

FORUM

5 Steps in the march to civil rights

Jaspen Leclerc
Guest Columnist

fashion; some might argue that influence has become definition. Nonetheless, short of the outliers who have, against overwhelming social obstacles, achieved economic parity, there still exist barriers that make every achievement even more remarkable.

The recent obsession with which "lives matter" has disrupted American political discourse, if not city streets and other cultural moments. Nary a rally nor awards show – or even the once sacred NFL pregame exposition – is immune from the injection of the relativist statement regarding the life-colors that warrant attention.

We didn't arrive here, in the throes of this argument, accidentally. Clearly, the rhetorical tool – "what matters" – is new, but the sentiments are rooted in centuries of American history. The United States is, if nothing else, a series of marches toward civil rights – toward freedom. Whether punctuated by bugle calls and bayonets or highlighted by occupations and sit-ins, the cadence of milestones is generally similar:

Visibility: In a nation of 300 million, "I" deserve to stand out. "I" am an individual with my own strengths and weaknesses. If "I" join with others like me to bring attention to certain traits that we share, and for which we may otherwise be discriminated

against, we assert our humanity against a set of institutions which may not naturally include us. For some groups, like those defined by gender or race, visibility is easily achieved, indeed it is often the basest reason for discrimination in the first place. For others, along sexuality or ideological lines, the assertions are less passive. Think about pride parades and spiritual rallies.

Acceptance: Merely the second step on the road to full rights, the now-visible group is granted acceptance among the greater populous. The power gradients between the objectified group – those who've gained "acceptance" – and the granters-of-acceptance remain. It implies that there is still something unequal, but for which outright and institutional discrimination is no longer tenable. Often this is hurried along as the ancillary traits that cling to the initial source of discrimination become conditions to cover up the "less palatable" traits. Think about how wrapping the rhetoric of black power in "Christian" terms or making gay rights about "love" have advanced those specific causes.

Integration: Creating space within the institutional hierarchy is the next step on the march to full

rights. In many ways, this has become the standard that most societies have used as the achievement. By "desegregating," Americans stuck feathers in their collective cap by busing black children to white schools and by giving women the right to vote and by giving LGBT the ability to serve in the armed forces. Viewing history in the lens of the present, the question of why these are achievements, underlies the absurdity in the historical institutional failures of basic human decency.

Equality: In America, this is the yet-unfulfilled promise of our Constitutional experiment. Overcoming the institutional, economic, and cultural barriers that continue to delineate a pro-forma (de-facto) segregation between neighborhoods, opportunities, and access to power is the front line of many of the greatest fights today. Beyond acceptance and integration, equality (implicitly, of opportunity) highlights the reality that the power of (black) words is still not equally accessible by every individual in society. Power has been concentrated within institutions that, by their nature, tend to denude the power of the individual. The challenge of America's next evolution is captured in the great duality between the integrated whole's ability

to do the "most good on average" which we pair against the achievements of individuals who've voluntarily (or by genetics) collected into groups.

Still, education stands as the grand totem of inequality. Until every child in America can achieve the same quality education – a full investment in the power of words – equality remains a chimera.

Equity: Among that small swath of those Americans who, by the birthright of their gender, color, and sexuality, are equal-from-the-start (or those who've achieved equality in earlier marches), there is a fight for a more "fair" distribution of scarce resources. Thus, we see increasing arguments about how incomes are distributed, about wealth and taxation. Not baked into any constitutional promise, but omnipresent in the emerging cultural rhetoric, is the assertion that all Americans "deserve" something more than mere equality in opportunity. Equity addresses the equality of outcome.

The failure of current political discourse is that discussions about equity still ignore those groups and individuals for whom equality has still not been achieved. Thus, arguments among those in power regarding the spoils of equality have distracted us

from the fact that we still lack full participation by many groups and individuals. When individuals still linger in their fights for visibility and acceptance, scheming for the redistribution of resources among the already-equal is, in itself, an unfair use of resources which should be directed toward full equality. A fair argument can be made that with full equality, equity will naturally follow.

Let's not entrap ourselves within literal bindings. Black, in 2016, means rainbow. Black means Gray. Black means red, white, and blue. We are all black inside. Black lives matter. Blue lives matter, and pink lives, and rainbow lives. Thus, it's true: Black lives matter.

Jason Leclerc is an internationally renowned poet (PoetEconomist.Blogspot.com), prolific blogger (SemioticArbitrage.blogspot.com), film-maker (FLAG, 2018), and political columnist (Watermark Magazine). As concerned with form as he is with quality storytelling, the author of *Momentitiousness* brings his socioeconomic theories to bear each day through trade. Learn more about Leclerc and his new book *Black Kettle* on <http://momentitiousness.com/black-kettle/>

Invest in education: the catalyst for change

James Ewers Jr.
Guest Columnist

It is safe to say that school has started in almost every city in America. As my Jamaican dad would say, "Jimmy me boy, your free paper has burned." In other words, your summer vacation is over and school has begun.

