

Generations

by Sheila A. Johnson

In this time of uncertainty and rapid change, it gives me joy and peace when I allow my mind to retreat in time and usher in childhood memories and experiences on my journey from “child” to “teen” to “adult.” The cliché, “The Good Old Days,” speaks for it all because there were times, places, and events that I feel were much better than they are now.

For instance, there was a time when the cost of basic living necessities was affordable. There were days *and* nights when my family and neighbors were not afraid to leave our doors unlocked. There were clerks who took your word that you would return the next day and pay the balance of your grocery bill — and you did. If one or both of your parents lost their jobs, your family simply moved in with relatives or close friends until they found jobs. There were weekends and after hours when the owner of the local dry cleaners would make a special trip to open their doors because you or your parents forgot to pick up your suit or prom dress or any special occasion garment. Walking home from the movies after dark didn’t pose a threat. When you made a promise, you gave that person a piece of your heart. If you broke your promise, it was like shooting them *and* yourself in the heart. Children, for the most part, could feel “safe” being alone with adults. Respect, morality, manners, and cleanliness were codes of honor. Those were the Days Gone By.

As we live and breathe, you and I are designing and becoming the blueprints of future Days Gone By for our progeny by the way we live our lives. In the days to come, our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren will ask, “Why do we have to drink only ‘distilled’ water?” “Where are all of the forests that we learned about in school?” “Was there a time when people could breathe clean air without wearing a mask?” They will wonder why God didn’t provide enough livable landmass. They won’t understand why there are so many fires all over the world. They will wonder why we allowed children to be separated from their parents and live behind fences and in unsanitary conditions. They will ask about the people who crowd the streets with seemingly no place to lay their heads down and sleep. My grandchildren and great grandchildren will ask their parents if I participated in the Black Lives Matter protests, and “Did it make a difference when it comes to living with racism?” Everyone will want to know why we didn’t work harder for human rights and a cleaner earth. They will scorn our greed and our undisciplined need to be first in everything while ignoring the last and least in everything, as they too move into the Days Gone By.