

A Moment...

My father has Alzheimer's disease, and for the umpteenth time, I found myself in the emergency room of St. Joseph's Hospital after receiving "a call." They know us there. My father can't communicate any longer. His eyes are dull, memory gone, he mumbles instead of talking, and rarely if ever does he make sense.

Two years ago my father was still driving. This disease is devastating.

The latest stage of Alzheimer's disease has introduced my father to seizures. They wreak havoc on his system, causing him days of drowsiness in their aftermath. Today, I was called because he fell out of his bed and gashed his arm. Stitches were needed.

When I entered his room at the hospital my father looked at me with big eyes. I said "Hi, Pop!" but he just looked at me. I don't think he knew me. I sat down beside him and held his hand. We just sat like that for a while waiting for the nurse to arrive.

I had managed to avoid the inauguration coverage all day long (which was my stated goal), but now, there I sat with my incapacitated father watching the inauguration parade ... I hate parades.

That's when it happened.

As we were looking at the new first family, the new black first family, my father took his gaze from the tube and stared right at me and said, "Son? What's the score?" "What did you say?" I asked. He just looked at me. Later I said, "Dad, the game is over. The Democrats won. That man is our president."

It was an odd moment.

My Dad is of the same generation as Bill Cosby, Colin Powell and John McCain. He would have been so proud of the moment and so furious with me for not celebrating it.

Generations.

That's the thought that was in my head as I looked up, and by complete and utter luck, caught the most powerful image of the day.

Marching across the bandstand on Pennsylvania Avenue was a regiment of Americans of African descent dressed in the uniforms of the [Fighting 54th](#). My heart stopped as their heads snapped left and they caught the gaze of President Barack Obama.

Chills. I felt that! It lasted for a split second but it was real, a sense of awe that spanned a gulf of 144 years, 7 generations and 8 seasons of history. It was a symbolic moment. Americans of African descent, marching in the uniform of their forefathers, eyes left

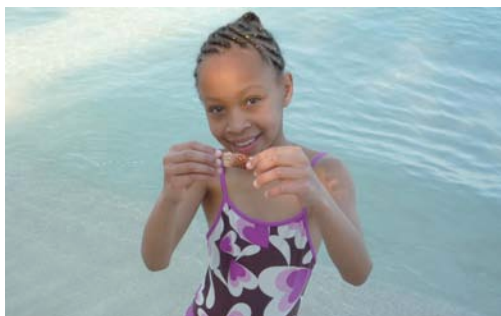
to a son of Kenya, President of the United States.

"Son? What's the score?"

I don't know, Pop. But I'm glad we watched the game together.

James T. Harris

Conservative Commentator, Speaker and Talk Show Host of the National Conversation heard on News Radio 620 WTMJ., Milwaukee Wisconsin.



KING OF THE HILL

Every year, twice a year, our family escapes to Jamaica. That's how we roll. Some couples spend their money on marriage counseling . . . my wife and I go to Jamaica, alone. And because we like it so much, we also take the family down for spring break.

Same beach, different vibe. Ya mon.

My baby girl is getting older. She is my civilizing force. I remember what it was like to be a teenage boy and I didn't have tools like, sexting, e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, the Internet! It's frightening out there. When I look at my girl and consider the spirit of this age, I shudder.

But this is Negril and she is a child. I still have time, I think, as we walk down the same beach that her mother and I enjoyed a few months earlier, holding hands and picking up shells.

Same beach, different vibe. Ya mon.

That's when my girl noticed the huge trampoline floating a hundred yards off shore! She wanted some of that action. No problem! For most of the week, my children, their friends and tons of tourists and locals enjoyed that trampoline -- bouncing, diving, tanning... paradise!

It doesn't matter the country, the ethnicity, or the culture, when adolescent teenage boys hang out in

packs, inevitably your parental radar kicks in.

Call it the Lord of the Flies syndrome.

Negril's beach is public (all beaches in Jamaica are public), and occasionally large packs of fun loving teenage boys bum rushed the trampoline driving everybody else off.

