

Orlando Sentinel OPINION

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GUEST COLUMNIST

This time, the movement for racial equality may endure



BY RICHARD E. LAPCHICK

My gut tells me this is different. After a lifetime watching and protesting incidents of racial injustice and hatred, I feel like it's possible, just possible, we may have reached a point where real change can be sustained.

Like the rest of America and now the world, I have been outraged by the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor. I watch the huge protests. I am encouraged by the athletes, coaches, teams and leagues that have raised their voices with strong calls for an attack on racism and hate.

More than ever before I see very diverse crowds in those demonstrations and I hear white people talking about *listening* to people of color. I think we finally realized as white people we really don't know what it's like to be black in America.

In 1978, I was the American leader of the sports boycott of apartheid South Africa. After leading protest demonstrations for four days in Tennessee, where a South African team was headed, I was working late in my college office in Virginia when two men wearing stocking masks attacked me. They caused liver and kidney damage, a hernia, a concussion and used scissors to carve the "N-word" on my stomach.

Some people suggested, "Now you know what it's like to be black." I told them, "I really don't know because I can walk away from the fight against racism and rejoin the white middle-class. I will never face the daily discrimination that confronts people of color every day." We can never totally understand that reality.

With so much emphasis on police brutality, I hope people don't lose sight of the fact that this is not totally what this is about. Racism stains every fabric of American society. People call it a broken system but I wonder if the system wasn't designed throughout our history to produce exactly the situation we live in today regarding race. I think we must break this system that has resulted and what we live with every day.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the United States has more than 1,000 hate groups. White nationalist groups

have grown by 55% in the Trump era. Some of our children are learning how to hate.

According to the FBI there were 4,571 incidents classified as hate crimes in 2019. The report states that more than half of all hate-crime victims never file a complaint.

My generation witnessed all of the murders during the civil rights era. It was awful and forever changed many of us. We read about it and saw still photographs. The same was true for racial attacks that occurred for the next 40 years. There were always demonstrations and calls for change. Little did change because the movements were never sustained.

The reason why my gut tells me this may be different is that I believe Generation Z and Millennials are more compassionate, passionate and open to a just society than previous generations.

This generation is bearing witness to racial hate captured on smartphones and repeated over and over in their social media accounts as well as in the news.

Another reason is the diversity of the protesters and that they are really grasping the underlying sentiment of what "black lives matter" really means. They have the technology of smartphones and social media to sustain the movement.

Finally, sports, which among the athletes is America's most diverse workplace, we have athletes — student-athletes and pros — of all races speaking largely with unified voices. They are being joined by coaches, teams, leagues and college athletic departments. Collectively, they need to hold leadership and people in power accountable on this issue.

They need to engage their communities, especially where there are communities of color. Like everyone else, teams and athletes need to listen to youth and invest in their future. As it always does, sport has the potential to heal divisions and bring communities together.

I hope my gut is right and that we have really reached a moment when we can bring about change that creates a new, just system. If some children have learned how to hate, we can teach them how to love again.

Richard Lapchick is the chair of the University of Central Florida's DeVos Sport Business Management.

GUEST COLUMNISTS

Still dealing with racism, generation after generation



BY RANDOLPH BRACY JR. AND LAVON WRIGHT BRACY

Our two children spent their adolescent years in Philadelphia. As parents, we spent many hours talking to them about the protocol of survival if they were stopped by the Philadelphia police.

That was 30 years ago, and we are having the same conversation today: How to survive if you are stopped by the police. Ironically, this is the same lesson that was passed down from our parents to us.

As native Floridians, we both experienced first-hand Jim Crow laws and segregation in the '50s and '60s. The wounds and memories are still raw of growing up during a time when black people were penalized for the color of their skin; literally lynched for trying to register to vote; harassed for desegregating public schools 10 years after the 1954 Supreme Court decision; attacked by dogs for drinking from whites-only water fountains; and the litany of indignities we suffered back then, which go on and on and on today.

