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“A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work”

LOVE AS A TOOL: THE LEGACY OF ST. FRANCIS

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**Presented at:
NACSW Convention 2005
October, 2005
Grand Rapids, Michigan**

Abstract

Last fifteen years I have been exploring love as a human phenomena, as well as a personal and clinical tool. It is so easy to argue that Jesus Christ was the first interculturalist and first “social worker” using love as a tool, his whole life being beautiful legacy of love and forgiveness. The legacy of his devoted follower St. Francis of Assissi (1187 – 1226) is however as pertinent now as it was in its own time. Born in the times of war and destruction, St. Francis searched for peace and construction! Living in the times of plundering and collecting wealth, he realized that justice and sharing are the Lord’s way of living. In spite of being educated to focus on himself and earthly possessions, St. Francis opted for communal, inclusive, egalitarian way of life, celebrating all of God’s creation! We live in times of materialistic culture, self-centeredness/separateness, fear, anxiety, addictions of all kinds, and we badly need LOVE as a source of our own healing and growth, as well as a tool for SW education and practice.

This presentation has three (3) interrelated sections: love defined, understanding self, and social work grounded in love.

1. Love Defined

“To cheat oneself out of love is the most terrible deception; it is an eternal loss for which there is no reparation, either in time or in eternity.”Kierkegaard

The American Heritage Dictionary defines love as a deep, tender, ineffable feeling of affection and solicitude toward a person, such as that arising from kinship, recognition of attractive qualities, or a sense of underlying oneness. Love can also be defined as complete selflessness, as a way to look for the good in the other and do the good for the other. For Leo Buscaglia (1972, p. 94) “Love is always open arms. If you close your arms about love you will find that you are left holding only yourself.” St. Paul gives us beautiful definition of love (1 Corinthians 13): “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous, or conceited, or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish, or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up: its faith, hope and patience never fail. Love is eternal ... There are faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Daily prayer by St. Francis contains all these qualities:

“**LORD** make me an instrument of Your peace: Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light, and where there is sadness, joy. **O Divine Master**, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”

Julia Kristeva (1987, p.139-140) provides us with a valuable comment regarding St. Paul’s approach to love: “Paul is responsible for the most precise and most specifically new expression of this unprecedented attitude that the synoptic Gospels certainly include but do not make clear. Indeed, the word *agape* (which in Latin is rendered as *caritas* – a term that has been watered down far too much in Christian tradition, both theological and popularizing, hence prompting us, today, to return to the Greek word so as to emphasize its novelty) appears only twice in the Gospels (Matt.24:12, and Luke 11:42),... Paul, to whom we thus owe the new definition of God as God of love, puts his definition together by means of a triple motion that has been brought to the fore by A. Nygren. Paul begins by downplaying somewhat the love of a man for God, and he emphasizes the Gospels’ theocentrism; instead of urging man to love God, he postulates that it is God who loves, and disinterestedly so. Next, he reveals – and this is doubtless the strongest point of his thought on love – that the disinterested gift the Father’s love consists of is, all things considered, the sacrifice of the Son – the *agape* is the agape of the Cross (Rom. 5:6-10). Finally, it is love for one’s fellow men, including not only one’s kin and the righteous but enemies and sinners,...” as well.

For John Powell (1978) “Love should be generally supported by favorable feelings, but it is not itself a feeling. If it were a feeling, love would be a very fickle reality and those who construed it to be a feeling would be very fickle people. Rather love is a decision and commitment. My Christian vocation is to love all people. This means that I must try to do for each person with whom I interact whatever I can to promote that person’s true growth and happiness. However, I cannot enter into an actual and ongoing love relationship with everyone. I must therefore decide – and it should be a careful choice – to whom and at what level of commitment I wish to offer my love. Having made such a

decision, on the presumption that my offer of love has been accepted and reciprocated, I am now by my own free choice committed to the happiness, security, and wellbeing of the person I love. I will do everything I can to help that person build whatever dreams he or she has. It is this commitment which I make when I offer my love. When I question myself about the place love has in my life, I must therefore ask if there is any person in my life whose growth and happiness is as real, or more real to me than my own. If so, love has truly entered my life. (PP. 63-64)... the only genuine love worthy of the name is unconditional...The essential message of unconditional love is one of liberation.” (p.66).

I have reviewed social work encyclopedia, almanac and dictionary. The first two do not have definition of love, while dictionary does. Seems that we now need love more than ever. Yet, Robert L. Barker’s definition in the latest (5th) edition of the dictionary left out – in my opinion the most important - last section of the definition which includes philanthropy. Below is the definition from the 3rd (NASW Press, 1995) and fifth edition (same publisher, 2003). Section which I bolded does not appear in the latest edition: Love is “A combination of biologically based, culturally modified perceptions, feelings, and actions signifying strong affection and attachment. Every person’s experience of love and way of expressing it are unique. There is considerable variability between people and even within the same person from one time to the next. This is because each person’s genetic makeup, physiology, stage of development, cultural background, and immediate stimuli, all of which contribute to the way love is expressed, vary. Thus, it is probable that when any two people profess love, they are not communicating about exactly the same thing; also what one person means by professing love one minute is probably not what that person means when using the term later. ***The concept in which the term is used also influences its meaning. It is also commonly used to signify eroticism (“to make love”), strong interest (“to love music”), and philanthropy (“to love humanity”).***

In the same dictionary we find definition of philanthropy: “A term derived from Greek, meaning “love of humanity”; it has come to refer to practical efforts to promote the public welfare by donating funds or resources to worthy causes. Philanthropic activity, especially in the secular community, was rather spontaneous and haphazard until the late 19th century. The field of social work was born, in part, as an effort to make these activities more systematic and effective in their raising and distributing funds. Today, philanthropy constitutes a sophisticated and highly complex number of organizations and groups.” (ibid.)

According to Dr. Lennart Norreklit from the Aalborg University in Denmark (2003) love is the center of a spiritual way of living, organizing meaning and setting values. He distinguishes three kinds of love:

- a) existential love, or simply the love to be, to exist;
- b) universal love or the love for the world which ensures general openness to good things in the world and enables us to receive a wealth of experience; and
- c) subjective love, which refers to person’s love for the specific other, or “things” of the world.

As Dr. Norreklit explains, loving people who practice all three forms of love promote peace and harmony wherever they are. If there is a problem loving people can find a solution. On the other side, if one divides world into us versus them/the others, thus implying that we are good and the others are not so good or even evil, than of course universal love comes to an end. One is no longer citizen of the world but only of a specific country, religion, ...

Source of love is within us, the self. SW Dictionary (NASW Press, 2003) defines self “As individual’s identity as a unique being; that part of the personality or character that distinguishes the person or entity from all others.”

