

Some Thoughts on Changing Hearts and Minds

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Appreciate the necessity of struggle. As Frederick Douglass wrote in 1857: "If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are [women and] men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters."

"The most effective way to break down prejudice is through repeated, positive interaction with the object of one's prejudice." (Gary Hirschberg, LCSW, MSW, 1996). But how do we create positive interactions?

Learn from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He expected members of the movement to adhere to a ten-point pledge. Here are the first three points:

- Meditate daily on the teachings and life of Jesus.
- Remember always that the non-violent movement seeks justice and reconciliation - not victory.
- Walk and talk in the manner of love, for God is love.

Persuasion is "attracting someone to your side." It is not overpowering another person through "facts" or volume (whether measured in decibels or pounds). Emotions are engaged in persuasion, not just logic.

In The All New Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate, George Lakoff offers this guidance:

- Always start with your values.
- Know your audience. Listen with respect and for understanding.
- Don't be on the defensive. Calmly conduct yourself in a way that will compel respect and people will take you seriously.
- Don't negate the other person's claims with facts and logic. Reframe the discussion and then fit the facts to your frame.
- Use future projection. "Wouldn't it be better if . . . ?"
- Tell a story. A personal story is best.

One frame for storytelling is "Felt/Found/Feel" – used in conflict resolution on playgrounds, but also in business sales as a way to generate empathy.

- I felt (something similar to what you expressed).....
- Then I found (what happened to change your mind)....
- Now I feel.....(how it is now)