



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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Generations Are In Jeopardy

The generational gap is not something you can point to, or put your finger on and feel, but it is real and it is impairing our community and our society in exceptionally detrimental ways.

Portland is providential! And no, this is not some residual praise of our city that is left over from my last thoughts about us needing to speak about our city in a better light. I really do mean it when I say this place is fortunate. And yes, I have an explanation. Like to hear it? Here it goes!

We've got sage wisdom and council right here amongst us — and one such advisor is a well-known, well-dressed and well-respected fellow by the name of Elder Rob Richardson. Elder Richardson deserves credit for a host of efforts, but two particularly strike me as noteworthy: the sheer number of people and families this man has touched and helped in the city of Portland AND a saying that often precedes him but is almost always credited back to him — “there was a time when a boy was afraid to walk through a pack of men. Now a man is afraid to walk through a pack of boys!”

And that saying, those two sentences sum up an ailment that is putrid and vile, real and raw and insupportable in our communities. But it did not become that way overnight, nor was it at the hands of a person, or a people. Our fault — if we have any to bear — is that we just haven't reminded each other recently enough that we need US -- ALL OF US! I so want to approach the historical, cultural and socioeconomic (equity) pieces that have contributed to this dilemma, but...well...another day.

However, I am willing to ride a wager on the line that says we just need to re-appreciate (I am authorized to make up words on Tuesdays) who we are, what we are and most critically, what we are to one another. Look at it like this — which of us would fib enough to declare that we never assumed the posture in life that says, “I've done it all by myself, I am doing it by myself, and no one has ever done anything for me,” or some version of that with more or less verbal contusions? By and large, most adolescents carry a detached perspective that smells like arrogance exponentiated; blame it on the part of their brain that hasn't developed yet.

And somewhere around there is



THE SKANNER NEWS

Rob Ingram

where this really corrosive cycle starts — I feel like I'm all alone, figuring life out without the necessary connections and support. Most who have matured would

that might be harsh, but how many of us got the “because I told you so!” and thought how cold to respond in that manner? Even better yet, how many of us got the “do as I say, not as I do” contradiction? I got it, but I didn't “get” it; still don't!

Oh, and then there is the issue of silent reprimand and retribution: when some feel as though they've not been treated with the reverence and veneration that they feel they deserve. And no one should argue who is deserving and who is not;

identify the culprit(s) and call them out? Shall we waterboard them?

Well you might be one of the ones getting dunked then, and probably didn't do any of it intentionally. While we're finger-pointing, complaining and calling for crucifixions, the gap between the generations is widening. Invariably, if and when it gets as wide as the Columbia River we'll have a task on our hands trying to bridge it. And I'm not sure what we can expect out of our society if we won't work together.

In a way, it seems fitting that this was written the same week that Gil Scott Heron passed away. Gil was a revolutionary in the purest sense of the word. He believed in the best of us, and gave us music to be the soundtrack to those efforts. He knew where our problems and demons lied, even though he struggled to keep a grasp on his own. Gil laid classic tracks about the struggle, and the issues, but the words that rang truest for me were about us, and how we needed to do better by one another. He hit us with those notes over and over, obviously because we weren't getting it.

Watching his life was somewhat prophetic if you mirror it with the growth of the Black community. First we learned about ourselves, then we took action to do something about, only to fall victim to addiction and abuse, and eventually sustained until our demise. And what's worse? We never reached our full potential! We never found those ways to share our experiences, our thoughts, our lessons with those coming behind us who needed them, and still need them, to this day.

While I can't give you the context Gil was in when he wrote the lyrics, I can tell you that they fit. “I know you've been hurt by someone else. I can tell by the way you carry yourself. But if you'll let me, here's what I'll do — I'll take care of you,” so noble and pure, if only we could live those words. And finally, one more from my good friend and mentor Rob Richardson: “Hurt people hurt other people.” We're out of options, and we can't do it alone. It is time for us to come together in real ways, let our guard down and remind each other — I love you, I need you, I AM YOU!

Bridge the gap!

But the emotion of feeling abandoned is as real as the perception that it is. And a human feeling detached is a simple way to create contention

say that those times in life where you have to depend on you and only you are times that make you a better person — lonely struggle can build resiliency.

But the emotion of feeling abandoned is as real as the perception that it is. And a human feeling detached is a simple way to create contention. That contention looks like disregard, which feels like disrespect and all of a sudden the same supportive adult is seen as the disconnecter or disposer. So what if I am one of Portland's thousands of teenagers? Some view me as a threat, to others I am a pest, and to some I am anomaly — to be studied, figured out, researched and experimented on (never forget Tuskegee!!!).

Whichever concoction of emotions I feel based on what I do and don't receive from those ahead of me shapes how I feel about me and how I feel about them. Left to my own devices, that concoction does (and often has) grown into disdain and real active disrespect and defiance. Now, if any were wondering why kids and young people don't listen to the adults around them — this is not the only reason but it is a big one!!!

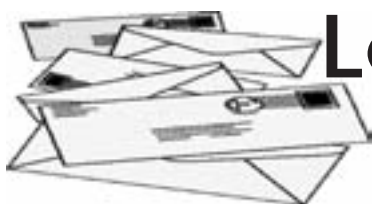
But they weren't left alone. No, not our children! Not always, but often that is the response from the adults and elders. We gave you more than we had, and can't help but to wonder if that was the fault. Are these spoiled, self-absorbed, superficial snot-noses going to tell me how they will be raised? Ok,

because you will inadvertently be right eventually. I would dare not mention who, where or when (as that might be a lot of remembering) but I've seen with my own pair of eyes how some who have made it; have “arrived” will intentionally remove themselves from those coming up as a way of reprisal.

It makes sense to take the car keys, the cell phone, even the right to entertainment — but to remove you??? The only thing that is likely to teach me is how to punish others with my absence or how to “properly” avoid situations and people that I feel are not doing enough homage paying and/ or brown-nosing.

It just bears mentioning that adults understand childhood (hopefully), while children can't understand adulthood, and that somewhere in all of that, it becomes their fault — whoever they are. We're in serious trouble here people! This rant is only a sliver of the real dialogue. In fact, the sins run so deep I'm not sure it is worth it to try to unpack and rectify them.

In some ways, it might just be better to apologize, make amends, and move forward rather than try to address the finger-pointing (you know what they say about the one pointing at them — AND the three pointing back at you...). I have no clue whose fault it is, and nor do I really care. Will it ever really matter and what will it get us if we can



Letters to the Editor

combat pancreatic cancer.

We would never tolerate breast cancer or prostate cancer killing nearing 40,000 each year without putting serious money behind finding an early diagnostic test and a reliable treatment. We would never turn a blind eye to a murderer who killed 40,000 people every year. We would never ignore someone stepping onto US soil and killing 40,000 of its citizens without going after the perpetrator. Why then do we allow pancreatic cancer to have the last word in SO many lives each year? It's time to level the play-

ing field of cancer research and give pancreatic cancer research its overdue attention. Now.

The best way to fight this disease and change the status quo is to pass the Pancreatic Cancer Research & Education Act (S. 362/H.R. 733). The bill would require the NCI to develop a long-term comprehensive strategic plan to combat the disease. Unfortunately, our very own members of Congress have not yet signed on to this critical legislation.

I would encourage everyone to join

me and thousands of other pancreatic cancer advocates from across the country on June 14 for a National Call-In to Congress asking that they co-sponsor the Pancreatic Cancer Research & Education Act. Go to www.knowitfightitendit.org to learn more.

Together, we can make a difference in the fight against pancreatic cancer.

Evette Bechtold
Portland