

On the Subject of...

NIGYYSOB!

By Viki Eggers Mason



THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

The Aberdeen Advocate

I was excited to read in a recent edition of *The Examiner* that our illustrious city fathers have taken a few baby-steps in the right direction by beginning a series of meetings to discuss planning for Aberdeen's future. Yay! It's about time!

I must confess that my cynical side suspects this is just another exercise in lip service designed to create the illusion that these men are (finally) doing the job for which we pay them quite handsomely. As you read this, the municipal elections are just 140 days away. It is prudent for our elected officials to appear to be busy whether they are actually accomplishing anything or not. All of that said, I was delighted to see the survey questionnaire seeking citizen input which is currently circulating. Please, if you do not have one of these, take the time to visit City Hall and obtain one. Fill it out and get it back into the hands of the people in whom our future rests. (For at least 140 days, that is.)

As you know, I'm a big fan of planning. I like the idea of having goals and, most importantly, knowing where I am in relation to those goals each and every step of the way. In the process toward change, the first step is identifying the truth. What is our reality? This is, of course, a difficult matter for men who have been so careful to shield the voters from the shameful facts about our city's state of decay. Let me run it down for you.

The disease killing our community begins around the board room table and, like any other deadly virus, is passed down the human chain from employee to employee until we end up in a place called

bankruptcy.

No business, most particularly a governmental business like Aberdeen, can operate without a solid set of policies and procedures in place. They are the skeleton upon which any organization or corporation is hung. In our case, while we have a fine framework in place, we have twiddled our handbook into oblivion.

You see, we have this overarching disorder in Aberdeen that has to do with our unfortunate addiction to a dangerous game. That game is NIGYYSOB! (Now I've got you, you son-of-a-brick!) This game may have its roots in the sad history of the South, but it has outlived its usefulness and it simply must be ended. Yes, I'm speaking about the sort of ignorance which frequently disguises itself as a pigmentation issue. I'm sick to death of pussy-footing around it.

If you are enjoying your victimhood, please stop reading here. If you read on, you'll likely be offended about what follows. If, on the other hand, you care about your community and your future, it's time to step out of the last century and into the bright light of a hopeful future.

There have been horrible violations of the Golden Rule from the beginning of time. Not all people treat other people civilly. Black folks were enslaved. White women and children were put into debtor's prisons simply for being poor. White people of the Jewish faith were gassed and cremated in Auschwitz. We humans can be monsters regardless of our color or our culture.

Many thousands of people from around the world came to America in the last two centu-

ries to find a taste of freedom and to live the good life we take for granted these days. Alas, the noble experiment we call democracy can be messy too. The promise of equal rights have, in some cases, been slow in coming. It took until the mid-1960's for the world to recognize that black citizens were not allowed to share in the experiment.

What is also true and frequently forgotten is this—many black citizens were voting in this country long before females of any color were allowed to cast a ballot! The fight for women's rights began in 1848 but it wasn't until 1920 when the Women's Suffrage Act finally gave women a personhood apart from their husbands or fathers and granted them the right (begrudgingly, I'm sure) to take part in the political process.

My point is simple, whoever we are, whatever our circumstances, we must move forward. We should learn from the past in order NOT to make the same mistakes over and over again, but wallowing in it is just not helpful.

In this country, we all are blessed with endless opportunity regardless of our color. Now, I'm not so out of touch with reality to try to suggest that racism doesn't exist. It clearly does. But I also know that adversities of all sorts exist and they can be overcome by those of us who are determined not to fail. If there is an obstacle in your path, you just need to find a way around it.

Recently, while I was wrestling with the content of this column, one of my black

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NIGYYSOB!

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friends explained to me his view of racism. He told me he prepared his children for life by letting them know there would be doors barred against them because of their color. He encouraged them to be creative problem solvers and never to allow the nasty business of bigotry to deter them from their dreams. His plan must have worked—his offspring seem to be productive members of society and at least one of his children has earned her doctorate degree. Had they been prone to play NIGYYSOB this would never have happened. The game paralyzes people and freezes them in misfortune.

