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OPINION

Learn to Show Respect and Insist on It

One Black Woman's View

BY HEATHER MOSLEY

What is the root of racism, the cause of conflict, the answer to anger? As we transition from our nation's first black president and the dream of a post-racial America to a man elected by supporters that include Confederate battle flag-wavers, I need to reflect on my own journey to help myself deal with it all.

I grew up in a family of six kids, I'm the youngest, and was born and raised in Portland. My mom is black and native from Mississippi, and my father was a strong black man from Alabama. Both were raised in the segregation era. We were not raised to be violent or racist and would get disciplined if we showed any signs of it.

My mom said she never worried about people messing over me even as a child. I was outspoken and would defend myself if it became necessary. I was a fairly small child but came with a powerful pack of energy. I never started any fights or picked on anyone,

and never played the bully role. You would have to pick on me first for me to go into action.

I was bussed out to all-white schools through elementary and high school. I can remember my first day of school; my oldest sister was getting me dressed to walk me to catch the bus. The buses picked us up from the black schools that were in the neighborhood to take

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us to the white schools. When my sister was putting me on the bus she said, "You better not let anyone treat you differently or disrespect you just because of your color." I did not understand. I was too young to understand about racism but I surely learned.

There were about 10 of us black kids who were bussed out to this elementary school. To this day I can remember this incident that

took place when I was in the 3rd or 4th grade. I was the only black kid in the classroom and a white girl raised her hand and told the teacher her lunch bag was missing. She believed I was the one who took it. The teacher who was an older white woman asked the class who wanted to go search my stuff to see if I had stolen it. All of a sudden, I saw all the little white hands go up

into the air. I remember thinking; as soon as one comes towards me I was going to sock them in their face. One of the kids then said to the girl who was missing her lunch, isn't that your bag over there on the window ledge, and she said yes. The class went back to normal with no apology to me from the teacher or the girl. I remember feeling so degraded even at the young age I was. That evening, I cried and told

my mom what had happened.

The next morning she, I, and my dad headed to the school and my parents were not happy. My mom went into the principal's office and explained how they were not going to treat her child in any disrespectful matter. My dad and I sat outside the door and then I see the teacher enter the principal's office. I will not repeat the words I heard my mom saying to this teacher. What I remember about the incident is, the teacher no longer taught that class, my parents and I were given a written apology, and I'm not sure what other actions may have ensued legally. I continued, graduated from that school, and had no more problems that I could not handle on my own.

In this world I have seen and faced a lot of unfair racial treat-

ment, and at times I have reacted in anger. Yes, I would get up in someone's face and be ready to handle the situation whichever way it went. It never got physically violent but certainly got verbally violent. Over the years, I learned the only person who suffered and got hurt from handling racism this way was me. I have been a work in progress and have come a long way from being aggressive. I have learned how to approach the situation and voice my opinion without hostility. I pray for strength from God to show me, and I have nothing to prove to anyone in a violent way. Now, instead, I use constructive communication skills, take conflict resolution classes, and get my point across where it does not cause serious problems. I will continue to work on being less aggressive, for I am a woman who carries herself in a respectful manner and violence is not the answer.

In the coming period, I pray we all reflect and respect and learn to overcome our inner aggressions. We will need this, I suspect, together.

Heather Mosley is a returning college student. (Distributed by PeaceVoice.)

AIDS: Envisioning the Beginning of the End

Daunting challenges remain

BY MARC H. MORIAL

On June 5, 1981, the Centers for Disease Control published its weekly Morbidity and Mortality Report which described five cases of previously healthy, young gay men in Los Angeles infected with a rare lung infection. It would eventually become recognized as the first official report on HIV/AIDS in the United States.

Since the start of the epidemic, an estimated 35 million people have died from AIDS-related illnesses around the globe. In the United States alone, more than 700,000 people have died an AIDS death since the beginning of the epidemic. Thirty-five years ago, testing HIV positive was an automatic death sentence, but today, as a result of targeted HIV prevention efforts, rapid testing, advances in treatment and increased access to life-saving



health care, what was once a death sentence is now, in many cases, a chronic disease that can be lived with and managed.

Today, more than 1.2 million people in the United States are living with HIV, according to the CDC. New infections are down from their peaks in the 80s and 90s, with the CDC estimating that new HIV diagnoses have fallen by 19 percent from 2005 to 2014.

As we celebrate those numbers, we must keep in mind that the epidemic is far from over and that our progress in combating this disease has been uneven and remains riddled with all-too-familiar racial and socioeconomic disparities.

The death rate from AIDS-related illnesses has dropped by 30 percent, approaching our nation's 2020 target rate.

As we celebrate those numbers, we must keep in mind that the epidemic is far from over and that our progress in combating this disease has been uneven and remains riddled with all-too-familiar racial

and socioeconomic disparities. African Americans and Latinos continue to bear the disproportionate burden of HIV infection in our nation.

In 2015, African Americans, who represent 12 percent of the U.S. population, accounted for 45 percent of HIV diagnoses. While Latinos, who represent 18 percent of the U.S. population, accounted for 24 percent of HIV diagnoses. Regionally, the South is experiencing the highest infection

rates, illness and deaths than any other U.S. region, with the Southern states accounting for close to half—an estimated 44 percent—of all people living with an HIV diagnosis in the United States.

For those of us on the front lines of the battle versus this epidemic, these numbers are a call to action to put an end to HIV with leader-

ship and commitment that amplifies our impact in all communities ravaged by this disease. It is also a vivid reminder that health, health care, disease and its dissemination and eradication do not exist in a cultural or social vacuum.

The link between health, social and economic equity and our vision of an AIDS-free generation is real and borne out by the shocking rate of HIV/AIDS in communities of color and vulnerable populations. Given the disproportionate

impact of the epidemic in communities of color, effectively addressing HIV/AIDS in the United States also means addressing poverty and a lack of access to health care.

The National Urban League and its affiliates continue to partner with organizations and groups working to decrease and defeat

HIV/AIDS in the hardest hit populations. League affiliates have joined the Act Against AIDS Leadership Alliance. As a part of the compact, more than 500 HIV related events and trainings have taken place. As a member of PACT (Partnering and Communicating Together to Act Against AIDS), we work on achieving the goals of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) by reducing HIV infections, improving health outcomes for people living with HIV and reducing HIV related disparities.

Here is a final sobering statistic: 1 in 8 people living with HIV in the United States are unaware of their status. We cannot fight what we don't know. We need leadership from service providers, advocates, doctors and government officials, but all of us, have a role to play on the journey towards an AIDS-free generation.

Protect yourself and reduce the risk of spreading HIV, or any STD, by getting tested and knowing your status. We must all commit to keeping our communities healthy.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.