2) Understanding Self

To the ordinary being, others often require tolerance (compassion). To the highly evolved being, there is no such thing as tolerance (compassion), because there is no such thing as other. When you perceive that an act done to another is done to yourself, you have understood a great truth.

Lao Tzu, Hua Hu Ching

Mitakuye Oyasin – “we are all related” (Ross, 1989), Dakota traditional wisdom reminds us of our relatedness, as well as the common roots of our humanity. Through our long history we have searched for answers to the major mystery: who are we, where do we come from, and where are we going? Culture represents an attempt to answer it, and serves as our primary “teacher”. Every culture develops its own set of guiding principles, cultural patterns which serve as a frame of reference for daily living. Each person has unique – personal, group – common, and culture – common sets of elements, which represent her/his cultural profile.

Culture seems to be an overlooked facet of the human composite, of who we are. It is omnipresent and for the most part operates at an unconscious level. As mentioned above, culture deals with the mysterious human nature, with our origin, with afterlife and everything in between. There are hundreds of different definitions. Samovar and Porter (2004, p. 32) adopted from Marsella the following definition:

Culture is shared learned behavior which is transmitted from one generation to another for purposes of promoting individual and social survival, adaptation, and growth and development. Culture has both external (e.g. artifacts, roles, institutions) and internal representatives (e.g. values, attitudes, beliefs, cognitive – affective – sensory styles, consciousness patterns, and epistemologies).

Another way of defining culture is as a common, shared striving and experience by a group of people (tribes and, later, ethnic groups) over a very long period of time. For thousands of years different groups were learning what works and what does not, what to rejoice in and what to be concerned about, what to fear and what to place confidence in. Every single element of human activity bears a mark of culture. Indeed, it is fair to say that culture is who we are. With time, different groups of people developed their values

and beliefs, and their world view. Every experience is filtered through a set of standards which we call cultural patterns, and every group has its own patterns – ways of being and doing that works best for them. We may call it peoples’ culture-anchored or centered (ethnocentric). One can envision culture like an ocean within which we ponder and do just about everything. At a very core of every single person we also find culture; this is our centeredness (graph1, Maglajlic’ 1997). For a person to be whole, harmonious, and well, inner and outer culture need to “correspond”, to “match” or be the same. This sameness may be extremely important to some, and not at all important to others. Another way of noting this important phenomenon is that some people are very “locally rooted” while others may be born as the “citizens of the world”.

This brings us to Klopff’s (2004) concept of personal profile or personal cultural pie with eight constitutive elements: age, gender/sex, ethnic origin, religion, class/occupation, geographic region, urban/suburban/rural context, and exceptionality. Within a given culture each person develops unique personal profile, differently using these elements. Let’s take a closer look at Klopff’s eight facets:

- 1) *age*: culture influences our life before we are born, defines how we come into it, and how we leave it, by defining funeral/burial ceremonies. There are people who enjoy every stage of their development, live in/with the present and celebrate each age period. Contrary to this, many people may mention a particular period (5 or 10 years) as the best time or best years of their life;
- 2) *gender/sex*: while it is important to distinguish the gender (male/female) we are socialized into, it is equally important to observe sex (born as a girl or boy) as well as one’s sexual orientation.
- 3) *religion*: I distinguish between spirituality, faith, religion and church. Through common striving groups of people that belong to same ethnic and/or cultural group defined their ceremonies and other rituals, their faith traditions; with time an element of social organization and structure was added, buildings were erected, an internal order defined - so the religion with its temple (church) were introduced. For some people religion/church is a source of everything – their life revolves around church proclaimed practices as the only right way of life. Others may live in a country with a state supported church visited by its people three times in a lifetime; that is, at the baptism, wedding, and a funeral. Some believe in one god, others in many, while others see holiness in just about everything around them. Some worship by enjoying the beautiful view and beautiful nature, others by chanting, yet others by lighting a candle and kneeling. There are thousands of different practices just within the major world religions and its denominations.
- 4) *class/occupation*: many countries and cultures claim egalitarian status, and a classless society; yet, as we review history only in the ancient times did large groups of people live alike, close by, and more or less equally. War seems to be one of the oldest “industries” and it was most likely through regional and/or international wars that one of the first divisions according to “class” and “occupation” took place; we can recall higher ranking leaders and followers, spiritual guides and healers, teachers and craft/trade holders. In modern times,

with a global economy, most people identify with their occupation – it defines their position within society.

- 5) *geographic region*: as we travel across continents and major geographic and climate sections it is easy to imagine differences, and how they influence our daily routine – the way we dress, what we do and eat, how and when we do it, and the like.
- 6) *urban/suburban/rural context*: we all know at least one person that does not like to live in a large city, or in a village (rural setting), and/or suburb. Americans have a saying: different strokes for different folks; there are many people who live by themselves, or with a family, in a remote wooded area far from rural microculture with its farming, cattle tending, and the like. Others love the big hoopla of the large city, and yet others enjoy the privacy and the separateness of a suburb.
- 7) *exceptionality*: it is a very important concept that points to a continuum of our different potentials and different abilities – from being genius to the other; mostly due to the lack of knowledge we attribute certain positive qualities at one end and negative at the other. For almost nine years I served as a volunteer national director for a Special Olympic program; with great coaches our athletes reached practically the same heights as “regular” athletes. Their way of “getting to the top” was different. It seems that we know very little about ourselves; the less we know the more we have a tendency to attach negative attributes which with time become stereotyped and may lead to a stigma.
- 8) *ethnic origin*: this is probably one of the youngest concepts in certain regions of the world. There were always tribes, clans, extended families, etc., but nations as we know them in the west have only existed for several hundred years. Sometimes there are strong common elements that cut across all strata of the social life; people live in a certain region, speak the same language, have the same customs, practice the same religion, and perceive themselves as members of one ethnic group and nation. More often than not, though, we encounter at least several different ethnic groups within one region or one country. USA is one of the most diverse countries in the world; just in the Los Angeles area we find people from over a hundred different groups, speaking over hundred different languages.

So, within a particular person each of these eight elements may play themselves out differently. Identity development is a lifelong process; there are gradual changes in our identity throughout our lifetime. Many people live their whole life without ever asking themselves questions such as:

- What kind of a person do I want to be?
- What do I want out of life?
- Who am I?

As already stated, culture is who we are, both through our identity formation and group memory of our ancestors. Deep structure is grounded in family values, education, faith traditions (religion), history and government. Anchored in these facets is our world view

as an overarching philosophy, a set of interrelated assumptions and beliefs about the nature of reality, the organization of the universe, the purposes of human life, God, and other philosophical matters that are concerned with the concept of being. It provides values and beliefs as a ground for personal ethics; different groups, including different professional groups develop set of rules for professional behavior, professional ethics, such as social work values. Ragg (2001, p.25) states as three core values:

- a) Relatedness and Mutual Responsibility;
- b) Self-Worth, Competence and Dignity of the Person, and
- c) Self-Directedness and Self-Determination.

