

# Is it Possible to “Change the World”?

## Some Guidelines to How We Can Build a More Decent and Dignified World Effectively:

### The Case of Dignifying Abusers

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I frequently receive enraged letters from friends who observe dynamics of humiliation in their social surroundings and feel that it is plainly wrong to treat abusers of dignity in dignified ways. Usually, their messages begin with the description of some despicable and painfully humiliating abuse that is occurring in their private or professional surroundings, involving them as victims or as third parties. Their messages often end in ways that resemble the following:

*An asshole deserves to be called an asshole! A bitch deserves to be called a bitch! You cannot seriously believe that dignifying this asshole would be of any use? I am not prepared to cover up abuse and humiliation with a smile! I am no hypocrite! Do not expect me to play the nice-guy game! I will remove the cover of hypocrisy from all the brain-farts in the world and expose the truth! Not doing so would mean to humiliate humanity! I will fight to get rid of evil people! I am passionate and do not permit you to take this away from me!*

Let me call the author of this message Diane. Diane’s friends asked me to write this paper. They are worried. Diane is suffering from high blood pressure, most of her friends either turn away from her or treat her with pity, her employees tremble in fear, innocent colleagues find themselves accused of “arrogance” and are “put in place,” and the human rights movement feels embarrassed to have her support. She, on her part, fumes at the doctors who tell her to calm down unless she wants to die of heart failure, she attacks everybody who disagrees with her, life, for her, is a combat zone with “enemies” (many) and “friends” (fewer and fewer) with her as self-styled martyr-hero at the center, and this, to her, is human rights work.

Let us begin with some questions. Is it useful for the Dianes of this world to operate in the way here described? Is it constructive to use words such as “asshole” and “bitch” to express revulsion? Is it helpful to announce that we need to “get rid” of certain people? Do such words expose the truth? Do Diane’s actions lead to effective change for a better world? Diane’s friends believe that she has become part of the problem and not of the solution.

These questions are embedded into the larger question of whether it is at all possible to “change the world” and build a “better world.” Let us first address this overarching point.

I suggest that we, humankind, before we do anything else, decide whether we think it is worth trying to “save the world,” or not. It might not be worth it. Currently, the gap between rich and poor widens, both locally and globally, and the have-nots watch how elites overindulge in luxury. In many ways we face the anarchic world that Robert Kaplan (1994), describes in *The Coming Anarchy*, with overpopulation, resource scarcity, terror, crime, and disease compounding cultural and ethnic differences and rendering us a chaotic, anarchic world.

Michio Kaku (2005) renowned physicist and leading expert in string theory, concludes his book on *Parallel Worlds* with the following paragraph:

The generation now alive is perhaps the most important generation of humans ever to walk the Earth. Unlike previous generations, we hold in our hands the future destiny of our species, whether we soar into fulfilling our promise as a type I civilization [meaning a civilization that succeeds in building a socially and ecologically sustainable world] or fall into the abyss of chaos, pollution, and war. Decisions made by us will reverberate throughout this century. How we resolve global wars, proliferating nuclear weapons, and sectarian and ethnic strife will either lay or destroy the foundations of a type I civilization. Perhaps the purpose and meaning of the current generation are to make sure that the transition to a type I civilization is a smooth one. The choice is ours. This is the legacy of the generation now alive. This is our destiny (Kaku, 2005, p. 361).

If we think that it is hopeless for the world to avoid the abyss – it may indeed be hopeless – we better make our last days as pleasant as possible. A terminal ill cancer patient takes lots of morphine to die in peace. If we decide that humankind’s only chance is to get extinct (and planet Earth will certainly sigh in relief) let us pass our last days as agreeable as possible, with lots of pain killers. And behaving like Diane does, might give her solace. Why not let her have her way.

However, in some cases, even very ill patients may get better if treated with the proper medicine. In that case, the treatment might diminish the patients’ quality of life in the short-term, in exchange for the promise of surviving in the long term. If we decide to go for this kind of treatment for humankind, let us hold together through the hardship of this solution, without complaining, because long-term survival might be the price. In that case, Diane’s behavior is both suicidal and homicidal.

It is *either or*. *Either* we agree on the first *or* the second strategy. We cannot have both. If we wish to avoid painful interventions we will not save the world. If we wish to save the world we have to face difficult times. Whatever we decide, throwing around aggression is counterproductive. If humankind chooses to die out in peace, lamenting and indignant ranting disturb pleasant death. If we settle on trying to save the world, indignation-entrepreneurship undermines this very goal at its core.

If we conclude that working for a better world is worth the effort, we need a fair amount of revolutionary optimism for first accepting this task and then getting to work without lamenting and raving. Pessimism and indignation-entrepreneurship are luxuries we can afford only in good times when there is an excess of energy and no dire crisis. In times of emergency, such behavior represents a suicidal death sentence because it drains

the very drop of energy that might save the situation. If we go for serious interventions, we need everybody to throw in all their resources wholeheartedly and constructively.

To undertake such a project, it is important to understand the role of the individual and society and their interplay. Sociologists discuss this topic. French sociologist Raymond Boudon, for example, stands for so-called *methodological individualism*, in the tradition of Max Weber and Alexis de Tocqueville. This orientation is particularly suitable for times of rapid flux, with “cracks” in the “system” allowing for individual imitative, and a thrust towards a global culture that calls for individual creativity. In Boudon (1994), he critically appraises *Theories of Social Change*, and in Boudon (1986), he addresses the *Logic of Relative Frustration*.

A central question of our times is whether the deplorable state of the *global village* is an expression of the *essence* of *globalization* or a *side effect* that can be remedied. My proposition is that the current obscene state of the world is a *side effect* and that we need *more* globalization and not less, however, that we have to create a new kind of globalization, namely globalization wedded to what I call *egalization* (meaning putting into practice the human rights call for equal dignity for all). I agree with Thomas Friedman (2005) that globalization entails a push toward a *flatter* world. I suggest that we need to become more conscious of this trend and start channeling it constructively.

A number of authors support this line of thought. Cees Hamelink (2000), for example, calls for the deployment of Digital Information-Communication Technologies (ICTs) to be guided by respect for such universal standards as human security, autonomy and equality. Philippe Legrain (2002) delineates the world’s responsibility to create fairer global trade. Jeffrey Sachs (2005) explains, how world poverty can be ended. I believe that we have a chance to build a *decent global village*, following the call for a *decent society* by Avishai Margalit (1996), if we manage to harness globalization with egalization.

