

FORUM

#BlackLivesMatter prioritizes Black life



Julianne Malveaux
Guest Columnist

Nineteen-year-old Zachary Hammond was sitting in a Hardee's parking lot in his hometown of Seneca, S.C., on a first

date. An undercover agent had arranged to buy marijuana from his date and had lured her to the parking lot.

What could have been a simple drug bust turned into tragedy. Zachary was killed when two bullets struck him on July 26.

As always, there are conflicting stories of what happened. The shooting officer says he was in danger of being run over by Hammond, but not everyone agrees, and one Hardee's employee witnessed officers moving Hammond's body to place it so it confirmed officer reports.

Hammond is White and his name is not as widely known as that of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, or Tamir Rice. Hammond's family and their attorney, Eric Bland, say the national media have not covered the murder of Zach Hammond because he is White. Give me a break.

While activists organized to protest the murders of the unarmed African-American men (and women) who have been killed by the police, no one in Zach Hammond's circle has cared enough to organize an action to protest his killing. His town is majority White, as are the officers of the law. Citizens of Seneca, S.C., need to ask why Zach's killing is tolerated.

Approximately 350 people have been killed by police officers so far this year. We don't know all of their names, but we do know that African-Americans are twice as likely to be killed (or die in police custody) as Whites. We know about Sandra Bland, and Eric Garner, and Michael Brown, and Tamir Rice because somebody lifted them up, organized around their murders, and made their presence known. Tellingly, the protest of Michael Brown's murder was muted until a grand jury failed to indict murderer Darren Wilson for his crime.

In the case of Zach Hammond, there has been no tape issued, no witnesses who have come forward, and a police bureaucracy that seems in no hurry to issue facts and findings. Still, everybody would know Zach Hammond's name if that #AllLivesMatter crowd, the ones who object to the #BlackLivesMatter movement, would coalesce around Zach Hammond's murder. Instead of criticizing



the #BlackLivesMatter movement, Hammond's attorney and his grieving parents ought to ask why more White folks aren't outraged about young Hammond's death.

Zach Hammond's tragic death highlights the reasons why police officers should be forced to wear body cameras. It reminds us that too many trigger-happy officers of the law should be better trained. It reminds us that some have been trained (or decided) to shoot to kill, even if the perceived threat comes from a 12-year-old child playing with a toy gun, or a young White man who (facts still to be determined) was simply driving his car. Even if Zach Hammond was trying to flee the Hardee's parking lot, the consequence for evading arrest should not be the death penalty.

I am proud of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, an excited about the three young women who organized it, and the thousands who have united under their

banner. That movement that prioritizes black lives in a way that they have never before been prioritized. The #AllLivesMatter seems to be a flippant answer to #BlackLivesMatter. But here's the deal - White lives have always mattered and Black lives have been historically denigrated. Our nation's organizing principle, the Constitution, stated that African-Americans should only be counted as three fifths of a person. Thousands of African-American people were lynched because they dared defy "Black Codes" or simply because they had too much money, too much attitude or too much dignity for oppressive White southerners. Congress repeatedly refused to pass anti-lynching laws.

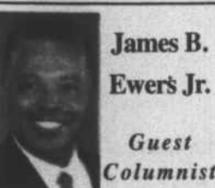
If all lives matter, where are the White folks who protest the murder of Michael Brown and Eric Garner? Where are the White folks who will protest Zach Hammond's murder? (There have been White protesters, to be sure, but have Zach

Hammond's parents ever been to a rally to protest the loss of Black life). There are many Black south Carolinians who would join in a protest against police brutality and an unjust killing. But those close to Zach Hammond will have to do the organizing to attract the national media.

Because of historic oppression, it is important for those who oppose needless police killings of unarmed Black people to embrace the #BlackLivesMatter movement. All lives matter, certainly, but it is the disproportionate killing of African-Americans that has provided the impetus for a movement. Eric Bland, the Hammond attorney, ought to embrace it instead of being criticizing it.

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The parental component in a child's education is mandatory



James B. Ewers Jr.
Guest Columnist

statewide testing frenzy and that is a recipe for disaster.

Too many children are coming to school ill-prepared for instruction and the subsequent success that goes with it. School has started and summer is now but a memory. Yes, the children had a great time on vacation and yes they had a chance to sleep late but are they ready for school? I think that depends upon whom you talk to about this matter.

You'll hear many people say it is the teachers who will get the students "ready" for the school year. Not so fast my friends as I believe there is another view which is gaining traction in a lot of homes.

Many parents are now engaging their children in learning activities during the summer. There is play time but there is also reading and math time. Depending upon the age of the child these exercises can last for a couple of hours. As a result of parents' direct involvement, students are better equipped educationally and socially to return to school after summer break.

A parent does not have to be college-trained to value education. I grew up in a neighborhood where not every parent had a college degree. Yet this did



Principles and guidelines for successful parental engagement

1. Be your child's parent and not his or her friend.
2. Value education in your home and make sure your child knows it.
3. Get your child a library card today.
4. Develop an educational relationship with your child's teachers.
5. Start or join a parents' support group at your school. Other parents are having the same problems.
6. Limit your child's television watching.
7. Curb your child's cell phone use, especially at night.
8. Become knowledgeable about social media and what your child is doing on it.
9. Meet your child's principal. He or she shouldn't be attending school there if you have not met the principal.
10. Set aside time each night for homework and school reflections.
11. Discuss your child's life goals with him or her.
12. Don't buy him or her the latest fashions because they want them.
13. Know who your child's friends are.
14. Express your love to your child. He or she needs and want to hear it.

not hinder them from placing a high value on education.

When we walked home from school in Winston-Salem NC, we were always asked by neighbors about homework and what did we learn. Obviously, we had to have some answers or be reported to our parents. The times have changed but I believe the value of an education has not changed nor has the role of parents.

Schools are being maligned these days because some see it as a panacea that can cure all student ills. Teachers have become social workers, surrogate parents and counselors. Schools have become social service centers where goods and services are being given to students, many at no cost.

This paradigm shift has lifted much of the responsibility from parents. Many

parents say, "Send them to school, the teachers can handle it." No, the teachers can't handle it and it is unfair to them.

For example, when a student gets in trouble and the parent is called, they begin a verbal assault against the teacher. As the young people would say, don't get it twisted. I can't imagine my parents siding with me in my wrongdoing. I never wanted to hear

the words, "wait until you get home or better yet, wait until I tell your father."

Parents can no longer hold schools accountable for the rearing of their children. We must do the child-rearing and be their parents and not their friends. The parent ship will always have the wind at its back. But the friend ship will simply be in the wind, unsure of its course and direction.

Based upon my experiences as both a parent and a grandparent, I humbly submit these tips and advice for your review and consideration. If you fail a time or two, no worries as many of us failed as well before we figured it out. The important part to remember is that you are ultimately responsible for your child.

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