King of the Hill

On the last day of our vacation my daughter walked up to me and said, "Daddy? I want to play on the trampoline." I looked up. Rats, the king was on his hill.

Sigh.

My wife chimed in, "Honey, your daughter wants to play on the trampoline." Damn! Mommy pressure. I could hear my late friend Uncle Ed in my head, "Harris, man up!"

So as I waded into the turquoise deep with my girl floating beside me, I stare at the king. As my baby swims toward the trampoline, I stare at the king. As she climbs the ladder to board the float, the king moves to block her. The other kings in waiting have given way; the king of the hill has a decision to make.

My daughter looked back at me and said, "Daddy?"

That's the snap shot, the picture in my mind that I will never forget. In that moment, I knew that it was only going to get more difficult from here on . . . that in just a few short years, she's not going to look back for me. That one day, some fool on bended knee is going to come talking some jibberish and "yadda, yadda, yadda..." Oh, man!!!

Sigh.

But, not today! I can still see her, one foot in the turquoise surf hanging on to the ladder, her way blocked by the king of the hill. I looked at him and simply said, "excuse me?"

He moved aside.

As my little girl bounced around on the trampoline she was all smiles! In a few short years, she will not remember my heroic actions and the reigning king of the hill won't be trying to keep her off that trampoline, will he? He'll say, "Ya mon, may I offer you my hand?"

And, I'll be right there to cut it off!

James T. Harris

Conservative Commentator, Speaker and Talk Show Host of the National Conversation heard on News Radio 620 WTMJ., Milwaukee Wisconsin.



A Father's Place

"What's it like to have a father?" This is the question that was on the lips of a dear friend. He was constantly asking me about my relationship with my dad. He was mining for nuggets. He wanted more than he had, which was nothing. He didn't know his father, had never met him, and it wounded him to his very core.

My friend died of AIDS a few years ago. He never told me he had it. He didn't tell anyone. He died alone, I was told. I think of him often. I miss him. I loved him.

"What's it like to have a father?"

I used to live in another area of Sherman Park. One day while we were gardening in the front yard I looked up to see my son playing with a number of young American boys of African descent. One of the kids walked up to me and asked, "Are you Jackson's father?" I answered the boy, "Yes, yes I am." I watched as the youngster ran back to the crowd yelling, "See, I told you Jackson had a dad!"

"What's it like to have a father?"

On Friday afternoon, right before the rains descended upon Milwaukee, my kids and I took a walk over to Washington Park. It was a great walk, a fun walk. My two little ones rode

their bikes and my eldest son and I walked the dog. We were a family hanging out.

As we strolled to the top of the band shell hill, a gentleman in his 30s stopped me, asked about my dog, and then said, "I like what I see." Which begged the question, "What do you see?" "You walking your dog like that..." He meant me walking my dog with my family. You would be surprised how often I get that. When I am out with my family, people stop us and comment on it. I guess it's kind of rare in the city. A black man with his family. It's sad.

"What's it like to have a father?"

As we walked down the hill, my son rode ahead. We walked slower to give his sister help. The hill on the east side of the band shell is steep and she is small. When I looked up, I saw that my youngest son was rounding the path toward the bridge. What he didn't see was the four teenage boys lying in wait for him. One of the thugs had what looked like a thick boat chain. It was hanging by his side as he waited behind a tree. One could only imagine my horror.

I yelled for my son. He didn't stop, he couldn't hear me. My eldest son saw the trap as well and started to move towards the trouble. I stopped him.

"What's it like to have a father?"

I called for my son again, but his time loud enough for everyone in Washington Park to hear. My son stopped. So did the thugs. As my son returned to me, the thugs began to move away.

That's what it's like to have a father.

Children need to be loved, taught, cared for, trained, disciplined, instructed, watched over, protected, and loved some more.

Those four young men didn't have a father.

That's what's making this city increasingly more difficult to live in; fatherless young men who are angry, lonely and violent outnumber the rest of us. They don't know what it is like to have a father and the rest of us are paying for it.

Written for a friend.

James T. Harris

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