Egalization is a process that needs to be implemented at all levels, at the highest global levels as much as at the micro levels of our colleagues and families, and even intra-psychically, within our psyches. Egalization, based on the human rights message, introduces two transformations, (a) dismantling the tyrants of our world and (b) dismantling, in addition, all tyrannical systems and their ways of defining human conduct, including all tyrannical behavior that might emanate from within us. In former times only (a) was carried out, not (b). Underlings rose up, replaced the tyrant, and kept the system. And, incidentally, this is also what the Dianes of this world do. They act like tyrants in their fight against tyrants. They attend to (a), but not to (b). They focus on the *what* but not the *how*.

In my work, I give the label of *extremists* to those who continue turning cycles of humiliation instead of ending them. Among them are those who limit themselves to carrying out solely (a), either intentionally, or because they have not yet understood the full scope of the human rights message (I think Diane is in the latter group). I give the label of *moderates* to those who are willing and able to perform both human rights steps, (a) and (b), those who have the intellectual and emotional resources for applying *self-reflexivity* (Nagata 2005), to *walk the talk*, and to end cycles of humiliation.

The problem for the Dianes of this globe is that we live in an increasingly interdependent world. This is a new historical fact that makes the second human rights transformation, (b), not just optional but compulsory. It is no longer sufficient to fight

against tyrants; tyranny itself, dominating behavior itself, are now obsolete. And this is not a question of opinion; it is a question of adaptation to new times.

Humankind might decide that this adaptation is too difficult and that we better die out. Indeed, if even the Dianes do not understand that they are missing the second human rights transformation, there might be no hope. However, humankind might also choose to keep trying. This is why I write this paper.

This paper starts from the assumption that we, humankind, have decided to stand together and try to make this world a better place. In this paper we will discuss whether it is useful, in this context, to dignify abusers, or not. We will address egalization and how to avoid committing something inherently irreconcilable, namely advocating egalization by methods that entail its opposite, humiliating domination. We will discuss how to avoid humiliating others and ourselves in the process of dealing with humiliating power abuse, be it at global levels or by our colleagues or spouses.

Arne Næss, one of the most renowned Norwegian philosophers, claims: “There are no murderers; there are only people who have murdered.” He explained his point at length at the Second Annual Meeting of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (12th - 13th September 2003, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme de l'Homme, Paris, <http://www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/annualmeeting02.php>). Næss described in rich detail how he would invite convicted murderers from prison into his philosophy class at Oslo University so as to demonstrate to his students that even murderers are human beings who deserve and need to be dignified.

Is Næss a dreamer? Is he a fool? Should we follow this example? Or not? Are Mandela and Gandhi fools?

The global network Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies is committed to *walking the talk* and we formulate this as follows:

We believe that it is important for all of us to walk the talk. We wish to invite people into our group who are willing and able to promote our mission with humility and in a cooperative relational spirit of mutual support and respect; please see *Relationship Tips* developed by Jordan & Hartling (2006), at the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute in 2006. Competitive and adversarial behavioral styles that draw their strength from dominating and humiliating others have no room in our work. We wish to encourage “selfless leadership” and would wish to avoid including in our group autocratic “big-ego” styles; see Peter Drucker (1993), who called for organizations to function like orchestras.

The overall framework for our work that we hold to be important is that we wish to work *for* and not *against*, namely *for equal dignity for all*. And, even though we aim at raising awareness for the destructive consequences of cycles of humiliation and the suffering of people who are being exposed to humiliating treatment, we do not wish to engage in violently humiliating humiliators, which would merely turn the spiral of humiliation further. We rather wish to promote respectful approaches also to humiliators and the non-violent humbling of humiliators (<http://www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/whoweare.php#walkingthetalk>).

In the following text, I will first discuss whether there are primary and/or secondary gains to attain from applying Diane’s approach. I will conclude that Diane indeed might

achieve secondary gains for herself, however at the cost of diminishing the chances for primary gains. I then will focus on how social change towards a more dignified world may be designed more effectively. I advocate long-range and long-term preventive action instead of re-action. I particularly advise against short-range re-actionism.

## **Is it useful to dignify abusers, or not?**

This section starts out with outlining the effectiveness of the kind of approaches promoted by the Dianes of this world, or all the well-intentioned peace advocates who deeply suffer from a world that is “bad.” My first question is: Are there valid primary gains to be drawn from such approaches? Does Diane change the world for the better by affronting “bad” people in the above described way? As you will see, I believe that there are no primary gains for Diane and the world to achieve, except for her passionate sense of injury highlighting that something is wrong with the world. I will enumerate the secondary gains that she indeed might attain, however at the cost of diminishing the chances for primary gains.

### **Primary gains**

#### ***Will a thoroughly “bad” person be reformed by Diane’s approach?***

Usually, even the worst of “bad” persons places herself within some kind of moral framework and feels that she either acts benignly or reacts *against* “evil” rather than identifying herself as evil. But let us assume that there are “bad” persons around who are so thoroughly self-serving, and/or so thoroughly filled with hatred, that they are beyond reform. Let us say, we face a pedophile man who justifies abusing children as benevolent patronage. Or, let us talk about a mass murderer who, as the victim of child abuse, is so full of deep hatred that he cannot let go of “retaliating” against all humankind. Or, let us think of a tyrant, who believes to be benign while holding on to power by torturing his critics.

Such “bad” people, will they be reformed through being affronted by being labeled as “bitch” or “asshole,” or through being pinpointed as the source of “brain-farts,” or through the prospect that they will be “gotten rid” of? No. On the contrary, such treatment will only reinforce whatever self-serving arguments these “bad” people nurture, and it will strengthen their resolve to resist what they see as evil attacks on them. And since we assume that this group of perpetrators cannot be reformed, they need to be stopped, no more and no less. As long as we hope to reform them, we waste our time and energy. And since Diane’s approach surely will not reform them, it is a gross waste of time and energy.

#### ***Will a potentially reformable “bad” person be reformed by Diane’s approach?***

Let us assume that we face a perpetrator who indeed has the potential to develop an interest in the larger common good instead of opting for narrow self-interest, and/or a person who indeed harbors some love and not just hatred. Will this person be persuaded

to let these constructive sides come to the fore if affronted in undignified ways? No. Only a dignified approach can bring dignity to the fore, in every person, including abusers.

