

COMMENTARY / CULTURE

Making the crabs accountable!

Terry Howard

“The more we develop an abundance mentality, the more we are genuinely happy for the successes, well-being, achievements, recognition, and good fortune of other people. We believe their success adds to...rather than detracts from...our lives.”

Stephen Covey

I’ve been on a binge lately – not a drinking binge or eating binge. No, these days the source of my binges are my insatiable search for quotes. But before I get to more of them, here’s a statement I recently published. It resonated. Now with the aforementioned Covey quote as a reference point, read the statement:

I am 100 percent convinced that one of the most gratifying and fulfilling things one could do is to recognize and celebrate the talents and achievements of others, particularly those who have been looked down on and devalued by self-centered others. I admire those who recognize others when nobody’s looking, at personal cost and time; those who dodge the limelight, the cameras, the selfies, who slip off into the night leaving others, including the deserving recipient, scratching their heads wondering “who did this for me?” They, like anonymous donors, are the cream of the crop.

Shifting to another quote, this one from poet Oscar Wilde:

“Anybody can sympathize with suffering of a friend, but it requires a very special nature to sympathize with a friend’s success.”

Moving along, here’s what “Christine,” asked me after reading my statement:

“Terry, what holds people back from recognizing the accomplishments of others? And why are those same folks quick to recognize negative stuff but are silent when it comes to saying good news about others? I suspect that it’s jealousy but suspect that it’s more than that.”

Clearly the answer, if there is one, to her question is rooted in personality, experiences, personal interests and needs of those who withhold celebrating others. So yes Christine, jealousy and insecurity are likely hidden factors.

And then there’s the “crab mentality,” defined as a way of thinking best described by the phrase “if I can’t have it, neither can you.” The analogous theory of the crab mentality is that members of a group will attempt to reduce the self-confidence of any member who achieves success out of envy, jealousy or competitive feelings.

Now the question is how do you know for sure if you’re in the company of a crab? Well, here are some red flags:

- When there’s a major achievement in your life that they know about yet refuse to utter a word of congratulation.

- They immediately offer unwanted criticism/negative comments after you or someone else is successful.

- They interrupt, change the subject, or cut you or someone else off when your achievements are brought up.

- They try to “one up” you by bragging about their own accomplishments when yours are brought up.

- They discredit your accomplishment as “no big deal.”

- They “remind” you and others about your past mistakes or failures.

Understand that crabs are insecure people, many of whom starve for adulation and recognition themselves. They will fight tooth and nail for credit they feel they deserve. Consequently, they will attempt to “steal your thunder,” to snatch the attention from you or others who deserve it. That’s their cynical calling card, their modus operandi.



The bottom line is that not everyone will celebrate your successes, even your assumed friends or family members.

So, who are the crabs doing the crabbing?

Well, say experts, “sometimes we’re the victims of the crab effect, and sometimes we’re the instigators of it. Sometimes you’re the one being pulled down, and sometimes you’re the one doing the pulling. Regardless of which role you’re playing, the truth is that there is nothing healthy behind this way of behaving. Whether you’re the victim or the instigator, a collective downfall benefits no one; it only sabotages the advancement of everyone involved.”

Okay, if you’re scratching your head now in search for solutions to the crab mentality, I’ll save you some time with these suggestions from the experts:

• Push don’t pull. You don’t need to be the crab pulling others down. Instead, you can be the one who lifts them up. Your first step is to become a giver, not a taker. In the words of Gandhi: “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

• Drop jealousy. Jealousy will ruin you. When someone works hard for something, and they share their news with you, reply with “I’m proud of you,” or “I’m

happy for you.” The key is to say any of this with sincerity, otherwise it will come across as phony and disingenuous.

• Don’t judge others. You can paint somebody’s success in a negative light, point out flaws in their achievements or you can be compassionate. The choice is yours.

So, take a second to look at the person (“crab” maybe?) in the mirror and ask him/her, “C’mon, what’s holding you back from acknowledging the accomplishments of someone other than yourself?”

In the end, here’s a quote you can leave with, compliments of yours truly.

“If this piece made you feel guilty or touched a raw nerve or two in you, so be it. On the other hand, if it helps those feeling ignored and unappreciated feel validated, better still.”

© Terry Howard is an award-winning writer and storyteller. He is also a contributing writer with the Chattanooga News Chronicle, The American Diversity Report, The Douglas County Sentinel, Blackmarket.com, co-founder of the “26 Tiny Paint Brushes” writers’ guild, recipient of the 2019 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Award and 3rd place winner of the 2022 Georgia Press Award.

Things Most Don’t Want to Hear, Want to Say, Want to Do

By Robin Smith

If you live long enough, and are honest enough, you’re going to be confronted with something you need to say, but just won’t; something you don’t want to hear but need to hear; and something you need to do, but just decide against.

