

## Kudos to “Coaches for Racial Equality”

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Californians for Equal Rights, January 5, 2022

<https://cferfoundation.org/kudos2cfre/>

*AUTHOR’S NOTE: The following letter was sent to Michael Brunker on November 3, 2021 congratulating him and Coaches for Racial Equality (CFRE) (1) for their role in trying to resolve a conflict between two San Diego High Schools (2). I encouraged future expansion of CFRE’s activities, offering suggestions. The letter is given verbatim here, altered only by the insertion of some links to background articles or videos. Brunker replied briefly but very positively, indicating the suggestions offered might be useful to the ongoing evolution of CFRE.*

Dear Michael,

To avoid ever-threatening potential charges of cultural appropriation I hope you have made it through the rough transition from haggis and Guinness to carnitas con nopales and Corona. Interesting tale you gave us in the SDUT the other day! (3) [Brunker recently had his DNA analyzed, and discovered he was not Sicilian and British as he had thought, but rather Sicilian and Mexican.]

We have never met but I came as a prof to SDSU 1970 well before you were there as a basketball coach -- and I'm still harassing administrators and other worthies there as an emeritus prof, since 2006.

Having watched the video of your retirement farewell from the Jackie Robinson YMCA (4) as well as that of you moderating the Oct 27 Zoom conference (5) of Coaches for Racial Equality (CFRE), I think I have gotten a good measure of the man -- and even his DNA.

During my lifetime it has been painful to see how we've frittered away the promise of the 1960s civil rights laws. We've gone backwards in so many ways and for so many (poor) reasons. Though my academic specialties are primarily ecology and the environmental sciences, I've been active, mostly as a writer and policy advocate, on issues of civil rights and racial discrimination both in academia and in society at large, especially over the last thirty years or so.

I was impressed by the Oct 27 Zoom conference, how it was structured and moderated in a way that made it comfortable for a diverse group of people to talk openly about difficult issues. "Live long and prosper," I say to CFRE!

Coaches and sports teams at the high school level have so much potential to have wide and positive impacts on the larger society. The reason seems obvious and simple though I have never seen it stated anywhere: **as a result of residential segregation, interscholastic high school sports often bring into close, "coach-supervised combat" groups of often different racial, social, and economic backgrounds. Emotions can be high, physical contact is often the norm, there are temptations to break "gentlemen's rules," and the kids are full of hormones.**

It is amazing that high school coaches survive! They sometimes confront volatile situations of a sort that college and professional level coaches, or classroom teachers at any level, rarely have to deal with. Thus those coaches who do survive develop a special sort of "smarts" that puts them in an excellent position to instill positive values in their players and, through them, many others.

Why do I sense that I am saying something that you knew 40 years ago?!

**I say all this just to emphasize my belief that high school coaches collectively should see themselves as well positioned to play even larger, more positive and more central roles in the education and socialization of students than they do now.** Organizations like CFRE would be key. One could also even argue for expanding the number of sports supported by interscholastic programs and foundations in their leagues, just to have more coaches in schools.

Anyway, let me wrap this up with just a few more **uninvited and non-expert** opinions for CFRE, if you'd like to pass these on to its other leaders:

- 1) **Stay grassroots** and stay focused and stay independent of other authorities. Learn more and then trust your instincts. You don't need any advice from politicized school or university DEI bureaucrats, NGOs or companies selling "diversity" training, etc.
- 2) **Keep membership restricted to coaches**, assistant coaches, athletic directors, etc., but put online videos of your major meetings and discussions.
- 3) **Grow**, but perhaps keep it restricted to SD County coaches until you get your "sea legs"
- 4) **Develop a permanent distrust of the mainline media**, its biases, and its penchant for inflaming the public to sell copy or to sell politicians. Some of the participants in the Oct 27 meeting brought up the tragic case of George Floyd. So a good first exercise might be to compare the known facts of that case with the shoot-from-the-hip claims of many newspapers and pundits. ... Through his players, an informed coach could do wonders for his whole school when such events happen and biased, unethical journalists are going wild. A coach is likely to have more courage for such work than an administrator or classroom teacher, right? (My personal opinion on the Chauvin trial, based on having listened to a large percentage of the testimony, having read the different autopsy reports, and seen all the videos?: Chauvin showed fatally bad judgment, but did not intend to kill Floyd, was not motivated by racism, and would have gotten a less severe punishment if Floyd had been white. Many black writers who've taken a hard look at the evidence seem to agree. Imagine if an entire, highly multiracial CFRE was agile enough to jump quickly into such situations and put out fact-based press releases more accurate than the standard news articles... Right, I agree, not in your job description, but ....)
- 5) **Periodically select a key book to read and then discuss in a Zoom meeting** for the purpose of both educating CFRE members on issues of race and developing a common culture within CFRE. At one venue you suggested Martin Luther King Jr's speech, "[Facing the Challenge of a New Age](#)" (6). Beyond that, how to choose?

It is inevitably a subjective, political decision. But I would argue for going with three very different black authors. These have in common only that all are champions of MLK Jr's ideas, all had rough childhoods in the age of Jim Crow, and all oppose the currently fashionable (in colleges, universities and teachers' unions, not so much elsewhere) but destructive idea that "group equity" should trump "equal rights under the law based on individual merit." Thus my

uninvited and impertinent recommendations would be some books written prior to current controversies:

- "[The Quest for Cosmic Justice](#)," by Thomas Sowell, 1999
- "[From Rage to Responsibility](#)," by Rev. Jesse Lee Peterson, 2000
- "[Creating Equal: My Fight Against Racial Preferences](#)," by Ward Connerly, 2002

Apologies for suggesting more tasks not in coaches' job descriptions. But let's hope they can *carpe diem*, man up, and become an even greater force for good!

Sincerely,  
Stuart Hurlbert

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#### REFERENCES

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