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Opinion

NAACP/Black Community: A Model for Resiliency

As America enters perhaps the most uncertain period in modern history, we will all be tested in new and unpredictable ways.

While there are many external factors outside of our control, how we adapt to change and uncertainty will depend on how we call on one of humanity's most indispensable traits: resiliency.

Resiliency in people describes the ability to bounce back from change and adversity, and defines how we navigate this crisis both individually and as a nation.

Frederick Douglass a Black American social reformer, and abolitionist, reminded us that "If there is no struggle, there is no progress." While frontline communities will predictably be the hardest hit. I see that Black communities are often the first harmed and last informed. These same communities are speaking truth to power about resiliency and how to muster its strength. Existential threats are nothing new to the Black community.

Throughout American history, Black people have had to endure a society that was founded on the belief that they were less than human. In 2020, we are still far from equality. But while Black Americans die an average of



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3.6 years before their White counterparts (largely due to risk factors for chronic disease), studies show that we may have better mental health outcomes.

“If there is no struggle, there is no progress

For example, both depression and suicide are less common among Black Americans than White Americans. While America's average life expectancy has declined slightly in recent years, this is not true of Black Americans. Black Americans seemingly evade the so-called, "deaths of despair," say's Dr Carol Graham, the Leo Pasvolosky senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

Among the reasons: poor Black people—society's most disadvantaged demographic—are statistically its most optimistic.

Shervin Assari, who stud-

ies health disparities and mental health at the University of Michigan, summarizes research on the subject as demonstrating that "vulnerability is a cost of privilege, resiliency comes as a result of adversity."

So, what are the effects of adversity on resiliency speaking to us in this hour?

While being resilient in the face of fear and anxiety is difficult, Nan Henderson, one of the foremost experts in resiliency research, writes about people's "hard-wired ability to bounce back." She identifies "basic characteristics of resiliency building" which she calls "protective strategies."

So in being resilient we are driven to create strategies. These strategies include ways to lend each other strength, and find it in ourselves as well. One of Henderson's strategies describes how we can support each other. She recommends communicating the "Resiliency Attitude" to those we care about and love.

The Resiliency Attitude means to remind people, "the part of them that is resilient is more powerful than the adversity at hand." This requires sincerity. We are challenged to acknowledge the inner strength of others and confer that honest belief to them. This sincerity will not

go unnoticed, and it is the surest way to help others believe in their own potential to overcome hardship. Another strategy Henderson describes is aimed at helping us find resiliency in ourselves.

Henderson calls this the "Strengths Perspective" and provides a quote from Martin Seligman, past president of the American Psychological Association, who concluded that "The keystone of high achievement and happiness is exercising your strengths."

Henderson points out that people often have a hard time identifying and acknowledging their own strengths—this is a difficult task for many of us. But Henderson suggests a slightly easier one: searching your mind for specific recent adversities you have overcome. Then, think about the traits that were employed to overcome them. It can help to compare the traits you come up with to a common list of strengths such as the one here to aid in affirming their validity.

Whatever the future holds, one thing is certain: the near and intermediate term will test us. The outcome will depend on our willingness to hit the ground running in support of each other. As we strive to do both, it's important to remember that resiliency is inherent in all of us.

Billions for Boeing, Pennies for the People

The development of the \$2.2 trillion stimulus package was extremely flawed. The Republican bullies in the Senate, led by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, wrote the bill with absolutely no Democratic input, then suggested that Democrats amend their legislation.

The first draft of the bill, unsurprisingly, was a goody grab for corporations with much less for individuals. Initially, the Republican Senate would have given Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin a slush fund of \$500 billion to assist troubled industries with absolutely no oversight.

The last version of the bill does include both monitoring and an inspector general to look for fraud and abuse. Republicans would have doled the money out to their cronies. But the Dems, led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, stood their ground. The stimulus legislation is better than the 2008-2009 bailout legislation; it is gratifying to see that the Senate rose above partisanship to get this done.

Republicans even conceded that Mr. Trump, his grafter family, other cabinet heads and senior leaders, along with their families, cannot benefit from this stimulus legislation. It is unfathomable



Julianne Malveaux
NNPA Columnist

that this provision has to be put in writing, but 45, a hotel owner, pushed hard for hotels and cruise ships to get bailout benefits, but some in Congress have apparently peeped 45's hole card.

“Good for Democrats for recognizing the pattern of double-dealings

It takes extreme hubris for our nation's chief executive officer, who has used the United States Treasury as a piggy bank, to be as self-serving as 45 is. Good for Democrats for recognizing the pattern of double-dealings makes it clear that written prohibition of these shady practices is necessary.

Michigan Congressman Justin Amash, an independent

who used to be Republican, tweeted, "This bipartisan deal is a raw deal for the people. It does far too little for those who need the most help while providing hundreds of billions in corporate welfare, massively growing government, inhibiting economic adaptation, and widening the gap between the rich and the poor." The legislation is likely to be hundreds, if not thousands, of pages long. And it's got lots of fine print.

For example, \$17 billion in loan funds are set aside for "businesses deemed critical to maintaining national security. While Boeing isn't mentioned by name, the Washington Post quoted a confidential source who says this money is partly set aside for Boeing.

This is the same Boeing that manufactured faulty, crashing planes. And they've imperiously said they will take assistance only on their terms. Some think the federal government should take an equity stake in companies that get bailout funds. Boeing's CEO said he wasn't interested in such a deal. If the feds wanted to play hardball, they'd force Boeing into bankruptcy, since bankruptcy doesn't mean the cessation of operations, it means the restructuring of debt.

Meanwhile, there's no helpful fine print for ordinary people. Sure, people will get \$1200 checks, plus \$500 per child. That's better than nothing, but compared to Boeing's billions, it's pennies. The ability to get unemployment insurance for extra weeks will also be helpful for those who lose their jobs.

More food stamp funds will be available. But there is some confusion over whether gig workers will get the benefit. Instead, it seems that those who have good jobs will get great benefits, while those who have part-time jobs, gig jobs, or are unemployed won't get much. As Congressman Amash says, this stimulus package will widen the wealth gap.

Inequality is at the very foundation of our economic system, so it isn't surprising that the coronavirus stimulus package reflects the biases that are hard-wired into our system.

We need committed, vocal, progressive members of Congress (Maxine Waters, Barbara Lee, Ayana Pressley, Bobby Scott, AOC, and others) to shine a bright light on this inequality, and to either modify the legislation or develop legislation to address some of these inequalities.