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Generations



Racist remarks about Michelle Obama an insult to all women

By Peg DeMarco - Guest Columnist - Special to The News Herald

I had a column all written for this Sunday, but when I read on the internet about what had happened in West Virginia, I just couldn't let it pass and not write about it for so many reasons.

Shortly after President-elect Donald Trump defeated Hillary Clinton in this year's election, Pamela Ramsey Taylor, a nonprofit group director from Clay, West Virginia, made blatantly racist remarks about First Lady Michelle Obama. Taylor, director of Clay County Development Corp., took to Facebook to express her excitement over Trump's and his wife, Melania Trump's, impending move into the White House by posting, "It will be so refreshing to have a classy, beautiful, dignified First Lady back in the White House," according to NBC affiliate WSAZ. "I'm tired of seeing a Ape in heels."

And if that wasn't horrible enough, WSAZ reported that Town of Clay's mayor, Beverly Whaling, responded to Taylor's post with, "Just made my day Pam."

I was seething mad on so many fronts when I read this that I had to chuck my column in favor of voicing my unequivocal distaste and disappointment in, once again, the level of unkindness and stupidity of two human beings and how their racist remarks can further chip away at the core of Americanism, especially when they decide a conversation between the two of them isn't detrimental enough and that it deserved a post in an electronic forum that encourages "letting it all hang out" even if it's hateful. And once the backlash began, the women quickly removed the posts to reinforce their cowardice of hiding behind an electronic medium instead of explaining why they would post such trash. One of them, in fact, declared that it wasn't racist at all in an interview.

They were stupid, racist remarks no matter how vehemently either woman tried to deny that they were. Taylor was fired and the Mayor resigned, but damage was done. For their 15 minutes of fame, the town they were part of faces years of shame as they attempt to repair the damage. One

hundred thousand people signed a petition to get rid of both of them – ah, the power of the web works both ways.

While racism remains at the forefront of this example, there was also the surreal fact that these posts were made by two obviously learned women who had attained some sort of stature in a community. As woman to woman to all the readers of this column, why on earth would any woman ever bash another one for absolutely no reason at all other than to be hateful? And as women working hard to overcome the historical stereotype of being judged by what's on the outside rather than what's on the inside, remarks such as these can set us back around a hundred years.

Sure, Melania is beautiful and so is Michelle, but should it really matter? Haven't we come far enough, ladies, that all of us should be saying, "Look past my face and figure and judge me for my mind."

Council member Jason Hubbard issued a brief statement condemning the "horrible and indecent" post and said racism and intolerance "isn't what this community is about." He apologized on behalf of the town to Michelle Obama and anyone who was offended.

Thanks, Jason, but this was your Mayor and a nonprofit in your little town that provided services to elderly and low-income residents in Clay County. It's even funded through state and federal grants and local fees. Did anyone consider the nonprofit's 501(c)(3) tax status and what racism could do to its future?

I wonder if anyone on the town council or those that interacted with the nonprofit noticed any racist remarks squeaking through in day-to-day interaction. Bigotry is hard to hide, especially when you have a big mouth and you want the world to hear what you say.

Lish Greiner of Belpre, Ohio, said she had volunteered during flood cleanup in West Virginia over the summer and returned for the town council meeting about the matter after she read about the Obama incident because, "I will not tolerate hate in my home and in my area."

The uproar occurred as the town of about 500 residents was still trying to recover from severe flooding in late June along the nearby Elk River.

Joyce Gibson, a council member, was asked what was worse, the flood or the backlash from the Facebook post.

"I'll have to think about that," she said. "This (backlash) will go away."

Yes, it will, Joyce, but unfortunately racism will not.

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