The stores have provided the latest in school fashions for some months now. However, there are a number of school systems across the country that now have their students in uniforms. Those in favor of uniforms say that it saves

parents money and it places less peer pressure on students. Every store has some type of back-to-school special. Electronics top almost everyone's list of must-have items. After all, a student today can't go back to school without a tablet, a cell phone or a personal computer. Whatever happened to pens, pencils, paper and crayons?

Teachers are also getting back into the swing of things. They have prepared their rooms with great care making them look inviting and warm. Teachers influence and shape the minds of our students. That is a high calling!

I believe teachers have some of the most powerful positions in the country. Every successful person can always point to a

teacher who provided them with motivation and inspiration. There is truly a correlation between the education system of a country and the strength of a country.

All students at all levels have equal excitement and eagerness. Students from elementary school to college must understand and accept the serious nature of school. The competition starts early and will only get more intense.

Don't let it scare you. In fact, have fun with it. Learning new material at any point in your life is always a good thing.

Having a solid education will help you in your future endeavors. This is what many of us know not what we think.

Speaking clearly, hav-

ing your subjects and your verbs agree will always get you a seat at the decision-making table.

If you use a cell phone as most students do, there is a text speak that you use. My strong advice to you as a future leader is not to write and text the same way.

When I reflect back upon some of my "school days," there are several things that come to mind. First, I remember how big my elementary school was. It was probably so big because we were so small. I am sure that it is the same for younger students today.

High school was probably a coming of age experience for me. Changing classes, having different teachers and taking part in clubs and organizations

were all new to me.

Walking home from high school, my friends and I would always hear the adults ask about our day in school and how much homework did we have. I will simply say we always had homework in high school. Homework was a dreaded work yet a necessary work and it paid off in the end.

While many of us have children that have graduated from high school and gone on to post high school opportunities, we must still support public education. As we move forward, I do hope that more young people choose teaching as a career. They will become change agents in the lives of students.

As parents, grandparents and love providers, let

us encourage and support our children. Let us give them the boost of hope and help that they need. Let us value education in our homes. As I reflect back now, everyone in my neighborhood in East Winston in Winston-Salem, N.C., placed a high value on education. My neighborhood was diverse educationally yet rich in wisdom and common sense.

Education is still the catalyst for change that it has always been. The investment that we make in it will always pay dividends.

James B. Ewers Jr., Ed.D., is formerly from Winston-Salem. He is a retired college administrator.

Carolyn Moolhuyzen
Guest Columnist

Babies of mothers who do not get prenatal care are three times more likely to have a low birth weight, and five times more likely to die within the first year of life than those born to mothers who do get care.

With early prenatal care, doctors can spot fetal problems, address any health conditions and social risk factors moms may have. With the support of a Pregnancy Care Manager, moms-to-be are advised and encouraged to keep all prenatal appointments. Pregnancy Care Managers can help pregnant women and their OB doctors [obstetricians] identify needs.

During a prenatal visit, the OB team will educate mom on proper nutrition. She'll learn that pregnancy does not mean you're eating for two. Only 300 additional calories can be added safely to mom's diet during pregnancy. Mom to be will learn that she should not eat

The importance of prenatal care

Forsyth County Department of Public Health knows there is a direct correlation between early prenatal care and healthy babies.

uncooked seafood like sushi and to avoid rare or undercooked beef or poultry because of the risk of "contamination with coliform bacteria, toxoplasmosis, and salmonella."

She may be surprised to hear deli meats could be contaminated with listeria, which can cause miscarriage. At a second trimester visit, baby's growth begins to be closely followed. This is an indicator of how baby is doing. A member of mom's OB team will use a Doppler instrument to hear baby's heartbeat.

All throughout pregnancy, fetal testing is done. During the first trimester, tests include blood tests – to check for chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis B, syphilis, cystic fibrosis, Rh factor, and HIV – as well as a urine culture and a Pap smear. A nuchal translucency (NT) ultrasound with a blood test is done to determine the possibility that baby will have a chromosomal abnormality. At second trimester an Alpha-fetoprotein screening (AFP) is done also called MSAFP (maternal serum AFP). Abnormal levels of AFP may be an indicator of chromosomal abnormalities.

A glucose tolerance test takes place somewhere

between 24 to 28 weeks of pregnancy. The test measures levels of sugar (glucose) in the mom's blood. Abnormal glucose levels could be a sign of gestational diabetes which in turn could affect mom and baby's health.

At every prenatal appointment someone on mom-to-be's OB team will ask how she's doing physically and emotionally. Mom-to-be's Pregnancy Care Manager will be there all the way for mom explaining stages of pregnancy, teaching the signs of preterm labor and educating mom on labor and delivery – supporting information provided by the OB team.

Every prenatal appointment is important. Early detection of fetal problems can be addressed and the health of mom-to-be will be priority. Early and regular prenatal healthcare equates to Healthy Mom Healthy Baby!

For more information contact Forsyth County Department of Public Health Pregnancy Care Management at 336-703-3243.

Carolyn Moolhuyzen is a care management team leader at the Forsyth County Department of Public Health.