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My Life in Community

By Bernie Mayer

Why I answered the phone is beyond me. My parents were both out. Tom, my 15-year-old brother, was in his room, and I was in mine. The phone was by my parents' bed. I probably wanted a bit of excitement, and in those days answering the heavy black rotary dial phone was often an adventure. Maybe the voice on the other end was a family friend, a relative, or someone calling my father about a work emergency. But what I got was not the sort of excitement I was looking for.

Mrs. M (more than 65 years later, I still feel constrained to maintain confidentiality) would often call and rant at my parents. In retrospect, I can understand why. Four of her children had been taken away from her and placed at Bellefaire, a residential treatment center located in a suburb of Cleveland. My father was the director, and Bellefaire was where we lived. My parents would never hang up on her,

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despite the fact that she could go on for what seemed like hours. They would just listen, try to get a word in edgewise, and be rational in the face of her diatribes about how awful they were. Sometimes they would put the handset down, return periodically to say “uh, huh,” and then put it down again. Why was it better to do that than say, “I have to go. Sorry, I can’t talk any longer. Bye,” and hang up? Perhaps they were honoring the pain that lay within the craziness—or maybe they were afraid of aggravating her further.

I don’t know the circumstances that led to her losing custody of her children, but I can imagine. A depressed and mentally ill mother, many children, neglect, perhaps even abuse. In those days, the system was not geared toward supporting the family so the children could stay at home or toward moving quickly to find a new permanent home for them. Supposedly we do this better now. Maybe. Of course, Mrs. M was angry—but unable to use that anger effectively. So she ranted, reinforcing everyone’s beliefs about just how crazy and unfit a parent she was.

This time she got me. I was an obedient, conflict-averse, sometimes anxious but even-tempered 7-year-old. I adored my father and thought he was beyond doubt the most amazing man in the world (this was long before adolescent rebellion set in). A concentration camp survivor, quick-witted, funny, charismatic, and a great storyteller, he always seemed sure of himself. Plus he was the ruler of this little world in which we lived.

When she discovered who had answered the phone, Mrs. M must have thought she had a chance for payback. “Your parents are immigrants,” she yelled. (I had no idea what the word meant.) “They don’t belong here. I am going to have you taken away from them like they took my children away. They are going to be sent back to Germany. You won’t ever see them again.” It went on like this for maybe 15 minutes—but it seemed like hours.

I was devastated and ran sobbing to my brother's room. He had no idea about what had been going on. He tried his best to comfort me. He told me that nothing Mrs. M had said was true. We were not going back to Germany. She couldn't take me away, nor could anyone else. She was crazy. Or something like that. It helped. When my mother came home, she basically reiterated my brother's message about my security, although with a bit more empathy for Mrs. M. She told me that even though Mrs. M was an adult, I did not have to listen to her. I could just hang up. I never got a chance to do that, though. I did occasionally see Mrs. M on campus, but only from a distance, and I never had another word with her. Surely a good thing.

Why, when I think back to my childhood at Bellefaire—a happy place for me, filled with kind, caring people—is this the event most seared into my memory? I wonder whether this points to something essential about both the nature of community and of conflict. The paradox of community is that what is good about it—the magic of love, safety, and space for growth—is inescapably connected to the sacrifice it demands, the pain it can inflict, and the challenges it presents. I have come to believe that this paradox offers a microcosm of how conflict plays out. All conflict is to some extent about relationships and boundaries—boundaries among individuals, families, groups, and communities.

What does anti-Black racism look like viewed through the paradox of community and autonomy? When we struggle to deal with racism, we are grappling with which communities we are part of, which we do (and do not) accept, which we feel welcomed into, and whom we welcome into our community. Black Lives Matter is a call by Black Americans to be fully accepted as equal members in the larger community of America, but at the same time a desire to be recognized as a group with a rich culture, an important history, and a particular knowledge and lived experience

inside that larger community. And, of course, it is also a call to change the lethally skewed distribution of power and benefits among the communities that make up our society.

This is too complex a lesson for a 7-year-old to draw from a 15-minute conversation with an angry adult. What I clearly knew at the time was that the good work that my parents did was somehow involved with pain, that the effort to make a difference was not a smooth ride. No pain, no gain. If you don't want conflict, don't try to make things better.

