



Dr. Martin Luther King And The "Global Challenge"

By Ron Ennis

Dr. King was urging us to think and act globally by saying, "Our loyalties must transcend our race, our class, and our nation; and means we must develop a world perspective."

Today, even with the perception of unparalleled prosperity as shown on TV and in our media, human life as Dr. King envisioned it is threatened by the mergers, acquisitions, and relentless growth of transnational corporations which measure success in money, not in service to human kind.

The consequence of this economic growth are not good for either our environment nor for the betterment of human beings as envisioned by Dr. King. A recent study by the United Nations characterized the world-wide economic growth as "ruthless", "futureless", "rootless" and "voiceless".

"Ruthless growth" is forcing close to 2.4 billion people to live in poverty while 358 individual billionaires enjoy a combined income equal to these 2.4 billion people. The income gap between rich and poor has grown 100% over the past 20 years with the richest 20% now receiving over 83% of the world's income, compared to the poorest 20% receiving 1.4%.

"Futureless growth" has resulted in the decline of every major living system on earth, our oceans, our fresh water, our air, our forests, our soil, and most wild life.

"Rootless growth" refers to the destruction of cultures in our neighborhoods and small towns as well as replacing centuries old local cultures with hedonism, crass materialism, destructive competitiveness, and egotism.

"Voiceless growth" is economic growth devoid of respect for human rights and democratic processes essential to society.

To this we might add "Meaningless growth" when these unhealthy forms of growth result in a loss of creativity, perspective, meaning, hope



and morality which then expresses itself in suicide, violence, drug addiction, crime and other hideous deeds.

Not exactly what Dr. King had in mind, but nevertheless prophesied: "Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Not all transnational corporations are consciously or unconsciously exploiting human beings and the environment. The winds of change are out there. Many small businesses and more and more transnationals are adopting what might be called "socially and environmentally responsible" business practices. Specifically they are looking to measure their performance by multiple "bottom lines" adding employee needs, customer needs, community needs and environmental needs to the financial need measure. When these measures are taken seriously, companies do what they should do, serve the needs of humanity without exploitation of people or the environment.

But, as Dr. King so often said, the main hope is with us, the people. Our answer lies in building local community to reduce dependence on transnational corporations. We can

Turn off the television. Protect our children from the constant bombardment of violence, greed, hate and materialism which is everywhere on television.

Join the "simplicity movement": consciously purchasing only what we truly need, buying only items which are recyclable and/or organic, and/or asking sales people if they know if making and distributing the product involved exploitation of people or the environment.

Buy local and organize community buying. Buy items collectively with neighbors or colleagues or join an existing cooperative. Shop stores with local sourcing. Ask questions.

Build community by volunteering in local community programs and churches.

For inspiration, we can again turn to Dr. King:

"Can a nonviolent, direct-action movement find application on the international level, to confront economic and political problems? I believe it can." And further: "I have the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice. Consequently, the believer in nonviolence has deep faith in the future."

By Brad Smith

Martin Luther King advocated nonviolence as a way of life, so did Mahatma Gandhi. I have found that violence occurs at many levels in our lives. In the pursuit of profits or just a better income, business managers and individual employees may often let go of their integrity, momentarily. I believe dishonesty and a lack of integrity are subtle, very costly forms of violence. Living your life in complete honesty, truth, integrity and love as a way of doing business is a daily act of courage and is the highest form of nonviolence one can achieve.

Many of us have spent time gauging an outward effect of a lie. Whether the end we want will be better achieved with words of truth or not or whether we will feel shame and guilt. Few of us look internally at what the lapse of self-caring that

allows a lie to do with our internal relationship with ourselves. What is lost in that sort of internal violence is self.

As managers in business, we allow subtle violent environments. Whether it is a sexual harassment, discrimination, negative attitudes or even ignoring good ideas to foster our own careers, violence of this sort is self limiting and destructive. It limits creativity, vision, trust, teamwork, and ultimately profits.

Many of us have worked in business where voicing a negative attitude was a continual event. How many of us did our very best work there? Were you excited about going to work each day because that environment fostered your highest creativity and willingness to participate?

In my coaching, I ask clients to look at their external surroundings as an expression of their internal

relationship with themselves. I ask them to view the violence they experience, however subtle, as a reflection of the belief systems they hold. If they are the victims of violence, do they hold a victim belief about themselves or are they victimizers or both? I work with them to grow their skill for external and internal honesty. My successful clients develop their skill for creating their life events from self-caring and self-love.

It is possible to build a business and a life on the basis of nonviolence that holds integrity, dignity, honesty, creativity and respect for the individual as the only acceptable foundation for each decision made. Look at what it takes for an individual to flourish, expand that to customer relations, marketing and business and you will find in that very subtle nonviolence a synergism that grows profits beyond your expectations.



"We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation."



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Multnomah County, Metro, the City of Portland and Port of Portland are committed to achieving greater economic and social equity in our contracting and procurement processes.

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