

DECEMBER 17, 2013

"THERE IS ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD BETWEEN HAVING SOMETHING TO SAY AND HAVING TO SAY SOMETHING."  
- QUOTE BY: JOHN DEWEY

HELLO WORLD!

MAY THE PEACE AND BLESSINGS OF ALLAH BE UPON YOU AS YOU READ MY THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS.

AS WE APPROACH THE TIME OF YEAR WHEN MANY PEOPLE OBSERVED "CHRISTMAS" AROUND THE WORLD, IT NEVER FAILS TO AMAZE ME HOW OUR WESTERN SOCIETY HAS COMMERCIALIZED THIS DAY AND PEOPLE HAVE TOTALLY FORGOTTEN THE TRUE ESSENCE OF WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT! THAT ALLAH SENT JESUS (I'SA) INTO THIS WORLD TO DELIVER HIS WORD TO MANKIND, WHICH WAS TO WORSHIP "THE ONE GOD" AND TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF. HOWEVER, WHEN I WATCH HOW PEOPLE TRAMPLE OVER ONE ANOTHER AT THESE "BLACK FRIDAY" SALES EVENTS, AND FIGHT OVER TOYS AND ELECTRONICS DEVICES; I FIND MYSELF WONDERING, "WHAT WOULD JESUS SAY ABOUT THIS BEHAVIOR?" DONE IN HIS NAME? PROBABLY SOMETHING LIKE "THE GOOD LORD HAS SET DEFINITE LIMITS ON MAN'S WISDOM, BUT HE SET NO LIMITS ON THEIR STUPIDITY - AND THAT'S NOT FAIR!" 😊

NEVERTHELESS, THIS PAST WEEKEND, I ATTENDED A NICE "RESTORATIVE JUSTICE" SYMPOSIUM HELD AT THIS PRISON. IT WAS AN ALL-DAY EVENT WITH OUTSIDE GUEST SPEAKERS THAT CAME IN TO SPEAK WITH THE PRISONERS ABOUT THEIR GOAL OF "TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS." AS I'VE BEEN A MEMBER OF THE SAN QUENTIN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE INTERFAITH GROUP.

SINCE 2009, I WAS ASKED TO FACILITATE THE "SMALL CIRCLE GROUP" IN ORDER TO DISCUSS THE TOPICS AND INFORMATION PRESENTED BY THE SPEAKERS. IN TOTAL, THERE APPROXIMATELY WAS 60 "OUTSIDE" GUESTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS (MEN & WOMEN) AND ABOUT 130 MEN FROM THE PRISON WHO ATTENDED THIS SYMPOSIUM.

IN THE "SMALL CIRCLE" GROUPS, FACILITATORS ARE REQUIRE TO CREATE A "SAFE PLACE" FOR THE INDIVIDUALS IN EACH GROUP, TO ASSIST THEM TO FEEL COMFORTABLE AND CONFIDENT IN SHARING THEIR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS. IN MY GROUP, I HAD 6 PRISONERS AND 6 OUTSIDE COMMUNITY MEMBERS (3 MEN & 3 WOMEN).

I OPENED THEM TO THIS PROCESS BY SHARING THAT "CIRCLES" ARE AN ANCIENT FORM OF COMMUNITY DIALOG WHERE EACH PERSON IN THE CIRCLE IS EQUAL TO ALL OTHERS. IT IS A "SAFE PLACE" WHERE EACH PERSON'S TRUTH IS HONORED THROUGH PRESENCE AND DEEP LISTENING, AND WITHOUT GIVING ADVICE.

I WAS ASKED BY THE GROUP TO "MODEL" THIS PROCESS, SO I SPOKE ABOUT HOW CHILDREN IN TODAY'S SCHOOLS ARE BEING "MISGUIDED" BY THE MEDIA, AS TO WHAT IS REAL. I EXPLAINED THAT WHATEVER WE BELIEVE WITH FEELING BECOMES OUR REALITY. FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU CONSTANTLY TELL A CHILD THAT HE OR SHE IS "NO GOOD" "A FAILURE", ETC., CHANCES ARE THAT'S WHAT THAT CHILD WILL GROW UP TO BE IN LIFE. OUR BELIEFS FORM A SCREEN THROUGH WHICH WE SEE THE WORLD, I SHARED WITH MY GROUP. TO SUCCEED OR TO WIN, YOU MUST STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT YOU WILL SUCCEED AND WIN. TO DO ANYTHING YOU MUST BELIEVE YOU CAN DO IT. YOU SEE, WHEN YOU TRULY BELIEVE, YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS MIND WILL FIND WAYS TO

ACCOMPLISH IT.