A further—yet to be understood—message was that part of my specialness and therefore my identity derived from my belonging to a community that was defined by a purpose: to help children and families. Such belonging is a gift, but one that at times requires standing up for that purpose in the face of anger, pain, and hopelessness.

My childhood home was the director's house on the Bellefaire campus. Bellefaire was (and is) located on 32 acres of land, most of which in those days were woods, fields, and meadows. The buildings were solid yet elegant brick-and-mortar structures with slate roofs built around a walkway that wound around a hexagonal brick chapel with stained-glass windows. The walkway ran between a double ring of oak trees. At one end was the administration building, where my father had his office. But in that building there was also a woodshop, a library (where Miss Sugar read stories to us every Saturday morning), a printing press, a sewing and clothing room, a food storage center, and a colonnade. Shim Cohen, the Bellefaire School principal, supervised the use of the woodshop one evening every week where I would regularly go to make things—birdhouses, stools, lamps, toy boats, and more.

In summers, we would gather every morning on the steps of the administration building for flag raisings. All the children and staff would gather there, sing songs, some-

times there would be a skit, the flag would be raised up what then seemed to me a gigantic flagpole, we would say the pledge of allegiance and then go about our day. Often Jack Emmer, a house parent and social worker, would lead us in singing “My Hat, It Has Three Corners” or “If I Had a Hammer.” Sometimes we would put on skits. (Once when my brother Tom was working as a summer counselor, I got to throw a lemon meringue pie in his face in front of the whole community!)

The walkway connected the eight “cottages” where the youth lived and a school building. On the outer edges of the campus were several other buildings—our house, a gym and swimming pool, an infirmary, some staff housing, an equipment shop, and a laundry. There were meadows, a pond, a wild strawberry patch, baseball fields, and tennis courts, but most wonderful to me were the woods. Bellefaire itself contained no more than 10 acres of woods, but they backed up onto woods that were part of John Carroll University, and to me they seemed enormous. They were filled with maple, elm, oak, hawthorn, and chestnut trees but also with grapevines, berry bushes, and a lot of poison ivy. Great adventures happened there.

I was aware that my life was in some ways strange and different from those of my friends who lived in typical middle-income postwar suburban homes on pleasantly shaded streets in the surrounding community. But it seemed normal to me—Bellefaire was the only home I knew. I was proud of the ways in which I was different, the son of Holocaust survivors, a resident of a treatment center, not wealthy—in fact, poorer than most of my friends but living as if wealthy, with access to so much land and so many resources. And of course, my father was the impresario of the whole show. I did not want to be too different. I wanted to be part of the larger community, but at the same time I

wanted to be special and apart. This desire to both belong and yet be special seems pretty universal.

Bellefaire provided an intense experience in community. It was fertile soil out of which my interest and commitment to both social activism and constructive conflict engagement grew. But it was just the first of many communities that were formative for me. I have been part of college living cooperatives, political collectives, intentional living communities, and a business partnership that lasted 30 years, and I now live in a small town that is, in its own way, a very distinctive community.

I am not unique in this regard. All of us live a life in community, and the communities we are part of and the dance we do between our need for both affiliation and individuality are a defining element of our identity, no matter what our vocational or professional focus. This is not a new concept. Developmental psychologists from a broad variety of perspectives have described this tension (focusing most often on the parent child relationship—the pull toward separation and individuation versus the need for belonging and attachment) as central to our growth (see, for example, Erikson, 1950; Mahler, 1969; Kerr and Bowen, 1988; Sayers, 1999; and Freud, 2002).

But those of us who work on conflict have a particular vantage point on this dance. Almost all important conflicts are based in part on identity needs, with the tension between community and autonomy an important dimension (Mayer, 2012, and Rothman, 1997). Our formative experiences with communities not only help define who we are but how we understand and intervene in conflict. I certainly cannot imagine my life as a conflict professional independently of the communities that formed me and sustained me and at times have also confined me.

What impact has my life in communities had on me? How have these experiences been formative to my life's work—especially my understanding of the complexity and paradox that underlie conflict and conflict intervention? Exploring these questions requires digging a bit deeper into my life in several of these communities.

Bellefaire: Life Has Purpose

Bellefaire was founded in 1868 as the Jewish Orphan Home. Its original purpose was to provide a home for Jewish war orphans from the North after the Civil War (a similar facility for Southern war orphans was established at the same time in New Orleans), and it became Bellefaire when it relocated to its present location in 1926. By around 1940, the need for orphanages had diminished, and Bellefaire was gradually transformed into a treatment center for emotionally disturbed youth (the term of art at the time). My father was brought in to guide the transition in 1945, the year before I was born.

