



Opinion

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SOMEBODY OUGHT TO SAY SOMETHING

BY LYDIA K. BASS



Till Race Do Us Part

No matter what side of the fence or the river you're on, racism is an inescapable reality. We can display the outward appearances of propriety in the workplace. We can tell ourselves that race doesn't matter when we get home. We can even believe that the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 freed the slaves and that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1965 made all black folks equal.

But here's what people aren't getting about racism: Racism is about how you treat people and why. And the difference in the racism of yester-year and today is that much of it comes from fear and ignorance rather than malice.

What so many don't realize about racism is how it makes you feel: You feel tolerated rather than appreciated; you're followed in stores, rather than being served; you're pulled over for driving while black; you have derogatory words painted on your home; there's no equal opportunity in job advancement, and almost 50 years after 'winning' Brown vs. The Board of Education, we're still fighting to correct years of inferior education to generations of our children.

People who haven't felt racism can't comprehend how dehumanizing and painful it is. You couldn't, unless you've experienced it, and in this state, this country you most likely haven't experienced it if you are white. Simply put: although we live in the same communities, work in the same places, patronize the same businesses, are served by the same school district and government officials, our experience and our reality differs from that of our white counterparts. This is not just our global history, but local current events in the 90's and into the new millennium.

Considering the ethnic tensions that have become apparent over the last month, it's important to seize this opportunity to do more than make nice. Some questions that I've been asked a lot lately are: Why isn't the African-American community as a whole, asking for and demanding a Derry Jackson resignation? What do we mean

when we say we understand his frustrations?

Either what he did was wrong or it wasn't. And, what appears to have disenchanted many of our white brethren is what seems to be our double standard of justice. It's important for me to note that I don't know of anyone that doesn't believe that his statements were wrong and that the first apology (if that's what you can call it) was weak. We know that his comments were not just hurtful to the Jewish community, but to all communities as a whole, and we too wish he had never gotten into it with Marc Abrams. But we also recognize that injustice and bigotry has become the framework for and of African-American life: physically, physiologically and socially.

Our daily frustrations come from living in what is tantamount to life in a pressure cooker. Filled with double standards, mired in illogical thinking, on-going requests for patience, to be happy with what progress has been made, while many of our concerns go invalidated; It is a frustration that is generational. It is a frustration that stems from our legacy. It is a frustration that seems to have no end in sight. Pile all that up and you are bound to have an angry outburst. This is the frustration we understand and we aren't all quick to jump on the bandwagon that gets rid of yet another

brother. We would rather discipline than destroy.

There's an essential dialogue that must take place among all of us, and it starts between two people. But candid, honest dialogue can't happen if you're walking on eggshells; It's about relationships, not color. This is a huge undertaking that requires compassionate understanding, consistency, commitment and follow-thru. We all have a responsibility in dealing with bias.

Reader response indicates there's an overall desire to create mutual understanding. Is it possible that this issue is worthy of further pursuit? I know this to be a necessary endeavor worthy of further pursuit, but is it possible?

There's an essential dialogue that must take place among all of us and it starts between two people...It's about relationships, not color.

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