

AUGUST 2016

Thinking on Things Letter

An indispensable letter that's better than a bagel with lox, onions, capers, cream cheese and an expensive latte. Yup !!!!

Hello Loyal Readers

Hello friends of The Levy Launch. It's August, 2016 and it's time for an installment of this mighty letter to educate and infiltrate that mighty cerebral cortex of yours.

I hope you're good these days—healthy, optimistic and with lots of meaning and purpose in your life. Remember – you're in charge of your wonderful life and are exercising your self-determination to lead a purposeful life that's providing you with genuine and enduring happiness. If you're one of my students in any of the senior centers, you know how to achieve enduring, genuine happiness. Just keep attending class so we can hook you up to that mighty IV of cultural literacy. Yup – all of my older adult students are so culturally literate and wonderful critical thinkers; always knowing how and when to ask the right questions and not accepting things uncritically or as self-evident truths. I'm so impressed with all of you – and please continue attending class so we can learn together.

I was reflecting on things the other day—and this time it wasn't a drug induced reflection of my absurd life. I realized that in the 20 years I've been at Founders – I've never had this many wonderful interns spending time with us learning. We have about 10 interns coming to learn about psychiatric rehabilitation at Founders. We have future nurses, Physician Assistant students, social work and other allied health care students. It's wonderful having them learning and the residents appreciate having them as friends. I can't express how thankful I am to these interns for bringing so much value significance to Founders House of Hope. Thank you lots.



Good news for Carmelitos

As many of you know, I've been volunteering at a low income housing community operated by the city of Los Angeles called Carmelitos in Long Beach. Well – in the last year, the residents attending my creative/poetry writing group have been writing and we're prepared to submit our manuscript of poetry to be self-published. The residents decided to title the anthology of poetry "Journey of Love, Hope and Compassion" We should have the book by October. It's a magnificent achievement.

The Founders Report

We're all good at Founders House of Hope. The residents are working at Founders Hut (the on-site store) and they're working on their recovery program. We purchased a few laptops, MP3 players and a few other things for residents working hard on achieving their rehabilitation goals. We've got a couple of residents enrolled at Cerritos College pursuing their academic goals and one residents is working full time as a security guard. It's wonderful seeing our residents pursuing their recover program and re-integrating into the community.

The Passing of Dr. Purandar Mallya

As many of you know, Purandar Mallya, M.D. was one of my closest friends. Purandar passed away in June battling cancer. We met in 1988 working at a hospital in Orange County and remained friends over a 28 year period. I went to India with Purandar about four 4 years ago, and it was a remarkable journey. In the last several years, Purandar volunteered at Founders by running a medication and wellness group for the residents. Undoubtedly the residents loved Dr. Mallya dearly because he was genuine, funny and he cared deeply for the residents. Dr. Mallya dedicated his career to exclusively treating the mentally ill in inpatient and community settings. His psychiatry weaved art and science—and he listened to his patients unlike any other doctor I knew. Dr. Mallya treated every patient with unconditional positive regard and his loving ways deeply touched the psyche of every patient fortunate enough to have him as their psychiatrist. His work was his calling and he performed his true and sacred work in the most healing and therapeutic ways imaginable. I established a Dr. Mallya Memorial Scholarship at Founders to recognize any resident that achieves their rehabilitation and wellness goals. Dr. Mallya's life leaves a significant trace in the sky that will never fade. May his memory be a strength to all of us.

Where I'm teaching these days:

University of Redlands
Southern California Univ.
of Health Sciences
Pasadena City College

My brother Josef and I are still training police officers on how to effectively manage and interact with the mentally ill in the community.

If you want to educate yourself on the mentally ill, please go to my website for lots of resources.

WHY CULTURES SURVIVE, NATURAL RIGHTS AND LIBERTY

By Elie Levy



Well, I think there's lots to be thankful for living in America and I'll try to explain it in this very brief historical-developmental piece. Let's start with defining culture as a shared system of symbolic knowledge where behavior is patterned from speech (language) and where predictable behavior patterns are established to nurture cultural stability (a fancy way of saying getting along with each other), in the form of cultural codes for social life, role expectations and social norms all for the purpose of creating predictability and survivability of the culture. Culture emerges because a people want to survive and live together on cooperative terms. How about we call culture a social glue for now. The goal of social organization and cooperative behavior is to reduce the incidence of unpredictability in behavior of a culture and its people. We can discuss it also in terms of reducing uncertainty in behavior of a people which reduces chaos/anomie (social disorganization). Culture also creates social expectations among a group of people. Rules, social norms and values surface to increase conformity and unity. Culture is a social bond that creates consistency in thought and action.

