

“Intolerance of Intolerance” Diversity Awareness Corner



Beyond This Place... There Be Dragons!

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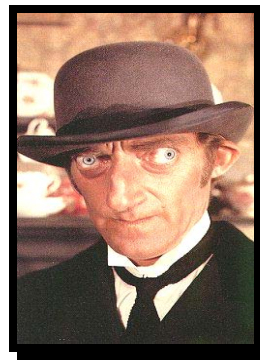
Bigotry of Good People? Nahhhhh...

Much ado has been made over the last several years surrounding the need for “Diversity.” We confuse diversity with Affirmative Action. I also hear from clients,

“Oh, we don’t need a diversity program. We don’t employ that many blacks.”

However, “Diversity” is a VERY simple concept:

**DIVERSITY:
Is ANYTHING That Makes You Different.**



Who Would You Hire?

HOWEVER...DIVERSITY IS RARELY THE PROBLEM.

It is extremely rare to have someone stand up and say:

- ❖ **“We have too many Jews around here!**
- ❖ **“Why can’t we get rid of some of these women?”**
- ❖ **“I won’t hire blacks.”**

These problems certainly exist. However, the problem is not a diversity problem. Instead, it is a TOLERANCE problem.

WHAT IS ...

TOLERANCE?

“Tolerance” is not persecuting those who are different from you.

“Authoritarian” and **“egocentric”** systems practice **“intolerance.”**

“Tolerance” carries with it the understanding that **“intolerance”** and requiring conformity breeds **violence** and **social instability**. **“Tolerance”** has thus become the term of choice to define the practical rationale of permitting diversity. While people deemed undesirable may be disapproved of, **“tolerance”** would require that the party or group in question be left undisturbed, physically or otherwise, and that criticism directed toward them be free of inflammatory or inciteful efforts.

Are WE Tolerant People?

Do We Allow Others To Disagree With Us?

Do We Allow Others To Be Different From Us?

Or ...

**Do We ONLY Want Diversity WHEN
THE DIFFERENCES OF OTHERS
ARE JUST LIKE US?**

In early November 2005, I conducted a “Diversity” training session, “**Management v. Labor: Diversity in the Workplace**” for a public service organization in the Dayton, Ohio area. As part of this program, I used this statement cited below from Bill Bennett to illustrate the point that even the most educated among us make bigoted statements. I also included bigoted comments from James Watt, former Secretary of the Interior, Lawrence Summers, President of Harvard University, and former L.A. Police Chief Daryl Gates.



Bill Bennett

On his “Morning In America Radio Show” aired by the Salem Radio Network, Bill Bennett said to a caller:

“If you wanted to reduce the crime rate...[Y]ou could abort every black baby in this country ... and your crime rate would go down.”

One attendee became **VERY** upset regarding my use of Bill Bennett’s quote. She interrupted the session and openly accused me of playing politics with my presentation and taking Mr. Bennett’s comments out of context.

“That is **NOT** what he said,” several attendees chimed in.

“You edited that quote so he would look like a bigot,” others said. “Why did you put ellipses in the quote and take out parts? You must be distorting the truth!”

I could see the foam starting to form around their mouths as their teeth grew longer and their claws began to protrude. I swore I could hear the “spark” of someone in the back lighting a torch and the “clang” of pitchforks being distributed. I had committed a cardinal sin: I had upset a bunch of middle-aged white people. I was accused of being a liberal Democrat who was attacking a great Republican.

(I actually thought that was ironic, since just a few months before I was accused of being a conservative Republican by Democrats.)

So, just to make sure we are all on the same page as to what was said, here is the entire quote:

FULL QUOTE

BENNETT: But I do know that it's true that if you wanted to reduce crime, you could -- if that were your sole purpose, you could abort every black baby in this country, and your crime rate would go down. That would be an impossible, ridiculous, and morally reprehensible thing to do, but your crime rate would go down.

(The last time I checked, the number one factor influencing crime in this country was actually socio-economic...**NOT** race.) (source: FBI "Uniform Crime Rates: 2004")

If you want to hear this statement with your own ears, just go to the following web link.

<http://clips.mediamatters.org/static/audio/bennett-200509280006.mp3>

Four or five employees were able to derail the entire session...and the "good people" of the organization never said a word, even though the "good people" of the organization, many of whom were either black or African America, said nothing.

I have run into this situation SEVERAL times in the last few years all across the country and into Canada. Last year, I was addressing a group of employees for a large national organization. We discussed whether or not we are a "tolerant" people. We discussed the tolerance we need to have between men and women...between older people and younger people, and so on.

We discussed how intolerant some people could be, such as some Muslims, some Jewish people and so on. However... when I suggested that some *Christians* were just like everyone else and that **WE** had tolerance issues of our own, once again, I could hear the torches being lit in the back of the room and the pitch forks clanging together.

As long as I was discussing how important it was for **OTHERS** to be tolerant ... I was a hero. But as soon as I suggested that we look at ourselves, I was labeled a "heretic" and non-believer. Interestingly, it was the Diversity Committee who was most upset over my heresy.

By the end of the week, I had received about two or three hate emails and death threats from some of these employees. (I think they take off their "WWJD" bracelets when they send these emails.)

This particular facility employed over 400 people. A handful of employees were "offended" ... maybe five or six who spoke up. Yet, management "bowed" to the intolerance of the few at the expense of the silent majority. The leadership was so afraid of upsetting **anyone** that the intolerance was allowed to stand and prevail.

