

“EYES AND EARS WIDE SHUT” - THE SILENCE IS DEAFENING

By Mauricio Velásquez, MBA – President, CEO, The Diversity Training Group (diversitydtg.com)

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 and update the original article I wrote many years ago. The recent rash of horrible racial injustices (some say pattern) of Ahmaud Arbery to Breonna Taylor to George Floyd to Amy Cooper to Jacob Blake has erupted into a national conversation about racial injustice, white privilege, inequity, diversity, inclusion, and more.

Comments like – “I don’t care about BLM - Black Lives Matter, I am trying to run a business” or “White Lives Matter” or worse “White Lives Matter More (WLMM)” when people mention “Black Lives Matter” have led many to the politicization and polarization of these horrible atrocities and these acts continue a horrible pattern of racial injustice. You have to go back to “Rodney King had it coming!” and “Trayvon Martin, who cares.” Today, you must be a “liberal” or a “conservative” – ouch!

I am so struck by the lack of empathy, the callousness, the insensitivity of these comments but people are underestimating the passion, the energy, the rage behind all of this. Eyes and ears wide shut really. These horrible, just insensitive, racist, sexist, homophobic, ethno-centric comments are made almost daily, but where is the outrage, the condemnation, the “calling this person out?”

REMEMBER:

What you permit – you promote

What you allow – you encourage

What you condone – you own

The silence is deafening quite frankly. Where are our leaders to unify and not polarize? Where are the decent folks to call out these horrible comments and actions?

When these comments above were uttered in front of their peers, their colleagues (in a workshop) - what struck me the most – the rest of the participants in the session did not even flinch when they heard these comments. Oh, and these comments are coming from people they know, people they work with every day – not some stranger. How do the individuals who don’t agree with these remarks (or who are horribly offended, afflicted) interpret the silence of their peers? Tacit support. Agreement. Endorsement.

How about an “ouch” or “wow” or “really” or “come on” or even a nonverbal reaction (facial expression, hand or body gesture) – some nonverbal action to show disapproval? Change the sound of your voice on a virtual call to convey your dislike and displeasure for the horrible comment. Oh, and stop with the “I did not say something because I thought I would get fired” for saying “wow or ouch?” Come on! Time to be a part of the solution and not contributing to the problem. Enablers, colluders, conflict avoiders are

playing a big role in all of this. If you are not a part of the solution you are definitely a part of the problem.

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. It is 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, domestic terrorism, pick your poison – the symptoms, the manifestations of hate and distrust are everywhere.

We all have a shared responsibility to lean in. I love this “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 to talk about it 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 step up to defend “one of our 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, then I will finally feel like we are getting somewhere. I have said this before – the greatest challenge to humanity is staying human.

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 who 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*



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