



August 2013

To My Sons & Brothers:

It has been more than one week since the verdict involving the case of young Trayvon Martin; the initial sting of that insult has subsided. My anger and frustration now evolves into a sense of strategic resolve.

Already, much has been written and said since The Verdict; it appears that the Zimmerman jury handed our cause a gift. In the arc of social justice, equity, and civil rights, outrage is the fuel for civic action. Without outrage, there is no Martin Luther King, Jr., no Mahatma Gandhi, no Nelson Mandela, no Malcolm X, no Mother Theresa, no Cesar Chavez.

However, social change is fueled by purpose-driven outrage, and in my moments of post-verdict reflection, I ask myself several purpose-laden questions: Why exactly, did I find myself in a place of anger and frustration after the Verdict involving young Trayvon? Who or what am I outraged with, or about? What change do I want to see? And who is accountable for assuring that change happens? What is my role, and what must I say or do? What does my spiritually-grounded life expect of me?

Social action and positive social change begins with love, and for starters I am compelled to profess it. While my spiritual centeredness requires me to love all of humankind – even those who despise me -- I unabashedly declare a special brand of love for my sons and brothers: young men of color. You are valued, cherished, appreciated, and embraced. You have and bring assets, and your community, your nation, and this world needs you.

Secondly, I am compelled to visit the notion of a mutually purposeful social contract. In what ways must we be accountable to one another, me to you, and my generation to yours -- and vice versa? Not through blame, scapegoating, and finger pointing; but through love and purpose. How has my generation disappointed yours? What must I and we do better?

Thirdly, we must act. Fathers must be better fathers, men must be better husbands and partners. Mentors are needed. Schools must return as portals of opportunity, and not pipelines towards prison. Prisons and juvenile halls must breathe restoration and rehabilitation, rather than a culture of punitive vengeance and hopelessness.

My reflection tells me I must do my part, and this is my frame for purpose driven outrage. For this is how the life of young Trayvon is sacrificed *for a cause*.

This is the substance of my reflection. Tell me yours. Join the conversation by sharing your story at HoodiesUpforTrayvon.tumblr.com or by following #hoodiesup.

Robert K. Ross, MD
President and CEO