

The Chief of Police stated in a news conference, on Facebook, that some 16 and 17 year old youth are lost.

We think that this is time for another lesson for our community governmental, business, educational, and criminal justice system leaders. There are some basic facts that you have little or no knowledge of and need to learn. I have learned these things by having a career all of my life in various fields of human service, and studying psychology, sociology, and counseling.

- 1) People can change. You have changed. People you know have changed. Change is part of the human condition.
- 2) People are not good or bad (lost). Behavior is “good” or “bad.” People have the potential for both in them and generally show some of each. Their behavior is not all good or all bad.
- 3) The reason most people in the U.S. criminal justice system, specifically jails and prisons, end up back there, little to no effort to rehabilitate them occurs. In the European Union, people in jail and prison are prepared from the moment they come in to return to society as productive members.
- 4) If one would spend any time talking to youth of color, one would discover that many of them have little hope that they will live into their early 20's. They have no hope of a better future than they have had as a child.
- 5) The reason that they feel that way is because of the way they are treated in our community - the lack of equal opportunities in education, jobs, and housing, the lack of common courtesy and respect given them, the daily mini-racist incidents and harassment of them, the disparities of treatment by the police, and the very belief of others that they are lost.
- 6) This all causes ongoing, high levels of stress in them, which makes it difficult to concentrate and to learn. Check it out on the internet. Racism causes significant health issues due to stress.
- 7) People can change and that change comes about when people are cared for, when they are treated with courtesy and respect, when others believe in them, and help them find some hope for a different future.

So, if you, our community leaders, want people, especially young people to change, you need to change. First you need to create a community that cares for everyone. You need to start with your organizations and businesses, and then encourage everyone to work to build a better community at large. We don't believe that anyone is “lost,” not even one of you. We believe that all of us, working together, can change our community into a place where everyone feels like they are valued and belong.

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