

The Human Side of Complex Public Policy Mediation
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For the past twenty years, I have served as a public policy mediator in a range of disputes and situations including international relations, governance, environmental disputes, land use and development decisions, transportation planning, labor standards, public health, and education policy. My typical cases involve managing 20-25 person negotiating teams of diverse stakeholders with conflicting interests and values, who are working to resolve public issues.

As a result of this experience, I have come to understand what is required to create and maintain productive negotiations of complex issues to develop actionable and sustainable agreements. Especially in public disputes, negotiators bring to the table not only their own agenda of issues, but also a driving passion in support of their interests and deeply held values. Unfocused passion increases conflict and results in failed negotiations. On the other hand, focused passion energizes creative thinking and may lead to unique solutions to long-standing conflicts.

As a mediator, I approach negotiations with the assumptions that 1) human nature includes the potential for expression of a broad range of action, emotion, passion, and thought; 2) circumstance may impact which action, thought, passion, and /or emotion is expressed; and 3) social structures can be built to create systems of circumstances that lead toward virtue, as in the example of Plato's Republic.

One of the key questions I consider is: If the spectrum of human nature consists of the entire range of human action, emotion, and thought that has been expressed by humans throughout time, then how is one possibility selected over another? How can one angle the "prism" of human nature to promote passionate productive deliberations rather than chaotic miscommunication?

During a mediation, humiliation may operate on three distinct levels. The first is the potential for personal humiliation by another negotiator, during negotiations. The second is passion that is expressed as a result of long-term humiliation, such as in an intractable conflict. The third is the development of an agreement that ensures no future humiliation. My question for the conference is: What are the interventions required by a mediator to address these three potentials for protecting against and responding to humiliation during negotiations?

For my brief paper entitled, "The Human Side of Complex Public Policy Mediation," published in the *Negotiation Journal* (October 2003), please go to http://podziba.com/resources_thoughts.html