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When Actions Speak Louder than Words

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. --Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963

In July, 1996, 14-year-old Melissa Gay, took a train from her home in Connecticut to New York City and failed to return home. According to news reports at the time, Melissa, in the company of two young men she knew, attended a “rave concert” on Randalls Island. During the course of the evening, she took several doses of *Ecstasy*, and was last observed at another party in a park beneath the Whitestone Bridge in the Bronx. When Melissa failed to return home by morning, her frantic parents began contacting all her known friends, and then the police.

After several tortuous days of searching, Melissa’s father, Robert, a partner at a private equity investment firm, felt he needed to explain his absence to his senior managing partner at the home office in Boston. To his astonishment, “the boss” immediately summoned other managing directors to tell them what was going on and to formulate a plan. Within several hours, the Boston office was virtually closed down and some 16 top officials were on a charter flight to New York. According to the Boston Globe, another 40 employees caught a shuttle early the next morning.¹

“Most of us have children,” remembers Stephen Pagliuca, a fellow managing director with the investment firm. “It wasn’t even a question. We just decided to do it.”^{ibid}

Shortly after touchdown, the senior managing partner turned a function room of the LaGuardia Marriott Hotel into a war room, and immediately hired a private detective firm to assist with the search and established a toll-free number for tips, coordinating the effort with the NYPD. He also hired a public relations firm and began calling everyone in his Rolodex that did business with his New York office, asking them to assist in the search for his friend’s missing daughter.

Some 250 colleagues from other Wall Street firms including Goldman Sachs, Price Waterhouse, and Bankers Trust responded. R. R. Donnelly, the firm’s printer, printed more than 300,000 fliers bearing Melissa’s likeness and last known whereabouts. Duane Reade, a drugstore chain and client of the investment firm, inserted fliers in shopping bags at 52 stores.

Additional command centers were established in the Donnelly offices and the Pierre Hotel in Manhattan to dispatch volunteers and get in touch with the press. “Volunteers with cellular phones fanned out to clubs like the Limelight and the Tunnel, the Lollapalooza concert at Downing Stadium on Randalls Island, parties in Tompkins Square and Central Park, as well as Madison Square Garden and the Port Authority Terminal.”²

Marc Wolpow, a director at the Boston office, said at the time that he was absolutely amazed to witness so many investment bankers, lawyers and accountants out on the streets in jackets, ties, and wool suits, engaging kids with spiked hair and nose rings.

Finally, near the end of the fifth day since Melissa had disappeared, a major break came following an evening newscast featuring the missing girl. An anonymous (teenage) boy called to inquire about a possible reward for her safe return.

A trace of the call led police to a home in Montauk (at the far tip of Long Island), where Melissa was discovered shivering through detox after a massive dose of ecstasy. Doctors later told Robert Gay, Melissa's father, she might not have lived another day. Robert believes his former "boss" saved his daughter's life.

Some months following the massive volunteer search, the investment firm drew up their annual list of accomplishments: Number one was the week they spent [that] July combing Manhattan in search of Melissa Gay, the missing 14-year-old daughter of one of the partners. "It really overshadowed everything we did from a money standpoint," said the firm's point man.³

Many readers have already deduced that the private equity investment firm involved in this life-saving drama was Boston's *Bain Capital, Inc.*, and the lead executive was Mitt Romney, the presumptive GOP nominee for the office of President. Romney later told reporters "The days and nights spent looking for Missy Gay were more valuable than some financial home runs that made the front page of the Wall Street Journal. I mean, money is just money."^{ibid}

We share this story for several reasons. First, it has a number of inspiring components—not unlike certain events recorded in the Bible. Similarities abound in the story of the capture of Lot and his household at the hands of a confederation of four lording kings (Genesis 14). Though Lot had foolishly pitched his tents toward Sodom (even as Melissa was hanging out at ecstasy parties), Abraham and his servants, numbering about 300, pursued the kidnappers and rescued his nephew and all his goods. After doing so, Abraham brought tithes to Melchizedek, the king of Salem and priest of God, but turned down rewards from the mayor of Sodom, except for out-of-pocket expenses certain of his servants had incurred during the daring rescue.

Likewise, the executives at *Bain Capital* decided not only to give their time but also their money, paying all expenses for the search for their partner's daughter. Mitt Romney later said he can't escape some of the images he carries with him from his week in the New York underworld. "It was a shocker," he said. "The number of lost souls was astounding."^{ibid}

Second, we know that Mitt Romney experiences extra scrutiny and even criticism for his personal wealth and business success. But few are aware that when Romney was asked by his former employer, Bill Bain, to come back to Bain & Company as CEO to rescue the firm from bankruptcy, Romney left Bain Capital to work at Bain & Company for an annual salary of one dollar. When Romney went to the rescue of the 2002 Salt Lake Olympics, he accepted no salary for three years, and wouldn't use an expense account. He also accepted no salary as Governor of Massachusetts.

And, third, most everyone is aware of the elephant in the room—Mr. Romney's "religion." For certain, there are intractable theological differences between followers of Joseph Smith and those drawn to *Solo Scriptura* (the WORD of God alone). We do not believe both groups are on the same path. The path to life is *narrow*. It begins at the foot of the Cross, and leads to the Father through Jesus, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

Still, we wonder for what earthly infidelity is Mitt Romney judged so harshly by fellow earthlings? His marriage and family? His generosity in community? His inclination to be a problem solver? His transforming to a "pro-life" view? His success in the pursuit of the American dream?

For the record, the White House has been home to several individuals that were arguably non-Trinitarian Universalists. While our founders strongly inferred that a wise citizenry should prefer and prayerfully select Christians for rulers, they understood the realities of a fallen world. Following Romans 13, they intended to establish a system of rewards and punishments based on (outward) actions, not inmost beliefs.

Translation for this treatise: In politics, "Let not the perfect become the enemy of good."

Rick Forcier

¹ Leung, Shirley, "Investment Firm Shuts to Help Find Girl," *The Boston Globe*, 7/12/1996, p. A25

² *The New York Times*, "Missing Teen-Ager Found in New Jersey, 7/13/1996

³ Canellos, Peter S., "Bain Capital Recalls NY Search," *The Boston Globe*, 12/8/1996, p. B2