Oh, yes! Rule #1 as a leader:

NEVER UPSET ANYONE!

I found it interesting that this is the same employer who had just settled a civil rights lawsuit over racial issues earlier that year for over \$2 million dollars. I cannot understand why they would have these types of racial issues when the leadership and rank-and-file employees are so “tolerant”? (MUCH sarcasm goes here.)

Isn't that the way it goes? A few small minded bigoted individuals “rule the roost” because the good employees stand by and do nothing. Isn't that how the 5% “crazy” bigots of the world can rule the world?

This concept is alive and well in Toledo, Ohio...much to the advantage of the Nazis. In October of 2005, some Toledoans feared the blacks who lived near them. They did not feel the Toledo Police were effective in “dealing with our black problem,” so they did the next most logical thing:

They INVITED the Nazis into their neighborhood to help “control” their black neighbors.

The Nazis arrived and, of course, violence erupted throughout these neighborhoods. In November of 2005, the Nazis announced that they would make another visit to Toledo in order to help the white people of this area resolve their so-called “black problem.”

(Oh, yeah! Whenever I have a problem, the **FIRST** people I think to call are the local NAZIs.)
(*sarcasm goes here...*)

Martin Luther King, Jr. was absolutely correct when he said:

There is nothing more dangerous to a society than a group of people within that society who have no stake in that society.

(Interestingly, I have never had anyone of color ever do anything bad to me...but I have had several middle-aged white people do a lot of bad things to me.)

The principles at work here are two-fold:

“Peer Pressure” and “Fear.”

“Fear” is one of the most powerful motivators of human beings. (Remember Maslow: People will do just about anything to protect themselves...not to mention their loved ones.) The Ku Klux Klan figured this out about 150 years ago. The Klan uses such deep-seeded bigoted fears to gain support for their heinous cause, which works astonishingly well. In fact, it worked so well for decades that thousands of African American males were hung, castrated and mutilated in the first half of the 20th century in order to “protect all of the white women.” Klansmen would actually pose with their children in front of the hanging corpses...proud of their murderous acts.

In short, the Klan and other hate groups do not need the support of “crazy” people...they have all the support they need from the “good and decent” people of the world who rationally and calmly step aside and say to themselves,

“That’s not my issue. I don’t need to say anything or get involved here. I did not do anything wrong here. I am a good person. I am not responsible for this injustice.”

In the end, the vast majority of us stand by and do nothing. **THAT** is all that is needed for the few bigots among us to succeed. “Isolation” the true meaning and life-blood of bigotry.

No one is “all good” or “all bad,” and we all think or make bigoted comments at one time or another. That is why it is so vital that we recognize bigotry when it occurs ... and when we do it ourselves...we stop. (“All those people are the same...” “All those people are hillbillies ...” “All those lawyers are like that...” “You can’t trust anything those managers/employees say...”)

Rationalizing away these comments or minimizing the harm they cause only guarantees they will in fact happen again and that they will be used to support all of the harm that occurs to others. These rationalizations are how we allow such evil to rise and thrive. The vast majority of the people in the room that day when I was attacked by the middle-aged white woman did not agree with her, as they told me on the break...but they did not want to get involved.

The vast majority of the people in Toledo do not support the Nazi Party, but few stand up and say, “I don’t agree with that.” To do so takes courage. Most people will say they stand up for what is right, but the truth of the matter is that:

“We will stand up for what is right...as long as we do not have any risk.”

When I first started conducting “Diversity and Tolerance” training, I thought my biggest obstacles would be the Klansmen, Brown Shirts, and Skinheads of the world. However, that has not been the case. Engaging such bigots has not been a problem at all. The vast majority of us recognize the obvious bigotry of these groups, so battling such bigotry has actually been quite easy.

The true problem lies with the “good, decent, self-righteous people” of the world who embrace their oblivious bigotry like a warm blanket, then unwittingly support and perpetuate the bigotry of others around them. (i.e., All those managers are the same...) They **refuse** to admit the people they support have flaws, even though logically we know we all do. They rationalize away the bigoted comments and actions these leaders demonstrate...all at the expense of those groups of people who are “vilified” and “objectified” by such bigotry.

In short, they are terribly intolerant of anyone who disagrees with them or who raises a contrary thought or opinion.

So...What will you do the next time you see bigotry...or commit and act of bigotry yourself? (“All those people...”)

Will you let it “slide,” or will you speak up.



“The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, in times of great moral crisis, maintain their neutrality.”

~~Dante Alighieri

Before proceeding with a Diversity/Tolerance Program, as yourself:

- **What are you going to do when someone complains that they are offended because they disagree with your message of tolerance?**
- **What are you going to do when someone complains that they are offended because you challenged them or someone they like?**
- **Can you commit to standing up for others when they voice a contrary opinion?**
- **Is the culture of your organization going to be a tolerant one ... or will it be one where those who voice differing opinions are “attacked” and “ripped apart”...like happened at NASA before the space shuttle blew out of the air...the first time?**
- **Do you have the courage in your organization to enforce a culture of tolerance?**

If not, then you should probably just forget the whole idea. The world has enough hypocrites patting themselves on the back for pretending to be “perfect.”

However, if you can make this commitment, then the rewards will be great. Tolerance creates an open free-flow of ideas from many different types of people and allows your best people to thrive in a positive manner.

But then, again, that takes courage.

For More Information, Go To: www.scottwarrick.com

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