

We Need to Stick Together



by Warren Hardy

People in our neighborhoods need to come together as communities if we want to live productively and peacefully! We need to help one another whether the problem affects us directly or indirectly. We must decide as a community what is important for us to hold on to or get rid of.

History has shown us that we gain more when we stick together. For example, during the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, the black community came together and stopped riding the bus in order to protest segregated seating. The boycott was not supposed to last a long time but it did, and a lot of people had to find other ways to get to work, school, and recreation. People in that community who had cars picked up those who did not and brought them where they needed to go. People walked together, sometimes long distances. After a year of empty buses, the transit system of Montgomery was desegregated.

We need to feel the pain now mentally as a community, as we felt the pain physically during the Civil Rights Movement in the early 50s and 60s. The blacks at that time went through a lot of really bad times. They did not give up. It did not matter that their lives were on the line; they believed in something and it was worth dying for.

I remember when one person's problem was a community problem. When I was growing up in Hartford on Earle Street in the early 80s, if I was doing something wrong at the top of the street, by the time I got to the bottom my mother already knew about it. If someone's kid was doing something wrong, anybody in that community could say something to that kid. That is the kind of community support we need now.

When I got up late for school and missed my bus, it was Miss Lue, my neighbor, who would ask, "Why aren't you in school?" and then she

would take me to school herself. If one person got sick, someone in the community helped them get better. When I got sick, it was Mrs. Smith who brought me some soup to make me feel better.

Every day after school, my grandfather took me with him to pick up Mrs. Williams from work because she did not have a ride home. Our community today could organize a transportation committee for those who need rides to and from school or work. Dropping out of school or a job because you don't have a ride should not happen, not when everyone knows how important it is to have an education and work. Someone in the community should be able to give that person a ride.

The same thing goes for child care. If that is a problem for a family, then we as a community should be trying to fix it. We could find out who needs child care, how many children need it, and who would be the best person for the job of providing it. Even if money is tight for the family, the community should be able to provide some options. This type of support is what we need now, so we won't have to worry about someone dropping out of school or a job.

They rightly say that it takes a community to raise a child, because even though parents may do their best, they can't be in two places at one time. This is why we need to stick together. Problems like transportation and childcare, for example, affect more than only a few of us; these seemingly individual problems become community issues. Hopefully, in the near future we will have the support we all need from our community.

Warren graduated from high school in 1992 and has provided counseling to youth and job readiness skills to inner city children. His favorite quote is: "Don't be afraid to encounter risks. It is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave."