

Violence and Racism

By

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Violence has been in international and national news for an extended period. Further, it has also been in regional news for an extended period of time. Now, violence is upon us- not a war being fought between Russia and Ukraine. Not mass shootings, kidnappings, police brutality in different parts of the United States. But right here in the Evanston/North Shore area we have been experiencing unprecedented violence that we have not seen before.

We continue to grieve for victims of the Highland Park shooting that occurred during the town's 4th of July Parade. Because we have become a nation that does not like to face the dire nature of our troubles, we forget all too soon. In an ever so brief moment Robert Crimo III opened fire just 15 minutes after the parade began moving down Main Street. In the aftermath, 48 people were wounded by bullets or shrapnel and seven people were killed. Crimo used a Smith & Wesson M&P15 semiautomatic rifle with three 30-round magazines. Eighty three shots were fired. Victims were indiscriminate and included spectators, and those marching in the parade. The bullets were so powerful until it is incomprehensible to describe the damage done to victims.

In mid-July a father was playing Pokemon Go with his six year old daughter in an Evanston Park when he was shot and killed. He had two daughters and was about to start a new job as a manager at Culver's.

In late July, a thirteen year old child was critically injured by gunfire while attending a birthday party in a backyard. Ten shots were fired over a fence where children had gathered for summer time fun and enjoyment.

An elementary school kindergarten student who attended Willard Elementary School was shot while sitting in a car on Howard Street in Roger's Park. He died a few days later.

These are all examples of gun violence which quickly finds its way into all news media platforms. But there are other forms of debilitating and chronic violence also wreaking havoc and damage upon our area, region, nation and world. Systemic injustice has created perhaps, the worst form of violence humanity is facing today- in a myriad of different ways.

The quickly widening gap between the minuscule wealthy who control the resources of our Mother Earth and the masses of poor who don't control any resources, has grown exponentially in recent years. There are hardly any words to describe the chasm existing between the wealthy and everyone else. The poor are inevitably, struggling with inconceivable conditions;

Poor/inadequate or no housing,

Hunger,

Health conditions and illnesses,

Academic disparity,

Unemployment/underemployment and more.

The violence against the poor, who are disproportionately black and brown, is crushing. It creates psychological, mental, physical and spiritual deficiencies which then produces early death, crippling health conditions and consuming rage and anger.

Disparity in our judicial system is yet another example of violence. In 2022 Black and brown people are still apprehended, put on trial, sentenced and imprisoned at higher rates than any other group. Though the infraction or offense may be the same, race continues to play a dominant role in the unjust judicial system that begins with police on the street, moves to local

jails, then to court rooms and judges chambers and finally to prisons. Prisons are the new institution of slavery in the United States. This, is a form of violence.

Perhaps the very worst form of violence committed against the poor, black and brown people in our nation, is the surging white nationalism and racism that is everywhere. You see, fifty seven years after the Civil Rights Bill, fifty eight years after the Voting Rights Bill, sixty eight years after Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education and one hundred and fifty seven years after the end of the Civil War, the tawdry ugliness of racism and its vile cruelty is now everywhere. This creates enormous challenges for people of color.

But I have news for you. We are up for every single challenge. We are not our grandparents or great grandparents, as wonderful as they were. We will not take it. We will not accept it. And we will work with every single instrument available to ensure that racism will not win. That is one of the main reasons, the NAACP is the strongest civil rights organization in the world. Racism has been a main reason why violence has become so cemented in our nation. To end the violence, we have to end the racism. May our Evanston/North Shore branch continue in the struggle and move towards the victory.