Nelson Mandela (2001) applied a kind of “minimal justice” approach. He did not endlessly lament Apartheid but demanded justice in a respectful minimal way. When he came to Robben Island, the following happened to him: “Two officers entered the room. The less senior of the two was a captain whose name was Gericke. From the start, we could see that he was intent on manhandling us. ... When he was just a few feet from me, I said, as firmly as I could, ‘If you so much as lay a hand on me, I will take you to the highest court in the land and when I finish with you, you will be as poor as a church mouse.’ The moment I began speaking, he paused, and by the end of my speech he was staring at me with astonishment” (Mandela, 2001, pp. 89). After 27 years in prison, Mandela’s prison guards were his friends. Mandela’s firm and respectful minimal approach nurtured the very seeds of “goodness” in his prison guards.

To conclude, any chance to bring dignity to the fore is wasted by affronting abusers in undignified ways. In order to limit “evil,” it is sufficient to stop it with firm respect. If there is any chance for improvement, it is wasted by Diane’s approach.

***Will third parties benefit from Diane’s approach?***

Diane might hope that it increases public safety when third parties, those who draw lessons from watching others’ behavior, are exposed to language of “bitch” and “brain-farts” so as to have the unacceptability of “evil” demonstrated.

Diane might consider that it might be more instructive for third parties to learn how abusers may be stopped with minimal resources, or, if possible, reformed and dignified, rather than to learn how abusers are being rigidified in this role. Third parties learn abuse, not refraining from abuse, by being exposed to language such as “asshole” or to the call to “get rid” of people.

As Mandela demonstrates, resistance to evil can be expressed without the use of vulgar tough-guy ranting. Public safety is ensured by making good laws, by enforcing these laws with minimal use of resources and not by ranting. It is inherently contradictory and thus impossible to humanize the world by applying dehumanizing methods. It is easy to treat friends in dignified ways, the litmus test for peace-making skills comes when we meet people whom we would not call our friends. How to stop or reform them effectively, without overkill and without creating inconsistencies, is when third parties learn the most.

### **Secondary gains**

As we saw, there are no primary gains to be achieved for the world by Diane’s approach except, perhaps, that the very strength of her passion, albeit wrongly invested, may be appreciated as a great asset. Yet, even though the world does not gain, there are considerable secondary gains that Diane can indeed reap for herself by using her strategy. However, these secondary gains, for herself, undermine the hope for primary gains for the world and rather resemble the short-term fix of a drug-addict.

### ***Maintaining an adolescent illusion***

Some peace advocates indulge in exaggerated expectations and are continuously astonished that the world is “bad.” They seem to feel entitled to a world that is a priori “good.” They treat the world as if it “owes” them love and harmony and as if it “betrays” them by not fulfilling this imagined entitlement. They wallow in indignation, spending their time and energy on ranting.

Many peace advocates became sensitized to the harmful effects of abuse by being victimized as children. Some get stuck in the role of victimized children and resist “growing up” by continuously accusing their “parents” (“the world”) that there is so much “badness.”

They draw satisfaction from holding on to the illusion that some “parents” out there ought to make the world a better place. They elevate whoever holds gatekeeper functions to the “bad parent position” and target them with their complaints for real or imagined power abuse.

These peace advocates draw secondary gains from not facing the fact that they themselves are the caretakers of the world who carry the burden of making it a better place.

### ***Maintaining adolescent hope***

As long as people fume at the world being “bad,” they hold on to hope. They hope that their “bad parents” will listen, reform themselves, and then the world. The secondary gain to be drawn from this behavior is that it allows for holding on to hope, even if it is misplaced adolescent hope. The alternative to this behavior is, as described above, “growing up,” letting go of the hope that other people will carry the responsibility of “saving the world,” and that this will be achieved by them listening to me burning with rage.

### ***Feeling relieved***

Many people claim that aggression is like a pressure cooker that needs to be released in order to avoid “explosion.” The pressure cooker argument gives justification to the usefulness of fuming and raving and the sense of relief that might accompany this behavior.

However, this model of aggression has long been abandoned in social science. Humans are not aggressive “by nature” and do not require regular outbursts of aggression

to stay healthy. A host of research underpins that humans evolved to be peaceful and cooperative, not least to avoid being prey for predator animals - these insights were outlined most recently at the 2006 American Association for the Advancement of Science, annual meeting in St Louis, US, see <http://www.aaas.org/>, see also a good presentation in Giorgi (2001).

It is a mistake to model aggression with the pressure cooker model. The desire to vent aggression can and needs to be tackled in different ways than merely by venting aggression. It is important to differentiate anger and aggression. Anger is a vital “alarm” signal that alerts us to the fact that something is wrong. Overlooking this alarm signal is dangerous and potentially self- and other-destructive. However, it is even more dangerous to merely short-circuit into venting aggression.

Diane reaps high blood pressure from continuously running up and down barricades (real or imagined). However, she does not only ruin her own health. Prolonged stress also causes “tunnel vision,” which in turn undermines her ability to be an efficient leader of her organization. Peter Coleman (2003) describes how our “hot” short-term coping system may be detrimental to our long-term self-interest:

Many of the coping mechanisms that act to protect and insulate individuals and communities from the psychological damage and stress of protracted trauma (such as denial, suppression, projection, justification, etc.) impair their capacity to process information and function effectively (Lazarus, 1985). Thus, the ability to make sound, rational decisions regarding a conflict (such as cost/benefit assessments and a thorough consideration of alternatives and consequences) is adversely affected by the need to cope with the perceived threats associated with the conflict (through a denial of costs, glorification of violent strategies, and dehumanization of the other (Coleman, 2003, p. 17).

In conclusion, Diane ruins her own health because she is too “hot,” and she hurts other people’s lives because being too hot also handicaps her abilities as a leader.

### ***Feeling in control***

Primates use dominant and submissive behavior in situations of threat, in order to convey dominance and reproductive status. They use elaborate posturing and displays such as strutting, stereotypic, jerky movements, body swaying, genital display, and piloerection (a mammal erecting its fur or hair). Pekka Soini (1988) researched the pygmy marmoset in Brazil. In their genital display, of either sex, they turn their backs to the observer, arch their backs, raise their tails in a stiff arch, and the body and tail hair are ruffled.

Much of the vulgar “tough-guy” language that we hear in certain segments of today’s world society seems to fall into this pattern. Tough-guy language is used in many macho cultures where it is primarily used by males, and it is also partly built into the American frontier ethos where it is employed by men and women.

