

ethikos Volume 33, Number 4. March 28, 2019 Moral leadership in a Ball of Confusion

By Joe Kale

Joe Kale (josephk@creativcdc.com) is the Executive Director of Ethics & Compliance at Creative Associates International, based in Washington, DC.

Morality in leadership matters. The term *moral leadership* resonates, because people see the need for a broader understanding of what good leadership is. It is a very different kind of leadership as moral leaders strive to serve instead of highlighting their own skills and accomplishments. They are not motivated by rank or title, but are characterized by a deep sense of core values, ideals, and the pursuit of a higher purpose. It is incumbent upon leaders to empower employees to act upon their values to build and sustain a culture where moral values not only resonate, but thrive.

As a big music fan, I have always enjoyed different genres and musical periods. I recently listened to a classic Temptations song, *Ball of Confusion*,^[1] that I had not heard in years, and it really struck a chord (no pun intended) when thinking about this topic. Recorded in 1970 and released in 1971, almost 50 years have passed, but the words and meaning of the song still resonate today.

Let me share some of the lyrics with you:

Well, the only person talkin' 'bout love thy brother is the preacher
And it seems nobody's interested in learning but the teacher
Segregation, determination, demonstration, integration, aggravation,
humiliation, obligation to our nation
Ball of Confusion that's what the world is today (yeah, yeah)

The lyrics from *Ball of Confusion* offer a pretty good description of where the world is today. We cannot seem to agree on anything. Instead of a civil discourse or discussion on our differences, it has become too easy and commonplace to dismiss other views and opinions as trivial, less-valued, or even wrong. Language and norms that were once considered inappropriate have become more common and even acceptable. Throw in the proliferation and ease of social media, and it has become far too easy to criticize, minimize, or degrade others and hide behind the wall of anonymity.

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