

A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

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How can a group of people effect a lasting change in our western culture self-serving society to a predominately "other-centered" community? This is a question against which we must measure everything we undertake here at Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal. It is this question which has been a driving force for us as we implement strategies and plans designed to do just that. We must hold ourselves rigorously accountable for producing results which show conclusively that this transformed quality of life is indeed being produced here in our city. □ *changing a fun*

Throughout the years of preparation for this mission, I began to learn the lessons for effective change to take place on a societal scale. And I must say that the foundation of all societal change must be the change of individual lives within that society. I know that this may seem perfectly obvious, but I had to learn even that basic truth through long and hard lessons over the years. A society does not and cannot change unless the people who comprise that society change. Simple fact? Yes. Easy to accomplish? Think again!

Yet within the mysterious weave of this precious fabric which we call "Life" is the indisputable presence of the reality of changed lives. There is overwhelming evidence throughout the history of the human race that ordinary human beings like you and I have experienced the arresting power of a force strong enough to either suddenly or gradually change our personalities, our directions, and our actions from the inside out. I know people who are as different from their former selves as night is from day! They have been changed from small self-centered, little-hearted people into folks whose lives are abundantly full of the joy that results from caring for others. They have been changed!

At the center of everything that we believe and do in Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal is the yielding to that miracle and mystery of changed people. It is the first principle of developing a strategy for effective and lasting societal change. That is what I call "The Great Transaction." And the best way to illustrate this truth is by using the analogy of cleaning a dirty swimming pool.

Now think of our society as a large swimming pool filled with dirty water. Our task is to clean the pool because it has gradually become a terrible threat to the health of any who would swim there. Left long enough in its polluted state, it becomes deadly. To clean a swimming pool you must know two things.

First, you must know what can clean just one molecule of H₂O. No matter how elaborate you want to get into the production of methods or machines for cleaning the pool, or no matter how eloquent you want to wax in propounding the theories of pool cleaning and the benefits of pristine water, *unless you know what cleans one molecule of H₂O and unless you know how to apply that solution successfully, then you can never clean the pool!* But if that is all you know, you cannot clean the pool. You must know more.

If all you know is the successful means of cleaning one molecule of H₂O, you will never be successful in cleaning the swimming pool. Imagine hundreds of people (agencies!) all diving into the pool armed with their H₂O molecule brushes, cleaning the molecules of water. They are wonderfully successful in getting the molecules clean. They expend monstrous energy in the cleansing process. They even point with pride to the statistics of clean molecules. But the pool stays dirty and continues to deteriorate alarmingly despite these heroic efforts! Why? Because when the molecules are placed back into the pool, the capacity of the dirty pool to overwhelm the clean molecule is instantaneous!

We must know what cleans one molecule of H₂O, but we must know one more thing. We must know how that fundamental *transaction* of changing a molecule from "dirty" to "clean" can become *atransformational system!* Somebody invented a swimming pool filter with the ability to bring billions of molecules of H₂O into a special systems environment and clean them all at once using the special knowledge of the cleansing transaction, and then send them into the pool again. This process of intake, cleansing, and return has to be so rapid and efficient that the pool becomes flooded by the relatively "clean" water. The process goes on and on until the pool is "clean."

For the swimming pool filter to be effective, it must be the repository of the knowledge of cleaning just one molecule *the transactional event*, and it must be so powerfully coordinated that it can affect the whole body of the pool *the transformational system*.

We have been trying to approach the healing of our society by majoring in the transactional approach. Now it is becoming clear that our best efforts are ineffective in stopping the general decay of our communities. While we see many individual successes, it is clear that we must have new structures which can effectively transform the whole. Jesus said, "We must have new wineskins for the new wine."

I believe that we must construct an effective model of transformation which is based upon the transcendent power of the Love of God to change people *and* the coordination of our transaction agencies into a transformational system. We have to flood the neighborhoods with people who have become the agents of that great transaction in a new, cooperative way.

Last week I had a respected leader of our city say to me, "I think you are really on to something with the strategies of SBCR!" I believe that with all of my heart! I believe that we are in the midst of being allowed to discover a truly transformational system for our society!

We have a "Strategy Room" in the SBCR Strategy Center which details our plans for rebuilding the system of caring relationships necessary for restoring a safe, loving, and nurturing community to our city. If you are interested in seeing this plan and in learning the process, I urge you to call and to set a time for a "tour" for yourself or for a group. It is an exciting plan! I promise you that!! Come and see.