Here's an example. When Cecil Belle was elected as Aberdeen's mayor he brought with him an attitude of cooperation. He had high hopes and noble intentions of working with people of all pigmentation in Aberdeen – Cecil was determined to make a difference. He was promptly labeled an Uncle Tom. It is somehow (insanely) held by many black people that to associate and/or work together with white folks in the spirit of collaboration renders them "less black." They are labeled traitors, turncoats and, well, the aforementioned unpleasant uncle.

Almost immediately, Cecil was shunned by the militant fools who wanted to play NIGYYSOB! These goofy guys wanted to use the opportunity of their first real majority in office to punish the white folks for all the misery inflicted upon black people from the beginning of time. (Never mind that these gamesters were also condemning their own people in their twisted plan to "get even.")

In spite of his right-minded, clear-headed beginnings, the lesser men around the board table eventually beat the mayor into something kin to submission. They subdued Cecil Belle the same way Aberdeen's black community has been beaten down for a very long time – by refusing to let them succeed, by sabotaging their every plan, then eagerly blaming their failures upon bigots.

In their incredible ignorance, the boys around the board table have spent the past 3 1/2 years allowing all manner of nin-compoopery to prevail. We have hired stupendously incompetent and unsuitable

employees only because they are properly pigmented. We have appointed a dangerously ignorant judge to wield the sword of justice but, because this is NIGYYSOB after all, we have allowed OUR lady justice to remove her blindfold. Now we seem to have black consequences associated with crime which seem to be significantly different from white consequences. Could there be a more egregious example of the game in play?

If two white employees weren't drawn and quartered for selling scrap wire to feed a petty cash fund, then one black employee should not be punished or prosecuted for borrowing nearly 70 thousand dollars. (If the money is repaid, does the crime disappear? I think not, but what do I know?) If white folks don't pay their power bills, they are promptly disconnected. If black folks don't pay their power bills, they are given hardship status and allowed to continue to collect countless unpaid kilowatt hours. On the other hand, if you happen to be a black person who has somehow fallen afoul of any of the black leadership, they might just allow you to amass an insurmountable bill *before* you are disconnected. Then you will be forced to sit in the dark for months. NIGYYSOB!

Essential policies and procedures eventually become convoluted when they are meted out willy (pun intended) nilly. The words chaos and anarchy gain new ferocity and we all eventually lose—but NIGYYSOB isn't a game for winners. It's a game played strictly by losers.

Now that we see how NIGYYSOB is played, it is important that we understand why it continues. Let me first assure you that by creating and perpetuating the "them versus us" thinking which is essential to the game, some people can keep themselves in powerful positions of authority. If these unscrupulous men can convince black voters that without their help, the white enemy will magically extract the inalienable rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, then they can keep their iron-fisted grip on their cushy jobs. Without the likes of Willie Cook and

Cloyd Garth to protect them, some misguided black folks still think we "crackers" will force them back into slavery or some other horrible catastrophe will follow as night unto day.

Oh, moose doots!

What will happen if citizens of Aberdeen work together for our common future? Something really sinister, I imagine. For example, if we were all working together we might find creative solutions to the myriad problems in our schools.

Maybe we could find funding for a first-class, indoor swimming facility where little athletes and old fannies like me could work out.

Maybe a Subaru plant would settle in Prairie because of the sterling example we set by skillfully playing the diverse hand we were dealt.

Maybe our property values would rise and our tax debt shrink.

Maybe our tax dollars would go to better pay for our police and fire-fighters instead of paying off lawsuits brought by employees we've treated outrageously.

Maybe I could enjoy my golden years in the satisfaction that I played some small part in helping our beautiful little community to become more harmonious.

Maybe I could grow tall enough so that my weight/height ratio would be more acceptable to my medical professional, Nina Journey. (Ok, as long as you're dreaming you might as well dream big!)

Neighbors!

Keep our local shops in business and Aberdeenians employed. For the sake of our community and our future, whenever possible, please spend your Christmas dollars right here in Aberdeen!



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We get letters! Imagine that!

