

It's Heartbreaking

It's despicable and so sad. Such a loss of respect defies definition and undermines our basic humanity.

I'm talking about the invasion of privacy inflicted upon the Rutgers' freshman – I omit his name out of respect for him and his family even though it's well-known in the press – by posting a video of a private sexual encounter as mass entertainment.

While the prosecutor will decide the ultimate charges with the possibility of an added hate crime charge, we should all be asking the question, "What have we come to?"

Why is the idea of such an outrageous act against another person something that even occurs? To be a bully? To show up a fellow human being as someone to fear, hate, trash or humiliate? Would the perpetrators of such a vicious act want that done to them? Would they want to be publicly humiliated?

Beyond the invasion of privacy are the basic human relations issues missing from so many segments of our society these days – respect for each person regardless of sexual orientation, religion, gender, race, citizenship status, ability status, etc.

In New Jersey and nationwide, we are at risk of losing our "center" – respect for each person and the values that hold us together as a civil society. Rutgers University has embarked on its Project Civility and that's a good thing. When we at the American Conference on Diversity work with students in New Jersey high schools and colleges, our key focus is to reinforce the value of each person, respect for each person, and awareness of the destructive impact of hate, prejudice and, yes, disrespect.

Let us learn a lesson from this tragic and incomprehensible loss and rededicate ourselves to working to rise above our differences and be the best that we can be as people, as co-workers, as neighbors, as fellow students and friends. Foster respect at home, in our schools, in our workplaces and communities.

Each of us can make a positive difference if we try.

It all begins with respect.

Sincerely,

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The work of the American Conference on Diversity is among the most important activities we can participate in to create a positive, inclusive society. It is the unfinished business of living in a highly diverse state: educating and empowering our next generation of leaders; enhancing NJ workplaces; and helping to create inclusive communities. The American Conference on Diversity takes an historic mission and creates programs and activities relevant and vital to 21st Century life. It is a journey we can all take together. The American Conference on Diversity operates eight chapters to help us to educate and empower leaders and bring our messages of inclusion and respect to communities throughout New Jersey: Atlantic County Chapter, Bayonne Chapter, Central Jersey Chapter, Essex County Chapter, Greater Bergen Chapter, Hudson County Chapter, Jersey Shore Chapter and Mercer County Chapter. Visit www.AmericanConferenceonDiversity.org to learn more.

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