Cultures also evolve—meaning they develop new and more efficient functional methods of survival. It's an end product of civilizations that have survived for thousands of years. I need to remind you that human beings are the only species that communicate using higher order abstraction and a symbolic language. Remember, cultures survive because most members behave predictably which serves to create a safe environment for people to live. The use of language results in thought, religion, art, science, government and social institutions. For a culture to survive it needs to transmit cultural elements such as social organization, art, play, economic organizations, religion, science, technology, language and social control. So, what are the fundamental assumptions of the American culture? Self-governance is one of the assumptions posited early on by the colonists. The colonists were suspicious of the theocracies, monarchies or other forms of rule that threatened the rights of individuals and their liberty. What is liberty? Liberty is freedom from despotic rule. We enjoy religious freedom; meaning we can find G-d in our way and we have political freedom, physical freedom and freedom of speech. Ever wonder why some cultures don't survive? It's probably because members of the culture could not transmit culture bound values—they weren't open to exploring and interacting with other cultures to examine how other social systems function and bring vitality to their members or they were invaded and conquered by other cultures.

Historically our culture's roots began with the colonist's focus on liberty. The early colonists agreed that self-governance was a cultural value that resulted in the writing of the constitution and Declaration of Independence. The Civil War reflected a pivotal period in our history and culture because it represented a war about individual rights. Essentially, our country was divided around the issue of slavery and natural rights. What is the one core value of American culture? It is "natural right" and the shared belief that everyone belongs. On the flip side, the pursuit of happiness through self-reliance and the belief that one should pursue his/her own destiny can lead one to be emotionally detached from his/her social institutions. A few authors label this phenomenon as a "culture of narcissism" or preoccupation with the "private self" which interferes with our desires to deepen our involvement in the lives of others. The other concern and natural outcome related to our culture's emphasis on individual rights and achievement is the belief in "rugged individualism" where one makes it on his/her own. Do we have a national identity? We must realize that our national identity shifts from time to time depending on changes in the political climate and social conditions. During WWII America was strongly united against the forces of fascism and Nazism. Our national identity was strong and unswerving. Today our national identity is sometimes perceived as fragmented by partisan politics about war and the causes of our social ills.

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Thinking About Work

By Elie Levy

Should our work be more to us than just a paycheck? And what's wrong if work is just a paycheck to us? Work is an indispensable activity for defining our sense of self. However, work alone does not pull for or engage our total self. It represents one dimension of our multiple identities from which we draw self-esteem. Interestingly, work will influence how others think of you. It is more than just an instrument enabling us to live a utilitarian life. The view of work as instrumental is a traditional American view, a consumerist perspective of work which may or may not fulfill our yearning for meaning and purpose in life.

One could define work as an activity performed for economic security and sustenance. In this way, work is conceived as instrumental and a means to an end. In contrast, responding to a calling also represents work—but it is an activity carrying deeper, inherent value for the individual and society. In this condition of employment, the individual sees clearly how performing their dignified work contributes to enhancing the lives of others or connecting to the larger community. Americans want to work and we have a peculiar curiosity about what each of us does for work. We believe we should work, even if we don't need the money. Our belief that work, in part defines who we are has its origins in Protestantism, and is defined as the Protestant Ethic which asserts that work is virtuous, we have a duty to work and for some, it may represent a calling. The individual who works benefits by gaining self-worth.

Work Alienation

Work alienation is likely to occur when an employee experiences less control over the process and function of their job. Further, their job seems overly routinized and simplistic. One could describe their job as meaningless and feeling isolated. The inability of an employee to connect what he/she does to the successful performance of the organization can result in meaninglessness. Such an employee may also feel isolated and a lack of purpose in their work. Studs Terkel (1974, 557-558) describes the following blue collar worker's expression of his dissatisfying job:

After forty years of workin' at the steel mill, I am just a number. I think I've been a pretty good worker. That job was just right for me. I had a minimum amount of education and a job using a micrometer and just a steel tape and your eyes—that's a job that was just made for me... Bob (his son) worked in the mill a few months during a school vacation. He said, "I don't know how you done it all these years. I could never do it." I said, "I been tellin' you all your life never get into that mill."

Connectedness

For some, work needs to provide deeper meaning so that one understands how their job connects to the big picture; how what they do makes a difference in the lives of others. It can express our deepest yearnings for validation and we want to know that the individual receiving your service appreciates you.

