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Total Transformation Needs No Violence

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The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. So it goes. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can.

—Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

The view publicly expressed by Professor Ben Nwabueze, reported widely in the media recently, is significant in a number of ways. Nwabueze is a beloved grandfather, an accomplished conservative intellectual and one of the brightest constitutional lawyers around. For him to come to the conclusion, as reported, that what Nigeria needs now is “total transformation” by means of “a bloody revolution” is something to ponder. He was quoted as saying:

...the entire social system is now very rotten, most especially with corruption...I want a wholesome transformation...I want a bloody revolution. Corruption has eaten deep and everybody is involved. Only a bloody revolution will remedy the situation.

As reported also, there was a convergence of publicly expressed opinions by elder statesmen and women in that public forum—the public presentation of a book authored by Nwabueze himself, entitled *Colonialism in Africa: Ancient and Modern*—on the need for “total transformation” rather than “piecemeal corrections”, although not all present were reported to have agreed on “blood-letting” as the only means through which this can be realized.

Nwabueze’s conclusion may be understandable viewed from the perspective of the analytical mode that led to it. The assumption is that the leaders impede development by engaging in corrupt practices. Development, in this traditional perspective, is viewed as provision of material needs of people and communities, determined by means of quantitative need assessment procedures alone. This invariably throws up such tangible exterior needs of human communities as economic growth, medicine, education, technology and infrastructure, as the only needs that call for attention. While these are important aspects of development, they do not represent the entire spectrum of human needs or even the most important ones, thus creating unsustainability, leading to the kind of frustration now being expressed. In this configuration, leaders are viewed as facilitators, “givers”, of development and never thought of as part of it. Therefore if they fail, they need to be

replaced, and since “everybody is involved” the only solution is clean sweep or blood-letting. Development effort like this, however well-intentioned, cannot but let people down.

New research in this field, however, explains that human societies come closer to sustainability as people’s worldviews begin to encompass and care for a broader group of others – other people, families, species, communities and eco-systems. Development practitioners call this self-empowerment. To engage effectively in the process of transformation, therefore, would require a broader and deeper understanding of development. Broader is viewed in terms of including qualitative and interior needs of humans. Also deeper implies more adequate understanding of individual and collective transformation itself. Since the beginning of the 1990’s, the theory and practice of development came to recognize the limitations of the traditional perspective on development, leading to a paradigm shift. The old paradigm does not address the full range of human needs that foster prosperity and cultivate happiness for all. An Integral framework, a map of the new paradigm, emerged from this critical re-examination of the entire development concept and process. This makes space for building relationships, cultivating trust among all involved in the development enterprise, and acknowledging the crucial role of worldviews and value systems in a community-focused approach to development. The new paradigm, the Integral approach, points out the role of awareness, consciousness, in the development process, also called conscientization, which means awareness of self, society and self in society. This is viewed as crucial to participants, facilitators and practitioners, “everybody”, for fostering involvement of all, empowerment of all, and leading to true social change, total transformation. This new view calls for a different way of viewing oneself and others, which requires a profound shift in perception of reality both as cognitive revolution and spiritual awakening.

The Integral Approach to developing sustainability therefore involves personal, collective and systemic transformation. It brings about total transformation, which obviates personal empowerment, self-realization and liberation, involving fundamental shifts in worldviews and ways of thinking about oneself, and others. It clearly recognizes that people’s interiority, meaning their feelings, beliefs and worldviews, influences or informs all aspects of their behavior. This approach draws upon moral, psychological and cognitive research to better understand and work with human interiority. A simplified sketch of this process would explain that as an individual’s sphere of consideration and care expands to include others beyond oneself and as that person acts in concert with others who also share this expanded worldview, the closer the community or society comes to sustainability. This indicates that worldviews shift from being self-focused or ego-centric, at the lowest level, to include others in the society or socio-centric, then eventually to include other humans, species and eco-systems in a world-centric embrace, the level of liberation. This means that self care, care for others and universal care are all contained within a world-centric perspective, and self care is contained within a socio-centric perspective. A person operating from a world-centric sphere has transcended and included all the attributes and characteristics of ego-centric and socio-centric stages of development. In the same way a person operating from a socio-centric sphere has transcended and included the attributes and characteristics of ego-centric level. And no one operating at the level of world-centric consciousness will ever descend to engage in the kind of perverted behavior that makes people see blood-letting as the only way out. Development theory and practice therefore contains within itself the very intervention people now advocate should be imposed violently and from outside the process. By re-defining our concept of development to include ourselves, our leaders, “everybody”, our understanding and the options we regard as available to us, become clearer. There will definitely be no need to resort to violence in order to realize total social transformation, which is a given, if development is properly articulated and carried through. The people being advocated to be made target of violence are only living and functioning at their level of consciousness, with all the logic flowing from that. They don’t even feel guilty about being called thieves. They even feel people are jealous of their “achievements”. Even if they get replaced, their successors will do the same thing or even worse depending on their own level of self-development, self-awareness.

Therefore, the sustainable approach to solving our problems, which people get frustrated about, is to make all, including our leaders, the target or at least a part of the target, of our development effort. Violence cannot solve this problem. It will instead complicate the problems. The world, of which we are a part, has moved on. Violence or terrorism will surely be unacceptable to the International community. No one should ever try to elevate violence to the status of option. It is not an option.

*One word frees us of all the weight and pain of life; that word is love - Sophocles.
And now these three continue forever: faith, hope and love, and the greatest is love*

– 1 Corinthians 13:13.

About the Author

Oliver Ngodo, PhD, is an Associate Editor of Integral Leadership Review and in process of stepping into the role of Bureau Chief for Sub-Saharan Africa. He is the Nigeria Program Director (Designate), Integral Leadership Project. This Project is funded by CIDA through CUSO-VSO and Managed by One Sky Canadian Institute for Sustainable Living. It is targeted at creating a home-grown cadre of high capacity leaders equipped with the mindset, values and competencies that can fully understand and respond to the complex issues of sustainability, human well-being and economic development. The project will be inaugurated soon.

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