Living in this setting involved me in the institutional life of Bellefaire. I played with Bellefaire kids, went to religious services and programs, and in many other ways participated in Bellefaire's communal life. When I was older, I worked there as a childcare worker and camp director.

The sense of purpose and commitment in the face of adversity pervaded the Bellefaire milieu, but it also was part of my family's own culture. In the years after World War II, a significant percentage of Bellefaire's staff, including my parents, and many of the youth there were Holocaust survivors. My father was arrested on Krystallnacht, the "Night of Broken Glass," November 9 and November 10, 1938, and transported to the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany, where he came very close to perishing. How he survived is a story in itself, but not for this chapter.

Before his arrest, my father had joined an underground movement to oppose the Nazis. The movement was largely ineffective, but he showed great courage in participating. Many of his compatriots from that time did not survive. Fortunately, the Nazis never discovered his membership; if they had, he would have been immediately executed,

My father had been a committed leftist in Germany, and I grew up as a “red diaper baby.” The threat of McCarthyism loomed large in our lives, and a number of my friends’ parents were hauled in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Several served time in jail. Politics of a distinctly leftist nature were the source of ongoing discussions, arguments, and bonds in my parents’ friendship circle and at our dinner table.

So I was surrounded by an unspoken but very powerful message: life is about service, about trying to make the world a better place, and about helping people, especially children. This meant putting yourself out, taking chances, and sometimes putting yourself in harm’s way. Service, however, was not at heart an individual undertaking. For us to be effective, to be sustained in what is often a draining and difficult effort, and to find joy in the process, requires community.

The impetus toward service is complicated, however. Lurking over everything for Holocaust survivors and their children is a sense of guilt—why did we survive when so many did not? We must give meaning to our survival—or what good are we? But there is an even more powerful optimistic message, as well, an often-unacknowledged lesson of the Holocaust, which is that with courage and conviction and the support of a loving community, goodness will prevail. Anne Frank was right! Despite unimaginable tragedy, our world and our lives can get better—and frequently do. I grew up with this message all around me, and it has informed every step of my life.

We are desperately in need of that outlook now.

From Activist to Mediator and Back Again

My path took me through years of activism in the peace, civil rights, student, labor, environmental, and anti-imperialist movements. And yet my professional journey led me to mediation and conflict resolution, where the defining characteristics seemed to be neutrality, impartiality, and process focus. Mediation seemed like a way to empower people to take control over their own lives, to bring the 1960s ideal of participatory democracy closer to fruition and address individual problems and social change at the same time.

A pivotal moment came as a result of my involvement in organizing demonstrations against the Rocky Flats Plant (a nuclear weapons manufacturing facility that is now closed) several miles south of Boulder. As part of these efforts, I attended a training in nonviolent social change conducted by Christopher Moore. I found the training fascinating, in large part because of the experiential approach that he used. There were almost no lectures or didactic presentations. Instead we learned by doing, role-playing, reflecting, and group engagement. Nonviolence training is in many respects about creating a community for action and support in preparation for intense and often dangerous interactions. (We are currently seeing the creation of such communities of change throughout the United States in support of Black Lives Matter.)

Chris and I became close friends and co-trainers in nonviolence and civil disobedience. I continued to offer nonviolence training and help organize the peacekeeping efforts at a series of mass protests. Chris and I also offered training in consensus decision-making and conflict resolution for activists as well as in other settings (for example, for inmates and guards at the Boulder County Jail). When

Chris became interested in mediation, I followed in his footsteps and thus began our 30-year collaboration (along with Mary Margaret Golten and Susan Wildau) as partners at CDR Associates (originally the Center for Dispute Resolution) in Boulder, Colorado.

From the beginning, I felt that I had found my vocation. Mediation and related conflict intervention roles seemed natural to me. I found this work challenging, fascinating, worthwhile, and I could even make a living at it. In the years when I identified myself primarily as an activist, I often found myself in the roles of consensus builder (within a community struggling for change) or negotiator (when dealing with those in authority—police, university administrators, management). During numerous protests at Oberlin College, where I had been president of the Student Senate, I had frequently been designated to negotiate with the administration. So this new vocation seemed to harness an important part of my personality and values. I believed in trying to communicate with people I disagreed with, focusing on underlying values and concerns, and speaking forcefully but constructively. Of course, sometimes I was terrible at this, as we all are. I saw myself not only as part of a community of activists but as a member of a larger community that included those I disagreed with, often fervently. I believed that it was through my participation in this larger community that real change would occur.