The Search for Meaningful, Sacred Work

Ideally--- what should drive work? Perhaps it needs to be charged by spirit; by something that ultimately deepens and enriches our lives; that allows us to connect the work we do to the larger picture. Our needs for validation and feeling worthwhile can derive from the work we do when others acknowledge that our work (relationships with others) has made a difference in their lives. William James said "I will act as if what I do makes a difference." Remember, you want to make meaningful contributions to the world—and by clarifying the values that drive your life, the more often you'll see a connection to how your work contributes to the satisfaction and pleasure of others. I think sacred work is something you truly value—it's work that pulls for the best in you; something that is intrinsically motivating for you and it's work that is valued for itself. If one feels that his/her work truly pulls for their knowledge, talents and assets; and they are passionate about their work— then he/she can assert that it's real, true work. Passion comes from deep inside of us—it's charged by spirit and it intrinsically drives us to perform at our highest levels. Since childhood, our socialization process taught us we needed to be something; to become something as life unfolded—to become a nurse, plumber, lawyer, teacher, bus driver, firefighter, pilot, mechanic. Also, do you think that we're socialized to "have" rather than "be"? If being informs our actions, and defines our self-concept as a great mother, father, plumber, recruiter, lawyer, student—then we're likely to become self-assured and feel the connection to what we've become and what we are with others; we are a great sibling, plumber, mother to my kids because I operate in my role as a mother exceptionally well—I draw self-esteem from my functioning as a mother in this role. On the flip side--- to "have" suggests we concern ourselves with materialistic consumption where we're likely to define who we are by objects to accessorize our lives.

Again—in moderation this isn't so bad--- but if you're primarily driven by attaining objects of status to show others your success then you'll be working long hours for more money, spend time looking for others to compare yourself to and discover they've got more than you, and you'll likely become what I call the "hungry and dying for attention" individual. Accumulating material status objects does not lead one to be passionate about their work. What's the problem? In our culture money can be used symbolically to define success and for some, it is life-enhancing; in other words, it buys one life—because without money you experience social death (those in poverty).

In summary, we pursue utilitarian objectives (economic) through work and search for ways to express our deeper desires for connecting with the larger social and cultural community. One can assert that all human beings desire to discover how they belong to the larger community of humanity. Clarifying for oneself how he/she belongs—feels connected to community anchors will more clearly validate his contribution to improving conditions for living for all.

About six months ago I began supporting an nonprofit called Our Father's Table, a Christ based outreach program designed to get the homeless, mentally ill off the streets and into transitional housing programs. The agency is headed up by Gina Seriel and I conducted a training on how to effectively interact with the homeless, mentally ill for her corps of wonderful volunteers. Since then, Gina runs programs she calls Shopping in the Park every few months designed to feed and clothe the homeless. Well – we've gone down with about six residents when she runs this event to support the Chris like work her nonprofit provides. The residents love helping run the event. Finally – I agreed to be on the board of Our Father's Table and here's the announcement Gina wrote introducing and welcoming me to the board.

Here's the announcement of me being appointed to the Board of Directors at Our Father's Table

Our Father's Table, OFT, a Christ based, street outreach for our brothers and sisters experiencing homelessness is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Elijah Levy to the Board of Directors.

Elijah Levy, Ph.D. is a Clinical Psychologist that has dedicated his clinical work to treating the persistent, mentally ill over his 25 year career. He has designed psychosocial/psychiatric rehabilitation programs to support mentally ill consumers restore function and meaningful, purposeful living. Dr. Levy has been the Director of Founders Outreach for 20 years, a nonprofit center providing psychiatric rehabilitation services to 90 mentally ill residents at a community based residential care center called Founders House of Hope.

In addition, he has been teaching at University of Redlands for 24 years and at Southern California University of Health Sciences. He also has a consulting practice called The Levy Launch, providing corporate/management consultation and training, in addition to forensic psychology services to law enforcement. Dr. Levy trains law enforcement personnel on compassionate policing of the mentally ill in the community. He has written books and produced a documentary on mental illness and collaborated on another documentary of his Veterans Legacy Project group.

Our Training for Police Officers Wins an Award

Well – I've got great news to share about the training we're doing for police officers on how to interact with the mentally ill. On May 5th of 2015 – The Violence Prevention Coalition of Orange County selected our class to receive The 2015 Ambassador of Peace award. We are honored to receive this award for the training we've been providing since 2011 to law enforcement departments in Southern California. We are invited to a luncheon on June 5th at the Promenade and Gardens in Costa Mesa to receive this award.

Ok – that's it folks for this installment of the mighty letter. If you've got a piece of creative writing like a poem, aphorism or adage you want published in this prestigious letter, please email me at the following address:

crazyhorse825@yahoo.com

