



PEOPLE TRAPPED IN ECONOMIC DISPARITY ARE USUALLY SELECTED FOR ENHANCED SCRUTINY

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Based on the suggested theme for this Conference, and the Title of this Paper, it will be based mainly on the Empirical Data collected over the years; spent on my Education in Science (Medical Microbiology & Chemistry) and Business (International Business: Management & Marketing) both in the developed and developing worlds; and also, my Corporate Experience: both Technological & Managerial (Quality Control Manager) in the Pharmaceutical Industry in both worlds, and in Hospital Administration in New York. Also in Academia: as a Faculty Member at Dowling College for thirty-three years, and as an Advisor of students at the Graduate and Undergraduate levels, and with Internships & Theses. Also, as a Co-Founder and Faculty Advisor since 1984, of the Dowling College Delta Pi Chapter of Delta Mu Delta, the International Honor Society for students of Business Administration. In addition, I was appointed by Dowling's Board of Trustees, to represent Dowling College as a Board Member of the Oakdale Chamber of Commerce. I was also a Member of the Board of Trustees at Briarcliffe College, N.Y., and Chair of its Academic Standards Committee - both for twenty-two years. Even as a Teenager and over the years, in both worlds, I have been teaching the Religious Education classes at different levels.

I would like to start by congratulating the person or Group that decided on the theme for this Conference: Freedom, Liberty and Humanity in a world of Socio-Economic Disparity. These words are indeed so very appropriate for the situation in which we find ourselves today. In reality, we should not be surprised, as it is indeed not uncommon at all to note that so many of us worship at the altar of the Almighty Dollar, even though we profess,



by and large, to be Judeo-Christians; and the world is well aware of our religious affiliations. This contradiction is indeed confusing. We are all aware that today, our elections are up for sale. It is considered perfectly legal for extremely wealthy people, mainly billionaires, to pour dollars by the hundreds of millions, into the election coffers of their select Party. Even though we are all aware of this, it appears that nothing can be done. The Supreme Court is well aware of this sad state of affairs, but it appears it can do nothing to put an end to this unreasonable, and seemingly unethical state of affairs. Is this the modus operandi of Democratic Elections in the United States of America, the Leader of the Free World? How can we pontificate to the rest of the world on issues of Ethics and Good Management Practices? Financial strength appears to stand for Power and Influence, and the only sure road to success in most situations. Have we forgotten the very important issues: Liberty and Humanity for the less fortunate, who do not have a Financial Fairy Godfather? The importance of Financial Power and strength, be it personal or political, given by individuals who have their own axe to grind for each dollar they donate seems to be a way of life for some, with their endless donations to the Party they know they can, and will influence to establish an important impact on future Political Decisions. As a result, the other Party and its people who are not the recipients of the endless donations given with ulterior motives, find themselves in a Position of Disadvantage, all through the Election Process; and the tenure of that soon- to-be-elected Party that could [?] be elected with the tainted donated dollars. If money is to be the only deciding factor now, in our Political Elections, God help the future of our Country and our Democracy! We are well aware of what those People with Ill-gotten Power have done: making several attempts to alter the established territorial limits and laws established half a century ago. Things that are said and done by Politicians, not in their Party, are subject to unnecessary scrutiny and are considered for rejection.

Humanity, Liberty and Freedom are no longer considered as being essential.

The persons who live here illegally, are marked for deportation; while their children who are born here, and who are ipso facto U.S. citizens, are expected to stay here. Is it human to separate children from their parents, only to adhere to the letter of the law? Those living here illegally, have no voice, even if they are the only witness to crimes. They are afraid they will be deported and/or lose their jobs. It is the President who is anxious to consider



the Humanity factor in their lives, by stating that they have the opportunity to become citizens in time, if: they have lived here for a stipulated duration, pay their back taxes and learn the English language. This seems fair; but the party with the tainted donated dollars, opposes this; just to please their Masters; and the so *status quo* persists.

As we look down the corridor of time, we note instances of disparate treatment, based mainly on socio-economic disparity, in all walks of life. Any attempt to enumerate instances will always result in the omission of a very large segment of society.

Unfortunately, Economic Disparity is visible almost everywhere. In most countries, ours in particular, the number of billionaires is rapidly increasing, and as a result, the gap between the Haves and the Have-nots is increasing too. The rich are getting richer; while the poor are sliding down the abyss of poverty. Whatever be the rationale, people holding positions of authority; our elected officials included; regularly vote for their large increases in salary; but they steadfastly stick to their principle that the minimum wage of subordinates should not be raised. The rationale given makes no sense at all: How can a business be hurt financially with the suggested small increases in the minimum wage; and not be affected at all with the large salary increases of the people in powerful positions? Unfortunately, we find ourselves faced with purchased political elections, fighting the proverbial uphill battle that we know we can't avoid.

