duty shift. I have a lot of friends and colleagues who are police officers and are serving their communities with the highest distinction and honor. Their families expect for them to return home after their duty shift, too.

The family members of the Dallas police officers and the Dallas transit police officers had the same expectations. Tragically, seven officers were injured and five officers lost their lives at the hand of a single assailant. I mourn for their loss and their families, too.

At the same time, we must acknowledge video evidence of unarmed African-American men and women being killed by police without accountability. Ask yourself whether a broken tail light, or selling CDs or loose cigarettes outside of a convenience mart, or playing in a park with a toy gun, or being a teenager playing loud music, or trying to walk home or change lanes while driving, would result in you losing your life.

Sadly, all of these events had three indisputable commonalities: All were unarmed, all were black and all were killed within minutes or seconds of police contact. Video evidence doesn't lie. I grieve for these families, too.

Some are too quick to dispel the truth by blaming the victim or a social movement by stoking the flames of hatred and fear.

Senator Robert F. Kennedy said: "When you teach

a man to hate and fear his brother, when you teach that he is a lesser man because of his color or his beliefs or the policies he pursues, when you teach that those who differ from you threaten your freedom or your job or your family, then you also learn to confront other not as fellow citizens but as enemies. We must admit the vanity of our false distinctions among men and learn to find our own advancement in the search for the advancement of all. We must admit in ourselves that our own children's future cannot be built on the misfortunes of others. We must recognize that this short life can neither be ennobled nor enriched by hatred or revenge."

Years after Sen. Kennedy's remarks, America still has a serious problem. We must hold each other accountable for our own actions regardless of our station in society. We can no longer live in the darkness of denial that color does not matter. We owe our children better — teach them tolerance and acceptance. We owe our friends and neighbors better — regardless of their ethnicity or religion. We owe ourselves better — truth and self-accountability.

I remember the three golden rules: 1. Always do what is right. 2. Do the best you can. 3. Treat others the way you want to be treated.

America is already great, but "We the People" can make her better.

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PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

BLACK LIVES

PHILANDO CASTILE, ALTON STERLING. AND BEFORE THEM ERIC GARNER, TRAYVON MARTIN AND MICHAEL BROWN. TAMIR RICE AND SANDRA BLAND. Those are among the names we know, whose cases in the last three years came to media attention because a video of their deaths went viral or the protests were loud enough to finally draw the lens of the media.

Black Lives Matter.

For many, the knee-jerk response to that is, "All Lives Matter."

The national Black Lives Matter organization says in addressing some of the many misconceptions about the movement that "the statement 'black lives matter' is not an anti-white proposition." Black Lives points out that there is an unspoken but implied "too," as in "black lives

matter, too," when you say, "black lives matter."

Or as still others have pointed out, when you say, "save the whales" you are not saying, "screw the dolphins." Saving the rainforest does not mean you want to see Oregon's old growth cut down.

Oregon is a historically white state — largely due to a history of laws that prevented African Americans from owning land and allowed "sundown towns," meaning while blacks could pass through, they could not stay after sunset. Eugene itself was a sundown town, if not by law then by practice, according to researcher James Loewen, author of the book *Sundown Towns*.

In 1848, while still a territory, Oregon's provisional government passed a law forbidding

black and mixed race people from living here.

Oregon didn't allow interracial marriages until 1951, the same year it stopped applying insurance surcharges to nonwhite drivers. The first black-owned house in Eugene was purchased in 1948 — less than 70 years ago — by C.B. and Annie D. Mims, but it was bought under the name of Mims' white employer.

As of July 2015, Lane County has an African American population of just 1.1 percent, compared to 13.3 percent nationally. According to the Partnership for Safety and Justice, "African Americans in Oregon are six times more likely than whites to be incarcerated" and "African Americans constitute 4 percent of Oregon's youth population but 19 percent of the state's Measure 11 indictments among youth." Measure 11 crimes call for manda-