

Five
--Looking Around--
Community

How do you move a nation? Just uproot out of Goshen and start walking? You're a bird perched on a boulder watching this unfold: blinding travel dust, hordes of smelly livestock, the chaos of children, clatter and clang, withered guy out front waving a stick. No armed guard. From where you sit, this is NOT cohesive.

Down in the middle of the mayhem, as part of the throng, what do you see? Is this about my immediate family and handful of livestock or is it about my tribe? There are people here I don't know? Is this "we" or "us and them?"

Right now, we have an opportunity to choose the vantage point we take of ourselves. There's the ground-level-pandemic-chaos-all-around-us view. Or, we can rise up and peer down at our culture more objectively.

Culture is systems. Our culture presents us with systems in tension with each other. We have systems that circle the wagons scoffing at systems that want to explore. There are systems that demand conformity lined up against systems that celebrate diversity. We've got systems capitalizing on hoarding and stockpiling that push against systems that want to help and share. There are systems focused on mass production belittling systems that artfully create.

How do we shape systems? We vote. We determine how and where we use our resources. We pursue certain vocations. We relocate. We study the rationale of alternate systems to which we're not normally exposed.

But, culture is also people. If people are nothing else, they are diverse: gender, age, race, etiquette and protocol, lineage, back-story, social/financial status, personality, outlook, attitude, IQ, ability, level of health, habits, hobbies, etc. There are three common responses to diversity: Cluster in our private bubble (isolation). Circulate with those who stand with us against "the other" (tribalism). Celebrate and explore the possibilities of diversity (inclusion).

Suppose we choose the last option? How might we celebrate and explore diversity?

Imagine someone very different from you sharing their back-story. What do you do with their alternative ideas or ethics? How do you handle what feels like push-back? Do you recoil as if attacked? Or do you see it as an on-ramp to further conversation? Do you treat your differences as cause for competition and

correction, or catalysts for cooperation and celebration?

We've intentionally placed this session after ones dealing with personal "stuff."
I'll never do culture in a healthy way until I do me in a healthy way. And the healthy version of me will always invest in culture.

Years struggling against diminished opportunities, the children of Israel finally realized their collective identity, embracing the African concept of Ubuntu, "I am because we are." On the banks of the Jordan, after a long desert ordeal, they were a united "we" instead of a scattered collection of "me's."

Things to consider:

1. Without naming names, describe a person who is your polar opposite.

2. With candor, talk about a conversation with this person.