Dr. Phil – MLK vs the Clergymen

**Dr. Phil:** On this episode, we are discussing the atrocities of today’s society and addressing the points that both the clergymen and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. bring about the situation. Clergymen, what do you have to say about this?

**Clergymen:** “We [express] understanding that honest convictions in racial matters [should] properly be pursued in the courts, but [urge] that decisions of those courts should in the meantime be peacefully obeyed.”

**Dr. Phil:** Doctor, do you agree that waiting for a decision from the courts is the best action in this instance?

**MLK:** “For years now I have heard the word ‘wait.’ It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity. This ‘wait; has almost always been meant ‘never.’ It has been a tranquilizing thalidomide, relieving the emotional stress for a moment, only to give birth to an ill-formed infant of frustration. We must come to see with the distinguished jurists of yesterday that ‘justice too long delated is justice denied.’ We have waited for more than three hundred and forty years for our God-given and constitutional rights.”

**Dr. Phil:** It is clear that action needs to be taken now rather than later. Both sides have put off this fight for too long and need to take action to resolve this conflict. Clergymen, how do you propose the people go about this?

**Clergymen:** “In Birmingham, recent public events have given indication that we all have opportunity for a new constructive and realistic approach to racial problems. However, we are now confronted by a series of demonstrations by some of our Negro citizens, directed and led in part by outsiders. We recognize the natural impatience of people who feel that their hopes are slow in being realized. But we are convinced that these demonstrations are unwise and untimely.”

**MLK:** “Frankly, I have never yet engaged in a direct-action movement that was ‘well timed’ according to the timetable of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation.”

**Dr. Phil:** I think the Clergymen are trying to say that now is not a good time in the country to bring a rise to these racial issues –

**MLK:** “I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say ‘wait.’ But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: ‘Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?’; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading ‘white’ and ‘colored’; when your first name becomes ‘nigger,’ your middle name becomes ‘boy’ (however old you are) and your last name becomes ‘John,’ and your wife and mother are never given the respected title ‘Mrs.’; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of ‘nobodiness’ – then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.”

**\*roaring applause of agreement from crowd\***

**Dr. Phil:** Well, those were some strong words fueled by the endless oppression that the Negro community has come to know. How, clergymen, will you react politically to such atrocious treatment of the black community?

**Clergymen:** “We agree rather with certain local Negro leadership which has called for honest and open negotiation of racial issues in our area.” “Just as we formerly pointed out that ‘hatred and violence have no sanction in our religious and political traditions,’ we also point out that such actions as incite to hatred and violence, however technically peaceful those actions may be, have nor contributed to the resolution of our local problems. We do not believe that these days of new hope are days when extreme measures are justified in Birmingham.” “We further strongly urge our Negro community to withdraw support from these demonstrations, and to unite locally in working peacefully for a better Birmingham.”

**MLK:** “There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.”

**Dr. Phil:** Well, folks, it is clear that there must be change in the way that both laws and social criticisms are handled nowadays. Dr. King has brought up many ideas for us to consider, looking forward into the future of this fight for equality.