Vulgar tough-guy language offers the secondary gain of feeling in control, feeling strong and big, thus avoiding the unpleasant realization of one’s own vulnerability. Showing off, singing loud in the dark, feeling strong through shocking others and violating boundaries, however, all this undermines peace work. It is rather saddening



when peace activists, in the name of peace and humanization, through their language, force others into watching their bulging muscles, sexual organs, or production of feces.

Tough-guy behavior can indeed be feasible, but only for those in power in cultures that support it. A man in a macho culture, or a white American in an American frontier culture, both fare well. They have leverage and meet acceptance for wielding it. Diane’s approach is well-placed, as long as she is part of an elite, surrounded by underlings who have bought into the elite definitions of what is right and wrong in life. In a culture where everybody accepts that “the world is just,” or that “might is right,” or that “the fittest survive,” Diane will succeed. Diane can indeed operate effectively wherever a description, namely that the powerful usually succeed in exploiting the less powerful, is turned into a legitimization.

However, as soon as Diane is not part of an elite, her approach is doomed. Being a woman in a macho culture, or a black or indigenous person in an American frontier culture, provides a totally different situation. An underling in these cultures better abstains from posturing and making big noises. In front of a polar bear who is about to kill us, we do not jump up and down and call him names, unless we have a gun, because we have no leverage to back up our noises. Screaming loud would serve our need to express our feelings; however, it would be a rather suicidal undertaking to serve this need.

Furthermore, as soon as Diane meets people from other cultures, her conduct elicits rejection. She reaps contempt in Asia for a behavior that is accepted in the U.S.A. Oprah culture is not enjoyed everywhere.

And, last but not least, increasing interdependence in a globalizing world makes Oprah culture obsolete everywhere. Interdependence means that nobody has unilateral leverage anymore; everybody is bound in mutual dependence.

### ***Feeling that I belong***

Particularly young people, who enthusiastically defend friends, may not see the fine line that differentiates defense from destruction. They might be tempted to make a cognitive link between friendship and readiness to “fight enemies.” Apart from the cognitive fallacy that expressing disagreement or proving loyalty in friendship necessitates aggressive hostility to others, there is also a psychological fallacy involved in “paying for” in-group belonging with out-group hostility. Undeniably, in-group members’ joint ranting against out-group members renders a strong sense of belonging and excitement and thus provides a powerful incentive. Consequentially, some seek satisfaction in continuously scrutinising other people for potential out-group markers, ready to identify anybody who fails their scrutiny as out-group members, so as to then proceed to ridiculing them from within the in-group. Yet, this is a malign source of satisfaction that not only does not bring peace with out-groups, but easily turns inwards and poisons the very in-group members’ hearts and minds in the process.

Letting go of this satisfaction is perhaps among the most difficult lessons to learn, because the satisfactions that can be derived – belonging – are so powerful.

In a globalizing world, instead of focusing on what possibly divides us, instead of investing our energies into drawing lines that separate us from out-groups, and instead of demeaning out-groups, what seems advisable to develop, is the ambition and skill to

*highlight common ground* so as to facilitate cooperation across fault lines, and include dissent as a source of enrichment. Ultimately we need to build one single global in-group that jointly solves the inner problems of our world. Out-group hostility, for short-term self-serving aims, is particularly damaging for this project, because nobody likes to build a common in-group with people, who rant against them.

### ***Feeling authentic***

Some peace activists wish to give voice “to the people” and condemn “refined” language as the “licking of the elites’ feet” and the “betrayal of the people’s authenticity.” Thus they defend filling their sentences with linguistic ammunition such as “fuck” and “damn,” or more intellectual variations such as “brain-fart” or “brain-screw.”

However, their assumptions might be fallacious. First, “the people” around the world do not usually wave around with their sexual organs in their use of language. Believing that such practices would be “authentic” is a misrepresentation of the world’s “people” and of the concept of authenticity (and I have traveled the world more than most). Vulgar talk resembles the narcissistic project of exhibitionists and the quick fix of drug addicts too much to be reconcilable with the goals of peace work.

Jean Baker Miller (1976) teaches us that “authenticity and subordination are totally incompatible” (Miller, 1976, p. 98). Miller et al. (1999) write, “Authenticity is ever-evolving, not achieved at any one moment – it is a person’s ongoing ability to represent herself in relationships more fully... Authenticity is a process in movement – we move in and out of more or less authenticity as a consequence of the relational dynamics (Miller et al., 1999, p. 5-6).

At the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute (JBMTI) Jean Baker Miller, Judith Jordan, Irene Stiver, and Janet Surrey did the early work conceptualizing authenticity, later carried further by Linda Hartling and her colleagues. As part of building *Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT)*, “rather than emphasizing the Western notion of autonomy, these scholars propose that healthy development leads people toward greater authenticity. When engaging in growth fostering relationships, both people are able to bring more and more of themselves into the relationship... Authenticity is about developing an optimal, empathic quality of engagement, being responsive and responding, rather than reactive or revealing. Being authentic requires an awareness of how our actions impact others engaged in the relationship” (Linda Hartling, in a personal message, May 10, and May 13, 2006).

### ***Getting dirty***

“In a real fight you get dirty! If you do not get dirty, you are not serious! You wimp, you merely are a coward!” shouts Diane.

This is the “medicine only helps when it hurts” argument and in certain situations it is correct. However, such arguments have also been used by perpetrators as “excuses” for genocides such as the one in Rwanda in 1994, or the Holocaust in Nazi-Germany. In contrast, the example of Mandela shows that the correct sequence in this argument must be observed. Mandela measured success not by weighing the amount of “dirt” on his hands. If he had used this strategy, he would have unleashed genocide on the white elite

in South Africa, following the extremist Hutus in Rwanda who attempted to exterminate their former elite. Mandela strove for a minimum amount of “dirt” and no overkill. He measured success by gauging whether the overall situation improved and not by looking at his dirty hands.

### *Maintaining victimhood*

As mentioned earlier, many peace advocates became sensitized to the harmful effects of abuse by being victimized as children. Victims usually yearn to be acknowledged for their victimhood. If they do not succeed – and abused children often are deprived of due recognition – some attempt to achieve this recognition later in life by repeatedly manipulating themselves into new victim situations. In other words, they draw satisfaction from bringing others into the perpetrator role because this maintains their hope to finally achieve due appraisal for being victims. Thus, substitute “wars” are instigated where there would be peace otherwise. Many Dianes might have such a personal background. What is usually regarded as “rational self-interest,” namely the avoidance of victimhood, is not the prevailing goal in these cases. What would be needed, for Diane, is that she works through her childhood trauma in ways that do not necessitate repeating victimhood.