I FURTHER ELABORATED HOW I USED THIS TECHNIQUE DURING MY EARLY YEARS OF IMPRISONMENT; WHEN I ENTERED THIS SYSTEM, I WAS ANGRY, BITTER, DEPRESSED, AND CONFUSED ON SO MANY LEVELS. AFTER A FEW YEARS OF EXISTING LIKE THIS, I FINALLY REALIZED THAT IF MY LIFE IS NOT WORKING THE WAY I WANTED IT TO, IT IS BECAUSE I'VE ACCEPTED BELIEFS THAT KEPT ME FROM ACHIEVING WHAT I WANTED TO. SO I SET OUT TO CORRECT THIS SITUATION, BECAUSE I KNEW THAT I NEEDED TO PROGRAM A NEW SET OF BELIEFS. THAT'S AROUND THE TIME THAT I BECAME INTERESTED IN "al-ISLAM", AND IN 2001, I TOOK WHAT IS CALLED MY "SHAHADA" (DECLARATION OF FAITH).

TO THIS GROUP, I SHARED HOW "BELIEF" IS THE MOST POWERFUL FORCE DIRECTING ALL HUMAN BEHAVIOR. THAT PEOPLE LIKE JESUS, MOHAMMED, BUDDAH, EINSTEIN, EDISON, AND EVEN PRESIDENT BARAK OBAMA, HAVE CHANGED HISTORY WITH THEIR BELIEFS. THEREFORE, I SAID, "BELIEF IS THE CORNERSTONE OF ALL GREAT ACHIEVEMENT."

THEN ONE OF THE WOMEN IN THE GROUP ASKED: "WHERE DO WE GET OUR BELIEFS, ZAKEE?"

I SAID; "QUITE SIMPLY, MOST OF THEM CAME FROM OUR ENVIRONMENT, OUR PARENTS, PEOPLE WE INTERACT WITH, AND EVENTS IN OUR LIVES." THEN I REFLECTED BACK TO THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SPEAKER'S TOPIC OF "TRANSFORMING OUR COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS" AND HOW WHEN WE WERE CHILDREN, MOST OF OUR "BELIEFS" CAME FROM OUR PARENTS, FROM THEIR WORDS AND ACTIONS. THEN AS WE GREW OLDER, OUR "BELIEFS" CAME FROM OUR TEACHERS, SIBLINGS, FRIENDS, OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS, SCHOOLMATES, FELLOW WORKERS;

PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY, AND FINALLY, THE MEDIA.

I ENDED MY SHARING WITH THESE WORDS: "AS CHILDREN, WE DID NOT DEVELOP ANY FILTERS ~~THAT~~ THAT ALLOWED US TO DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN THE HELPFUL AND THE USELESS BELIEFS. AS CHILDREN, WE ACCEPTED WHAT WE WERE TOLD. VERY RARELY DID WE QUESTION THE TRUTH OF THOSE BELIEFS. FOR MANY OF US, HERE TODAY, OUR ACTIONS ARE STILL BEING INFLUENCED BY THE BELIEFS WE LEARNED AS CHILDREN."

SO MY WORLD-READERS, THAT'S WHAT I DID AND TALKED ABOUT THIS PAST WEEKEND. HOW DID YOU SPEND YOUR TIME? WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU ENGAGED IN A MEANINGFUL, THOUGHT-PROVOKING CONVERSATION, FACE-TO-FACE, WITH ANOTHER PERSON? REMEMBER THAT "COMMUNICATION" LEADS TO COMMUNITY, THAT IS, TO UNDERSTANDING, INTIMACY, AND MUTUAL VALUING.

UNTIL NEXT TIME, I'LL TALK TO YOU IN 2014! HAVE A HAPPY AND WONDERFUL NEW YEAR! 😊.

PEACE,

Zakari  
JK

P.S. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS AND/OR COMMENTS, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO LEAVE A "REPLY", OR WRITE TO ME DIRECTLY AT MY RETURN MAILING ADDRESS.