John Heron (1992) takes a position that “a person is a fundamental spiritual reality, a distinct presence in the world. *Personhood* is the capacity for feeling..(p.53)..Emotion is the primary, basic locus of human individuation. Emotional fulfillment grounds the person in their own distinct being. This being may get enveloped in thick coats of distress and egoic alienation, but sooner or later, I believe, true individuation emerges, from the cocoon through the emotions of self esteem and delight of loving, emerging in the context of participative feeling in the world.” (p.24)

“As we learn from Hume and Kant, the self as subject is not presented as an object to itself; but this implies that acquaintance with it cannot be like an acquaintance with anything else, not that there can be no acquaintance with it at all. Indeed, it would seem that we have a unique advantage with respect to knowledge of ourselves simply because we *are* selves, and that we have an acquaintance with ourselves which consists not in an objectified self-presentation or special experience in which we encounter ourselves but in the experience of *being* ourselves. To acknowledge the involvement of the latter in every experience is, perhaps, to acknowledge nothing more than that every experience is something *for* someone, and this, as we have seen, seems undeniable.” (Lund, D, 1994)

The same author in his latest book (Lund, 2005) argues “that the conscious self must be accorded the ontological status of a metaphysically basic particular in the philosophically fundamental account of what exists. The conscious self is the center of consciousness and agency, it has a primitive matter-of-fact unity, and it maintains a “strict” identity through time. It is known, in the first instance, only from the first-person viewpoint, as it is directly known in one’s experience of being a conscious subject and conscious agent. Contrary to pure-ego theories, psychological construction (e.g., bundle) theories, and no-entity theories, I contend that one has experiential self-awareness that must be understood as direct knowledge of a subject of conscious states and of its persistence through at least brief periods of time. Such awareness is, in part, an awareness of a real agent of deliberate actions, apparently capable of choosing among genuine alternative courses of action.”

“Most of us are confused about what is real. Even though we sense that there is something more, we attempt to settle for a reality based exclusively on feedback from our physical senses. To reinforce this “reality”, we look to what our culture defines as normal, healthy and therefore real. Yet where does Love fit into this scheme of things?

Wouldn't our lives be more meaningful if we looked to what has no beginning and no ending as our reality? Only Love fits this definition of the eternal. Everything else is transitory and therefore meaningless. Fear always distorts our perception and confuses us as to what is going on. Love is the total absence of fear. Love asks no questions. Its natural state is one of extension and expansion, not comparison and measurement. Love, then, is really everything that is of value, and fear can offer us nothing because it is nothing. Although Love is always what we really want, we are often afraid of Love without consciously knowing it, and so we may act both blind and deaf to Love's presence. Yet, as we help ourselves and each other let go of fear, we begin to experience a personal transformation. We start to see beyond our old reality as defined by the physical senses, and we enter a state of clarity in which we discover that all minds are joined, that we share a common Self, and that inner peace and Love are in fact all that are real. With Love as our only reality, health and wholeness can be viewed as inner peace, and healing can be seen as letting go of fear." (Jamplonsky, G. 1970)

According to Randi Noyes (2001, p.109.) "There can be no wisdom without love. ...Love is peace; to abandon love is pain. Our greatest enemy isn't in the world around us; it lives inside us. We need to stop being so angry with ourselves! Once my negativity was so great that I thought I was going to beat myself to death. Since then I've chosen to treat myself with love and kindness, but it took time to learn how. Treating myself badly never made me feel better, only worse. After tearing myself down, I had less to give to other people. Now my goal each day is to love, and things just seem to fall into place."

Erich Fromm (1989) ponders "What does one person give to another? He gives of himself, of the most precious he has, he gives of his life. This does not necessarily mean that he sacrifices his life for the other – but that he gives him of that which is alive in him; he gives him of his joy, of his interest, of his understanding, of his knowledge, of his humor, of his sadness – of all expressions and manifestations of that which is alive in him. In thus giving of his life, he enriches the other person, he enhances the other's sense of aliveness by enhancing his own sense of aliveness. He does not give in order to receive; giving is in itself exquisite joy. But in giving he cannot help receiving that which is given back to him. Giving implies to make other person a giver also and they both share in the joy of what they have brought to life. In the act of living something is born, and both persons involved are grateful for the life that is born for both of them." This notion of mutual enrichment through giving/receiving/giving/receiving... is not only an individual (person to person) phenomena. It is also a group phenomenon.

One of my favorite authors, Leo Buscaglia (1987)) comments that recent studies simply reinforced his "belief in the complexity, mystery and comedy of human behavior. We are so funny. We continue to be the great enigma, so unpredictable, so vulnerable, so wonderful and unique. For example, most studies concur that security, joy and success in life are directly correlated to our ability to relate, one with other, with some degree of commitment, depth and love. We have learned, most of us from experience, that our inability to live in harmony with others is responsible for our greatest fears, anxieties, feelings of isolation and even severe mental illness. Still, even after many painful failures, precious few of us have deliberately sought the information to clarify and

ameliorate our dilemma. Even those of us who hunger for closeness and more understanding discover in our search that there are a few places to which we can turn for help.”

Use of self deserves more attention in both, SW theory and practice. Culture, specifically its deep structure, represents essence of human identity. We can define world view as a conceptual pillar that helps us understand nature of reality, with spirituality as one of its most important facets. Spirituality may be defined as “our inner life nourishment, grace, wisdom, lifeblood. It is Pure Love. Our very being. Spirituality is our doing, it is how we go about digging deep to discover the shadow and light of our authentic self. Spirituality is our practice to perceive and pursue fuller aliveness. As the ground of our very being and doing ... spirituality is how we discover the gift of all gifts: our interconnectedness with a world of other complex, wild and wonderful spiritual beings ... As a leader and a follower, this love ... challenges me to realize my full aliveness, no more and no less than to realize yours. It is my unshakable belief in an unknown, infinite potential we share to forgive and celebrate our humanity, build our differences, and steer our passions ... for the good of all.” (Lakey, 2003)

Fine definition of spirituality by Kellogg Fellow Melinda Lakey (2003) also incorporates love. It helps us understand its interplay within one/self and the other/s and through it, its relation to social work as a service to humanity:

- spirituality is central to human authenticity; it helps us understand our origin;
- spirit has self-healing power,
- each person (human being) is a seed of divinely inspired possibilities; with and through love we will grow and become all we are supposed to become;
- there is order and rhythm in all of creation; love helps us align ourselves to it;
- we are all endowed with passion and purpose; to be congruent we need to discover the divine plan which is unique for each and every human being;
- part of this divine plan is to (re)discover love as a “mortar”, connecting or bonding element among all;
- social workers are servants of humanity, as conduits of God’s love we have a potential to heal, and to restore balance and harmony.

