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Opinion

Racial Profiling: A National Epidemic Hits Home, Again

A simple internet search uncovers countless studies and statistics, from highly credible sources, outlining the disparities relating to the frequency and severity of interactions between law enforcement and African Americans, compared to interactions with other races. Increasingly, social media is being used as a platform to expose the world to the deeply entrenched epidemic of racial profiling in the United States.

Once again, the Pacific Northwest, namely Portland, Ore., is thrust back into the conversation. Jermaine Massey, a 34-year-old African American man, in Portland for a concert, stopped in a quiet seating area at the DoubleTree Hotel in Lloyd Center at approximately 11:23 p.m. to take a call before returning to his room. After being racially profiled by hotel security, Mr. Massey was escorted from the hotel by officers of the Portland Police Bureau. According to the police report, Earl Meyers, a hotel security guard, asked Massey for proof that he was indeed a guest of the hotel. Meyers went on to report that “Massey refused to give a room number.” Meyers informed the guest that, “If a room number couldn’t be provided, he would be asked to leave the property,” re-

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sponding Portland Police officer Richard Harvey wrote in the police report. The police report also states that Massey, a Kent, Wa. resident, accused Meyers of being racist.

This negligent, avoidable situation, along with numerous other unreported and public instances of racial profiling, highlights the reality that in the 21st century, this evolving epidemic continues to be fueled by the lack of action in both the private and public sectors. It is not a novice experience for an overwhelming population of African American men to be stopped while driving, challenged while traveling by public transportation, plane or train, or in doing any number of daily activities, to become a victim of racial profiling.

The N.A.A.C.P. (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) has been at the forefront of promoting effective law enforcement practices since its inception in 1910. It is with great urgency that we move swiftly to address the over 100-year-

old grievance. It is egregious that we are still dealing with fundamental issues that erode confidence and respect between law enforcement, African Americans and other communities of color. The N.A.A.C.P. endeavors to establish humane and effective

“Implicit bias is often the root of racial profiling, compounded by severely under-trained security personnel

public use of force standards for law enforcement officers, to eliminate racial profiling, to advance policies that require data collection for all police encounters, to institute full transparency of such interactions and increase support for adaptable community policing strategies.

We have a grave concern regarding the ability of local law enforcement to facilitate an illegal eviction of a patron that has legally obtained temporary lodging, and unduly removed without proof of violating any laws, and without the right of due process. Im-

PLICIT bias is often the root of racial profiling, compounded by severely under-trained security personnel often employed by hotels, malls, and like places. Since we can see increasing instances of the profiling of African American men—the intertwining effect of systemic racism has written a narrative that black and brown people carry the overwhelming burden of the enforcement of rules. Although neutral as written law, when applied it has a racial and discriminatory impact.

Additionally, we are challenging corporations to adopt and enforce policies and procedures against racial profiling, and to promote diversity and inclusion not just among employees but also as it relates to their customers. Having a policy against racial profiling does not mean that there will be no claims of discrimination. However, having adequate policies and procedures, in conjunction with annual diversity and inclusion training for all employees, will assist in preventing the racial profiling of customers and provide definitive procedures for employees to follow that ensure equitable consumer care, professional treatment, and ensuing interactions are addressed quickly, effectively and humanely.

Listen – A 2019 Challenge in Memory of Robby Gregg

By Julianne Malveaux, NNPA Newswire Contributor

I’m leaving 2018 behind, with its myriad trials and tribulations. For me, many of the challenges revolved around the unhealthy atmosphere in Washington, D.C., and that’s not likely to change. But many of the challenges, joys, and sorrows were also personal. One of them was the loss of Robby Gregg, Jr., a diversity expert and consultant at Cook Ross, a diversity and inclusion firm in the DC area that was founded by my dear friend Howard Ross.

Robby died unexpectedly at 58, just a week before Christmas. Alarmed at not having heard from him, a friend went to his home and found him gone. Unless you are part of the D&I community (as diversity experts call themselves), connected to Wake Forest University (Robby was a 1983 graduate), or part of the vast Maya Angelou extended family (Robby was one of Dr. Maya’s students at Wake, and an ardent supporter of the Maya Angelou school in Washington, D.C.), you probably wouldn’t know Robby. He was a man worth knowing.

I’m writing about Robby because his memory has challenged me to make a 2019 res-

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olution. I am going to endeavor to listen more, especially to people I disagree with. I’m going to seek some of these people out for conversation, and I’m also planning to have

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tea or a meal (without knives — halfway joking) with a few of them. While I will never let go of my commitments to social and economic justice, to racial parity, and to reparations, knowing Robby made me realize that it is also important to open oneself up to thought-provoking conversations with those we disagree with.

Robby and I had been friends for a while, but he was no fan of my confrontational style, and

he didn’t mind telling me. He was offended by my Facebook page, which is a combination of policy analysis, organizing, and personal sharing. Because I live in a gentrified neighborhood where, in my opinion, my melanin-deficient neighbors can be entitled and inconsiderate, with a sprinkling of racism thrown in, I vent on my page about the Brads and the Beckys. And Robby didn’t like it. He responded that if I didn’t like my neighborhood, I should move from the home I’ve lived in for 20 years. Not. I became so angered by his suggestion that we began to avoid each other and cease interaction.

An unpleasant encounter at a social gathering (I was wrong to carry our disagreement into that space) prompted me to reach out, and the result was a wonderful three-hour lunch where we offered each other the gift of listening. I think we both walked away feeling affirmed, if not in perfect agreement or alignment. We could agree that we loved and respected each other and shared common values, even if our ways of going about things was different.

Robby and I shared an appreciation for Howard Ross, the founder of Cook Ross and

author of *Belonging: How Our Need to Connect is Tearing Us Apart* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2018).

It’s a great read about the ways our human tendencies to belong work both for us and against us. Part of the book recounts Howard’s journey around the country talking and listening to people who voted for 45, some of whom regret their vote, and others who stand by it. He walked away with a more nuanced understanding of 45 supporters, which he shares in the book, along with techniques for having civil, even friendly, and informative conversations.

When I interviewed Howard a few weeks ago, he threw out the suggestion of lunching with those with whom I have profound disagreements. I scoffed at it, considering it an utter waste of time in many cases. The day after our interview, Robby Gregg, Jr. was found dead, and I wondered if there was a message in his passing for me. After all, had we not had that delightful long lunch, my friend and I would not have had rapprochement.

Read the rest of this commentary at
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