Walter Mischel and Aaron L. De Smet have studied domestic violence and describe a related psychological phenomenon, namely what they call *rejection sensitivity*. Mischel & De Smet (2000) describe it as a “maladaptive reaction pattern of uncontrolled hostility [that] may be essentially reflexive, by-passing conscious control and preventing purposeful self-intervention effort. In such a case, the person applies encodings even if they do not fit and maintains them regardless of contradictory evidence (Mischel and De Smet, 2000, p. 259). The ironic and often tragic result is that what is most feared, namely rejection, is elicited in a self-fulfilling prophecy fashion.

Another reason for why some people might engineer themselves into victimhood is the admiration that can be gained from it. Human history presents us with many stories of admirable heroic martyrs. Due to the amount of admiration that martyrdom can command, some people manipulate themselves into martyr roles. One way to achieve this is the above describe way of provoking others – for example, by demeaning them – into attack.

Yet another method for maintaining victimhood is to hold on to remembering the humiliations of the past. In his book *The Ethics of Memory*, Margalit (2002) suggests that it is not only the experience of moral emotions like humiliation that motivates aggressive behavior, but also the memory of such emotions. Goldman & Coleman (2005) report, “Margalit proposes that, under certain conditions, individuals can become attached, or even addicted, to the emotion, thus serving as a constant source of retaliatory action” (Goldman and Coleman, p. 15). In other words, a self-styled martyr can use provocation and the memory of humiliation to justify “heroic aggression.”

To conclude, secondary gains are like drug addiction. They provide short-term solace at the cost of long-term aggravation of the problems. One may sip a glass of wine from time to time; however, it is best to avoid getting hooked on secondary gains. Secondary gains do not serve one’s own long-term interests, and those who are “bad” only rejoice at

people who invest their resistance in short-range re-actionism instead of long-range action. Short-range re-actionism misses the real problems of the world and underestimates the real extent of “badness.” When petty problems are allowed to take the front stage, the real troubles may be overlooked.

Even being the victim of fierce insult is no reason to lash out in ways Diane suggests. A friend was once attacked and had his supporters respond in a Diane fashion. This was in 2005. I wrote to him:

Remember that America never received as many sympathies in the world as after 9/11 in 2001. Today, those sympathies have evaporated around the world, not because America was attacked more, but because of its strategies of defense. Being attacked may be a source of enhanced support and sympathy, attacks do not necessary destroy one’s reputation. Sometimes it is rather one’s own defense that destroys one’s reputation. Thus, it is advisable to keep extremely calm under attack, and never use any words that might be interpreted as aggressive, combative, or defensive. Clearly, it is not pleasant to be attacked, and it is normal to get hurt and angry, however, this anger has to be used to design effective responses, not brought into the public domain as aggression-entrepreneurship. Not because anger is bad, but because aggressive responses are counterproductive. Readers, audiences, all those, who form an opinion on your reputation, are taken aback by aggressive defenses and feel that you are not in control. You inculcate yourself. Particularly well-willing and seriously interested supporters will drift away from you.

To conclude, we have to learn to identify and then forego cheap secondary gains, which resemble the fix of the drug addict – a fix that ultimately leads into the abyss. Satisfaction from appearing tough and aggressively venting anger, for example, is destructive in a new interdependent world where cooperation is the aim and not domination. Finn Tschudi calls what I label secondary gains “pathetic advantages” (in a personal message, May 31, 2006).

## **What is effective change?**

As discussed above, in old times there were those who could afford to engage Diane’s behavior (elites) and others who could not (underlings). Global interdependence flattens the world and there is no space anymore for Diane’s behavior. And this is not a question of opinion; it is a question of adaptation to a new situation. Jonathan Friedman (2005) writes:

...when the world starts to move from a primarily vertical (command and control) value-creation model to an increasingly horizontal (connect and control) creation model, it doesn’t affect just how business gets done. It affects everything how communities and companies define themselves, where companies and communities stop and start, how individuals balance their different identities as consumers, employees, shareholders, and citizens, and what role government has to play. (Friedman, 2005, p. 201).

In this new world, not only does dominating behavior not work anymore, it poisons its authors. It is inherently irreconcilable to work for human rights and betray their spirit in the process. Being a living paradox destroys inner coherence and credibility within the creators of such behavior. As discussed earlier, adapting to new historical times of unprecedented interdependence means that it is no longer sufficient to fight against tyrants; tyranny itself, dominating behavior itself, are now obsolete. Not only the *what* counts, but also the *how*.

There are two basic approaches in medicine, pro-active prevention *for health*, and re-active struggle *against disease*. Both approaches also apply to the health of the world.

### **Action**

We, every single human being on planet Earth, are jointly responsible for making the world “good.” There is nobody else but us to be held responsible. If you think the world is bad, it is like looking into the mirror. If you see ugliness, you can break the mirror, or you can accept that you are the one who has to nurture change. The best way to do that is by building alternative social universes that “crowd out badness.” Building alternative universes resembles the preventive approach in medicine. And this approach deserves our main attention. “An ounce of prevention is worth many pounds of cure,” says David Hamburg (2002).

To achieve sound prevention, action is needed, action poured into defining constructive and alternative visions for a future world and then implementing these visions. The global Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS) network is meant to represent the seed for such an alternative social universe that focuses on action and not re-action.

As discussed before, the human rights vision for a sustainable future world calls for two transformations, (a) the dismantling of tyrants, and (b) the dismantling of tyrannical systems and behaviors, including our own tyrannical behavior. The so-called Millennium Goals operationalize in detail the *what*, what has to be done out in the world, and papers such as this try to spell out the skills we have to learn in the process within us, or the *how*. The aim is not to make everybody love everybody else, but to begin to move us all toward “a minimum standard for human relations” as formulated by the Coexistence Initiative ([http:// www.coexistence.net](http://www.coexistence.net)).

### **Re-action**

Once disease has occurred, it is too late to prevent it. In the face of serious “disease” (power abuse, disrespect and humiliation), re-action is needed. When re-action is advisable, there are two kinds available, petty re-actionism and useful re-action.

#### ***Petty re-actionism***

Petty re-actionism is similar to hypochondria. “Social hypochondriacs” are hooked on pinpointing or imagining “bad” people in their social surroundings and thus give the power to define their priorities away to others. And they draw everybody into their web

of complaints. They abuse their families’ and friends’ attention, time and energy. Petty re-actionism represents a net loss, a net loss of energy that would otherwise be available for effective change in the world. The involved players are caught in a fog of minor problems and miss the real problems of the world that would need to be attended to. Unfortunately, petty re-actionism is wide-spread, due to the secondary gains above mentioned.

