



A Pledge For The People of Ferguson Missouri And Everyone Else

By

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I don't know, maybe I was in the fourth or fifth grade when I was told there are three necessary elements to start a fire — heat, fuel and oxygen.

Since August of 2014, I began to think about the possible events that were likely to happen in Ferguson Missouri. To me, *Violence is a communication about a lack of communication.*

I have witnessed close and personal the impact of violence on people, places and dreams. Since the mid-1960s I attended riots, student demonstrations and plain old fashion protests as an official observer for State and Federal Government. During the days of the student demonstration at San Francisco State College, I worked in the president's office under S. I. Hayakawa.

I was young, and felt the excitement of all those who shouted for justice. Gosh, it was powerful stuff in those days as it is today. I saw the faces close up filled with torment, trauma and dedication. It was hard to observe and not to participate, on some level.

I was scooped up along with 445 alleged other "lawbreakers". I was in fact, arrested, adjudicated and later released.

What is going on in Ferguson Missouri is as old as soap. Sure, racism is alive and well in America. It exists on all three human levels: intra-psychic, psychophysiological and interpersonal. The first level intra-psychic, relates to our thinking about our thinking. In other words, how we process information within our own mind on both conscious and unconscious level.

The most important factor is whether we have a two valued or multivalued orientation, when we look at people who are different than us.

The two-valued orientation presents a world that is seen as black-and-white, right or wrong, good or bad. This myopic perspective provides information that's the good news. The bad news is that it leaves out the truth of most of our life's experience. Few things are either black or white, good or bad. Most things in life exist in the shadows of a true black-and-white.

When we discover this reality we become curious about people who are different than us. It becomes natural to make inquiries to explore and to try to understand differences in others.

So how does this relate to the uproar going on currently in Ferguson Missouri? Simple. In order to create a fire you have to have fuel. By definition, that is a pre-existing condition. Something has to be there that could cause an ignition, and explosion.

Some would argue that the conditions in Missouri have existed for a long time, making it capable to have an ignition or explosion when the other key factors are present. Apparently, it was there all along. *Distressed is the most important fuel with in and between people!*

Fuel - in this situation fuel equals assumptions. It is the accumulation of faulty beliefs that lead us to "warehouse" ideas, and inferences about others which are under scrutiny and factually incorrect. Those ideas exist about individuals, groups, minorities, and national origins.

Heat, is generated by the friction between people who do not listen or try to listen or understand those people who are different from ourselves. When we look at people, and see that they have more or less, and deserve more or less than we do, we are making a judgment. That ultimately creates a kind of heat or friction between us and them.

Oxygen, the words we speak ride on the oxygen in our lungs. Those words reflect our thinking, how we are feeling, and our intentions regarding our feelings. They are designed to influence others, and their views of the world. They are our attempt to create in others the world we feel, and sometimes fear, within ourselves.

There is one device that encompasses all of these capacities. It is a television camera, capturing images and reporting them in a way that proves the point and not raises a question. A camera focusing on a closed mind, with the technical capacity to speaking to the world, can be as lethal as a gun discharged by the officer who was co-creator of the mess that we have witnessed in Missouri for months.

But clearly it is not the camera. It is those who define the images that the camera sees and collects. It is those who tell people what they *want to hear*. Or what they *should hear*, if they listen correctly. It is those who fan the flames of fear, anxiety, hatred and misunderstanding that are pitting American against Americans.

Few will doubt that we are in serious trouble nationally and internationally. Let us remember the words said by John Dickinson in his revolutionary war song *The Liberty Song*. In the song, first published in the Boston Gazette in July 1768, he wrote:

“Then join hand in hand, brave Americans all! By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall!”

Many of us know the American Pledge of Allegiance:

‘I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.’

My dear departed friend, Dr. Bill Pemberton, had the audacity to modify those words as a General Semanticist would. He said it this way:

“I pledge of allegiance to all man/woman kind, and to those principles which will unit us, one world, unified, yet diversified, with justice and understanding for all.”

I prayed this pledge permeates the people of Ferguson and all of our citizens, not just in America, but around the world.

Let it be so.

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