**I’D LIKE TO SHARE MY THOUGHTS ON CURRENT EVENTS, BY GOING BACK IN TIME.**

**SOME ROTARIANS CAN CLEARLY RECALL WHAT ARE KNOWN AS THE 1968 RIOTS - A SERIES OF EVENTS BEGINNING IN APRIL OF THAT YEAR WHICH ENCOMPASSED THE ASSSASINATION OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING , THE BUILD UP OF TROOPS IN VIETNAM AND CARRIED THROUGH TO THE DEOMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION IN AUGUST.**

**EARLY 1968 SAW THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF US SOLDIER DEATHS DURING THE WAR.**

**IN 1969, THE ARTIST ROBERTA FLACK RELEASED THE SONG ‘TRYIN TIMES’ WRITTEN BY DONNY HATHAWAY AND LEROY HUSTON.**

**THE LYRICS EXPRESSED WHAT MANY WERE FEELING.**

**THE LYRICS BEGIN:**

**TRYING TIMES, WHAT THE WORLD IS TALKING ABOUT. YOU GOT CONFUSION, ALL OVER THE LAND.**

**YOU GOT MOTHER AGAINST DAUGHER, FATHER AGAINST SON, YOU KNOW THE WHOLE THING IS GETTING OUT OF HAND**

**MAYBE FOLKS WOULDN’T HAVE TO SUFFER**

**IF THERE WAS MORE LOVE FOR YOUR BROTHER**

**BUT THESE ARE TRYING TIMES’.**

**TODAY OUR COUNTRY HAS EXPERIENCED 8 DAYS OF CIVIL UNREST ON A SCALE NOT SEEN IN 52 YEARS.**

**THIS CRISIS IS OCCURING DURING THE FIRST PANDEMIC IN 100 YEARS. AND WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT.**

**THESE ARE TRYING TIMES.**

**HOWEVER, TODAY AS LOOK AT ALL OF YOU, I AM NOT CONFUSED. I COULD TALK ABOUT MAN’S INHUMANITY TO MAN. I COULD SHARE THE STORIES OF MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS. I COULD TELL YOU ABOUT THE MISTREATMENT OF PEOPLE OF COLOR INCLUDING ASIAN AMERICANS WHO HAVE BEEN VILIFIED, SHUNNED AND UNFAIRLY BLAMED FOR THE PANDEMIC. BUT THERE’S PLENTY OF EMPIRICAL DATA TO PROVIDE YOU WITH THESE STORIES.**

**WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN THIS MOMENT IS WHO WE ARE AS ROTARIANS.**

**AS ROTARIANS, WE ARE BOUND TOGETHER BY A COMMON SET OF VALUES – THE 4 WAY TEST . OF THE THINGS WE THINK SAY AND DO, IS IT THE TRUTH, IS IT FAIR TO ALL CONCERNED, WILL IT BUILD GOOD WILL AND BETTER FRIENDSHIPS, IS IT BENEFICIAL TO ALL CONCERNED?**

**WITH THE 4-WAY TEST, WE ARE NOT CONFUSED IN TRYING TIMES. WE KNOW WHAT TO DO. WE KNOW THAT DURING THIS TIME PEOPLE ARE HURTING – INCLUDING ROTARIANS. WE KNOW THAT THIS IS THE TIME TO USE OUR COLLECTIVE RESOURCES TO HELP OUR COMMUNITY, OUR NEIGHBORS AND TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE.**

**IN THE WORDS OF MR. ROGERS – “LOOK FOR THE HELPERS. YOU WILL ALWAYS FIND PEOPLE WHO ARE HELPING.”**

**ROTARIANS ARE HELPERS. EVERY DAY AND IN OUR DARKEST TIMES, ROTARIANS HAVE BEEN AND ARE HELPERS. WE ARE PEOPLE OF ACTION AND KNOW WHAT TO DO BECAUSE WE HAVE INHERITED A PROUD LEGACY OF HELPING. OUR INSTINCT AS ROTARIANS IS WRAP OUR ARMS AROUND THOSE WHO ARE IN PAIN AND TO CREATE ROTARY MAGIC TO SOLVE PROBLEMS IN OUR COMMUNITY AND AROUND THE WORLD. ROTARIANS HAVE LED ON CLEAN WATER, POLIO, MALARIA AND THIS CLUB IN PARTICULAR ON ADMITTING WOMEN TO ROTARY.**

**THAT’S WHY IT SHOULD BE NO SURPRISE TO YOU THAT WE ARE ALREADY DOING MUCH OF WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.**

**ON THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF SLAVES ARRIVING IN AMERICA, ROTARIANS WENT TO TOWN HALL TO LEARN ABOUT OUR SHARED HISTORY – THE DESCENDANTS OF SLAVE OWNERS AND THE DESCENDANTS OF SLAVES SAT WITH MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY TO LEARN HOW WE ARE INEXTRICABLY INTERTWINED. MANY PAST PRESIDENTS AND ESPECIALLY DOROTHY BULLIT HELPED MAKE THIS HAPPEN.**