Our son is a Florida state senator and we are still having the same conversation with him, especially when he leaves from Orlando on his way to Tallahassee for legislative sessions — traveling up Interstate 75 north and then Interstate 10 west, through those infamous West Florida counties that have a long track record of lynching and unfair treatment of black men. We still hold our breath until he calls and tells us he has arrived safely.

This past Memorial Day, my wife woke me up to Good Morning America, believing that it would be an ordinary day of celebration. Because of COVID-19, we only had our family present for the cookout, and we thought the day ended uneventfully.

Waking up on Tuesday, she realized that Memorial Day was not an uneventful day. Tuesday morning's news caught her attention that a white woman named Amy Cooper was walking her dog in New York's Central Park. She was asked by Christian

Cooper, a black man, to put her dog on a leash. Cooper called the police and lied that her life was in danger. Fortunately, Christian had videoed the incident and left. The irony is that, had Cooper waited until the police arrived, he could have lost his life.

Later that day, breaking news showed George Floyd being pinned to the ground by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, and ultimately murdered in slow motion with a knee upon his neck while three other officers aided and abetted in the crime.

Our granddaughters, who are 7 and 8, at first thought they had seen a black man being run over by a car on TV. By this time, the horrific video was seizing the world's attention and my youngest granddaughter realized this was the man she had seen earlier. She shrieked in horror when she learned that the man had not been hit by a car but had been murdered. My son spent that night and every day since trying to explain what they had seen was not an attempt to kill all black men.

The question is, how long must this craziness last? How many generations have to go through this horror show before America sees this as wrong and inhumane?

What will it take for America to get its foot off our neck?

Paraphrasing Frederick Douglass, a black activist from another generation: Power never concedes anything without a struggle; never did and never will.

One of the simple solutions to the problem black people face in America is this: White people, we need you to do better! We appreciate those of you who have decided to join us in the fight for equality, and we appreciate those of you who have always been with us. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

We can no longer afford for you to remain silent.

Racism is still real in 2020!

Randolph Bracy Jr. is a long-time pastor and dean and distinguished professor for the School of Religion at Bethune-Cookman University. LaVon Wright Bracy is an author and the first black student to graduate from Gainesville High School.

GUEST COLUMNIST

What is 'new normal' for arenas?



BY LEN MOSER

Stay-at-home orders are lifted, businesses across Central Florida are implementing the state's guidelines for reopening, and larger institutions — like theme parks, school districts and public universities — are submitting plans for how they will ensure the safe return of those they serve.

Meanwhile, residents have more questions than answers. How will I know when it's safe to travel, send my kids back to school, or go to the gym? Will college football be back in the fall? When will live concerts return to stadiums and arenas?

From aviation and retail to amusement parks and attractions, industries that serve the general public are being challenged to create safe environments and pleasant experiences in a post-coronavirus world. Likewise, sports venues are exploring what their "new normal" might look like for the athletes, entertainers, event staff and fans.

I've spent my entire 30-year career in sports facility construction management, beginning right out of college as part of the team that built Camden Yards for the Baltimore Orioles, one of the most transformative structures in Major League Baseball. Closer to home, I've worked on venues such as the Daytona International Speedway, Orlando City Soccer Club's Exploria Stadium, the Atlanta Braves' spring-training facility on Florida's Gulf Coast, and most recently, the Inter Miami CF Lockhart Stadium and Training Facility.

Over the decades of building facilities for professional sports teams, college athletics and other venues, I've seen construction design evolve to incorporate new technologies, such as JumboTrons and retractable roofs in the 1980s, and respond to life-altering events like 9/11 in 2001. So what will sports and entertainment venues look like going forward from the coronavirus pandemic?