### *Useful re-action*

Petty re-actionism is like exhausting one’s resources by letting them “drip about.” Useful re-action, in contrast, means choosing a worthy cause and concentrating all energy and resources on that project by devising truly effective action. This is done by refraining from losing energy on being astonished, indignant or on ranting. Undignified language is obsolete.

Re-action that is effective is also “dangerous,” for everybody. Having one’s resources “drip about” harms nobody seriously, because, apart from the waste, it is without great effect. However, as soon as resistance to abuse becomes focused and effective, it elicits significant reactions. The “bad” people will retaliate. Mandela was in prison for 27 years. In order to survive such reprisals, resistance has to be designed with utmost care, and the arbitrary dripping about of indignation, ranting and posturing would be disastrous.

“Minimal justice” was the label I used for Mandela’s approach of very measured responses. It means avoiding waste of energy and resources by designing action at the appropriate level and scale. It is akin to the subsidiarity principle which is prominent in the design of the European Union and states that matters ought to be handled by the smallest or lowest competent authority. John Braithwaite (2002) developed the concept of *responsive regulation* which puts this approach in a comprehensive framework. Finn Tschudi wrote (in a personal message on June 14, 2006):

Perhaps the key concept in Braithwaite’s theory is his concept *responsive regulation*, illustrated by a Regulatory Pyramid, RP. This covers (in principle) all kinds of regulatory issues (including all kinds of business and economic crimes), and as a special case what is covered by criminal law. If repeated attempts at RJ dialogic approaches do not work – the base of the RP – one should move “upwards” and the next level would often be some kind of deterrence measures e.g. fines.

While the base level assumes the “virtuous” actor, an inhabitant in a benign CS world, the deterrence level assumes the “rational actor” where we are into the MP (or is it EM?) world. If all attempts at deterrence fail it may be necessary to move to the apex, “incapacitation,” where you have the “irrational” actor and this neatly seems to conform to “asocial” relationship or “sociopathy.” In criminal law this would imply indefinite jail sentence, in business withdrawing of license to operate, in international relation changing regime. *Responsive regulation*, however, implies that concretely you would have a variety of RP’s with different number of levels; each tailor-made to the specific situation. In international relations there will (or ought to be) a variety of threats (do “threats” basically imply AR relations, or can it sometimes also be EM)

varying in intensity, then trade sanctions, boycotts, and so forth.

A basic point, however, is that you should always be willing to scale down the pyramid once you get compliance at a higher level. The point of the draconic apex is that you as a regulator should act in such a way that it is not necessary to invoke this level! “Talk softly and carry a big stick” is one of Braithwaite’s favorite quotes, and you might add “but handle yourself so that you do not have to use the big stick”. (I cannot refrain from mentioning that the US backed coup against Allende in Chile in the seventies scarcely epitomizes wise use of RP: quick move to the top of the pyramid).

To conclude, let me share with you a message I wrote in 2004 to a dear friend, let me call him John, who had put all his heart into encouraging a victimized minority to become more confident and assertive (I am adapting this text so as to protect both John’s and his friends’ confidentiality). Now his friends are turning against him, accusing him of failing to condone the violence they think has to be carried out.

Dearest John, I worry about you. It is so dangerous to support or instigate violence, even if justice is at stake, particularly in a struggle for empowerment. What I saw in similar struggles, for example, in Africa, indicated that the use of aggression with “good intentions” can easily backfire.

As we discussed, some of your friends have grave personal problems, which they displace into the public realm. And unfortunately, they have succeeded in highjacking the group and implementing their dogmatic and blind in-group/out-groups biases as group norms following the motto “if you do not join us in the anger against whom we choose to be angry at, you are not part of our group.”

I am sure, you know Mary Woolstonecraft, who went to Paris to support the French Revolution. She almost ended up under the guillotine. The French Revolution shows how empowerment, driven by too much aggression, can end up in blind paranoia and as “reign of terror.” Also Rwanda reminds us that a genocide can be carried out in gruesome ways by the downtrodden, those who try to “rise up” and “empower” themselves. Some of your friends, I fear, would not refrain from a “reign of paranoid terror” if they had the power.

Instead of bowing to their paranoia, not least to your own protection, I think it would be fruitful to have meetings with each of your friends individually, at least with the most problematic ones. The blind anger that has become group norm is intensified when they are in a group, and, as we both agree, counterproductive to constructive empowerment.

I know victims of oppression, who express sadness and anger in completely different ways as compared to your friends. There are other ways than indulging in dogmatic anger, playing around with aggression, using anger as a resource to obtain secondary gains, or utilizing the situation as an arena for unsolved personal problems.

You are at a very crucial crossroad with your friends, I believe, and you have to be extremely careful that you do not endanger yourself and your family by appeasing them by bowing to them, particularly not in the current situation that is perhaps more heated than ever. As not only the French Revolution shows, violent revolutions easily

eat their own children, they tend to eat the Mary Woolstonecrafts who initially closed their eyes to violence since they believe it was for a “good cause.”

The way forward for your friends must be, I would suggest, to get them out of blind anger *against* “enemies,” into calm strategizing *for* a vision of a better world, which also includes former perpetrators and/or those perceived as such, see the white elite in South Africa, who is rather included than alienated (the argument that the white elite in South Africa still has too much power does not invalidate the merits of the overall strategy). Otherwise cycles of violence never end. Reading Fanon or Freire, without a clear constructive vision for a better world can have gruesome results. I know that, particularly from Burundi/Rwanda and German history. Aggression is a fire one should not play with.

As I wrote above, I am afraid that some of your friends “want blood,” whoever’s blood, and you have to be extremely careful. You are so to speak in shooting distance. In such situations – I am sure you know this for example from torture victims – it does not pay to renounce once ideals just to avoid being hit. Usually, one is hit more after bowing, not less.

Dear John, HumanDHS is an initiative that for the time being rests mainly on my personal idealism and sacrifices. I am receiving no salary, from nowhere; Columbia University, for example, expects that we bring the funding. I could easily jump into a “mainstream career” (I am frequently asked to apply for professorships, for example), however, I want to stick with HumanDHS and build it as a global network of scholars and practitioners. Among others therefore, namely in order to be global, we are careful with any local affiliation; we wish to keep a large amount of independence and global reach.