3. Social Work Grounded in Love

*We are called to act with justice; We are called to love tenderly,
We are called to serve one another, To walk humbly with our God. Micah, 6:8*

Social work grounded in love is completely in harmony with our purpose and mission, and it’s anchored in peace, unity, justice and human rights. For the workshop I selected 17-minute video-clip about St.Francis that relates to same issues. What follows is a very brief summary of some of the work which I presented over the last seven years at the IFSW/IAASW and other SW conferences, at the Inter-University Center for Postgraduate Studies, the IUC Dubrovnik School of Social Work, as well as at the regional and local events within the Minnesota and USA.

3.1. Peace

Peace is not the absence of war; it is a virtue; a disposition for benevolence, confidence, and justice. Spinoza

For most of us peace was and continues to be only alternative. Yet, war seems to be one of the oldest industries, and most likely one of the early sources for division and destruction of unity. Concerns about our security are probably as old as human history. These concerns are now magnified by the unprecedented scale of environmental degradation and the presence of immense poverty in the midst of extraordinary wealth, as well as the fact that social, economic and environmental challenges can be found everywhere. Some argue that we are facing triple security crisis:

- 1) effects of environmental decline,
- 2) social, economic and psychological repercussions, and
- 3) huge dangers of the proliferation of the known and unknown arms.

It is time to promote “global human security” as a substitute for “national security” with focus on peace, environmental protection, protection of human rights and global social integration. After all, conflicts typical for the “contemporary world cannot be resolved at gunpoint. They require not a recalibration of military tools and strategies, but a commitment to far-reaching demilitarization. Indeed the military now absorb substantial resources that could help reduce the potential for violent conflict if invested in health care, housing, education, poverty eradication, and environmental sustainability (p.116). At the same time the “gap between the rich and poor has grown to tremendous levels, both globally and within many individual countries. Worldwide, the richest fifth of the population now receives 60 times the income of the poorest fifth, up from 30 times in 1960. In the United Kingdom, the ratio between the top 20 and bottom 20 percent went from 4:1 in 1977 to 7:1 in 1991. In the United States, it went from 4:1 in 1970 to 13:1 in 1999” (p. 121) and continues to grow. (Lester W. Brown and assoc, 1997).

I recently attended workshop on ethics and life in America by Colleen Rowley. She specifically suggested three books as additional reading, of which one is “The Cheating Culture – Why More Americans Are Doing Wrong to Get Ahead” by David Callahan (2004) who points to the above mentioned trend: “When profits and performance are the only measure of success, old-fashioned ideas about fairness go out of the window. Lean-and-mean business strategies have conspired with trends like globalization and technological change to insure huge income gains by well educated professionals – while many less-skilled workers have been running in place or losing ground. Fewer people also control more of the nation’s wealth. In fact, the top 1 percent of households have more wealth than the entire bottom 90 percent combined. Economic inequality has lead to striking changes in our society” (p. 18) including omnipresent degradation and violence.

We live in times in which our souls yearn for a safe and secure future while our hearts yearn for connection, respect and love. We are all born free and equal in dignity and rights yet ... one in four persons lives in object poverty unable to meet their basic needs, one person out of three is either homeless or living in extremely substandard housing, 1.3 billion people have no access to safe water and sanitation, over 140 million children have

no access to elementary education, one billion people have no regular access to local health services, pollution and environmental disaster threaten millions of the world's poorest people, and women own a mere 1% of the world's property (graph.2, OXFAM Canada report).

Keeping the above in mind, indeed it's time to organize for peace. This is the time for new thinking. This is the time to conceive of peace as not simply being the absence of violence and war, but the active presence of the capacity for a higher evolution of human awareness. This is the time to conceive of peace as respect, trust, and integrity. This is the time to tap the infinite capabilities of humanity to transform consciousness which compels violence of any kind at a personal, group, national and international level/s. This is the time to develop a new compassion for ourselves and others, the time to rediscover love and unity!

History is a great teacher! It teaches us about ignorance, fear and anger as the components of fanaticism which result in fighting, humiliating and victimizing others (graph 3; original presented by Dr. Benjamin Yanoov at the IUC School in 1997; with author's approval, I have added a few elements). US culture of violence points to lack of quality education, lack of creative exploration and love, loving kindness as a social glue! It also points to deep rooted problems associated with the violent history of US, as well as an interplay of the history – government – religion/church – non/education, as major contributors to the dominant world view. It resulted in generations addicted to pop media, drugs and material possessions, imprisoned in low self-esteem and all other usual suspects of inner oppression and acted out towards others (bullying, harassment, violence, murder) and self (high level of anxiety, addiction, depression, suicide). Elite structure – those in power – used segregation and tolerance to control different subgroups within the society. Although most of recent history is marked with the successful use of power by a few to dominate and manipulate the majority, there are beautiful examples of human creativity, human kindness and love which found mysterious way to learning and self-liberation! In June 1999, we celebrated 10th Anniversary of the IUC Dubrovnik School of SW Theory and Practice by producing “Towards a Peaceable Community” document, to be found in the issue no.3. of the IUC Journal (www.bemidjistate.edu/SW_Journal) At one point our Swiss colleague and friend Ms. Regina Mueller exclaimed: imagine there is a war, and nobody attends! What a deep message that points to the fact that peace starts within each of us, and it has to be grounded in love. Author of logotherapy, Dr. Victor Frankl sends one of the strongest messages of love and peace. While incarcerated in German concentration camp he was observing hungry, overworked, tortured people who were giving from their rationed food portions, doing the double work, and taking the beating for the weakest – guided by love they were giving selflessly, and at the same time they were the most resilient survivors!

3.2 Unity

In the transforming union, the energy of faith, trust and love is constantly being beamed to us whether we experience it or not. Divine love can now manifest itself .. a nonpossessive attitude towards everything, including ourselves .. because there is no longer a self-centered “I” to possess anything. ... Transforming union is the ripe fruit of dismantling the false self. Thomas Keating, 2004

