

Green Bay Press-Gazette

Opinion Column

We must deal with racial issues head on

DE PERE — In the past couple of weeks, we have heard many opinions regarding the racial issues here in our community. Adults sharing their thoughts about racial issues that are front-page news is not new to us.

We need to find a positive force in our community ... someone who can help this community start to deal with these issues head on.

In a meeting recently with a representative from our school district, we were shocked to be informed that our school believes in a "gray area" in regards to using racial slurs. We find that unacceptable that our son feels that he does not have a voice, that his concerns are

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his alone. Allowing a "gray area" sends a message that some racism is acceptable. Is this the message we want to send to our area youth?

We want the community as a whole, to eliminate the "gray areas" and find racism to be unacceptable in any situation. We need to start asking where our priorities are. Are our children important to us? Is our community worth it? Do our children have to go to school with the idea that

they cannot change these issues, that there is no one who will help them? Who are being told that racism is not a "big problem" in this community? That using racial slurs gets a slap on the hand, and defending yourself gets you a harsher punishment?

Our responsibility to our youth is to teach them self-respect and integrity, to respect others and to be accountable for their decisions.

There is a program in this community that helps parents of young men reinforce those values. My Brother's Keeper, is a

strong, positive resource in our community.

Harry and Madonna Sydney are striving to help the boys in our community become strong young men — not just the boys who are minorities, or the students that the school thinks they have to target as the troublemakers, the kids that they think may get into trouble.

This program is for all boys, including boys who could be labeled as having good grades, are popular, outgoing and, yes, being "good old boys."

The crime in this community is being committed by many. We debate racism in this community, but are not talking enough about the one thing that can be

the biggest part of a solution ... we need to start with our youth.

This program is designed to encourage the positive choices that our young men make on a daily basis. It offers outside support to young men at a time in their lives when negative choices are easier to make.

As parents of three boys, our hope is that area school districts will adapt their curriculum to include these values. As a community, that is something that we all want our young people to learn ... not just the minorities.

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