

THE RELEVANCE OF THE VALUES
PROMOTED BY PEACE LEADERS OF THE
WORLD IN THE PRESENT CRISIS
SITUATION

By

Adrial Naidoo

Leadership is the ability to inspire, educate and magnify certain traits within people. It is truly a powerful quirk as it can be used for the betterment or the detriment of society.

The COVID-19 pandemic is an extreme yet excellent proving ground for the current batch of world leaders. On March 11, 2020, WHO declared the virus an international health emergency due the spread and severity. The sentiment was clear - those in power need to take swift and proactive measures to curb the transmission and ultimately, save lives.

In this essay, I will outline how the leadership styles of two world leaders during this current period in time have not only affected the lives of their citizens but the course of humanity.

As a first world country, it is only befitting to begin with the USA and its notorious leader, President Donald J. Trump. For a country that prides itself on democracy and financial prosperity, it has been completely overwhelmed by the virus. In my opinion, the initial misstep began when President Trump referred to the virus as the "China Virus". The careless utterance of those two words printed ignorance and discrimination. Citizens were deluded into believing they did not have to take precautions as they are not Chinese therefore they couldn't contract the virus and those of Chinese/Asian nationality were a risk to their well-being. The refusal to wear a mask and make the act mandatory shows a complete lack of compassion or intelligence as the wearing of masks has been scientifically proven to reduce the risk of infection. Another incident that may not have been directly caused by the pandemic, but certainly is highlighted, is the Black Lives Matter movement. George Floyd's deaths and the demise of many like him prove that racism still lives. The world was already mourning the deaths of those taken by the

virus and to have individuals being ruthlessly taken to their maker by the very force that was meant to serve and protect them is truly heart wrenching. Instead of condemning the act, President Trump tweeted brute force. Instead of seeking dialogue and resolution, he reinforced the ideal that those who shared his ethnic roots mattered. It is with these examples, I believe that the leadership of the USA has been ineffective in combating the transmission of COVID-19 nor has it contributed to the progression of socio-economic justice.

The second leader that has piqued my interest is the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, PM Ardern mourned with her country the fatal terrorist attack on a mosque that killed 51 innocents. She vowed to and did tighten gun control laws. Under her leadership, New Zealand has displayed remarkable response to the pandemic. A national lockdown was implemented; the wearing of masks was necessary, social distancing motioned, all while she communicated clearly and calmly the gravity of the situation. Her citizens were educated by her that things will change in order for many lives to be saved. PM Ardern had stated that she wants to eliminate the virus from their shores and so far she has come close. She is a leader that empathizes with her people as she cut her own pay by 20% in solidarity with those who are facing economic hardship. Overall, these facts that prove the leadership of PM Ardern have been effective in combating the transmission of the virus as well as furthering the ideology of gender equality. She has demonstrated that a leader can be both compassionate and stern yet still produce results.

To quote Martin Luther King, Jr. 'We need leaders not in love with money but in love with justice. Not in love with publicity but in love with humanity.' His statement is a mission we as society need to invest in by choosing and rewarding leaders who display such ethos. Kindness, wit and empathy, compared to avarice, ignorance and arrogance, are the weapons that have proven to be working against COVID-19, which begs the question, how many other pandemics can it fight against?