**IN THIS TIME OF LOOTING AND DESTRUCTION, HUNDREDS OF RESIDENTS SHOWED UP IN CITIES AROUND THE COUNTRY INCLUDING HERE IN SEATTLE TO HELP CLEAN UP. THAT’S WHERE PAST PRESIDENT JIM MCCURDY AND HIS WIFE BROOKE MCURDY FOUND THEMSELVES LAST SUNDAY MORNING WITH BROOMS AND DUST PANS. MAYBE YOU WERE THERE, TOO.**

**OR HOW ABOUT ONE OF LIFE’S ESSENTIALS - FOOD - AND THE EXTRAORDINARY EFFORT BY BOTH THE SEATTLE ROTARY SERVICE FOUNDATION & THE ROTARY CLUB OF SEATTLE BOARD OF DIRECTORS PLUS SO MANY OF YOU WHO HELPED US GIVE MORE THAN $31K IN A FEW SHORT WEEKS TO PURCHASE FOOD FOR OUR NEIGHBORS.**

**AND NOW, TO THE ONE THING THAT MAKES A LOT OF PEOPLE NERVOUS - TALKING ABOUT RACE.**

**OUR PEACEBUILDERS COMMITTEE BEGAN HOLDING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE A LONG TIME AGO.**

**THIS IS THE WORK THAT IS THE HARDEST PART FOR MOST OF US. IF I COULD, I WOULD SHARE WITH YOU TEXTS FROM PEOPLE THIS WEEK WHO WROTE TO SAY THEY WERE HEARTBROKEN OR WERE CONCERNED FOR ME AND MY FAMILY. YOU WOULD SEE THAT SOMETIMES THE ACTUAL WORDS ARE NOT AS IMPORTANT AS MAKING THE EFFORT.**

**WE KNOW THAT ROTARY IS NOT PERFECT – SEATTLE #4 IS NOT PERFECT. CAN WE DO MORE? ABSOLUTELY. HOWEVER, JUST LIKE THOSE TEXTS I RECEIVED, WE ARE DOING THE WORK.**

**WE CARE ABOUT TRUTH AND FAIRNESS. WE BELIEVE IN GOODWILL AND FRIENDSHIP.**

**IN FACT THE MAJORITY OF OUR MEMBERS MOST HIGHLY VALUE OUR “FELLOWSHIP”, OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER ABOVE ANYTHING ELSE.**

**IF YOU HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING THE COVERAGE OF THE EXACT SPOT IN MINNEAPOLIS WHERE GEORGE FLOYD WAS KILLED, YOU HAVE SEEN THE EVOLUTION OF THOSE GATHERINGS WHERE NOW WHEN THE CITIZENS MEET EVERY DAY THEY ARE TALKING WITH ONE OTHER, LISTENING TO EACH OTHER, SHARING FOOD AND BEVERAGES – THE SAME ACTIVITIES IN ROTARY THAT WE CALL FELLOWSHIP.**

**HOPEFULLY YOU ARE PERSUADED THAT WE ARE THE HELPERS BECAUSE WE ARE ROTARIANS. WE KNOW WHAT TO DO. LET’S KEEP DOING IT.**

**AND NOW, I INVITE YOU TO HEAR FROM ROBERTA NESTAAS, CO=FOUNDING CHAIR OF PEACEBUILDERS COMMITTEE WHO WILL INTRODUCE ROTARIANS JANE TORNATORE AND HARRY SHORT TO SHARE WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED FROM TALKING ABOUT RACE.**

**THANK YOU ROBERTA, JANE AND HARRY FOR YOUR WORK AND YOUR COURAGE TODAY.**

**NOW BEFORE WE ADJOURN, A REMINDER TO WAIT JUST A MOMENT IF YOU’D LIKE MARIAH TO ASSIGN YOU TO A CHAT ROOM TO VISIT WITH YOUR FELLOW ROTARIANS. TODAY’S QUESTION FOR SEATTLE #4 AND ROTARIANS EVERYWHERE: WILL YOU JOIN THE CONVERSATION ABOUT RACE?**

**IN CLOSING – I’D LIKE TO SHARE THE END OF MAYA ANGELOU’S POEM TITLED “I RISE”:**

**LEAVING BEHIND NIGHTS OF TERROR AND FEAR**

**I RISE**

**INTO A DAYBREAK THAT’S WONDROUSLY CLEAR**

**I RISE**

**BRINGING THE GIFTS THAT MY ANCESTORS GAVE**

**I RISE**

**I AM THE DREAM AND THE HOPE OF THE SLAVE**

**I RISE, I RISE, I RISE!**