

Race

by Gary Fouse



Having been born in 1945, I am old enough to have seen historical changes in American society when it comes to racial matters. Though I grew up in Los Angeles, my mother, who was a native of North Carolina, used to take me back there during the summers to visit her family. I can recall at about the age of ten when I saw a sign in a restaurant window that read, "Whites only". Even at that tender age, I was puzzled.

My parents never taught me to use the N-word though it was commonly thrown around by the kids in California and adults as well. I was never exposed to black schoolmates until my first year of high school. Later, at the age of about 19, I played on a semi-pro baseball team that was almost all black. It was a great learning experience. The players were older than me and had experienced discrimination first hand.

Of course, the Civil Rights movement was by now in full swing.

We also had a lot of Mexican-American and Japanese-American kids going to our schools as well as Jewish kids. While the Mexican-Americans and Jews faced some prejudice, the Japanese-American kids were very popular.

In 1966, I joined the army and was sent to Germany as a military policeman. The racial problems in the US were mirrored in the army in Germany, and as an MP, I was right in the thick of it. Fortunately, we did have some black MPs in our unit.

I look back on those days and I regret that I did not get personally involved in the Civil Rights movement. Like most white people, I stood back and watched it on the news. What is important here is that I have seen so many positive changes in our society in our relations with and feelings about minorities (not to mention gays). As a personal example, in high school, I was involved in a few fights with the Mexican kids. I eventually married a Mexican.

We entered this century believing that race relations were on an irreversible track for the better. With immigration and intermarriage, it seemed inevitable that one day we would achieve that post-racial society. The election of Barack Obama seemed to reinforce that feeling.

But something has gone terribly wrong in just the past decade. Maybe it was all just simmering below the surface, but things are now definitely going the wrong way back to a time most of us do not wish to return to.

The incident at Charlottesville has put this into sharper focus, but before Charlottesville, we had Treyvon Martin, Ferguson, Missouri, Freddy Gray, and other tragic incidents that led to the formation of Black Lives Matter. I don't doubt there are many well-meaning members of this movement, but when I see images of marchers chanting, "Pigs in a blanket: Fry 'em up like bacon (Minnesota) and "What do we want: Dead cops,

When do we want it? Now” (New York), my blood boils. Being retired from law enforcement, I naturally tend to support the cops even though sometimes, they error.

What went wrong? I put some of the blame on President Obama. He missed a chance to be a unifying force. He blew it. I put as much blame on his first attorney general, Eric Holder. He used his position and his department to push a racial agenda. It goes without saying that the Jeremiah Wrights, Louis Farrakhans and Al Sharptons of the world have done nothing but earn my contempt.

But let's don't talk about the last decade. Let's talk about just the past year. Academia, which has been nothing to brag about during my entire adult life, is now going full bore in teaching our youth that America is a racist society. It's not only Black Lives Matter, but “white privilege” and “white racism”. White people are supposedly the enemy of minorities and are actively attempting to block their advance. I reject that premise.

Yet, Charlottesville featured not just the thugs of Antifa engaging in violence. The event (and the previous evening's march on the campus of the University of Virginia) was organized by the KKK and neo-Nazis. One of the latter drove his car into a crowd of peaceful protesters and killed a young woman. The excesses of Antifa were overshadowed.

Call me naive, but I still cling to the notion that the KKK, David Duke, Richard Spencer, and neo-Nazis enjoy very little popular support. Yet they have the potential to grow. Whatever growth they may be enjoying at the moment I would attribute largely to this unfair demonization of whites. This is not to deny our history, which is full of racism, discrimination and unfair treatment of minorities going all the way back to slavery. We acknowledge this history and teach our younger generations about it – not to show that America is a racist country today – but to ensure that it never happens again.

This is similar to how Germany educates its younger generation about the Nazi era. Today, Germany is a decent nation even as it is being torn asunder by an out of control wave of asylum-seekers. But that is another topic.

We are in a very delicate period. Illegal immigration and Islamic extremism are elements of the problem. We desperately need sound leadership and sincere and respectful discourse. Most importantly, everyone needs to reject the extremists preaching hatred on all sides.