

Thanksgiving means lifting up each other

Written by Julianne Malveaux, NNPA Columnist
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(NNPA) - The last five weeks of the year, the days beginning with Thanksgiving and moving through the New Year, are days when we all wind down. Some of us don't want to admit it, citing business as usual. But the fact is that from the first thanksgiving party to the last holiday gift exchange, we have collectively decided that the year is over and we can't do much about it.

This year is different from many others. One in six Americans does not have a job. One in four African Americans is unemployed. This means that our holiday parties must be muted by the challenge of acknowledging and supporting those who are impaired in our midst. It also means lifting up those who deserve the lift up, those who have done such phenomenal things this year that they need a shout out.

I will lift up my sister friend Susan Taylor for her National Mentoring Cares Movement ad for the phenomenal love she sows into African American people as we grow, develop, and learn to heal from our hurt. As she crosses the country, she infuses her gentle spirit into the many ways we can embrace our futures. She is a force that must be loved, respected and appreciated.

I will lift up Dr. Boyce Watkins for his embrace of Heather Ellis, the young sister from Missouri who faced 15 years in jail for cutting a line. Heather Ellis did what so many of us do – went to the store with a friend (cousin), took separate lines, and decided that whoever got up first would hook the other up. How did this turn into a racial farce of utter insanity? It would take the people in Kenneth, MO to tell us. Here is what I know – Boyce Watkins spent time, effort, energy and money in rallying people around Heather Ellis. I am grateful for his activism and lift him up for his work.

I will lift up Donna Richardson Joyner, who has both embraced Bennett College for women and Black women around the globe in her positive and joyful commitment to healthy living. Thanks to Donna, we are doing work on growing a healthy garden and embracing healthy habits at Bennett, but more importantly, thanks to Donna, we all have a model of how to live and how to be.

I will lift up Blanche Williams and the National Black Women's Town Hall and the many ways that Blanche is into hooking sisters up. Blanche's mantra is "Embracing Greatness" and she is unselfish about that embrace. She is a blessing and a lesson, a joy and a leader. I am so very excited about their work.

There are so very many more who deserve the lift up. And, there are so many who must be acknowledged as they struggle through these times. I am especially concerned by those who are marginalized by the notion of these holiday celebrations, marginalized by the reality that they have not much to celebrate. What do we celebrate through the storm? Mostly we celebrate that we are still here. Still here? Still navigating, functioning, managing, holding it up. And we celebrate the fact that in the middle of the wind-down, we are indeed winding down.

I always find the end of the year poignant. We always have much to reflect on, much to celebrate. We lift up those who have assisted, accomplished, and moved us more aggressively to a better world. And, at the same time, we acknowledge those who have been touselled by our economy. We ask that all of us do the work we must do to provide analysis as we move

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forward. We wonder if we suffer from the paralysis of analysis.

At the end of the day, we know that the end-year act of winding down offer us an amazing possibility to lift up and respect our past and yet be challenged by our present. We know that there are those whose contribution has been stellar; we know we all want to do more. We inhale this moment called the end of the year, appreciating the opportunity to wind down, looking forward to the challenge of winding back up.

As long as there are racial economic gaps, there is cause to work, challenge, and focus. When the Black unemployment rate is nearly twice the white rate, when Black wealth is a tenth of white wealth, there is work to do. For many the end of the year should be nothing more than a momentary respite. There is, still, much work to do.

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