

# **The BLACK C o M M e n t a t o r**

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African Americans and the African world.

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## **My Child's Rage The Other Side of the Tracks By Perry Redd BC Columnist**

I've spent years and years watching mothers grieve over the shooting deaths of their sons. That type of grief is commonplace in my community - the Black community. That grief is multiplied to unfathomable levels when the authority figures - the police - are the shooters.

Prince George's County, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, DC, has one of the highest rates per capita in the nation of police shootings of Black men. The saddest aspect of this police-induced violence is that many of the officers are Black. This fact is conveniently absent from social discourse when the topic is Black-on-Black crime.

Last week, a case of this nature hit close to home, bludgeoning my grandson with a one-two punch. He is currently living through the horror of a police unjustifiably fatally shooting his uncle - in Prince George's County.

Viewers commented about the shooting on the local Fox News web site. The comments highlighted the sheep-like mentality of so many Americans who value loyalty toward police over justice. My position is this: reality is based in fear of the police. Supporters of police often attribute their unwavering loyalty to law enforcement's honorable work. However, I'm quick to challenge that by asking: what is your behavior called when you act dishonorably?

When citizenry gloss over wrongful police killings, they slap families of victims in the face, not to mention the face of justice. My 10-year-old

grandson hurts. Shortly after the shooting, he grimly stated, "I feel that all the men around me are leaving me." Hmm, in the past 5 years of his young life:

- 1) He has suffered the break-up of his family, with his father leaving the home and seemingly deadlocked with his mother over many important issues.
- 2) His father was violently assaulted.
- 3) His great-grandfather passed.
- 4) And now, he mourns the loss of his uncle.

To compound my grandson's trauma, one of his grandfathers - with whom he's very close - was returned to prison for a 'technical' violation related to supervised release. Now can you feel this 10-year-old boy's loneliness? But that's not all.

Soon after learning that his uncle was killed by a police officer, he declared, "I feel rage!" That's a lyric in one of my songs, written specifically to address the scourge of police brutality. My grandson's never heard my song! He continued by saying *he's* under attack. I'm impressed at his ability and willingness to express his feelings so articulately for a 10-year-old boy, and, of course, I'm proud of his awareness of this pitiable aspect of our society (i.e., police-community relations). Children must be given a vast array of experiences and license to "voice their feelings." To voice them constructively is healthy. I can understand why he feels alone. The fact that he hurts, hurts me. So, what do I do?

My grandson's rage is *not* unfounded, worthless, or unjustified, and yet he feels he has no recourse. Our children should not have to endure adult situations and as adults, we try to shield them, but at age 10, America's heart of racial injustice is unfolding before him. I've watched him gravitate toward resources about the Civil Rights Movements (at first, through school projects and later, out of personal curiosity). He fears a Klan robe; just the sight of one unsettles him. I've gingerly piqued his interest to continue exploring Black history and to confront all things that foster fear, including evil white people.

Recently, two Prince George's County police officers picked up two Charles County teens at the request of a friend who hosted a gathering and suspected the boys of stealing liquor from his house. The boys

weren't arrested; instead, they were 'driven around' in the cruiser, and one boy was beaten (one boy escaped). The police have been charged with kidnapping, assault, false imprisonment, and misconduct.

How can parents uphold the ideals of law enforcement, when the realities contradict the ideals? Raising young Black males to respect police authority against a backdrop of rogue behavior is challenging, especially when the rogue officers are Black. For my grandson, learning that the perpetrators are *Black* police officers compounds the task of overcoming his fear. Someone who looks like your father and yet acts like the devil.

Here's where I see my role. I must empower my child...thus I fight. Much like Emmett Till in 1955 or Trayvon Martin this year, we - as Black Americans - must force the hand of Lady Liberty; dare the authorities to make victims whole. My grandson won't be made whole unless accountability comes to fruition.

Our children are our future. As such, we cannot simply *march and demand* accountability, lest another generation of **irresponsible** civil servants and bureaucrats get off while our youth and young adults watch us watch miscarriage after miscarriage of justice in the midst of our marching and demanding.

Instead, the time is now to voice our disgust with those appointed to protect and serve. I will **not** defer *my* voice, waiting for the next tragedy. Not only are the dead irreparably harmed, but their loved ones are too when we - the Black people - fail to stand.

My grandson hurts and while he sees no recourse, I do, but it requires action. I will be the genesis for such action. I will show him how to appropriately *and legally* redress grievances. I can't bring my grandson's uncle back, but I can empower my grandson.

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