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Celebrate!

FROM GAY PRIDE TO EMANCIPATION OF SLAVES TO MEN'S HEALTH, JUNE IS A TIME FOR AWARENESS OF OTHERS AND SELF

In the month of June, we celebrate Pride Month, Juneteenth, Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month, and Men's Health. Each celebration deserves an entire article on its own but I only have 1,000 words.

Pride Month

Given the national movement against the LGBTQIA+ community, check in on your friends and loved ones. See how they are doing. Sometimes, hearing from you can make all the difference in their day. If you're not open to the LGBTQIA+ community, remember, no one chooses their sexual orientation or preferences. It's who they are. We all have a limited time on this planet; everyone deserves to be happy and freed from judgment.

Juneteenth, Freedom Day or Emancipation Day

On June 19, 1865, about two months after the Confederate general Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, Virginia, Gordon Granger, a Union general, arrived in Galveston, Texas, to inform enslaved African Americans of their freedom and that the Civil War had ended. General Granger's announcement put into effect the Emancipation Proclamation, which had been issued nearly two and a half years earlier by President Abraham Lincoln.

Slavery casts a long shadow in race relationships in the U.S. We continue to struggle with the inequitable treatments of African Americans today. Let's face it: African Americans are treated differently because of the color of their skin. Period. We need to change. From the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and David McAtee, we need to address race relations and make policy changes. Banning the use of choke holds is a good start. How about losing qualified immunity?

Sadly, racism exists within the Los Angeles Superior Court. Recently, I was in trial with CAALA President Elect Ibiere Seck. Watching the judge acknowledge me by "Mr. Nguyen" and Ms. Seck by "young lady" was appalling and disgusting.

He then denied Ms. Seck the opportunity to make a record, ordering the court reporter not to record and running off the bench. We need to rise above the color of our skin and treat *all* with dignity and respect.

Alzheimer's and brain awareness

At the gala, I told the audience that my mother has Alzheimer's. Since then, many friends have shared similar stories about their parents. Regarding brain injury, up until now, I have kept my own mild TBI a secret. In 2016 while training for an Ironman, I crashed my bike and sustained a mild TBI. I briefly lost consciousness. I struggled with anger, had poor impulse control, my memory was not as sharp as before, and concentration was an issue. My injuries led to acrimonious times with my loved ones and people at the office. It was not until I received help that I was able to manage my symptoms. Notice that I said "manage." You don't really recover from a TBI. If you are lucky, you learn to cope and manage the symptoms. Sustaining my own TBI has helped me understand and advocate for my TBI clients better.

Men's (and women's) health

This past month alone, I learned that three young trial lawyers with young families have been diagnosed with cancer and one former CAALA president is fighting the same. Cancer sucks. We all know that life is fleeting. From the moment that we are born, our life clock starts ticking backwards to when we depart. We will all die. It's a fact of life. It's what we do with the time that we have that is important. While it is important to do everything that we can to help our clients, it is equally important to take care of ourselves and spend time with loved ones.

Put down the phone. Unplug yourself. One of the things that we require all students who attend the Gerry Spence Method is that the students are unplugged from their screens. They do not have access to cell phones or the internet. Unplugging

freed up the mind to relax, to self-reflect, and to be at peace. You may even discover something about you that you never knew before. We pay thousands of dollars to go on vacation to "get away." To get away from what? Work? The office? Not really. It is to enjoy Mother Nature, to experience new food, learn about a different culture, and appreciate art. Take an hour a day to unplug yourself and enjoy your neighborhood, the beach, the park...trust me, the office will not burn down; the client is not going to substitute you out; and the defense counsel is not going to file any dispositive motion that needs to be dealt with in an hour.

Whether you enjoy doing Ironman races or playing baseball like I do, or simply like to take a leisurely stroll through the neighborhood, do it. Put it on your calendar to exercise. Exercise with a buddy who will keep you accountable. You don't need much. Fifteen to 30 minutes a day is better than none. The key is consistency. Personally, I have discovered great ideas or thought of a different approach to a thorny issue while riding my bicycle on PCH. There's something about how the mind is freed up when the heart is pumping and the endorphins are flowing.

As I pass the halfway mark of my life expectancy, I finally realized what the expression, "You are what you eat," means. It is so easy to eat out every day. There's no time for meal-prep. But you must make time for your health. As Warren Buffet said, "You only get one mind and one body. And it's got to last a lifetime. But if you don't take care of that mind and that body, they'll be a wreck 40 years later...it's what you do right now, today, that determines how your mind and body will operate 10, 20, and 30 years from now."

Lastly, it's okay to leave the office and be with family and friends. When we are on our death bed, we will never look back and wish we had worked an extra hour at the office. Rather, we all are going to wish that we spent more time with family and friends. So do it now. Make time for your loved ones.