I am proud of having gathered of a group of people, who give their resources and time for making a difference in this world, and I feel that for me maintaining their motivation, spirit and creativity, and keeping the group together, is a task that almost resembles “walking on water.” We live in a materialistic world, where those who are being suspected of “idealism” are easily ridiculed. I feel that it is almost a miracle that we, in HumanDHS, manage to gather and keep together a network of people who find satisfaction in contributing to a better world in a very down-to-earth way. So many others, particularly the well-to-do, opt for having an easy life and merely decrying the ills of the world. In contrast, many HumanDHS members really give their lives for a better world and reach out to people around the globe who are caught in humiliation. Clearly, however, we cannot “save the world” alone and not at once.

What your friends do with you hurts me deeply. Instead of taking the hand that is reaching out to them, and appreciating that there is somebody, namely you, who tries to “walk on water,” their only comment is that “the fact that he walks on water shows that he cannot swim.”

This attitude is utterly destructive, I feel, for your friends and those around them, including you, as you yourself acknowledged; therefore I fear for you. Please be very careful with every step you take now! I profoundly worry about your safety! As you said, your friends behaved viciously with me, but treat you even more brutally. I am now far away, while you have your home with them!

To summarize, I believe that building up blind anger and dogmatic in-group/out-group demarcations or rigid oppressed/oppressor dichotomies in the name of empowerment



is profoundly counterproductive. One has to go beyond Fanon and Freire, I believe. I personally attempt to position myself in the “middle,” so to speak, of two opponents, whoever they are, as a voice for dignified lives for all, and not as a voice for “victory” of one opponent over its “enemies.” People in the “middle,” like me, usually are attacked from the extremists of both opposing camps, for being “too much on the other’s side.” Shirin Ebadi, the Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner of 2003, whom I met in Oslo, received death threats from both sides, the conservatives and the students who want revolution: for some Iranian students she is not radical enough, and for the conservatives she is too radical. I made similar experiences when I organized the Hamburger Ideenkette in 1993, when I mobilized Hamburg to open up to the notion of global responsibility and got 20,000 people to turn up. I was glad that I had no children of my own to protect.

However, I believe the situation becomes even more dangerous for people, who side with one camp in a struggle, or try to appear siding. By placing myself in the middle, openly, I am announcing that it is my program to be a “traitor” for extremists in both camps. I announce openly that my strategy is to gather all moderates, on all sides, and work for constructive change. Those, however, who side with one camp, and hope to not appear as traitors, risk to be hit by much more wrath in case they are suspected to be traitors. And the probability for being suspected to be a traitor increases together with the heat of the struggle. Heating up feelings thus heightens the probability that those who put fuel into the fire, and this is valid for all sides, are consumed by it. Surprisingly, I believe that historic times have never been better for constructive change brought about by moderates than now. There is, in fact, more reason for hope than ever, I believe, if one embarks on constructive strategies that are anchored in global structures of legitimization. As I alluded to earlier, the fact that the glass is only half full does not mean that there is no hope to fill it more. The fact, for example, that the UN is not yet the body that can pacify and provide justice to people around the globe, does not mean that we should give up striving for a world that is governed by global rules of justice rather than “might is right” norms.

Dear John, I send you lots and lots of love and compassion for your extremely difficult situation! I know that I am not able to understand what you are going through and that any amount of compassion is insufficient. However, I try, at least, to let you know that there are people in this world who feel deeply wounded by the occurrence of abuse, wherever it happens! Let us build global alliances against such suffering!

## **Concluding remarks**

As discussed above, some peace advocates are victims of unrealistic expectations and believe that the world “owes” them peace, love and loyalty. I suggest that they embrace the painful insight the situation is much more complicated – indeed, love and loyalty may lie at the core of much of violence and war. It requires everybody’s efforts to make the world “good” – pointing at others is not sufficient.

We live in an increasingly interdependent world. This is a new historical fact that none of our forefathers had to face and new times require new adaptations. It is no longer

appropriate to merely fight against tyrants; tyranny itself, dominating behavior itself, are now dysfunctional.

Humankind might decide that these new adaptations are too difficult to tackle and that we better give up trying. Indeed, if even the Dianes do not understand that they violate the very core of the human rights message which they supposedly defend, there might be no hope. However, humankind might also choose to keep trying. This is why I write this paper.

Unfortunately, without being aware of it, and despite of lip service to Martin Buber (1944) and his “I-Thou” connectivity, many peace-makers and anti-genocide activists follow the Diane path. Within their own groups they go down precisely the slope toward mayhem from which they wish to free the world. This is why we highlight the need to *walk the talk* in the global Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies network (HumanDHS, <http://www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/whoweare.php#walkingthetalk>). See also Lindner (2006).

If Mandela had used Diane’s approach, he would have instigated genocide against the white elite in South Africa. In Rwanda, the Hutus, the underlings, when in power, embarked on killing the Tutsis, their former elite. Mandela refrained from going down this path. In order to follow Mandela, we have to learn to *walk the talk*. In order to learn to walk the talk we need more *self-reflexivity*. Adair Linn Nagata (2005), an American professor in Japan, describes this skillfully. Admittedly, it is very difficult to look at one’s own behavior from a meta-position and recognize that we might violate our own goals; however, it is precisely this painful step back that we have to take, because the stakes are so high. Otherwise we cannot bring about the second human rights transformation.

What we need is *transformative learning* – see Mezirow (1978), Mezirow (1995), or Taylor (1998), where creativity can be triggered at the interface of old and new mindsets. Research indicates that creativity is enhanced through *interactions of mutually contradictory but equally compelling forces* (Hayashi (2003). Cultural assumptions are called into question and a *stress-adaptation-growth process* unfolds (Kim & Ruben (1988) – see also Lonner & Malpass (Eds.) (1994). We need to increase *social identity complexity* (Brewer & Roccas (2002), and develop a mature and complex *meta-emotions discourse* (Gottman et al. (1997)).

All *moderates*, those who are willing and able to perform both human rights transformations, (a) and (b), those who are able to apply self-reflexivity, walk the talk, and end cycles of humiliation, have to speak to the *extremists* in this world. The moderates have to speak to those who keep cycles of humiliation moving instead of ending them. Among them are those who limit themselves to carrying out solely (a), either intentionally, or because they have not yet understood the full scope of the human rights message. I think Diane is in the latter group.