Many authors mention the 21st century as a turning point, a century in which we will either rediscover unity or bring the world as we know it to an end. Kabagarama (2004) is of opinion that we will either cherish together or perish. Andree Malreaux, famous French Minister of culture exclaimed “Le 21^{si}ecle sera spiritual ou ne sera pas!” (The twenty-first century will be spiritual, or it will not be!) Dr. Robert Bellah from the University of California at Berkeley, was the keynote speaker at the 2004 BSU student achievement conference. As a handout for his lecture Dr. Bellah suggested “The House Divided”, an updated introduction to his bestseller book “The Habits of the Heart” (1996). The whole chapter deserves our attention. Unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this presentation. I have selected a few brief excerpts which point to the deep division, division within the US society, but may serve as an indicator of the worrisome global division. More and more of us doubt whether we can trust our institutions, our elected officials, our neighbors, or even our ability to live up to our own expectations for our lives. And anxiety is always close to the surface, a haunting fear that things have somehow gone wrong. For many Americans, these fears come to a head in worries about crime, moral decline, and the deepening divides of income and opportunity. There is a gnawing uncertainty about the future of our jobs, of adequate income, and of our family life, especially our children’s welfare. Underlying many of these fears is the realization that, for most Americans, growth of the global economy no longer means opportunity, but, rather, “downsizing”, “re-engineered” jobs, and the pink slip of dismissal. (p vii) ...Americans often feel uncomfortable talking about class. Isn’t this basically a classless society? Far from it. In the Habits of the Heart the consideration of class is largely implicit, since the book focuses on cultural ideals of middle-class identity that most Americans share. But in the past decade changes in the class structure have occurred that raise grave moral issues. An explicit treatment of class has now become unavoidable. The pressures of the global market economy are impinging on all societies in the world. The chief consequence of these pressures is the growing disparity between the winners and losers in the global marketplace. The result is not only income polarization, with the rich growing richer and the poor poorer, but also a shrinking middle class increasingly anxious about its future, ... Among this powerful elite the crisis of civic membership is expressed in the loss of civic consciousness, of a sense of obligation to the rest of society, which leads to a secession from society into guarded, gated residential enclaves and ultra-modern offices, research centers, and universities. (p. xii)

In spite of the fact that Americans don’t like to talk about class, and when they do they all see themselves as members of the middle class, Dr. Bellah uses Robert Reich’s typology to support his standing: over-class, anxious (“middle”) class, and underclass. In the Habits, Dr. Bellah and associates point to the language of individualism concerned that it may undermine civic commitment and group membership. The only two groups in which membership is growing are AARP, American Association of Retired Persons which does not call for any meaningful interaction, as well as a twelve-step substance abuse treatment program/s, and similar support groups.

So, social and political identification have declined, while at the same time campaign contributions and writing to congress representatives have increased! “The increasing

salience of monetary contributions, leads to the summary conclusion of *Voice of Equality*: Meaningful democratic participation requires that the voices of citizens in politics be clear, loud and equal: clear so that public officials know what citizens want and need, loud so that officials have an incentive to pay attention to what they hear, and equal so that the democratic ideals of equal responsiveness to the preferences and interests of all is not violated. Our analysis of voluntary activity in American politics suggests that the public's voice is often loud, sometimes clear, but rarely equal, ...

There is another sense of community that also presents difficulties if we think the solution to our problems lies in reviving community, and that is the notion of community as neighborhood or locality. *Habits of the Heart* encourages strong neighborhoods and supports civic engagement in towns and cities. But residential segregation is a fact of life in contemporary America. Even leaving aside the hypersegregation of urban ghettos, segregation by class arising from differential housing costs is becoming increasingly evident in suburban America. Thus, it is quite possible that in "getting involved" with one's neighborhood or even with one's suburban town one will never meet someone of different race or class. One will not be exposed to the realities of life for people in circumstances different from one's own. One may even succumb to the natural human temptation to think that people who are different, particularly those lower in social status, are inferior. The anxious class does not want itself to be confused with the underclass. One of the least pleasant characteristics of the overclass, including its lower echelons in the educated upper middle class, is that they do not want to associate with middle Americans, with 'Joe Six-Pack' and others who lack the proper cultural attributes. Even in the underclass, those who are not on welfare look down on those who are, and those who are on the dole briefly look down on those on it for a long time. Under such circumstances an exclusive emphasis on neighborhood solidarity could actually contribute to larger social problems rather than solving them. (Bellah, pp xxi and xxiv)

On the subject of meaning and a renewal of the civic membership in the USA, Bellah writes: "While the idea of community, if limited to neighbors and friends, is an inadequate basis for meeting our current needs, we want to affirm community as a cultural theme that calls us to wider circles of loyalty, ultimately embracing that universal community of all beings of which H. Richard Niebuhr spoke. We should remember that when Jesus was asked, 'Who is my neighbor?' he answered with a parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), in which the true neighbor turns out to be a Samaritan, a member of a group despised in Israel. It is not that Jesus didn't think that a person living next door, or an inhabitant of one's village, or a member of one's ethnic group could be a neighbor. But when asked directly, Jesus identified the neighbor as a stranger, an alien, a member of a hated ethnic group. Any community short of universal community is not the beloved community. Much of what has been happening in our society has been undermining our sense of community at every level. We are facing trends that threaten our basic sense of solidarity with others; solidarity with those near to us (loyalty to neighbors, colleagues at work, fellow town folk), but also solidarity with those who live far from us, those who are economically in situation very different from our own, those

of other nations. Yet this solidarity – this sense of connection, shared fate, mutual responsibility, community – is more critical now than ever. (Bellah, p. xxx)

In order to restore unity we must restore its soul! As Georgia Kelly (Sonoma, CA 2004), founder of the Praxis Peace Institute points out, it's time to restore "Soul of Culture": 'An untended soul is susceptible to colonization; our collective soul has been colonized by the culture of the machine. Most of our modern ills – environmental degradation, the glorification of consumption, social and economic injustice and a pervasive sense of powerlessness – can be directly traced to this loss of soul. Recovery of soul requires us to challenge the myths and values of the dominator paradigm. To restore "Soul to Culture" means to acknowledge how western culture, for all its many gifts, had de-animated our world leaving us wandering as exiles in a wasteland. It means embracing our collective shadow; it means accessing the imaginal world of dreams and inspiration; it means trusting the creative powers of vision and deep intuition; it means finding our place again in the family of things. More than anything else, to restore soul to culture means to bring the wholeness of our lives to full engagement in the world. The time requires nothing else.'

Jamplonsky (1970, p. 42) adds to it individualized, personal element: By constantly choosing Love rather than fear, we can experience a personal transformation which enables us to be more naturally loving to ourselves and others. In this way we can begin to recognize and experience the Love and joy that unites us."

3.3. Justice

I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits. Dr. M.L. King Jr.