But I was never completely comfortable with the neutrality part. That was less natural. I believed in being fair, respectful, empowering of parties, mistrustful of my capacity to judge the right path for others to take, and committed to the power of consensus when making difficult decisions. But neutrality was another story. There was this problem of coercive power and social injustice that I felt demanded something other than neutrality. In the absence of some affirmative effort to deal with power differentials,

whether between police and minority communities, men and women, employers and employees, a purely neutral stance could easily contribute to the perpetuation of an oppressive relationship.

This tension was rooted in my identity and value system, and over the years it became the foundation of my thinking, my teaching, my practice, and my writing. It can be seen in some of my earliest published work on power dynamics in mediation (e.g., Mayer, 1987), and in virtually all my books but especially in *Beyond Neutrality: Confronting the Crisis in Conflict Resolution* (Mayer, 2004). I want to empower disputants to make their own decisions, but I also am committed to recognizing how power differentials, structural and personal, affect conflict. This perhaps paradoxically has often made me more credible as an intermediary. But I have also come to see the ally role (e.g., advocate, consultant, coach, organizer) as an essential conflict intervention role.

The Juniper Street Collective: Community Requires Autonomy

The most powerful communal experience of my adult life, one that overlapped the first 25-plus years of my work as a conflict specialist, was in an intentional community in Boulder, Colorado, the Juniper Street Collective. I was a member of the JSC from 1973 until about 2002.

I moved to Boulder in 1972, intending to be there only for the summer, knowing I was ready to leave New York City, where I had gone to graduate school and started my professional life as a social worker, but not sure where I was heading. I wanted to experience Colorado and to work on a farm or in some other outdoor setting. My brother was on the faculty of the University of Colorado, and some of his colleagues had started The Community on Nelson Road, a communal farm with about 20 members. So a friend and I

signed on for the summer. In the end, I remained in Boulder for more than 30 years and at the Nelson Road community for 18 months. I loved the setting and proved to be a terribly inept but avid farmer (I drove a school bus to make some actual money). There I made some lifelong friends and met my first wife, Reggie Gray, and her 2-year-old son, Ethan.

The farm was an incredible but complicated place. Its efforts at building a community ran smack up against two related problems: how to handle what was at times intense conflict in accordance with the values of community, and how to contend with the individualistic nature of our socialization, which was reinforced by the cultural norms and structure of the world in which we grew up.

The ethos of the time supported alternatives to the nuclear family structure, but the liberation values of the '60s also promoted intense individualism. Efforts to suppress this individualism were at best ineffective and often destructive. This tension emerged around issues big and small. How thoroughly did the garden need to be cleared of rocks? How should parents (or others) respond to children who were being "disrespectful" or "disruptive"—and was that even a thing? How should community finances reflect the different economic circumstances of members? While we tried to resolve the tensions between our individual needs and those of the group, Reggie and I began to feel that some of our essential concerns were being overrun by the demands of the group.

So when a house on Juniper Avenue in Boulder, next door to my brother and sister-in-law's home, became available, Reggie and I grabbed it. It became our home for 30 years. Together, our two homes (which each couple owned separately) became the Juniper Street Collective. For most of the 30 years we lived there, one or both of our houses had additional residents who were not family members but

who were important members of the community (they were also what defined us as a community, not just an extended family).

For 15 years, we ate together five times a week, bought groceries as a group, took turns providing childcare to the children in the collective, tended a joint garden, went on camping and skiing trips, celebrated holidays, and met once a week to talk about whatever needed discussion. What most often demanded attention was how to integrate our needs for autonomy with our commitment to the collective. We seldom defined it in these terms, but in retrospect, that was what our most intense discussions were about. And the structural arrangements we created reflected this. We lived in two separate houses that provided significant private space for each of us. The collective grew out of that structure, but it is also what allowed us to endure. Our cooking arrangements also reflected the need to be both individuals and a group. We took turns taking primary responsibility for dinner, for cooking and cleaning up. Others might help with serving and clearing the table, but the bottom-line responsibility was one person's. In part this was for practical reasons of childcare and work responsibilities, but it also was in recognition that we each had different approaches to cooking that maybe did not need to be continually renegotiated with others. For example, some of us (guilty) were messier cooks than others.

