

10 steps toward a peaceful summer

By Dwayne Lee *Posted: June 11, 2007*

Since we seem to be living in an increasingly violent world, I would like to suggest a summer peace plan. Every day - or at least every week - we are confronted with a new wave of senseless and reckless violence.

Before you can take a breath, it seems, some other mayhem happens. I'm tired of it, and I know you are, too.

I applaud the Milwaukee Police Department for its plan to put officers on the street in these drug- and gang-infested areas. It is so sad to hear people say that they feel helpless in these neighborhoods and that they want officers there *now*.

Here is my plan. Feel free to add to it as you enact your own plan.

Get to know your neighbors. Do this while doing the next step.

Clean up and maintain your neighborhood. In many places, there is too much garbage and litter lying around. Store owners don't seem to care, so neighbors must.

Establish an air of mutual respect and ownership even if you don't own the house or apartment building where you live.

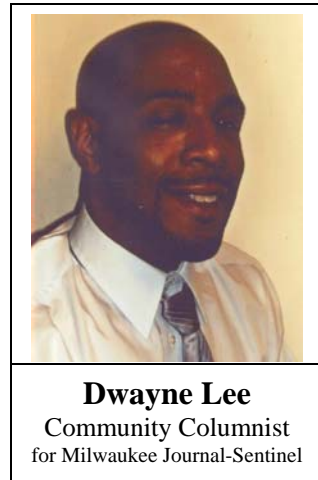
Overlook insults, slights and ignorant and foolish provocations. These often come from dysfunctional people. Sometimes people behave this way because they are bored or under peer pressure.

Override pride and fear of shame or embarrassment and the need to make a reputation violently. Instead, flip the script and use your energy to do something positive for the neighborhood.

Help those who may need a hand, such as the elderly and handicapped. Also, look out for children and know that many times teenagers may need wisdom and guidance. Do not let these violent events make you apathetic or pessimistic about the next generation. Some will listen to you. Really.

Be an agent of peace, not an instigator of discord in any way. This means: Stop gossiping and fighting and begin talking and organizing to make your neighborhood a safe and positive place. It is important for adults to act like adults.

Be understanding of other people's shortcomings and challenges. Some people will always choose to behave in a disruptive, destructive manner.



Don't despair and never give up.

Smile.

If these steps are followed, we can expect a more peaceful and constructive summer.

To some, this plan may appear rudimentary and unsophisticated. Nevertheless, I wager that it will prove effective in reducing the pervasive, ominous and negative tension while yielding positive results.

Some would say we are seeing the potentially crushing effects of poverty, but I disagree.

What we are seeing are the results of people making selfish and self-defeating choices to achieve their destructive aims. We are experiencing the effects of hopelessness of those who feel that they have no choice but to engage in illegal activities. Part of this stems from a system that leaves felons, who have done their time and paid their debt to society, with so few opportunities and options for the future.

I hope summer peace plans spur a remarkable increase in the number of and effectiveness of neighborhood block watch groups. Additionally, remember that the police can be (and should be in some cases) called anonymously.

We need to take possession of our neighborhoods and streets, not just our own households. Our kids should, and do, hold us accountable.

We can change the violent trend. We have to - for the benefit, safety and protection of all we hold near and dear.

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