

The Silence is Deafening

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I have always specialized in hostile or militant audiences but from time to time even I have to step back and pause for a second. Current events are always "fair game" in my workshops; it is what makes my sessions current, electric and never boring. Recent moments of truth in my sessions lead me to pen this article. Comments like – "Rodney King had it coming!" and "Tayvon Martin, who cares," just get my motor running. My recent favorite – "Secret Service Agents are fools, they just got caught, just pay...." Wow! Right? What struck me the most – the rest of the participants in the room did not even flinch. Oh, and these comments were coming from the police officers in the room (sworn professionals). In other words – the silence was deafening. How do the individuals who made these remarks interpret the silence of their peers? Tacit support? How about an "ouch" or "wow" or even a nonverbal reaction (facial expression, hand or body gesture) – some anonymous action to show disapproval?

Then you have Marion Barry with his racist remarks about Asian shop keepers and "Filipino nurses." Where was the Chamber of Commerce, the hospital leaders, nursing program leaders? Nobody said a word! Don't forget the racist comments or tweets (social media is grand) about the "Hunger Games" actors who are African American/Black or the Black Washington Capitals hockey player (Ward) who scored the series winning goal against the Boston Bruins and the racist tweets were flying. Did the NHL, Boston Bruins or Washington Capitals Teams denounce these actions? Racism everywhere is easy to point out. What is much worse – silence everywhere. Willful disengagement? Limbaugh at least was challenged and economically disciplined. Thank you advertisers!

I thought we were living in a "Post Race Society since the election of President Obama" (give me a break!). Sure. Denial is much easier than acknowledging the truth. It is much easier to hate (less time) than to understand. Go to SPLC – Southern Poverty Leadership Center website (splcenter.org) to see the latest reports and numbers – scary! Don't forget to hit the Innocence Project as well (innocenceproject.org) in your internet travels.

While we are on the subject – President Obama is not our first Black or African American President – he is our first bi-racial president. Can we get that straight? And all of this controversy about freedom of speech – yes, but there is freedom of consequence of that speech. You can't say whatever you want and then denounce those that react in a particular fashion. Ask Rush – cost him millions!!! So, what is my point?

We all need to "step up and say something." Challenge the injustice, the lack of civility; speak up for those who don't have a voice. The silence is deafening. Haters (or what I

prefer to call toxic individuals) win, get stronger, and are emboldened, when they go unchallenged. A form of bullying or intimidation if you ask me, and don't tell me I am making this up or "blowing this out of proportion." Just look around, open your eyes and ears. Hate crimes are up, bullying, workplace violence, terrorism, hate groups, pick your poison – the symptoms are everywhere.

My kids were talking about the racist reactions to the Hunger Games' black characters – "I didn't feel so bad when Rue died since she was black" nonsense had my kids talking. We all have a shared responsibility to step up. I loved the "teaching moment" to stir the conversation. Don't pass up on the chance. I would rather my kids talk about these issues with me and we get it all out in the open than for them not talk about and have to "freeze" when someone else tries to blindside or ambush them.

It is when we all come to the aid of each other and not just you step up to defend "one of your own." When men stand up for women, white for black, brown for black, black for white, and the rest of the permutations (you know what I mean) and we all stand up for each other, that I will finally feel like we are getting somewhere. I have said this before – the greatest challenge to humanity is staying human.

MY OWN SON

Ever heard the phrase – your children pick your friends? Well, the other day a dad of one my children's friends was over picking up his child and Limbaugh was on the news and this parent said – "Limbaugh should call her a prostitute or slut!" My son Ethan turned and said to him – "No one should be called a slut." My 12 year old son schooled this dad. I was so proud. You should have seen the look on this dad's face.

We all have a shared responsibility to each other as human beings. I always find it odd when I am defending, challenging or coming to the aid of another and a person asks me – "Why do you care, you are not (blank)?" We have to speak out for each other, especially for "those that are different." This famous quote is always ringing in my ear.

First they came for the communists, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a Jew.

Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.

By Martin Niemöller

Thanks for your time in reading this article! As I always like to say – "We are all in this together!"

Sincerely, Mauricio

P.S. My kids were humbled and inspired by our recent visit to the Holocaust and MLK Memorials.

Comments, reactions, more worst practices – please share with me!

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