In *The Silence of the Welfare State*, Joel Blau (1995) writes: *Once there was an American welfare state. It wasn't much by comparison with most European welfare states: as a percentage of the gross domestic product, the budgets of European welfare states were about fifty to one hundred percent larger. They had well-funded day care programs for working families. We did not. They provided a regular stipend for every child regardless of family income. We did not. They offered national health care. Despite efforts in the 1940s, 1960s, 1970s and 1990s, we did not. Still, in its hayday, the American welfare state made a difference, because its programs benefited certain categories of people. Whether it was students, veterans, women, children, blacks, the poor, or the elderly, the benefits of the welfare state – from college loans to Social Security – gave people access to opportunities and a standard of living superior to that which the market alone could provide. Then came the backlash. The first really visible sign of a decline in the adequacy of social provision was the appearance of homeless people on the streets of major American cities. But since only 1% of us were likely to be homeless in any given year, most Americans saw little risk to themselves, and said nothing. Next President Reagan fired the air traffic controllers who had gone out on strike. Air traffic controllers are trade unionists. Most Americans are not trade unionists, so they said nothing. The attack intensified. Even though almost half of all Americans get some cash benefits from national government, conservatives contended that the primary*

recipients of federal largesse were black or Hispanic. Most Americans are not black or Hispanic, so they said nothing. Welfare – really Aid to Families with Dependent Children (now Temporary Aid to Needy Families) – was the most vulnerable program in the American welfare state. Although it only absorbed about 1% of the federal budget, this 1% was said to be a social contagion that destroyed the true grit of poor people and ate away our economic vitals. Besides, since just 15% of the U.S. population is officially poor, there is an 85% chance that poverty will strike other people. Because those are such terrific odds, most people said nothing. In the last couple of years, critics of the welfare state turned their attention to the benefits that immigrants receive. Even though immigrants perform work that no one else wants, for wages that no one else will accept, many in what used to be described a “nation of immigrants” have been surprisingly receptive to this critique. Now when they hear of proposals to slash benefits for recent immigrants they think of themselves as real Americans, and say nothing. The original purpose of the welfare state was to provide a measure of protection against the worst effects of a market economy. Recently, as that economy has become more global, large segments of the white American middle class have been left behind. An expanded welfare state – one that provides jobs, national health care, day care, college loans, and children’s allowances – might have addressed their growing economic insecurity. But now that the economy is affecting them, the welfare state had been so shrunken by silence that they do not see the point of speaking up for themselves, and there is no one left to speak for them.

NASW Code of Ethics (1999, p.1) states that “the primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human wellbeing and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed and living in poverty.” Many may say that there is no poverty in USA – the wealthiest country in the world, and/or if there is it could be found among people of color, specially the ones perceived as lazy, no-good drunkards. Yet Bellah (1996, p.xiv) informs us that five out of six poor people in America are white as a result of the systematic withdrawal of economic and political support from the most deprived and segregated portion of our society.

Freeman (1996) argues that *the United States is becoming more unequal. The middle class is shrinking, wages are stagnant or declining, and the wealthy are getting an ever-bigger proportion of wealth. The result is that the United States is the most unequal of the advanced countries. When comparing inequality across societies, the data actually understate the magnitude of inequality in the United States because the other nations provide more generous universal social programs (e.g. health, pensions, housing).* The author points to a number of societal costs that arise with relatively high levels of inequality.

Poverty refers to those individuals at the bottom of the income distribution who don’t have enough income to satisfy basic needs. In “The Other America” Michael Harrington (p. 46) argues that America’s poor are now more isolated and politically powerless than ever before. The real number of poor is not known since most records don’t count the homeless people living in different institutions, as well as people living together in order

to avoid harsher consequences of their poverty. American Dream refers to the myth about starting from basically nothing and making it happen: “The stories of penniless immigrants who came to these shores to become successful” (Mittal & Rosset, 1999)! Dream is to be rich, or at least well to do! About hundred years ago such dream was possible for 23% starters; now at most 3% can do it. Seems that the door that leads out of poverty and discrimination, is hermetically sealed for generations of poor Americans.

The same holds true around the world. Respect for the existing declarations and resolutions should open equal opportunity around the globe and eradicate poverty and hunger. To be hungry, poor and without hope is to be without human rights that some take for granted: personal security, health care, education, employment, welfare benefits in time of need, political participation etc. Some billion people around the world live without enough food to maintain a minimum level of health, dignity and productivity. After WWII, and in particular during the Cold War Era, task of providing food for all often took second place. In fact “food issue” was often used as a weapon, a reward and/or a propaganda tool.

Times have changed, at least in the food production sphere: today there is enough food in the world to feed everyone adequately. People are hungry in the world of plenty, because they are poor and ignored, and because of what M.K. Gandhi called the Blunders of the World. In 1998, Arun Gandhi served as a lecturer at the IUC School of SW Theory and Practice, and he shared with us a small part of his Grandfathers wisdom (graph. No.5): wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice and politics without principles. Arun Gandhi added the eighth blunder: rights without responsibilities! There is a need to add and explore greed.

If poverty is the basic cause of hunger, equitably distributed prosperity is its basic solution. This is becoming an extremely complex issue as corporate volatility can lead to a kind of placelessness at the top of the pyramid: the richest move their capital and production within very short period of time to the most distant and unpredictable corners of the world. As Michael Lewis observes (quite from Bellah, p. xviii) “These days the man who has made a fortune is likely to spend more on his means on transportation than on his home: the private jet is the possession that most distinguishes him from the rest of us.”

Alan Curtis (with Kevin Phillips, pp 16-17, 2005) remarks: that “the American government is practicing socialism for the rich and laissez-fair for the poor. We are increasingly leaving the fate of the most people in America up to the un-tender mercies of what the federal government misleadingly describes as ‘the market’. In fact, that ‘market’ really is a highly concentrated set of powerful corporate players who are quite willing to subvert or corrupt free markets whenever they get in their way, as our experience with Enron, Global Crossing, and other rogue corporations affirmsPoverty rates, as unemployment rates, declined in the United States during the booming 1990s. But poverty rose in the new millennium. Today, the richest nation in the history has 35 million people living in poverty. That is malignant neglect by the federal government. In 2002, the

poverty rate for people under eighteen years old in America was over 30 percent among African-Americans and approaching 30% for Hispanics according to the US Census Bureau. Again, mainstream American corporate, commercial media have said little about these numbers. "Diana Pearce, the University of Washington, developed self-sufficiency standards which try to "calculate how much it would actually cost families, in various places, to pay for all the things they absolutely must have in order to be self-sufficient – like housing, food, child care and medical care, ... In Chicago, for example, the self-sufficiency standard works out to \$ 38.000 for a single parent with one child in school and another of preschool age." Question remains how many parents leaving welfare can make it to that level? Equally important question is how we define poverty? If this is what family of three needs for the basics in Chicago, and in 2001 government set the poverty line at \$ 17.184 for the family of four (Zastrow, 2004) than it would be fair to say that the number of poor is at least twice/double the most frequently mentioned number.

Although we, social workers, proclaim justice as one of our principles, we live in a very unjust world. The issue of poverty and related issue of food security will be urgent and alive as long as millions of people go hungry and without other basic necessities. Globalization advocates will be pressed to show that world capitalism can reach the poor; moralist will have to demonstrate that they can generate the support needed for an ethical movement to install a world regime of peace and food for all, and advocates of the step-by-step approach will be obliged to show that they can make real progress toward an international agreement to respect, protect, facilitate and fulfill the right of humankind to food, clean air and water – something that has been there, as a nature's given gift – for millions of years. Humans were part of this glorious creation, born into it as free and equal members of human family.

