

## **Dignity, Humiliation, and Mutual Empowerment for Fundamental Change**

by Bill Leland

Abstract prepared for the 2007 Workshop on Humiliation and Violent Conflict, Columbia University, New York, December 13-14, 2007

My paper focusing on the approach of using mutually empowering relationships as a central organizing principle for facilitating fundamental change can be found in ten sections on my blog at: [www.mutualempowermentforchange.blogspot.com](http://www.mutualempowermentforchange.blogspot.com) or in one entire piece as a PDF at: <http://www.environmentaldirectory.net/MuEmJul1207.pdf>.

Humiliation and Violent Conflict: if conflict is the expression or manifestation of apparently incompatible thoughts or actions held by two or more parties, then violent conflict occurs when one or more parties in a conflict situation acts to gain power over one or more other parties. Such an action precludes the other party being treated with human dignity and is potentially humiliating to that other party. Lasting, life-affirming conflict resolution will not occur in situations characterized by power-over actions and acts of humiliation. Power-over behavior and humiliation feed the downward spiral of violent retribution. On the other hand, nonviolent or life-affirming conflict resolution can occur when all relevant parties act to move towards mutually empowering relationships in the context of which the apparent incompatibilities can be explored and resolved.