

FORUM

Being black is too much



Micha James
Guest Columnist

He is 5-foot-8.5, 175 pounds at 12 years old and he is my son. He wears his height and weight as badges of honor, especially when people think he is older than what he is. What kid wouldn't? I fuss at least twice a week about him keeping his room tidy and not eating all the snacks in the house. My stories sound similar to my friends who have kids the same age. We deem it as typical middle school

behavior. I don't fear much, but my fear for my black son's life is growing each time I scroll through my Facebook timeline and read about another unarmed black man being murdered.

Will he have an opportunity to speak so a police officer will possibly hear that he's only 12? That probably won't work because his voice is deep. They won't know that his laugh most definitely lets you know he is still a kid or that he has braces that he gets tired of me asking about whether he has flossed. They won't have time to learn that he has wanted to be a K-9 officer since the third grade. They won't know that he spends a lot of time watching the Discovery Channel and is

extremely knowledgeable about animals and insects.

They won't know how much of a homebody he is and that he would much rather play soccer than the expected sports of football and basketball. They won't know this because to them he will be seen as a "bad dude."

I have run out of ways to make the conversation about police shootings interesting to my son. He was annoyed when I asked him to Google the most recent shooting because he said he needed to finish his homework. It is no longer breaking news to him; it is just another news story. That is not normal. I pray for balance with not allowing him to have social media accounts because of the things he will be

exposed to that he is not emotionally mature enough to handle, yet allowing him to watch parts of the shootings to help him understand the seriousness of what is considered a "bad dude."

He doesn't understand why I am so excited that two of his four core curriculum teachers are black. He doesn't understand why we travel as far as we do to visit his black pediatrician when there are so many doctors less than 10 minutes from our house. I do it because I want to surround him with as much "community" as possibly. Many of his friends/classmates are white. Their parents call all the time asking for my son to spend time with their families. I appreciate them, but am not naïve to

the fact that if it is between their sons and mine; mine will be the "bad dude."

I work two jobs, which means we spend a lot of time apart, so I hate using our time together talking about the dos and don'ts of being black. With each conversation, I strip away another piece of his childhood. The pain of explaining why, because I don't know the criteria of what a "bad dude" is, I selfishly made him cut some of his beloved afro off to help him look more childlike.

I do all of this while not having an opportunity to use "being black" as an excuse to call out of work. Fronting my anger is a faux smile I give patients and coworkers who I feel are waiting for me to exhibit some "angry black

woman" behavior. As I type this, I check my feelings as best I can despite being on the phone with a customer in Charlotte who I feel is baiting me by talking about the riots.

Were it not for prayer and my village, I am almost certain I would have had a psychotic breakdown. Much like parenting, being black doesn't come with an instruction manual and I do not mind saying it has become too much and I need HELP!

Micha James is a freelance writer from Winston-Salem. She is also a proud Alumna of Winston-Salem State University who is passionate about helping and inspiring others.

Why did Jesus weep? Because

#BlackLivesMatter, too?



Keith Magee
Guest Columnist

instead of the perpetrators wearing white sheets and lynching African-Americans with coral ropes as they did decades prior, they now wear blue uniforms and use issued firearms.

The loss of Trayvon, Eric, Tamir, Sandra, Freddie, Korryn, Alton, Terence, Keith and all of the others we can name came not because their assassins feared them but, because they believed their lives didn't matter. Secretly, I've wept at my core when I hear the news that they have taken another life. Even when I'm driving my car with my 2-year-old Zayden, I pray that our lives will matter.

As the numbers of African-American lives continue to be disproportionately taken, many onlookers (primarily Millennials), have come with demands and questions about whether those in power believe that #BlackLivesMatter. And if so, why is injustice prevailing in the loss of these lives?

The Black Lives Matter movement does not assert that other's lives do not matter. It aims to draw attention for the need for understanding if those who enact,

execute, frame and inform the law also value Black lives.

In my youth, every evening we had to offer a Scripture, after prayer, before we could partake of supper. We would all eagerly go for "Jesus wept" because it was the easiest to remember.

As I sit most evenings unable to eat, sickened to my stomach, praying and searching the Scripture for meaning, I ponder why did Jesus weep.

The Scriptures have three recordings of Jesus weeping. The most notable is because he loved Lazarus, and Martha and Mary. Even in knowing that Lazarus would be raised again, Jesus' human nature and pain mourned, both in relation to their present pain and even their unbelief. Jesus also wept when the chosen people failed to keep the city 'holy' and set apart from other world powers. He saw the city and wept over it. The other prominent presence of his weeping is found in a garden. Jesus wept sweat "like great drops of blood," as he prayed to his Father, knowing his time had come to die for a humanity that might never get it.