When we all walk the talk, when we all have cooled down, we will recognize another fact, a fact that made me put the word “bad” into inverted commas throughout this paper. As mentioned earlier, often it is precisely “goodness,” namely love and loyalty that lead to war and violence; people defend their loved ones with violence and do not find that to be “evil.” Even more, the question of human “badness” or “goodness” is often not relevant at all. Customs, societal structures and institutions that appear “evil” to human rights advocates today, once were regarded as “normal.” Norway, for example, ranks number one on the Gender-Related Development Index today. Nevertheless, as recently

as the end of the nineteenth century, Norwegian law gave husbands the right to beat insubordinate wives. The human rights movement turns formally legitimate practices into illegitimate ones, and this transformation proceeds in a rather uncoordinated way, without “bad” intentions causing this incoherence. As a result of this lack of homogeneity of the human rights movement, some people, those leading the movement, look back on former “normality” and find it “evil,” while others, those who are not yet touched by the new times, still find it “normal,” without any “badness” being involved. In yet other cases, it may be a mere lack of knowledge or plain unawareness, which are at the core of “evil” practices. My fieldwork in Rwanda and Burundi drew my attention to such dynamics. In *Jungle Child*, Sabine Kuegler (2005) describes this very starkly. She grew up in West Papua (Irian Jaya) and explains how devastating it was that people believed that there was no natural death, but that people died because somebody had cursed them. The result was an unending “need” to revenge the death of one’s loved ones by killing the supposed killers. Again, there was no human “badness” involved. A group of 7000 people decimated itself down to 400 people in the course of a few generations.

Diane’s beliefs are as erroneous as those Sabine Kuegler found in West Papua. Diane’s fallacy is to think that blue-eyed appeasement of “evil” is remedied by ranting. It is not. Jumping up and down in front of a polar bear who is about to eat us is even more unintelligent than smiling at him or running away (not to speak of jumping up and down in front of a self-made paper tiger). Mandela did not bring down Apartheid by making a lot of noises. Clearly, “blissful ignorance” and “keeping smiling” are no way to bring down “evil” people or institutions; rather than avoid or solve conflict, they create it. But the opposite of naivety is not self-serving posturing – it is firm intelligent action.

Let me end this paper here. To Diane, I wrote the following:

Dear Diane, I love your passion for peace and for helping this world to become a better place. I deeply appreciate your sense of injure whenever you experience that power is being abused and people are treated in humiliating ways. Please use your wonderful talents for pro-active change, dear Diane. Try to work primarily *for* a better world, and use as little energy as possible on fighting *against* evil.

If you wish to invest in re-active change, dear Diane, please avoid petty re-actionism and rather invest effectively in useful re-action. Please avoid language such as “bitch” or “brain-fart” because it undermines your goals and makes you vulnerable. Avoid losing your focus in lamenting. Choose a worthy cause, concentrate your resources on this project, and try to achieve real change.

If you wish to work for human rights, you need to make two transitions, (a) affront tyrants, and (b) affront dominating structures and behavior, including your own dominating tendencies. If you resist tyrants by aggressive posturing, you stay within the old system, as it was the norm prior to the human rights movement. You will destroy yourself and your friends. You become part of the problem.

What we discuss here, dear Diane, does not concern a difference of opinion between me and you. It is a question of adapting to new times. Grandmother cooked with lots of butter and oil, for people who worked in the fields; however, as soon as people spend their days sitting in office chairs, grandmother’s cooking becomes obsolete. I had a “Diane period” in my life, dear Diane. Thus, I am not speaking from moral high ground. I was the eldest and physically strong. I abused other children. I behaved

arrogantly and dominating. It was only later in life, when my physical prowess lost significance and the fact that I was a woman began to define me more, that I was forced to learn that aggressive behavior does not help. It only helps as long as one is in a privileged position. And as soon as connection and cooperation are what is needed, as is the case in a globalizing world, aggressive behavior becomes obsolete altogether. I myself had to learn this painfully. As I said, to being with, I was a veritable bully. I said that I do not speak from moral high ground. I mean that. The pain of feeling lost in this world – I was born into a displaced family – made me struggle to become a global citizen. By accident, this experience transported me into the future. I see things that others will only see in some decades. I observe global interdependence more clearly than most others. And this is not an insight I arrogantly carry in front of me as my achievement. I humbly offer the lessons I painfully learn through my global life to you and lovingly invite you to join the new world. I suggest that you are shielded from seeing the potentially dangerous consequences of your behavior, since you are safely tucked away in a protected corner of the world. However, those at the front, the Mandelas, know how overkill can backfire. I am aware that it might be difficult to accept that you might benefit from learning something new at your age, particularly from me who is so much younger, but please, consider the possibility!

At the moment you might be too angry at me to be able to listen. Please let it touch your heart that I love you and appreciate you deeply. Take a step back and accept my loving invitation. Perhaps you could try the Mandela way for a while and see how it feels? Why not make an attempt! Please try, even if only to please me! Start by not getting excited. The world is bad? Yes, what did you expect? The world is much worse than you think. However, there is no need to get worked up. Working yourself up does not make the world a better place. Just stay calm and pour your energy and passion into sound planning. You will see, the quality of life will increase, for you, for your family, your friends, your colleagues, and finally, even the world may become a better place when you talk calmly to it and pour your formidable talents into devising firm and measured action.

Avishai Margalit (1996), wrote a book entitled *The Decent Society*, in which he calls for institutions that do not anymore humiliate citizens. Decency reigns when humiliation is being minimized, humiliation in relationships, but also humiliation inflicted by institutions. Decency rules when dignity for all is made possible. Decency does not mean that everybody should like everybody; decency is the minimum that is necessary to keep a neighborhood functioning – coexisting without mayhem – even when neighbors dislike each other.

The global Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies network extends the call for decency from national to global levels. The vision of a *decent global village* is spelled out in detail in the United Nations Millennium Declaration of September 2000. The point is sustainability, sustainability both ecological and social. On the way to a decent and sustainable global village, we have to be alert to dynamics of humiliation and heal and prevent them. Particularly the danger emanating from the current lack of egalization must be taken seriously. Lagging egalization threatens to fuel feelings of humiliation, and feelings of humiliation in turn entail the potential to lead to violence.

Let us jointly build a decent global village. Let us invite the tyrants of this world to join a world of equal dignity. And let us invite the Dianas of this world to join in and not only dismantle tyranny out there, but also our own tyrannical behavior in us. If this approach will not save the world, none will. Old methods are no alternative in a new world of mutual interdependence.

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