

Deacon Jodi Moscona's
Monthly Memo On:
Ethics, Spirituality and Success

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There are a lot of stories in the news, however I hope you will pardon me this month for focusing on my home state, Louisiana. Since my last newsletter, my state has been victimized and I feel compelled to write about it. But first, many have e-mailed about the upcoming book that Billy Arcement and I are writing, "Journeying on Holy Ground-Christian Strategies to Reach your Personal, Professional and Spiritual Destiny. It is in final edit and although we are slightly behind schedule it should be released in time for Christmas. To all that have asked, you can pre-order. Just respond to this e-mail and let me know the quantity. All pre-orders will be personally autographed by both authors.

THE NEWS

The biggest news in Louisiana this past month was about the "Jena Six." I had intended to let the story go. But because two days ago, the principle character in the well scripted play found himself back in jail for reasons totally unrelated to the "Jena Six" issue, I feel a comment is needed. Mychal Bell is the teenager that spent months in jail and was convicted of a felony only to have the conviction overturned because he had been prosecuted as an adult rather than as a juvenile. This entire case centers around racial tension at a high school where the white students hang out in one area and the black students hang out in another area. It is alleged that the black students decided they wanted to gather under the huge oak tree where white students hung out and tried to force the white students away. The white students allegedly hung some nooses from the tree to show their dissatisfaction with the situation. The situation escalated until a fight ensued. The fight, captured on video, shows six black teens kicking and beating a white student to unconsciousness. It is further alleged that this particular student did not have anything to do with the noose incident. One of the gang, Mychal Bell, was charged, tried as an adult and convicted. He appealed and won on the basis that he was a minor at the time. Unfortunately, before the case had a chance to go through the normal legal

process, thousands of people converged on Louisiana to protest Bell's conviction.

JUST THE FACTS PLEASE

Most people in America now have the impression that Louisiana is a racist State and that our citizens are generally uneducated, still living in the past and holding on to parochial, racist prejudices. The reality is that we all have bias in us. A poll released just last week indicates that an overwhelming majority of Americans would rather be around, live around and socialize with people like themselves. It's not just race. The bias involves religion, nationality, and all other sorts of ways in which we identify ourselves. This was no surprise to me. Just look around and you will see that we tend to form small "clickish" groups and hang around with people with whom we are most comfortable. Despite the impression presented in the press, people in Louisiana live harmoniously with a rather diverse group of people. We have French Cajuns, people with Spanish heritage, Creoles and we have integrated Irish, Italian and German immigrants into our society in addition to African Americans and Hispanics. One would never know this listening to the venom spewing out of the mouths of the Al Sharpton's and the Jesse Jackson's of the world. These individuals made the incident in Jena to be some kind of racial travesty. In truth, if they had just let the criminal justice system work, the outcome they sought would have been the same. A couple of days BEFORE the big protest, the Court of Appeals ruled for Mychal Bell and threw out the conviction. The protest went on anyway. Why was the protest needed?

THE REST OF THE STORY

What really was initially never reported was that Mychal Bell, at the time of the beating, was on probation for a prior conviction. In fact, he has four priors on his record. Mychal violated the terms of his probation for the prior conviction and is now back in jail. All of that effort on the part of the Black Leadership (and I use that term loosely) to free Mychal and he winds up right back in jail. The town of Jena and the State of Louisiana were held hostage to get Mychal, not your All American kid, out of jail.

THE SPIRITUAL CONNECTION

We all have a spiritual dimension in our lives that directly impacts how we live. Unfortunately, many simply ignore that dimension. If we are "in tune with" our spiritual side, we are able to focus on events from the perspective of how they impact the way we experience life. If we take the time to quiet ourselves and to look inside, we see things from a different perspective. We are able to imagine how things will impact the future and also how things will impact others. Without looking to the spiritual side, we tend to focus only on ourselves. We become selfish and self centered.

Relating this idea to the Jena case, we can look at it from two perspectives. First look at it from the perspective of Mychal Bell. He reacts to the perceived threat of the noose in the tree by physically beating a white student. He clearly has a void in his spiritual life. The reaction of Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson, both ministers, is similarly void of the spiritual dimension. Their efforts to stir up the emotions of Blacks nationwide had a very negative impact on the community of Jena and on Louisiana. It appears to me that these men had a self-serving and negative focus.

The second perspective is that of the people of Jena and Louisiana. Citizens simply moved aside and allowed all of this to happen. We could have tried to stop it. However all we wanted was to let the system work. And it did. Furthermore, the system continues to work.

The spiritual dimension of our lives is what keeps us focused on the positive. We all must realize how important it is to our lives to feed our spiritual side. We feed it with prayer, meditation and most of all with quiet time. I am not saying that the people of Louisiana are all spiritually superior to any others. I just know that in this case the cooler heads of or folks prevented what could have been a very bad situation.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

You might be wondering how all of this fits together and how it affects you and your business or your life. Dale Carnegie says in "How to win Friends and Influence People" that we should avoid arguments and that we should avoid voicing our opinions until we are asked. In the case of situations like Jena, the best thing to do is to let the folks that have made it an issue continue to let it be an issue, and for us to just continue to be good upstanding citizens. I think the citizens of Louisiana, although victimized by the vicious verbal attacks, came out looking pretty good. The folks that looked bad are the

usual ones—Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson. Let us all continue to live our own lives focusing on our own goals and let us not fall into the trap of worrying about the small stuff. And when others try to make the small stuff into large issues, let's just let them go and ignore them because if we don't react, they will just fade away.

Jodi

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