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To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy Committee on Improving Intelligence" <baruch@cmu.edu>, "Dr. Anne-Marie Slaughter - Director, Policy Planning Staff via Ms. Marisa S. McAuliffe" <mcauliffems@state.gov>,

From: Lloyd Etheredge <lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net>

Subject: 211. Red Team: Rethinking Invisibility: The Obama Administration's Human Rights Strategy and Faster Progress

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

Nobody has a reliable behavioral science theory about how to increase the rate of progress in human rights. We have lots of (sometimes) workable ideas, but a Red Team/National Academy project might create a research program to do better. There are several innovative ways to look at the problem. And new global IT technologies that may change the causal options that the Obama Administration can use - for example, to build the international women's movement.

The Question of Invisibility

One haunting phrase is the characterization of the 1960s as "the time we (sic) discovered poverty in America." [The same might be said about consciousness, discrimination against women, and an agenda for women's rights/liberation.] The poor always knew that they were poor., so the question is, in part, invisibility of people & conditions to higher status and ruling groups and their worlds. And the "invisibility" is as current as the baseline rate of lives ruined by drugs or death by violence or crime or other inner city problems in Washington DC - ignored/invisible to the Washington Post.

Also, there are changes in visibility and human responsiveness: Noam Chomsky used to write about the extraordinary deaths in civil violence and humanitarian disasters of

earthquakes and floods and famines in distant and obscure UDCs that were ignored and invisible in the US mass news media. And this, partly, has changed in the US. Invisible victims have become, at least, visible victims with a standing to elicit (a degree of) compassionate human response. There is variation that can help to pin-down causal theory & create a progressive theory of how to speed progress for all groups.

Neuroscience Investigations

I suspect that the issue also involves the link of hierarchical social dramas (visual cortex) to emotion. One of the most interesting new social movement-oriented languages has been Robert Fuller's series of books on status. [He is trying to start a social movement - e.g., Somebodies and Nobodies (2004), Dignity for All (2008).] He's pointing to the idea that the invisibility is, in a sense, dual: the invisible, disempowered "nobody" individuals and groups have induced (and/or self-created) identities and behavior that also are part of the system. So change might be helpful, to foster and sustain human rights, at both lower and higher points. [And President Obama, in his extraordinary Philadelphia speech on race, obviously feels the same way . . . and it is a speech that the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy is not - I suspect - circulating widely enough around the world.]

The Red Team/National Academy scope-out of the rapid learning options might want to suggest neuroscience R&D along these lines. There is something deep and ubiquitous (across societies and historical periods) that we need to understand. My current run at the problem is at www.policyscience.net at II. A. - the second recapitalization initiative of "Neuropsychology and Rapid Learning Systems about Social Problems." I think there is something fundamental that is triggered in the brain, that we see across primates too, that also effects motivation and cognitive function and the endocrine system via the visual cortex. This would imply, for example, that visual strategies could add power to current (verbal) political strategies.

- Robert Fuller is a physicist, former President of Oberlin College, and an experienced activist. He might be one of the interesting consultants to craft a fast discovery (basic + applied) research program.

Discrimination still is ubiquitous in the world. If a Red Team/National Academy review can challenge conventional thinking and foster progress toward a world commonwealth of human dignity more quickly, by peaceful means, it could be a breakthrough for a better and more peaceful world for many people, in many areas. And allow more people the opportunity to fulfill their human potential.

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