



THE TRUE PERSON IS LOVELY

—SHANN FERCH

Mediocre people want to be loved.

True people are lovely.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

When my wife and I first read Emerson's two-part understanding we were caught short, thinking of the implications:

"Wait a minute," I said. "I want to be loved. . . does that mean I'm mediocre?"

Yes, I had to admit, sometimes it does mean I'm mediocre. When I'm needy or reactive, defensive, self-absorbed, when I live from basic anger or anxiety or fear, I am unable to access an interior devoted to the service of others, God, life, or love.

True people are lovely. Even the very words invoke grace. They harken us toward vulnerability, transparency, humility, surrender, perhaps even submission to love itself—the ultimate expression of legitimate greatness and power. In reading the wonderful work housed in this second volume of *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership* I was struck by the nuances of what it means to be lovely. The authors here have given us their own deep loveliness and in so doing, they lead us to a more discerning, precise, and fearless understanding of self-responsibility and collective responsibility for our life together. In self-responsibility we recognize and ask forgiveness for how we harmfully impact the heart, mind, and spirit of others. The idea of noticing our own weaknesses and getting away from the desire to name the faults of others is perhaps the deepest healer of the most painful relational systems in our society. What we discover when we



descend into our own interior is a dangerous and pernicious tendency to hold the beloved other (family members, colleagues, humanity) in a dark light. By so doing, we hide ourselves and fail to notice the significant reach of our own shadow in the world. When we return to self-transparency, appropriate vulnerability, and responsibility, inherently we have the soulful life Robert Greenleaf envisioned in servant-leadership. After summoning the courage to surrender, to *ask* forgiveness and change in ways our beloved ones find meaningful, the act of *granting* forgiveness becomes fluid and natural. We find our own human evil is connected to the darkness of all humanity, and we forgo the desire “set others straight.” From here, philosophically and relationally, an earned ground develops in which we call on a way of life that reconciles the great rifts, ends power abuses, and heals the heart of the world.

A good test is to note how much time we spend talking about the faults of others. An appreciative measure of health is 9 to 10 encounters of meaningful, sincere, and positive regard for the “other” to every 1 critique—regardless of the perceived level of the “other’s” fault. This is the unconditional forgiveness we see in South Africa, time after time, that eventually breaks the hard-heartedness of the offender and returns him or her whole; it is the echo of People Power from Corazon Aquino and the Philippines, one of the first non-violent revolutions of the modern age; and it is the constant theme in Martin Luther King Jr.’s groundbreaking work to heal the center of American life.

When we are lovely we consider what it means to understand the nature of our own self-weakness or personal darkness in a given system. We begin to embrace our own brokenness. The natural tendency of humanity is to externalize blame for a given communal conflict—but the life of loveliness keeps in mind the deeper truths that heal us. We begin to internalize self-responsibility for system health rather than externalize blame; in this context, in the family as well as in work, and even in the course of nations, resilience and moral power, infused by love, rise to transform the system. We are lifted out of our own self-embeddedness and placed in the



MLK mode of self-transcendence, a way of living that engages the greater purpose of humanity toward healing, freedom, and what he fittingly called “The Beloved Community.”

Everyone can be great because everyone can serve. . . it only takes a heart full of grace. . . a soul generated by love.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

The authors, researchers, and scholars whose work appears in this journal form a tapestry of servant-leadership revealing the idea of emotional discipline in the center of love. In so doing, they call each of us toward vital responses to human suffering. Such responses are grounded in discernment regarding human conflict, maturity in the face of oppression, and real answers—familial, societal, and global—that rise from the crucible of human potential that is our humanity.

In the dialogues on business, politics, the arts, theology, and all forms of human endeavor found in the following pages, an underlying notion emerges that points toward restorative justice, reconciliation, forgiveness, and servant-leadership. Historically, economics, race and gender, as well as religious and sexual preference have often conferred on a select few in society an undue amount of power. We see this both in the slavery policies in early America and in the Native American genocide systematically conducted over the last few centuries. Atrocities as deeply grievous as the Nazi crimes against humanity are harbored in U.S. history as well. Consider the Sand Creek Massacre barely a hundred years past, in which Cavalry troops killed Cheyenne women and children, disgracing and mutilating their bodies. Today, this shadow extends in subtle and still pernicious forms of economic, race, gender, religious, and sexual oppression. Command and control leadership is another remnant: the idea that in conflict (or even during peace) we consciously or unconsciously establish our own view by dominating or violating the humanity of the “other.” Peggy McIntosh’s work on unveiling white privilege orients us toward thought in critical theory, and Paulo Friere’s critical pedagogy moves us to the hope of greater



understanding and more true living, united in spirit, and free from oppression.

I want to personally thank each author whose work appears here. Their sacrifice and will to see the world whole inspires servant-leadership everywhere. I recently returned from the Philippines doing collaborative work with Filipino leaders on servant-leadership and nation building. A groundswell of care was imparted to me and my family from my Filipino colleagues and their families. Consider the bravery that shines in recent Filipino history: Ninoy Aquino was assassinated 23 years ago under the Marcos regime, and Ninoy's death became the seed for a revolution that was nonviolent and beautiful and eventually unseated the Marcos dictatorship and led to the democratic election of Cory Aquino (Ninoy's wife) as President. She and her cabinet wrote love, yes *love*, directly into their new national constitution. She is now in her 70's, and it is clear that she and her own "beloved community" preceded and in many ways inspired non-violent revolutions the world over: the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, the fall of Communism, the forgiveness-based revolution in South Africa. And consider in this light Ninoy's premonition, his own quiet foresight full of love and hope: before he returned to the Philippines from exile in the U.S., some months before he was assassinated and left dead on the tarmac at Manila International Airport, he stated: "The Filipino is worth dying for."

Because of love, Ninoy Aquino chose to live and even die for his people.

The work in this journal aspires to a lovely way of life, one that requires the dreaming of great dreams, even if such dreams are often attended by seemingly insurmountable losses. In the midst of such losses, the life of the servant as leader is true.

The life of the servant-leader is lovely.

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