An incident that occurred rather recently at the marriage celebrations of the children of two diamond merchants, gives us a graphic picture: The wedding guests received as Bridal Favors, diamond studded: tie clips / pendants. Outside the area of the festivities, the poor Company Workers were marching in protest, for an increase in their meager wages - which were very low: way below the minimum wage level of that developing country. Surely one sees this as an example of Sins that cry to Heaven for Vengeance! Often we note that people who constantly crave the collection and accumulation of cash, think more of the Short Term vs. the Long Term. [Today's vs. the Hereafter].

The vast majority, steeped in poverty, find it very hard to exist. As a result, complacency and feelings of being depressed in spirit, is what is experienced. The children reflect the feelings of their Parents. The only schools to which they can send their children, are the ones in their community, that are way below the academic standards of the schools in the



better, more affluent localities. [Obviously the quality of the teaching staff and others selected, are also based on the lower standards]. Most of the students attending those local schools, tend to be below average, and many end up as high school drop-outs. Some turn to Gang membership, making things worse for themselves and their families. The Parents live in constant fear that in any unusual situation, these children will be blamed by the local authorities; even if they are innocent. How often are we reading and hearing of unarmed Black young men shot and killed by the very people who are expected to protect them! The more affluent and better dressed kids will always get the benefit in any situation. Is there a way out? Certainly. Hard work, good study habits, good grades, taking on the initiative and applying for scholarships and internships; and also, enlisting in programs for tutoring problem students. These good students are all bound to make an impression on the teachers and administrators in the institution..

Hardworking, exceptional students will always win in the end. Students accepted for higher studies will result in obtaining a College education. The result? Those individuals will be among the first persons in their family with a College Degree. Unusual individuals always tend to make an impression on people. This admiration will result in emulation, and gradually, the academic and other standards will improve for their own Family and also, the Community in which they live. Recognition of the need for effort, constant hard work, diligence and the intelligence of individuals, often results in successfully escaping the original ambience; and slowly moving up in society.

We are aware that when much is given, much is expected of us; so we realize that we are expected to help those in need, rather than curse the consuming darkness. Automatically we think of Bill Gates, Sr. & Jr. and Melinda and Warren Buffet and the many Americans in different settings, who are helping the poor and disadvantaged in different ways and in different countries. They remember that it has been said, *“Whatsoever you do to the least of My brothers, that you do unto Me”*.

At this point I recall the words that have made a major impression on me, growing up:

“Life is only worth living, so long as there is a wrong to right,

Wail of the weak against the strong, and tyranny to fight.”



Bill Gates et al have really understood the true meaning of these words; they live by them.

Whereas every word in our assigned theme is very important; surprisingly, I find that it is the Humanity component that seems to have taken center stage in the last decade. This brings us to another issue: Economic Disparity does not stand alone. There are other issues too that have almost the same, or even a worse, negative impact on people. However, in this other group, there is almost no way out.

Academically, we are aware that there exist certain other groups of people who have been constantly subject to discrimination. This selected set of people are referred to as belonging to the Protected Groups, mainly because of the many examples of past hatred and discrimination that calls for our sympathy, attention and protection. Those select groups are based on many issues; mainly the Color of one's Skin: the issue being Race. Other issues that deserve special mention here are: Religion, Gender, National Origin, Age, Physical Disabilities, and Sexual Orientation. There is almost NO escape from these groups. In the books we certainly have laws to protect persons who fall into these categories. However, the Humanity issue is sadly ignored. Half a century has not helped some people erase the built-in Prejudice so prevalent in our Society. The young Baptist Preacher, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his enthusiastic followers suffered excruciating pain and torture, prior to, and during the March that started in Selma. Because of the inhuman treatment they endured, that day has been named Bloody Sunday. President LBJ hoped to end this crime against Humanity, by passing the Human Rights and the Right to Vote Bills – both passed as Bi-Partisan Bills. Later, both Bills were endorsed by Presidents of both parties; and yet some lawmakers today are making every effort to ignore and alter those laws.

Six years ago Americans voted to elect Barack Obama, a Black African-American individual, as President of the United States of America. The World believed that we Americans had finally overcome that cancer of prejudice: They believed that we have finally accepted a person as President, who is not White. That is so far from reality. Many who describe themselves as True Americans, happen to be White. Some of them, and others too, did their very best to discredit him; saying he was NOT born in America, and so could NOT be our President. They insisted on obtaining a copy of his Birth Certificate.



That should have put an end to that specific question. Not content, they came up with another issue: they said that he is not a Christian. Well, that issue died a natural death because of his obvious Christian beliefs and practices. The next step was to stoop very low - way below the Humanity line of tolerance: They came up with nasty insulting statements, cartoons, emails and the use of every form of communication, to insult our very intelligent President Obama. People, especially our elected officials, have totally different standards when they address and assess him.

