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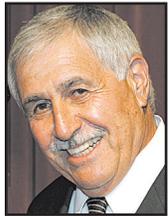
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Why is there so much violence among black youth?

BY ERNIE SOCHIN

Vice Mayor



Some time ago I wrote a column for another newspaper titled "I Fear Black Men." It was a gutsy article to write, but something that I'm sure many of you can identify with.

The basic theme was, and this coming from a known liberal, that if a black youth approaches

my car while I am stopped, I tend to check to see that all of my doors are locked and that the windows are closed, at the same time selecting my getaway route in case I need to move on. Frankly the same thing does not happen when I am approached by a young man or several younger men who happen to be white. Why is this so?

One cannot help, when watching the evening news to see all of the crimes that are being committed by these young black men usually followed by their aunts, uncles, and neighbors out in the street saying what a nice young man he was and that they could not understand why he would shoot someone or assault them, etc.

The same story is repeated over and over again and when you match that with statistics that claim that 75 percent of black men between the ages of 18 and 35 are under the control of the judicial system (i.e. in jail, awaiting trial or on parole). Pretty scary, huh?

Shortly after I wrote this article I invited a well-known black columnist named Robert Steinback, at that time with the *Miami Herald*, to a TV show that I was hosting at the time. I thought I would be clever and start the show by saying to him that I feared black men. His reply: "so do I." He then brought home to me the fact that black people are as victimized by their fellow blacks as are white people.

We then went on to explore the reasons for this. Robert used the oft-quoted remark that how would you react if your grandfather had been brought to America on a slave ship. Frankly I don't buy that anymore, especially when our president is black and many police chiefs are as well. There haven't been any slaves in this country for well over 100 years and that should not be an excuse for stealing a gold chain from someone walking down the street.

Although my grandparents were not slaves and were not brought to this country against their will, they did leave a horrible regime and the constant

Northwestern High student shot dead on street

Northwestern High grieves for two students shot to death

Woman shot as home riddled with bullets during drive-by

Father and son shot as they drove on I-95 in Northeast Miami-Dade

These headlines are all too common.

threats of injury or death simply because they happened to be Jewish. I was beaten up a few times for the same reason right here in the United States, but hopefully those days are past.

So what is my explanation for the high crime rate in the black community? My first idea is that many of these young men have no father figure to look up to, and, if they do, he in many cases incarcerated himself for various reasons. Of course, the black women who give birth to these children do so thinking that they have met the man of their dreams only to be disappointed in the long run.

There was a terrible joke going around a while ago that went; "a DCF person was interviewing a mother who had 5 young boys that always seem to be in trouble. The worker asked their names and was told Willie, Willie, Willie, Willie, and Willie. The worker asked the mother how she was able to call them when they all had the same name. Her reply, "I call them by their last name." I agree it's not a very nice joke, but it does tell a story.

Every year I am asked to go to a special housing development that is almost entirely filled with black single mothers. I see all the little kids that they have

brought into the world and try to bring them some presents that I buy on my own and also invite some local policeman to show that police are not just a bunch of mean guys with handguns and Tasers. You ought to see the excited looks on the faces of these kids.

Unfortunately, in many cases their older brothers have begun their lives of crime and this is a particularly troublesome area for the police when they are doing their normal work. How do you stop these young women from bringing these children into a world that is not too welcoming? I am sure that in each and every case they believe that their life is beginning anew with a new child and a new husband. For some reason, and this appears to be happening now in the white community as well, the men don't stick around too long. I wish I had the answer for that one other than birth

control and condoms. I belong to several organizations trying to help these kids, but the number who take advantage of what is offered are few and far between. I personally have tried to bring organizations into our town that would help a lot of these kids but met a lot of resistance, mostly based on fear.

What makes it so much worse now is the introduction and easy accessibility of high-powered weapons. No longer are people being mugged or hit on the head, but they are being shot by kids who have no respect whatsoever for human life including their own. Now we have policemen venting their anger against blacks and the black population venting theirs at the police or white folks in general.

Even in Israel the black Jews from Ethiopia have become targets of the white Jewish population. Where and when will it end? There is a fascinating book about where I was brought up and raised called "The Death of an American Jewish Community" by Hillel Levine and Lawrence Harmon. When I went back to Boston recently to visit my old neighborhoods I was cautioned that I would be taking my life in my hands. Why?