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ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER

Proceedings to

CC **AAPI**

Cancer Concerns

Asian *for* Americans

& Pacific Islanders

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proceedings.

Cancer Concerns for
Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders

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tality rate for prostate cancer? Why? We have known that for more than 25 years, We are facing this cancer crisis, and I really do not see any attempt to address the problem with a real dollar investment.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) only spends a fraction of its \$14 billion annual budget on studies addressing the health disparities in minority America. What this says to me is that it is still a great deal of lip service in terms of money being placed where it should be. As the black football player, in the recent movie "Jerry Maguire" said, "Show me the money. Show me the money."...and then I will know that you are really sincere. Again, to me it is a matter of how one is valued.

Several years ago I chaired one of the American Cancer Society's Cancer and the Poor meetings. To stress how we value people of color and its role in health care, a young black woman responded in terms of her care, "They make me feel poor." That says it all!

I have commented a number of times on my experiences in Australia: the freedom just to be a human being, no more, no less. It was truly a surprise, given the history of racial intolerance in that country. However, as an Australian friend commented to, me, given the fact that they killed their indigenous population rather than dehumanizing them, once they no longer killed them it was easy for them to accept them as equal. Unfortunately, white America truly dehumanized the African American for over 300 years. Therefore, it is hard to see in general how America can really accept its African American population as equals or for their true worth.

How many of you can trace your families back to your country of origin? How many of you can trace your family to a city, town or village? Now, ask a well-educated African American the same question? He or she may tell you Africa, but where in Africa? What subgroup? Where from? East Africa? West Africa? Where? Where are those family stories of the struggle to get to America as if often heard from

other groups who have come to America?

Since the first African American arrived on these shores almost 400 years ago, African Americans have been promised much and received little. African Americans have been used as a sometimes scapegoat. They are often pitted against other groups of color, the divide and conquer program.

The first African American arrived as an indentured servant. Most people do not realize this fact. Unfortunately, they became enslaved for almost 300 years as a people. Upon their freedom, they were promised a mule and 40 acres. Well, I am still waiting for a mule and 40 acres.

The Supreme Court decision of "Brown vs. Topeka, Kansas" was quickly circumvented to allow us as a nation adjust to the change from separate and unequal too. It was thought that school systems needed time to adjust. It was almost nine years, 1963, after the decision, that the schools in my neighborhood were integrated or should I say the 12th grade. It took almost another decade before the entire school system was desegregated.

The disproportionate rates of cancer were well known in the African American community. However, it was only after a landmark paper published by Dr. Gerald Murphy and his colleagues at Roswell Park, indicating a disproportionate death rate among African Americans, did some in the nation begin to turn their attention to this health crisis. In 1979, Dr. LaSalle Leffall, Jr., became the first African American and the first person of color to become President of the American Cancer Society. At that time, he represented a handful of African Americans in the field of oncology. Today, those numbers are still shamefully small. To stress the number, I ask you to think of a prominent African American physician and/or cancer researcher with a national reputation without failing back to Dr. Leffall or Dr. Harold Freeman? How many others can you think of?

Remember my golden rule, he who has the gold makes the rules. If there are few African