The most ferocious argument I remember having as a group was about chickens. Early on in the collective experience, several of us thought it would be a good idea to raise chickens. One person was adamantly against this idea, and we had quite a heated interchange that culminated in the rest of us being pronounced guilty of "bucolic romanticism" (a terrible accusation, coming from a leftist). Fair enough, actually. In an outcome that is not uncommon in group conflict, we finally agreed to go ahead with the plan,

but it never happened. The discord sapped our energy to execute the project.

Why was this seemingly peripheral issue so intense? For most of us, raising chickens seemed an interesting, useful, and, above all, unifying group project. But for the dissenter, this plan was dragging him into something that he did not want to do and did not reflect his vision of what the group's collective identity and focus should be. He felt that the collective energy of the group ought to be expressed more around political action and interaction.

A chapter in *The Conflict Paradox: Seven Dilemmas at the Core of Disputes* (Mayer, 2015) called "Community and Autonomy" suggests that each are necessary aspects of the other and that almost all conflicts are in part a reflection of the interaction between these polarities. The JSC flourished best when we could maintain our sense of groupness without undermining our need to follow an autonomous, individual path through our lives—when in fact these two elements of our identity supported and nurtured one another. When our capacity to fully experience both our autonomy and our collectivity began to diminish, the collective became a less defining part of our lives.

This was a very gradual process that perhaps began with the birth of our younger son, Mark (the older three JSC youth were then in their teens), when we came to the conclusion that we needed to redraw some boundaries to reflect the different developmental needs of our children. We began to eat together less frequently and put some limits on unannounced entry into each other's homes. These changes reflected our changing needs as we moved into a new stage in our personal, parental, and professional lives. But they did not take place easily. Feelings were hurt, and tensions, which we generally succeeded in working our way through, arose.

In retrospect, some of the ideas we had about how this community would work were naïve, but the arrangement nevertheless proved to be remarkably durable and powerful. I carried two important lessons from this experience into my parallel life as a conflict engagement practitioner. One was that communities are powerful. They enable us to live fuller lives, are an essential part of our identity, are the places where we work out who we are and what we believe in, and exercise important constraints on our development. The second was that constructive communities must allow our individualism to flourish. The pull between these two realities requires that communities of all kinds learn to handle conflict effectively. And the lessons we have all drawn from our lives in communities is what informs our approach to conflict throughout our lives.

Community and Autonomy at CDR

The interaction between community and autonomy has been a major theme of my professional life as well, as a partner at CDR Associates in Boulder, Colorado, a professor of conflict studies at Creighton University, and more generally as a conflict intervener.

CDR was a bit of an organizational anomaly. Its structure appeared similar to a law firm, with partners and a staff of associates, assistants, and consultants. But CDR was a nonprofit corporation. The partners reported to a board of directors (who formally appointed the partners and a managing partner). In practice, during the years I was at CDR, the board operated primarily in an advisory, supportive capacity, although ultimate fiduciary responsibility rested with its members.

The partners were the hub of the CDR community, operated by consensus, and as long as we were able to work together effectively, it all worked pretty well. But of course we did not always function in an optimal way. We

supported each other, but we also fought. We respected each other, but we sometimes became irritated with each other. We walked our talk about conflict, communication, and collaboration most of the time, but on occasion we also exhibited some distinctly sub-optimal behaviors. In other words, we were like any other human community.

Some of our differences were pretty trivial (for example, about how to fill out time sheets or what music to play in our lobby). Others were more significant (how we should calculate compensation, what our parental leave policies should be, which projects we should undertake, and what staff we should hire). When we were at our best, which I like to think was most of the time, we were a creative, innovative, and effective organization. We pioneered the use of collaborative approaches to conflict in many arenas, developed internationally recognized training programs, contributed to the growth of the conflict field, and helped many communities, organizations, families, and individuals along the way. We worked with societies in transition from war to peace and dictatorship to democracy around the world. Some of the people we trained and collaborated with went on to become major leaders in the field (including the editors of this volume).

