

the OPINION

Racism is a cancer eating away at our nation

While closing down my childhood home in Detroit and moving my mother to West Michigan to live with me, I remember finding an old medical lab notice in a drawer telling my mother they wanted more tests.

She pooh-poohed my questions saying, "Oh they're just trying to get more money out of me. I'm fine."

She seemed physically fine. But I remembered that conversation three years later when we learned that cancer was slowly eating away my mother's bone marrow. Already emotionally devastated from the sudden death by swine flu of my sister Connie, her oldest daughter in 2009, Mama was learning the ways to deflect and avoid the difficult conversations about health.

But difficult conversations are necessary; be they about the health of a family member or the health of a nation.



MIND BODY SPIRIT

THERESA D. McCLELLAN
Fort Bend Star correspondent

But is the question really why can't we all just go along? Go along and gloss over and don't address the uncomfortable conversation that comes when we look at an American history based on oppression, colonization and white superiority. Some will say it is ancient history. Slavery is over. We had a black president.

But the climate and mindset that made it OK to steal land and break treaties and sell black and brown bodies as if they don't matter years ago, is the same climate that today ignores cries that the name of the sports team in our nation's Capitol – the Washington Redskins – is racist and offensive.

It's the same climate that ignores the cries to look into a justice system that can't make a conviction when unarmed blacks die at the hands of police officers. It's the same climate that saw this nation basically look the other way as the man

elected as the 45th leader defiled the position with his lies and bombastic bullying.

Charlottesville happened because white supremacists were so comfortable with their racism, so self-assured, that they no longer felt the need to hide beneath sheets because we had reached a climate of no consequences. The weekend Nazis felt comfortable enough in this climate to walk the streets in their Dockers and polo shirts and spew their hate and then return on Monday to their positions as students, preachers, bankers, law enforcement, medical professionals, our neighbors.

The cancer had reached the marrow if you will, resulting in the vehicular murder of a young woman and the injuries to more than a dozen others protesting the presence of racists torch-bearing neo-Nazis and Klansmen marching through the streets chanting against Jews and other minorities.

My mother's denial of her cancer was driven by a desire of not wanting to be a burden to her remaining two children. But those we love are never a burden.

Those who remain silent and decline to name what we are seeing in the streets are in

denial of the cancer that has reached the nation's marrow. But if we love this nation, we have to take the tough steps to excise the glaring tumors.

When my mother finally agreed to go to the doctor they wanted to do a biopsy. They needed to pull out a piece of bone marrow and examine it. The doctor tried to do it quickly and without anesthesia and it was excruciating for my mother. I learned two things that day. I could not trust that doctor to act in my mother's best interest and I fired him and found another willing to listen to our needs and work with us. I also learned I had to become her best advocate. After the painful, life-draining chemotherapy, she was given six months to live so I quit my job to give her full time care.

There is nothing so agonizing as hearing your mother cry out in pain and not being able to make it immediately stop. But there is nothing so sacred as walking that journey with the hurting. Not running away swept up in your own discomfort; but staying connected and doing everything in your power to make it right. She was given six months with in-home hospice and I was blessed to keep her alive and thriving for nearly three years.

This nation has a cancer but the diagnosis is not terminal.

The viral videos of angry whites taking arms to protect the removal of racist icons from public town squares are a symptom. The placard waving anti-racists challenging white supremacists who claim they want America to be a "white homeland" are part of the medicine.

There are no statues of Hitler in German town squares. We watched on our television sets as statues of Lenin and Saddam Hussein were brought down. Their sordid history is not changed, but their icons of hatred are not held up as men of honor.

So here's to the difficult medicine of community conversations across this nation. Not the one-and-done actions of a one-hour TV special, but the committed, consistent, targeted conversations where we stop and really listen to one another, walk with that pain and advocate for changes that perpetuate the pain.

What if we used these statues and Confederate flags as a source of learning? What if we vowed to become a nation that makes cancer history?

(Editor's note: Joe Southern's Faith, Family & Fun column will return next week.)

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON TAX RATE

The Fort Bend County Municipal Utility District No. 25 will hold a public hearing on a proposed tax rate for the tax year 2017 on Thursday, September 21, 2017, 5:30 p.m. at the District Administration Building, located at 10347 Clodine Road, Richmond, Texas 77407. Your individual taxes may increase or decrease, depending on the change in the taxable value of your property in relation to the change in taxable value of all other property and the tax rate that is adopted.

FOR the proposal:	Beth Murany, Richard Webb, Victoria Coates,
AGAINST the proposal:	None
PRESENT and not voting:	None
ABSENT:	Escoto Thomas, James Dalton

The following table compares taxes on an average residence homestead in this taxing unit last year to taxes proposed on the average residence homestead this year.

	LAST YEAR	THIS YEAR
Tax rate	\$ 0.8400 / \$100 Adopted	\$ 0.8400 / \$100 Proposed
Difference in rates per \$100 of value	\$0.00	
Percentage increase/decrease in rates(+/-)	0.0%	
Average appraised value	\$ 245,138	\$ 255,877
General exemptions available (excluding senior citizen's or disabled person's exemptions)	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Average taxable value	\$ 245,138	\$ 255,877
Tax on average residence homestead	\$ 2,059.16	\$ 2,149.37
Annual increase/decrease in taxes if proposed tax rate is adopted (+/-)	\$ 90.21	
and percentage of increase (+/-)	4.38 %	

NOTICE OF TAXPAYERS' RIGHT TO ROLLBACK ELECTION

If taxes on the average residence homestead increase by more than eight percent, the qualified voters of the district by petition may require that an election be held to determine whether to reduce the operation and maintenance tax rate to the rollback tax rate under Section 49.236(d), Water Code.

Should you have any questions concerning this notice, please contact the tax office at 281-482-0216.