



May 9, 2016

Are You Ready to Help Cure Racism?

In President Obama's final State of the Union message, the President announced that Vice President Joe Biden would spearhead an initiative to cure cancer.

"Last year, Vice President Biden said that with a new moonshot, America can cure cancer," Obama said, before noting that Biden has worked with Congress to add resources for the National Institutes of Health. "Tonight, I'm announcing a new national effort to get it done. And because he's gone to the mat for all of us, on so many issues over the past forty years, I'm putting Joe in charge of Mission Control. For the loved ones we've all lost, for the family we can still save, let's make America the country that cures cancer once and for all."

This comment got enormous applause, as the President turned to Biden and went off script, saying, "What do you say, Joe?" Biden gave him a thumbs-up, to more applause. "Let's make it happen," President Obama said.

Vice President Biden lost his son, Beau Biden, 46, to brain cancer in 2015.

This is amazing - that our president and vice president decided to take on this charge, because most families have had to deal a friend or family member who has suffered from the horrible disease of cancer.

But, I think the disease that kills even more Americans than cancer is the disease called racism. The cure for this disease will not take billions of dollars spent on research to find a cure. We can just start by looking at the South and West Sides of Chicago, Cook County jail, Illinois' prisons, our school system in Illinois, our prosecutors' offices, our police departments and our workforce opportunities. I would submit that if we cure racism, we will speed up the possible cures for cancer. Too many lives are lost and too many lives never reach their full potential from the twin diseases of cancer and racism, leaving ALL of us lacking for the best we could get from our God-given opportunities in life when one of us dies too early from cancer or racism.

Mohandas K. Gandhi once said, "I believe in the essential unity of all people and for that matter of all lives. Therefore, I believe that if one person gains spiritually, the whole world gains, and if one person falls, the whole world falls to that extent." If we just fight to end hate and racism, then I believe we can

heal the world. This is possible if we work for transformation in the world AND transformation in ourselves at the same time – we have to work to make both ourselves and our world whole.

I am reminded of an episode of *All in the Family* when Archie needed blood and a black person was his only match. Archie went crazy until he finally realized he had no choice but to take the "black blood". I think the lesson for us is that we have no choice but to end racism if we all want to obtain the best that life has to offer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LSK', with a stylized flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District