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Fall 2018

Although a majority of my beliefs are steadfast from the first day of ethics class, what has changed is the theoretical underpinning of those beliefs. Since I was a little girl, I have lived by two mantras. The first is the golden rule, “And as ye would that man should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (Luke 6:31, KJV) or “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (Matthew 7:12, KJV). In laymen, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The second mantra in the words of Arleen Lorraine (1974) is, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” to me these mantras are not just words on a page but a way of life, a life that is centered around social responsibility, and public service. These are my driving forces, my core beliefs, yesterday and today.

In the essay This I Believe, I express the importance of social responsibility and service, I would like to add the pursuit of justice to my purpose. As a little girl, I talked about changing the world, in reality, I wanted to create a more just society. A place where the underrepresented is given a voice, and there is an equal chance for everyone to claim wealth, power, income, and opportunity. Justice is complex, difficult to define and understand, but a necessary evil. Micheal Sandel (2009), points out that a just society is about the distribution of our prize possessions, the difficulties of justice is determining what people deserve and why.

I have always believe that all people deserve respect and to be treated with dignity. Little did I know that respect and dignity were the bases of Immanuel Kant’s second categorical imperative. Kant states people should, “Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a (mere) means but ... as an end in themselves” (O’Neill, 1993, p. 178). Kant is saying we should not take advantage or use others as just a tool, whatever the transaction or situation there should be mutual

beneficiaries and informed consent. I believe now that I am not a utilitarian as every life is equally valued. I would not push the fat man on the train tracks to save the group of people as his life is as valuable as any of there. Who knows he could have the cure to cancer and my action may deprive the entire world of this breakthrough.

As leaders, we must first understand that we have ethical blind spots, often using others as a means to an end and often act against our compass of morality when no one is watching (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011). As Mahatma Gandhi says, “We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. This is the divine mystery supreme. A wonderful thing it is and the source of our happiness. We need not wait to see what others do (p.241). If we cheat, steal and lie when no one is looking, why would we expect anyone else to act morally in the dark. As leaders in our families, churches, place of employment, and our organizations our purpose is to eradicate injustice, create an environment where there is fair opportunity. When opportunity is not accessible to all we must create policies to even the playing field. As leaders we have a responsibility to educate ourself and others and agitate the world to make a change.

References

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