They make every effort to evaluate and misconstrue his every action. These individuals, be they our elected officials or regular Americans, fail to realize that their children and young interns are watching their every action. They seem to have forgotten that “the minds of Young People are like wax to receive and like bronze to retain”. Little wonder then, that we see today, groups of young people leaving the security of family and home, to join ISIS. If we want to trace the etiology of this scary situation, all we have to do, is Look at the face in our mirror. Yes, it is we who are showing them, by our words and actions, that we have no respect at all for Authority – our President; so why should they respect us? It is almost a forgone conclusion that the children and also the grandchildren of these crazy parents, will, sooner or later, be found in the ISIS camps. Scary, isn't it? So we must make up our minds NOW to make every effort to respect Authority- all persons in Authority. Hurry! Before it is too late!!! One, rather responsible individual recently stated that our President is “in no way like us; he was not brought up like us”. I would like to respond to that person, that I, and most of us, were not brought up like he was: to ignore the teachings of the Church to which we belong, and to have more than two wives; one brought to the house, even in the presence of his then present wife and his young children! President Obama, on the other hand, is a good example of a very devoted Family man.

The many criticisms of the physical appearance of our President and others of his race, imply that those critics seem to have forgotten that we humans are all created in the likeness of the Lord; and we are certainly aware that the Lord does not create people whose appearance we dare to criticize. Is anyone sure that their present appearance will not change – and not improve at all? Every time we say stupid things about a person's appearance, do we realize that we are criticizing the handiwork of the Lord? Also, when



Jesus came down to this earth, He was born in the Middle East, where the vast majority of the people are not Caucasians. Each culture has its standards. [Are we aware that in some cultures, a very dark skin color is an indication of Royal heritage?]; and it is only ignorance that prompts people to criticize those individuals who appear to be different from the people of their culture. I had made a similar statement in one of my International Business Management classes. A few months ago I received a beautiful letter from a former student, who said that those words have stayed in his memory, and that he sees the veracity of those words in the tiny minds of some people. He is now very successful in his position at work. He ends the letter thanking me again for the advice that has helped him over the years. Every time we are tempted to criticize anyone, we must realize that whereas we find fault with him/her; that person too must most certainly think that we are indeed the odd creatures.

A variant of a poem I read in School, decades ago, comes to mind:

In speaking of another's flaws, pray don't forget your own;

Remember, those in homes of glass, should seldom throw a stone.

Some may have flaws; and who has none; the old as well as young?

Perhaps we may, for all we know, have fifty to their one!

True it is, that we can, with much effort, alter our Economic status. It is indeed the status of people in the Protected Groups that cannot be altered. As stated earlier, we have laws in the books; but those laws seem to lack the desired tenacity, and hence credibility is diminished. People keep on breaking those laws, with no negative consequence at all; with absolutely no regard for the consequences of the Humanity aspect of their actions. Restated here for emphasis, is that the Protected Group includes: Race, Religion, Gender, National Origin, Age, Physical Disability and Sexual Orientation. We must agree that whereas we can move out of our Economic status, usually with a great deal of planned individual effort; but we are almost permanent residents of our status in the Protected Group in which we find ourselves.

Historically, we have many incidents in which race and religion have been wrongly used as the criteria for discrimination: for torture or killing. Today, Isis is losing no time killing



Christians and those they label as their non-believers of Islam. Isis is trying very hard to entice and recruit local western young people as future recruiters; as Isis realizes that with them, Isis will have an easier entry into our territories. This effort seems to work for them. They entice our youth with cash; starting with free expensive airline tickets to their countries in which their training occurs. Isis has succeeded in making inroads in College campuses, resulting in the recruiting of students there. Those who find that a college education is beyond their financial reach, are fascinated with these free flight offerings. It also saves them the effort of looking for a real position in the workforce. They believe this lucrative lifestyle offered, is just what they would like. Isis seems to have researched the situation well. They have realized that it will be more to their advantage to recruit the future recruiters: young American/Canadian/Australian and European/ girls and boys to do their recruiting for them. The objective being to add a touch of local authenticity and thus greatly reduce the suspicion of their involvement.

In an attempt at overcoming this sad and dangerous situation, we, as a group of Americans, Canadians, Australians and Europeans, must work as a Combined Team; each with its specific needs and solutions. In America we must concentrate on improving our communications with the young people who certainly need our attention. [With both parents working, there seems to be very little or no time at all, to spend with their young ones. I remember students tell me that they were brought up by themselves.] I knew exactly what they meant. They need attention; they also need well-paying jobs and specific training for those jobs. Our infrastructure is badly in need of repair. That alone will provide the need for construction workers with specific training. What is also essential, is Community involvement, with an aim at closing the generation gap. It is up to us to make these young people feel wanted, and that they are an integral part of our society. If we make an effort to pay attention to these stated issues, we will certainly improve the lives of our young girls and boys; and we must also make it a point to see that they are satisfied and happy at home. Then only will we be sure that they will not even think or talk about joining Isis, or any other group. Years later, they will think back about this present problem, and almost believe that it never occurred.

I cannot end without stating that over the years I have often experienced and been a victim of the Gender, and more frequently, in recent years, the issue of National Origin.