

A Walk in the Park, Covid-19 and Black Lives Matter

Judy Cushman, jcushman@jc-a.com

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Introduction: Why Now? Why did the country and the world explode over the clear injustice and death of one black man? That was the question rattling around in my head as I headed to the park. I felt there was something very different about the time we are in. Do you think the worldwide suffering because of the Pandemic has made us more vulnerable to acting out? I think it has made a difference and we are more impatient for truth and change than ever before. How do you feel? Do you agree?

It was early June, a sunny, breezy afternoon, one of the perfect spring days in the Seattle area. Like so many of us, my “normal” day during the Pandemic was a change from before the virus imposed itself on our lives. I was happy to be out in such wonderful weather but not on the terms I was forced to accept.

My life had changed and there was no hope it was going to revert to the old normal. There is no way I could see a short-term fix and I thought the news about moving through a modified phase 1 to a phase 2 and then to phase 3 was risky. Every day new, stunning, death counts are announced, and it seems obvious we are in this crisis for the long haul. At this point, as I pull into the parking lot near the running track, I’m tired of political posturing and BS. I just want to know the truth.

My goal is to exercise enough to keep up my health. I have no interest in doing more than that. My husband and I generally exercise together—he runs, and I walk the track around the field. We motivate each other since we both know how important it is for our health. As I walk, I notice small groups of people on the field and try to observe the 6-feet of distance rule.

As I’m walking purposefully and slowly, I see a young couple and a carriage. I move in their direction and then I see a toddler, about 15-months old, pushing the carriage as his parents attentively watch his progress. The field is flat, and the artificial turf is smooth, so he is able to take several steps straight ahead. He looks very determined. Then he stops and lets go of the carriage, looks around for a moment and then takes several awkward steps toward his mother. Clearly, this success is very new for him and he stops to look around again. I was close enough to him and I could see how proud he was of what he had achieved. Instinctively, I responded to his success and said “That is wonderful. You did a great job.” It was a response we all would make to the pure joy this child felt.

In that moment I realized that we have come to understand how connected we are to the people in our community and that we have deeply felt, caring emotions for them. The virus is agnostic and spares no one. We are at a moment when the world is suffering, and we all share that collective pain and desire to help.

Just as we are coping with this crisis, George Floyd is murdered in an unambiguous case of police brutality. The injustice is so egregious that the response is universal, tapping those humanitarian instincts that have been exposed as we have come together to fight a common enemy. We are so ready for the truth. We want to know what can be done to save lives, to stop police from overreacting. and give them the support and tools to be the best police officers possible. When that doesn't work, remove the officer. We can't eliminate the police force but we can find the strength to eliminate the bad apples. No BS. No posturing. Just do it and we will know instinctively this is the right thing.