

11-3-2021

Save Our Children

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It has been a topic of my mental anguish for several years: the plight, and the state of affairs, of our young, our children and our youth. My mental gyrations have been based on no scientific data, or empirical evidence, to prove what I thought I saw before me, which was a metamorphosis in our youth. Our youth have been bombarded with a series of disconnected events that have contributed to a new generation and a new composite of our youth, both youth of color and white youth. I respectfully submit to this mental process, a list of those contributory factors:

- The emergence of a generational virus (Covid 19), threatening the life of family, friends, and even oneself, faced by our youth.
- The observation of extreme divisionalization, and disconnect, rooted in race, gender, economic status, political affiliations, generations. Please note it could be a combination of any, or all, of the items listed.
- Extreme divisiveness that is rooted in hate, supremacy and interconnected with all of those various divisions that we have.
- The uncertainty of career opportunities (not jobs, but careers), and the seeming disconnect between their educational sacrifices, to a life of financial and personal security.
- The realities of inequity, lack of diversity, and the lack of inclusion, will dominate their adult lives.
- That their unfortunate realization, by observations, that big lies, and misinformation go unchecked and are supported by such a large segment of our community. In other words, the fleeting fabric of truth.
- Their observations that the adults are troubled with being accountable for the future. For example, what are the adults going to do to guarantee a world not ruined by climate change, toxic water, and more.

Repeating myself, our youth are highly affected by the facts and observations. They are changed, and are inclined to have mental health challenges because of all of this drama and uncertainty. And, most of their challenges are not readily obvious to us, as adults.

May I teach, from a point of wisdom. Youth of color have another additional layer to reckon with, and it's mostly all rooted in multi-generational poverty. Multi-generational poverty generates a sub-culture of inferiority, desperation, anger, community disconnect and lawlessness. An example, crime and drug trade. Drug trade generates more crime, violence, murder, and more, because the drug trade generates a unique opportunity of cash flow, in a poverty stricken community. I implore readers not to judge the victims, but judge the circumstances. Above all, understand the root and the cause of many of the problems within our urban centers. Recently, in the news, I read about violence, fights and disruptions in our schools, and realized that they are rooted in generational poverty.

I submit to you two recent pieces of evidence, to make my point, that our youth have changed:

1. My recent southern Black History Tour, where I take 40 high school kids on an annual Civil Rights history journey throughout the south. For five years, we have travelled with over 250 youth, but in 2021, the youth that we travelled with were different. The evidence of all of the aforementioned factors, had impacted this year's group. They were significantly harder to manage, harder to discipline, harder to get them to focus and harder to develop them as to learning, caring and leadership. We made an impact, but it was extremely harder. They were different.
2. In my university class, at UNO, we discuss items from my book, *Economic Cataracts*, written in 2015, regarding obstacles of urban community engagement and reduced voting enthusiasm. My surprise, from former class discussions, is that this year's class seemed to refocus the normal discussion, into a discussion of not the realities of urban communities, but the discussion of their own communities, and the lack of political, and society's, commitment to their future, such as was mentioned, climate change, equity, women's rights, environment and more. My detection is that they expressed confusion, and uncertainty about the state of affairs, and the future of Democracy.

My confession is that I share the same concerns; the same uncertainties. The advantage I have is that I have lived most of my life, and the waters have flowed under my bridge, but our youth are just going to the river for a drink, and have a thirst for a full life. What they are begging for, is the recognition of the adults to understand that their future is in our hands. I agree. We need to save our children. I challenge us all, that we lay down our divisiveness and focus on doing whatever is necessary to save our children, and not just sit back and see what happens.