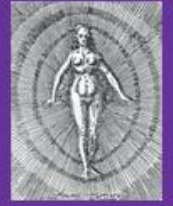


CHARLYNE GELT, PH.D.

Encouraging Self-Discovery and Empowerment



The Great Realization by Charlyne Gelt, Ph.D.

"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

Dr. Martin Luther King



[The Great Realization](#)

The recent celebration of Reverend Martin Luther King's birthday and teachings has been a reminder of how important it is that we continue to apply a lens of knowledge and understanding to how we navigate the *current* turbulent waters of political, family, ethnic, and racial differences.

It helps to recognize that hidden within every crisis, large or small, lie the seeds of opportunity for positive change. It may surprise you to learn that human conflicts, rather than reinforcing each individual's "my way or the highway" thinking, *can* actually be turning points leading to peaceful evolution and real, lasting change for the better — without having to personalize the issues or divide up individuals and groups from each another.

We can all be agents of change and do our part in building bridges to reconnect with each other. It's usually not the issue itself but our *perception* of the issue, how we view it, and which set of "facts" we've obtained (or chosen to believe) that end up influencing us and can even determine if someone lives or dies. ***Let's learn to hear each other out, respect each other's rights, without judgment or name-calling.***

Our families, our schools, our cultural histories, and our religions formulate the basis of our belief systems and are the foundation of our nation's great strength. Our nation's diversity is also our nation's strength. However, our Judeo-Christian foundations tend to support either/or thinking, including top dog/underdog dynamics that may not encourage or offer opportunity for diverse or critical discourse. From a relentless focus on black-or-white rational, one is either good or bad, right or wrong on the critical issues that affect people's daily lives. How do we question the existing paradigm, bridge the opposing black-or-white viewpoints and still honor our cultural histories and religious beliefs?

History buffs know that things were not always the way they are today. Immigrant families rejected authoritarianism, endured great hardship, and became US citizens as they continued in the struggle for their freedom and for autonomy. Rather than continue to be enslaved, they worked hard, enlisted in the fight for their political freedom, advocated for voting rights and economic equity.

This short clip puts today's problems in perspective <https://www.youtube.com/embed/P-IzlvGRxA8>

"Change your thinking, change your life" Buddha

Can differences of opinions and thinking be okay? Yes! Our great nation has thrived by encouraging new development, including inventions created from out-of-the box thinking. However, in many families, dialogues about differences in thinking and opinions are devalued or discouraged. So, to belong, to not be criticized, to not be cast out, we shut down, we choose to join-in (in silence) rather than speak up. Many have learned to adapt, to go with the flow, to adhere to the rules of our family or society.

In our schools children are often taught to learn robotically, to memorize facts and figures in order to pass a test. Now, at a time of so much uncertainty and unrest around the world, it is important that we learn to *think critically*, including questioning our beliefs and authority figures. Critical thinking is a skill that can be learned in the classroom and in the family at the dinner table, but we have typically relied on media and news outlets to report their "truth" on war, politics, corruption, and the difficulties many of us face.

If words can divide us, so, too, can words become a bridge to unite us despite differences. Since we do have choices about how to respond, and since how we respond determines the kind of life we lead, it's worthwhile doing the hard work to learn the art of civil discourse again. Learning to validate one's answers by examining them is not cut and paste; it is research, digging into information for facts that support one's views. Taking the time to talk with someone on the other side and listening to all perspectives — not to change each other's minds, but to respect each other as people. It is a skill that can be applied to create healthy work environment and marital relationships.

I flash back to John Lennon's message, and whose outlook is still in me: that *peace really starts with you and me!* We can judge others or we can create bridges. We start by doing the personal work to expand our own thinking, learn what others believe, reinforce or challenge our own mindset, and even be open to a fresh perspective. "Give peace a chance" (Lennon)!

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Resources

Journeys to the Extraordinary <https://www.vikingcruises.com/expeditions/video/all/play.html?id=152030>
"Our expeditions reveal a breathtaking view of the planet in its purest state, and take you to pristine landscapes to witness wildlife in its natural habitat." —Torstein Hagen, Chairman



ATTN: Parents and Teachers

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