In recent weeks, one of the significant questions for the sports industry has been how to make venues safe for fans, athletes and staff. Among the ideas that have emerged include the use of thermal imaging cameras to detect elevated body temperatures; wristbands to identify COVID-19 cleared personnel and visitors; high filtration HVAC systems; a "destination dispatch" system for elevators; reconfiguring seating, pedestrian and parking areas to support social distancing requirements; and paperless ticketing and cashless payments systems.

The Event Safety Alliance has also developed reopening guidelines. They include

"virtual" queuing, scheduling arrival times in advance, and other ways to stagger admission to minimize lines for wanding, bag check and ticket scanning. They also recommend establishing an Infection Mitigation Coordinator, someone with medical and risk management knowledge, to coordinate, communicate and help implement public health guidelines.

Our firm was recently awarded the \$60 million improvement project for Camping World Stadium in collaboration with The COLLAGE Companies and JCB Construction. We are in significant discussions around what modifications and upgrades will be necessary to prepare that facility, as well as other sports venue projects, for the return of fans in a COVID-19 environment.

The challenges include line formation for ticketing and concessions that adhere to social distancing guidelines, seating density, concession payment methods, circulation in concourse areas, player and staff safety, restroom utilization and circulation, and sanitation of touch points. All of these items potentially involve construction and operational modifications to facilities in the near future.

As a company, Barton Malow Builders is already implementing a variety of measures to keep our own team members healthy and our job sites safe. For instance, we created a specific QR code for each site and office that requires visitors and employees to scan the code, and take and pass a health assessment before entering.

Last May, we moved our Florida office to downtown Orlando's Milk District, renovating the former Barnie's Coffee headquarters into a collaborative, flexible work environment using the latest approaches in workspace design. One year later, we are reworking the space and adding wayfinding signage for social distancing, occupancy limits, hand washing, sanitization measures and traffic patterns, and just last week, we installed "hands-free" door openers to limit touching of the handles in our building.

All of us involved in the design and construction of sports facilities realize the importance of creating a memorable fan experience and understand that change is hard. After 9/11, there was resistance to bag checks and metal detectors, much like face coverings and social distancing today. But, we got used to them, and people came to accept that they were there for our own safety.

Staff, vendors, athletes and team officials, and especially spectators, need to feel that stadiums are safe before they can return to the love of the game.

Len Moser is vice president of Barton Malow Builders' national sports division.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Justice system didn't fail; law-breaking officer did

The United States has a justice system. It's not perfect, but it does not allow cops to kneel on detainee's necks for 8½ minutes without consequences.

George Floyd's death was unnecessary and egregious, but no law enabled that cop to do what he did. If there was such a law, that would be proof of "systemic racism." But the cop broke the law and he is paying the consequences. It won't bring back George Floyd, but what else can government do with a bad cop?

Ron Berti Orlando

Systemic racism can't be denied

Systemic racism is a statistical fact. It exists, therefore it is.

Professor Charles Negy purports ("Professor's tweets called racist," June 5) to explain (some would say justify) this racism by pondering whether it would exist at all, should the victims of its grip comport their behavior to that of a mythologized other.

This line of "yes, but" thinking is, in fact, one of the more insidious variants of racism. While the First Amendment

protects Negy's tenure at UCF, it does seem he might find a better fit at the Archie Bunker School of Social Justice.

Joe Finger Orlando

Be wary of racial labels

I'm sure every black man and woman in America is thrilled to learn that "MAGA loves the black people," as President Trump told the press on May 30.

They are a category in Donald Trump's mind, in Trump supporters' minds. No one could love every black person, or every white person or Hispanic person, for that matter. Some are wonderful, some are jerks, just like all of humanity. None are categories. All are individuals.

My parents, like Trump, didn't think they were racists. Yet they saw every person in terms of race — everyone, that is, except white people. White people were the default race. Everyone else was labeled — "that black woman" — and by inference, second-tier.

My parents were "a product of their times," something "products" like to say to excuse their bigotry. The era of their early adulthood — the 1950s — is the era Trump and his supporters want to revive, when whites reigned. His presidency is the resentful backlash to a half-century of progress.

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