Fromm (1956, p. 20) reminds us of the complexity and multilayered phenomenology of the issue: "In the sphere of material things giving means being rich. Not he who *has* much is rich, but he who *gives* much. The hoarder who is anxiously worried about losing something is, psychologically speaking, the poor, impoverished man, regardless of how much he has. Whoever is capable of giving of himself is rich. He experiences himself as one who can confer of himself to others. Only one who is deprived of all that goes beyond the barest necessities for subsistence would be incapable of enjoying the act of giving material things. But daily experience shows that what a person considers the minimal necessities depends as much on his character as it depends on his actual possessions. It is well known that the poor are more willing to give than the rich. Nevertheless, poverty beyond a certain point may make it impossible to give, and is so degrading, not only because of the suffering it causes directly, but because of the fact that it deprives the poor of the joy of giving."

3.4. Human Rights

*One has to speak out and stand up for one's convictions.
Inaction at a time of conflagration is inexcusable – M.K. Gandhi*

In 1944, President Franklin Roosevelt told Americans that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. He argued that people who

are hungry and out of work are the stuff of which dictatorships are made. He called for a 'second bill of rights' covering economic life, under which a new basis for security and prosperity could be established for all.

His wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, served as a chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights. On December 10, 1948 General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Originally intended as a 'common standard of achievement for all people and all nations', over the past fifty years, the Universal Declaration has become the cornerstone of human rights. It guarantees civil and political rights, such as equal protection under the law; protection against arbitrary arrest, torture and punishment; and the right to participate in government through periodic election. The Universal Declaration also guarantees a full range of economic human rights including the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one's family. This does not mean that government must feed everyone or give them a home, but rather that they must assure, through policy, that those rights are not denied.

The guarantees in the Universal Declaration include an inextricable link between different categories of rights. Civil and political rights are meaningless when the majority of the citizens remain economically disenfranchised. Likewise, exercising one's economic rights becomes impossible against a backdrop of political repression and exploitation.

In 1976, President Carter signed both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESAR). The Senate ratified the ACCPR in 1992. It also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and the Convention Against Torture (CAT) in 1994. The US is currently bound to uphold the ICCPR, CERD, and CAT, and can be held in violation of them before the UN Human Rights Committee. The ICESAR still awaits ratification by the Senate. All of these documents, both the ratified and to be ratified, should be the guiding principles for our countries policies. Rights spelled out on paper, even legally binding paper, are meaningless if people do not demand their enforcement. In this context the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has become the foundation of a movement that has grown to include human rights organizations in nearly every country of the world. Some, like Amnesty International, safeguard the civil and political rights of people. Others, like Food First Information and Action Network (FFIAN), and Survival International, are working to insure the economic and cultural survival of the poor, and of indigenous peoples struggling to feed themselves in the face of a global economy pushing them to the margins.

Grassroots organizations like Food First have an extremely important role in the U.S.: Because the Senate is stalling on ratification of the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, we are counting on pressure from grassroots movements. Already several city councils have adopted resolutions declaring themselves 'human rights cities'. In Oakland, Berkeley, San Francisco, Chicago and Arcata, they have adopted the Covenant, and 'resolved that the City affirms its stand for human rights by pledging to oppose any legislation or action that impinges on the fundamental human rights of human beings as stated in the UDHR' Not only is that a message to the Senate,

but activists can now hold those cities accountable to the UDHR and the Covenant. When the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted to ban sleeping and camping by the homeless in some of the last public spaces that were still left in which to sleep, many in San Francisco, including the American Friends Service Committee, were quick to remind the Supervisors of their commitment to universal human rights.

In the International arena, the U.S. Government stood alone in rejecting the right to housing at the Habitat Conference in Istanbul in 1996, and the right to food at the World Food Summit in Rome in November 1996. Melinda Kimble, the Head of the United States government delegation to the Food Summit, said that the U.S. could not support language around the right to food in the Summit's Plan of Action because the new welfare reform law would then be in violation of international law. The U.S. tried to downgrade the right to food, calling it 'a goal or aspiration to be realized progressively ... (which) does not give rise to any international obligations'. In other words, go ahead and say we aspire to a world where everyone eats, but don't hold us to it.

In December 1998, against the backdrop of the 50th anniversary celebration of the UDHR, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution that urged all countries to eliminate obstacles to development by protecting not just political and civil rights, but also economic, social and cultural rights. In the text of the resolution, its drafters argue that the existence of widespread poverty inhibits the full and effective enjoyment of human rights, and renders democracy and popular participation fragile. The Resolution supported by all of the developing nations in the world body, had only one negative vote: the United States.

In the past, the U.S. government has applied the framework of human rights selectively to mostly Third World countries, and focused only on political rights, to the exclusion of economic, social, and cultural rights. Now we must call our country to task for its own record on human rights. The time has come to say that human rights are indivisible – Civil and political rights cannot be separated from economic and social human rights – and they are universal, applying just as much here at home as anywhere else in the world. Human rights are a basic way of conceptualizing and implementing concepts of right and wrong.

If we don't stand up now for our human rights and those of all Americans, the safety net for the poor will be further weakened or may even be abolished outright. Homelessness and hunger will continue to increase. The prison industry will grow, constituting the only form of public service that is fully and willingly funded. The gap between the rich and the poor, already the largest in the industrialized world, will widen. Unregulated industries will require employees to work in increasingly unsafe conditions at lower wages, and cut back on worker's health and retirement benefits.

Those of us concerned about growing economic insecurity are still awaiting U.S. ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Until we legally endow all people with the inalienable rights to not just liberty, but freedom from want, the U.S. cannot rightfully claim moral authority as a human rights leader. This is not a radical proposal for the late twentieth century. All other major industrialized countries have embraced these economic and social human rights through ratification of the Covenant.

Economic and political oppression are our common enemies, whether in the industrialized countries or in the Third World. We must therefore all begin to speak the

same language, educate others about human rights and actively work to make our voices heard.

Too often the lives of millions of poor Americans appear strange, distant and impossible to understand. Yet, the tragedy of our nation's poor does not lie in some fundamental difference that sets them apart from other Americans, but rather in our shared humanity. Human rights standards of economic and social justice give every human being and every community a powerful tool for struggle. (Mittal & Rosset, 1999, pp.viii-xiv)

Social work is anchored in values, principles that serve as a ground for our code of ethics and our day-to-day practice: service, social justice, dignity and worth of every person, importance of human relationships, integrity and competence. So, desire for equal rights, social justice and equitable social development is part of our credo. Our purpose is to eliminate any, and every, kind of discrimination, oppression and injustice, providing for everyone unique right to be equal, and equal right to be different.