But CDR was not always an easy organization to function in, and along the way, we lost some very skilled practitioners (and friends). At our worst, each of us demanded too much commitment to the collectivity from others while demanding too much autonomy for ourselves. This is a struggle all organizations face, and we were no different, despite our values and professional focus. I believe that one reason we were as effective as we were at a critical time in the growth of our field was because we were mostly able to reconcile a commitment to the CDR community with a respect for individual skills and needs. We were very successful in coming together to develop a common approach

to training and to intervention—but one that accommodated our very different styles, personalities, and ways of thinking.

From time to time, our differences became more heated, particularly when we had to make major decisions about the future direction and structure of CDR. On several occasions we brought in third parties to help facilitate our process and mediate specific disputes. Sometimes we resisted asking for help, sometimes we resisted the help itself, but on those occasions when we fully committed and engaged with a conflict intervention process—surprise, surprise—it really helped.

CDR was my most important and meaningful professional home. My colleagues and partners there were and still are close friends, teachers, and collaborators. But there, too, the time came when the business model of CDR had evolved (because it had to) to one that seemed to leave me less room to pursue my own path. I needed more autonomy than the collective could constructively accommodate. For example, although I could take a leave of absence to write a book, CDR would then be deprived of the income that I might otherwise produce, and this put a significant burden on everyone else. Not coincidentally, about the time I was coming to terms with the need to move on professionally, I relocated to Canada to be with my life partner (and wife), Julie Macfarlane.

The Negotiation and Conflict Resolution Program at Creighton University (originally called the Werner Institute) provided me an opportunity to enter into a new community that accommodated the kind of autonomy I needed at this point in my career. I have just retired after 14 years as a professor of conflict studies at Creighton. The NCR program has been a nurturing professional community for me, and here, too, I developed important professional and personal friendships. I feel very fortunate that these

two wonderful communities, CDR and NCR, have been an essential part of my life as a conflict practitioner for more than 40 years.

In almost every conflict I have worked on, a central dynamic has been one of boundaries, the need to commit to a common approach while protecting the space for personal growth and freedom. This is a basic facet of the human experience. Unless we can help people both connect and remain separate, we will be able to arrive at only superficial or short-term solutions to our most serious problems. Perhaps the essential lesson I have taken from my own experiences in community is to pay close attention to this dynamic. Often our efforts to find common ground can be overly weighted on one element of this dynamic and thus create unintended problems. In divorce mediation, we might, for example, push for too great a level of commonality in parenting—or too rigid a separation of responsibilities. As always, we need to pay constant attention to how our own experiences with community affects how we guide conflict interactions.

Our Global Community

As I write this, in the spring and summer of 2020, we are in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis, one of the most intense challenges we have ever faced as a global community. The choices we make about addressing our individual needs while making sacrifices for the common good are literally matters of life and death. So, too, are the decisions we make about which communities we identify most strongly with. We are constantly challenged to think of ourselves as part of a world community, a national community, and a range of local communities and to act as responsible members of each. And for the most part we seem to be doing just that. It's truly amazing that so many people have been willing to upend their lives to try to address the coronavirus threat.

My family and I have been self-isolating in our home on the north shore of Lake Erie. Perhaps paradoxically, while we are more physically separated from the larger community around us than ever, we are also more connected and involved in it. Because we can't physically engage with the range of communities we normally identify with, we virtually engage with them—and we do so more frequently, more intentionally, and often more effectively than ever. This crisis will reset the individual-community system for all of us, and it will no doubt affect the nature of the conflicts that we work on as well.

COVID-19 is also showing us that there are many communities that do not have the choice or ability to isolate and are suffering a disproportionate share of the worst consequences of the pandemic. The sense of betrayal and abandonment that people of color in particular experience by the larger communities within which they exist has exploded into massive public protests since the murder of George Floyd. This, too, is a story of community—and privilege. We are being challenged to change the fundamental structure and flow of power among the different elements of our national and local communities. This is no simple matter, but it is vital to our future. We can't fix this problem by simply redefining community, promising to be better, or focusing on immediate policy changes in policing practices. Systemic change requires system disruption, and that always involves pain.

Our capacity and commitment as global and national societies to protect and to own our least powerful and most marginalized communities and to honor their autonomous and equal place within our larger community will say a great deal about our moral future. Our history on this front is not encouraging, but I continue to hope and believe that progress is possible. Constructive conflict engagement is more necessary now than ever.

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