

Cano: Here are four things to do to show we all matter

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By Rand Retterath

This issue I'd like to focus on a comment made regarding my 2020 article. Nicole H. posted this response to that article: "This is such a crock. Neighborhoods are not representative of their residents (say what?). The city is requiring work to be done to get money. You act like the money is expected or entitled. (This isn't for me personally, it's for the communities and part of the participative government experience that has existed in this city for decades.) You should write about how the white power base are losing power and have created false narratives. Every single one of your points can be argued yet you will never see it because you are full of the kool-aide. (I assume she means that I am white and it mitigates my ability to understand much of anything.)

I agree with Nicole. I should talk about the white power base losing power; we all should.

But to do that means that we must discuss her comment in light of achieving racial and socio-economic parity for all.

The assault on my ideas and opinions is unrelenting not because they are flawed, but because I am (fill in the blank). No single person has ever spoken to me about the facts or merits of my opinion. Rather, like Nicole, the response is always about my race or some other unrelated attribute, real or imagined, and as a result of that attribute, I have nothing to offer.

Since Alondra Cano has come to office, I have been called an endless list of insults. It is the same tactic used by the Nationalists in Washington. Think about it. Facts are overlooked in favor of emotionally charged slanders and false narratives designed to cut people out of the conversation.

2020 is all about engagement; my responsibility, your responsibility, theirs and ours. It should be a message of inclusion. However, since 2013 the rant from Ward 9 leadership seems to be about minimizing someone as entitled, gentrified, or victimizers exclusively. We talk about a specific diversity agenda to the exclusion of age (why yes, I have been accused of that), ability (or lack thereof), religion (ask my Hindu, Lubavitch, Ethiopian Christian or Coptic friends how they feel included in our so-called community), national origin (ask my Ethiopian and Eritrean neighbors) and others. What about how we treat



people because of their job? The worst employment in this city right now is a police officer (now there is an example of profiling). On May 18, American Public Radio went so far as to air a story on the increasing suicide rate within rank and file officers because of the environment in which they are forced to work.

You are an untouchable hero if you work with victims of the sex trade or bike lanes. If you are an educated professional, you are a member of the proletariat and could not possibly understand. In fact, Cano doesn't even think she needs to attend events, candidate debates, parades (May Day), because she apparently knows better than everyone else. Opportunities for community input are a thing of the past for ANYONE!

As a white man, I need to change and adapt. I like that! Those who aren't me do have the right to their anger! But do they have the right to focus that anger on me and others with a goal of retribution, invalidating my opinions or insights? Isn't that exactly what I am being accused of?

I am descended from a line of Irish Catholic Railroad workers. My great uncle Stan was allegedly killed by the KKK in Lake Side Park, Fond du Lac, Wis. because he was Irish Catholic. The Irish, as indentured servants, were worked to death with greater frequency than slaves. England practiced a policy of total genocide in Ireland. "East of the Mississippi, under every railroad tie is a dead Irishman, west is a dead Chinamen." John F. Kennedy was to the Irish American – what Barrack Obama was to the African American. The Irish formed street gangs to survive in America (Dead Rabbits, Hudson Dusters, the Westies and others. Whittie Bolger emerged out of the Irish gangs).

People have a right to their anger! But do they have the right to target individual representatives of the historically oppressing group? To what end is it "creating false narratives"?

I had a black neighbor who lived across the street. She would sit in her 2nd floor apartment window and call every African immigrant who passed words that made me shudder.

So, my question for you all today – how long are we going to tolerate people in power, to model behavior that divides, disparages, invalidates, ridicules and depends on historical guilt to survive, that makes it ok to call people names and treat them as worthless, uneducated dolts rather than engage in meaningful, community building conversation?

We must find ways to meet in common space. Not one single person since 2013 has ever engaged me in a respectful dialogue over the issues that have evolved in our community. The recent resolution on prostitution is a perfect example. I get it, I really do. But, as I said, this is the current golden topic. To argue the point will only result in name calling and disparaging assaults on my intelligence, integrity and the reality of what I see. What I see day after day are needles, feces, children in harm's way, elders afraid to walk the street, black eyes and the full spectrum of maladaptive behavior within the culture of a sex work, addiction, homelessness and all the rest. Unfortunately, rather than talk openly about these other victims, people will just take me to task for being white, entitled or some other completely unrelated and irrelevant aspect, real or imagined.

I come to people with a wealth of information on topics, having done my homework in an

effort to understand as completely as possible the issue. I am told to go lay down by my dish, that I do not matter. I am very sure that resonates with many of you, just as I am sure there are many of you thinking “good for him, now he knows how I feel,” and I agree; that is good for me and yet, we still need to come together, live next door to each other and solve a common set of problems that are destroying our community!

Perhaps Cano could make a start by unblocking all the community members she has blocked on social media. (Which, by the way, is a court determined violation of First Amendment Rights). Secondly, she might initiate protocols to return every constituent inquiry. Thirdly, she might commit to attend and host community events where she actually listens to community experience and ideas. Fourth, she might institute community events to talk about the exercise of power and community building strategies, which is the intent the 2020 program.

Four simple actions that could turn the tide of division and derision in favor of building community with all Ward 9 residents by showing that WE ALL MATTER.