Hey Viki.

I was reading the blog page and ran across the part about you speaking to Dr. Reed. Someone responded to it. That person made a good point.

The school system does cheat students out of a good education. I graduated from Aberdeen High School in 2005. When I got to college in the fall, I got the biggest shock of my life. I was NOT prepared for college.

I was an A and B student in high school and didn't have to work for it because the teachers didn't care. When I got to college, I was so far behind, it wasn't funny. And apparently I'm not the only one, the rest of the people I graduated with feel the same way.

I will tell anybody who sends their child through the Aberdeen school system that they are complete idiots! They are making it hard on their kids. When will people realize it?

My mother took my sister out of Aberdeen after I graduated. She is now at Oak Hill and is working for her grades. It is really sad that my mom and dad have to pay for my sister to receive a decent education, but I AM SO GLAD that she will be prepared for college.

Lee Ann Jones, Aberdeen

What follows is excerpted from a request made by Ms. Travette Vassar addressed to the Aberdeen School District School Board—VEM

As a concerned parent I was outraged over some of the grades my child was bringing home. I took it upon myself to be a student for a day in my child's classes—observing teaching styles, methods, classroom control and stu-

dent/teacher interaction.

It was a total disgrace to me as a former student in the Aberdeen School District, as a parent having a child in the school district and as a Doctoral student in Mississippi State's University School of Education.

I found one 7th-grade teacher to be outstanding in the areas that I observed. I am very proud to have my son attending Mrs. Jones' class. If he does not understand what she is teaching, then the problems are on him as an active learner.

Why can we not have more Mrs. Joneses in our school district? Our children are deserving regardless of parent background, economic status and environment.

Philosophy of Education has taught me that every teacher knows that education is a powerful instrument for the shaping of individual lives and society. The way in which teachers relate to their students depends upon their conception of human nature. One's view of reality shapes one's beliefs about knowledge.

We are not all 32 year-old grandmothers. We care about our children's education and believe it or not, a lot of us are highly educated and capable of teaching our children, but we send them to school for the state's supposedly trained and paid teachers to do this. As parents, if we question the way our children are being taught (or not being taught) we should not expect our children to have to suffer the consequences of unfair treatment, comments and disciplinary actions by teachers and administrators.

Travette Vassar, Aberdeen



Thanks for writing, ladies!

I could list about a thousand consequences of the corruption that plagues our city, but foremost among them are the problems which exist in our schools. Because of the board's consistent bad appointment-making in the past *our school system stinks!*

In case you've forgotten, or didn't know in the first place, businesses which seek to relocate look carefully at a community's school system. Industry brings management teams made up of people who have families. Good managers must have confidence in the school system which educates their children. Industrial leaders understand this particular reality and locate their enterprises accordingly.

So, to put it very bluntly, we can cry for new industry and jobs until the cows come home, but until and unless we can point to an above-average school system we will lose out to communities like Amory and Hamilton who can. Period. End of discussion.

The good news is, of course, we now have a new Superintendent of Schools. We hope he brings a new set of administrative skills and an attitude of excellence – such an attitude is highly contagious and we need an epidemic of it. With any luck at all, he will invigorate the school board and the teachers who will, in turn, infect the students. It will be at that precise moment that Aberdeen makes the hairpin-turn back toward vitality.

In saying this, I don't mean to let any of you off the hook. Whether or not you have a child in Aberdeen's school system, it is your responsibility to make sure the schools are churning out bright students who are aflame with a lust for learning and manifesting the habits associated with winners.

If you fail in this responsibility, Aberdeen will wither away just as it has been over the past years. Without successful schools, we are doomed.

Of course that matters only if you live here, work here, or know somebody who does.

VEM

“We must make each one of our schools an embryonic community life, active with types of occupations that reflect the life of the larger society, and throughout permeated with the spirit of art, history and science. When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantor of a larger society which is worthy, lovely and harmonious.”

...John Dewey



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“That old law about ‘an eye for an eye’ leaves everybody blind. The time is always right to do the right thing.”

...Martin Luther King, Jr.

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