Social responsibility is one of the basic assumptions of social work. As Kristeva (1993, p. 63) puts it in her Open Letter to Harlem Desir: "If I knew something useful to myself and detrimental to my family, I would reject it from my mind. If I knew something useful to my family, but not to my homeland, I would try to forget it. If I knew something useful to my homeland and detrimental to Europe, or else useful to Europe and detrimental to mankind, I would consider it a crime."

As Freire (1998, p.36) puts it: "If the economic and political power of the ruling class denies the powerless the minimum space to survive, it is not because it should be that way. It is necessary that the weakness of the powerless is transformed into a force capable of announcing justice."

Freire (in Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 99) defines social responsibility through terms such as liberation, liberating education, empowerment and social transformation: "Liberation is a social act... even when you individually feel yourself most free, if this feeling is not a social feeling, if you are not able to use your recent freedom to help others to be free ... than you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom."

Our responsibility is always towards a larger society, to the entire world. The only alternative for the 21st century is a network of egalitarian, open and flexible local communities which are globally connected. Almost exactly a year before the September 11, 2001 attack, 'Charter 99', a British based lobby group presented its "Charter for the Global Democracy", with an agenda for reforming and expanding the scope and power of the United Nations as the core of the new institutional framework of the open and transparent democratic global governance. There were proposals to reform the Security Council and to phase out the single country veto, to create mechanisms for the regulation of transnational corporations and financial institutions and to bring the World Trade Organization into the United Nations system, to create an annual Global Forum of All, to accept compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court and the UN Human Rights Committee, to establish a UN Center for economic and environmental security, and an environmental court, to cancel the Third

World debt, and to secure universal access to safe drinking water, family planning, health care, housing, education, gender equality, economic opportunities and sustainable development.

I wish social workers are at the frontiers of such actions, but more often than not it comes from artists and culture-related responsible and responsive activists who often risk their life to stand for peace, unity, justice and human rights! This is one of many options for a badly needed global dialogue. It is time for us – social workers – to start asking ourselves and everybody else some very important, crucial questions. If our profession declares principles of human rights and justice as fundamental, than it is high noon to start acting since most people live with at least a few rights denied, and in a very unjust world!

Although seven centuries passed since St. Francis looked into his heart, listened to the voice of Jesus, and started an action grounded in love which with time attracted all of his rich friends, and shook – at least for a brief moment – the local elite and the unprecedented power of the Holy Seat. His message easily crosses to our times and circumstance. We can relate elements from the video-clip to similar situations and problems of our time. I hope that it will be equally easy to find inspiration in the works of St. Francis and start making positive changes by creating thousands of peaceable, egalitarian, and inclusive communities.

Concluding Remark

Give to others what you want to receive – love, support, appreciation, healing and acknowledgement – and you will get it back. Sanaya Roman (1986)

“In the Kingdom of Heaven Jesus says there is not Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free. But everyone is one in Christ. That’s the way it actually is. We don’t see it that way yet. That’s the problem. What can we do to see it from right side up? It’s the *deep* knowledge or the true knowledge of God that Paul presents to us in his epistles. Over and over again he speaks about *deep* knowledge. Not just knowledge. Not just intellectual knowledge. But the kind of intimate knowledge that is only comparable to the most intimate kinds of human relationships.” (Iachetta, 2003, p. 255).

One may come to “understanding” at a level of intuition, while the others require more than that. To live in, and/or with “love is life’s greatest challenge. It requires more subtlety, flexibility, sensitivity, understanding, acceptance, tolerance, knowledge and strength than any other human endeavor or emotion, for love and the actual world make up what seem like two great contradictory forces. On the one hand, man may know that only by being vulnerable can he truly offer and accept love. At the same time, he knows that if he reveals his vulnerability in daily life he often runs the risk of being misused, taken advantage of.” (Buscaglia, 1972, p.191).

Few years ago I have taken training in Centering Prayer. Father Thomas Keating (1992) redefined centuries old tradition and added to it latest cultural, psychological, philosophical and spiritual knowledge. He, like all other authors that I consulted, reiterates role and importance of unity (graph 5.). Maybe we can distinguish the original

unity and renewed, informed, responsible and responsive unity as the final stage of human development. After millions of years of human history, according to Keating, the most dramatic leap in human consciousness took place cca 3000 B.C.: the emergence of reason – Mental Egoic Consciousness. Theoretically this is the era we live in now. It calls for movement beyond the self centered instinctual drives and gratifications of the pre-rational instincts into full personhood, grounded in taking responsibility for ourselves as well as to respond to the needs of our families, our nations and the human “race”, including the generations to come. Full reflective self consciousness, by nature both intuitive and unitive, is consciousness in which mature faith and LOVE guide us in all our actions. Human condition is still under the sway of the false self with the emotional programs for happiness based on the primitive stages of consciousness related to security – affection/esteem, and power/control – from the typhonic stage. As a result, even as adults, we may demonstrate consciousness which is in many respects infantile. And, so it seems, culture as a whole has not advanced beyond the mythic membership level. Although unitive level of consciousness is still not accessed by the vast majority of the humankind, we are encountering trends in this direction. So, for example, Prism May/June 2005, in the article “Francis and Claire are Back” (p.24-26) describes a symbolic portion of the “Growing numbers of highly educated, evangelical youth (who) are saying “no” to comfortable salaries in exchange for the privilege of living in slum communities in the developing world. Seeking lives of simplicity, purity, and devotion, these young evangelical “friars” are joining missionary orders that are devoted to ministry among society’s dregs. What we’re seeing is an evangelical movement akin to the Franciscans”

In the 21st century we – social workers – may be invited to be the consciousness of the world, to complete a full circle and facilitate final stage of human development. Starting in unity overshadowed by struggle/s for security and survival, we now have enough – shelter, food, clothing – for all people, for all of human family. If we allow faith (full trust in God) and love to guide us as responsible, selfless, caring, loving individuals, we will develop a new kind of unity within the human family which will result in a unique transformation that harmoniously embraces all levels of human history and development. Many cultures possess and acknowledge archetypes of such development.

In the chapter on Obligation and Loving Kindness, Wayne Muller (1992, p.172) states: “When we come to the moment of our death, it is likely that a few simple questions will arise in our hearts: Did I love well? Was I generous and kind? Did I allow myself to be loved? How did I share that love with others? Few people facing the end of their lives worry that they didn’t spend enough time at work; not many wonder if they made enough money, or went to enough meetings. Instead, as they prepare themselves for death, they become focused on the deep love they have for their family, their children, and their friends. What could be more important? To hold those we love, to give our love freely, to be open and generous with our care – these are measures of our life, the priceless rewards of our time on earth.”

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