Entire Bible studies, sermon series, and books have been written about each of these avoided realities. Living creatures avoid pain as an inborn instinct. As a human species, however, our will overrides that basic survival instinct to set us apart to reason, resolve conflict, persevere, and endure, and mature, grow, and thrive...if we just decide to do so. However, humans despise being exploited and made vulnerable. So, our basic instincts often prevail.

So, rather than avoid these things, let’s think about them to understand the value of actually saying them, hearing them, and doing them.

What are things that most don’t want to hear?

The worst is likely, “You’re wrong.” Followed closely by, “I’m disappointed in you.” Pride in self, a belief that we’re



esteemed by others and valued, and a distaste for being judged make these words as walls erected to shut out those who dare utter them. Understand, if the statements

are made to instruct, correct, and work for reconciliation and restoration, everyone benefits from hearing these words and act by our own will to be better.

What are things we don’t want to say?

“I’m wrong” or, another variation would be, “You’re right, I’m wrong.” These words literally seem to be wads of cotton choking out of our mouths when rehearsed or spoken. These are best followed by, “Please forgive me,” rather than the oft stated and insincere, “Sorry ‘bout that.” Being vulnerable and giving control of the situation to the one with whom you’re attempting to reconcile is tough; but it’s authentic and encouraged by the Good Book, God’s Word.

What are things we don’t want to do? Most might guess it’s hearing these tough assessments, when offered in sincerity, or admitting one’s own humanity and being reconciled with the one offended. And that’d be close.

The avoidance comes in receiving these words and giving control to another by asking forgiveness. But the thing most

don’t want to do is to give forgiveness and overlook offense.

Research has demonstrated that, as cited by Psychology Today, the conditioning of our experiences develops within us either a desire for retaliation or reconciliation. Most, unfortunately, find a sense of satisfaction in the two forms of retaliation--revenge or negative reciprocity--when wronged.

Revenge is motivated by hatred, both spoken and unspoken, and involves a disproportionate response in return. Negative reciprocity is more along the lines of “an eye-for-an-eye” way of thinking, or “You harm me, I’ll reciprocate with equal, proportionate harm.”

Interestingly, forgiveness given and received involves all three of these avoided things through exerting our will over our feelings and instincts, which sets humanity apart from animals. Our health, well-being, families, and communities will be strengthened if we decide to do all of these things.

This Week in African American History**MALVIN R. GOODE, FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN NEWS CORRESPONDENT**

Sponsored by Mary Walker Historical and Educational Foundation

LEARN TO READ READ TO LEARN



Malvin R. Goode was a pioneer in broadcast journalism, becoming the first African American news correspondent for a major television network in 1962.

Goode arrived at the pinnacle of his career later in life, but his accomplishment serves as a testament to the work ethic he developed in the steel mills of Pittsburgh.

Malvin Russell Goode was born February 13, 1908 in White Plains, Virginia. He was raised primarily in Homestead, Pennsylvania, just outside of Pittsburgh. As a high school and college student at the University of Pittsburgh, Goode worked in the steel mills in the larger city to the north. He was later employed by the YMCA in Pittsburgh as its boys work director. Goode was instrumental in working to end racial discrimination at the Pittsburgh locations of the YMCA. After his time there, he moved to the city’s housing authority. In 1948, Goode started his journalism career at the Pittsburgh

Courier newspaper remaining there for the next 14 years.

During his journalism career, Goode began working in broadcast radio with KQV and worked his way up to hosting a daily five-minute news program on WHOD. He was named WHOD’s news director in 1952. Ten years later, Goode’s big break came when he became ABC’s first Black network news correspondent. Goode was reportedly hired after baseball icon Jackie Robinson complained to the network executives that there weren’t enough Black reporters on air. At the time, Goode was 54 years old.

Goode’s reported on the Cuban Missile Crisis and the debates happening within the halls of the United Nations. Despite his late entry to journalism, Goode gained the respect of his peers and was even cited as a mentor to celebrated news anchor Peter Jennings. In 1963, Goode and others taught journalism to African students via a seminar series in Nigeria, Ethiopia and

Tanzania. In 1968, he also covered the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Among Goode’s awards and acknowledgments, he became the first Black member of the Radio and Television News Director Association. In 1972, he became president of the United Nations Correspondents Association. He was also a member of 100 Black Men in New York and worked with the National Black Network. Goode is the recipient of the Mary McLeod Bethune Award from Bethune-Cookman College and the Michelle Clark Award from the Columbia University School of Journalism.

Goode was married to Mary Lavelle and the couple had six children together. Goode died of a stroke at the age of 87 in Pittsburgh. His funeral at Lincoln Avenue Church of God in Pittsburgh was attended by the afore mentioned Jennings and many of Goode’s journalism peers.