Why did Jesus weep? Was it because he was fully human and, yet, fully divine, feeling the spiritual and nature pain of the people? Was it from his humanity and divinity, where he felt love, disappointment, loss, grief and sadness - every human emotion that evokes tears from the heart?

One doesn't have to be dead to grieve

death and dying. Grieving calls us into an experience of raw immediacy that is often devastating. In "A Grief Observed," a collection of reflections on the experience of bereavement, author C.S. Lewis reveals that "No one ever told me that grief was so much like fear.

"Tears, the lachrymal gland, responds to the emotion of awe, pleasure, love and, yes, sorrow. They are the fluids that rest in the ducts that can cause you to lose sight and can run down into your nose, all because of sorrow not joy. And, when the heart weeps it is beyond the liquid into the small channels that flow into the tear sac. It is a pain that is likening to the sound of sorrow from the mothers, fathers, family members, who have lost their loved ones in the midst of these murders and executions.

"I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing."

As an African-American male, I can relate to Lewis because seemingly every day my life is at risk. I swallow grief and fear that I, or one of my brothers, our children, or mothers, are next.

It was the sorrow of a suffering people that gave cause to ecumenical faith leaders becoming the catalyst for a civil rights movement for a "Righteous America." These faith leaders used their sacred spaces to address the grave concerns for the least-advantaged among them. As an American society founded on a hunger

and thirst for religious freedom was turning a deaf ear to the pleas of a marginalized people, certain that God's creation suffered no stratification; these likeminded humanitarians, across racial identity, leading the charge for equality. They understood why Jesus wept, as did Jehovah, Allah, the Buddha, and many other spiritual leaders who wept, too.

Recently, America lost an African-American male musical icon, Prince, though not at the hands of those in Blue. I mostly remember him for "Purple Rain," in particular "When Doves Cry." Though is it understood that these lyrics spoke to a failed relationship between two people, I purport that it speaks more to the sound of the doves. When doves cry, as they soar, it is a sorrowful song and yet in the sound we find a message of life, hope, renewal and peace.

Could the Prince of Peace be sending us a prophetic message that even in these moments of tragedy there is hope for better days? As we stand through our sorrow, will we be able to earnestly declare that #BlackLivesMatter too?

Keith Magee is a public intellectual who focuses on economics, social justice and theology. He is a researcher, scholar and pastor. For more information visit www.AJusticesake.org or follow him on social media @keithlmagee.



Tom H. Hastings
Guest Columnist

Rights. We are inundated with a great deal of loose talk about "rights." What sorts of them? Legal rights. Civil rights. Natural rights. Human rights. Constitutional rights. God-given rights. Is there a difference? Says who?

AWR Hawkins of Ammoland Shooting Sports News helps us understand God-given

Your rights and our election

rights: "Our right to keep and bear arms is a God-given right." He's backed up by David French of the National Review who informs us that having and using guns is a "Biblical and natural right of man." They seem to be endorsed by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who railed against a proposed arms control treaty that could, in his words, "hinder the U.S. in fulfilling its strategic, legal, and moral commitments to provide arms to key allies such as

Taiwan and Israel." Moral commitments and lethal aid—praise the Lord and pass the ammunition. The Republican Senator from Kentucky is of course a champion of right-to-life legislation 100 percent. Nothing says pro-life like a prayer closet full of guns and some war profiteering.

Free speech is defined by Jeff Bell, who also clears up questions about who defends all our rights and under what circumstances. No, he's not the Supreme Court Justice who

wrote the prevailing opinion on the matter, he's the head of the Broward County, Florida police union, who pulled the plug on the rights of three Miami Dolphin players to be protected by police because they knelt during the Star Spangled Banner. I hope Chief Justice Roberts was taking notes.

I'm pretty sure Donald Trump is informed by these sorts of declarations and friendly reminders about what constitutes your rights, his rights, and the

times when those rights may no longer apply. Re-elect McConnell and his ilk, vote in Donald Trump, and watch what happens to your rights. If you do, unfortunately, you may lose the right to know until it's a bit too late. But for the time being, it's your right to vote—well, unless you're part of a demographic likely to vote against incumbents. The 2013 Supreme Court evisceration of the 1965 Voting Rights Act goes a long way toward helping us to under-

stand that, nowadays, voting in the U.S. is much like health care in that it's a privilege, not a right. That will be all firmed up once Trump gets to appoint the next Supreme Court Justice and possibly a couple more of them.

Rights, schmights. Focus on the Surreality TV around the election. Much more fun!

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