

# You Matter Even If You're "Wrong"

By Roy G. Miller

Oh my, the things we do—and have done—to fit in.

As a kid, I can remember roaming the neighborhood with boys that were older than me. Yeah, which means I discovered cigarettes as a 10-year-old, saw my first Playboy by age 11 and found my next-door neighbor's face stuck to what I thought was a glass vase. A bong.

We all want to fit in, be accepted and be with the "in crowd." So, when we're rejected, criticized, attacked or set apart—physically, relationally or emotionally—there's great angst and irritation. Fear. Yet fitting in often conflicts with what is right, what is good, our values, beliefs and professional standards. So therein lies the struggle. So, at what price do we choose to fit in? How willing are we to stand up for what we believe is true, good, just or unjust? Can we deal with scorn, rejection, disdain? Hate?

## The Burden of Conviction

Professionally, PR folks have a code of ethics. In addition, we each have a personal code of conduct. Are we operating our lives, attitudes and actions in concert with the code, or have we become ambivalent or hardened by what we see and hear every day? I'm guilty. You are too. Yet increasingly, I find myself saying "no more." Not now. I can't allow this or that. I won't tolerate this action or that inaction. I am re-discovering my personal conviction. It is this burden of conviction that we've lost somewhere along the way.

## 5 Challenges for You & Me

1. **Be alert.** Gulliver should have never taken a nap. Don't sleep through your life. Awaken the heart and spirit. And mind. Live to effect change.
2. **Be informed.** Know your stuff. Read. Read. Read. Study what's being said, by whom. Ask questions, ask why. Today, information is rarely objective or "simple fact." Example, if you agree with global warming, know why. If you don't, know why.
3. **Be active.** Knowledge without action is empty air and wasted time. Act. Do. Figure out "your part" at work, at home, in your neighborhood or nonprofit. It is the silent doers in the back that make the most impact. The famous and rich? Rarely.
4. **Be outspoken.** There is so much clamoring that it's often difficult to get a word in edgewise. Share your convictions. Share what you believe is good and right. Agree to disagree but enter into discourse and debate.
5. **Be you.** Most importantly, you must remain true to who you are, what you believe and what is required of you. You matter. Your opinions are valid, whether I agree or not.

Whether we're talking about our role in the workplace or as a parent – or as an American citizen tuned into the issues of the nation and world—we must respond to the burden of conviction. It's about being true to one's self. Thinking for yourself. And acting.

The time is now.

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