



# Ethics Roll Call

To Champion the Nobility of Policing

FALL, 2013

Human rights rest on human dignity. The dignity of man is an ideal worth fighting for and worth dying for.

-Robert Maynard

## *A Brief Sketch for Why Sexual Harassment is Morally Wrong*

By Dan Primozic

We all know that sexual harassment is wrong and we have the training we need to try to avoid giving such offenses to other human beings in our workplaces, learning places and public places (and, hopefully, our private places as well). That does not prevent some inevitable sighs, knowing glances and eye-rolling to occur when this subject is taught for organizational leadership training. So I wonder if that is not because it is usually taught in a very superficial manner as something that is just a set of rules that must be followed, especially to prevent exposure to litigation for the organization and the individual that is accused of the harassment. It is usually taught merely as a *legal* issue. It is a legal issue, of course. But, first and foremost, it is an ethical issue.

I wonder, then, if it might not be appropriate to teach it in a rigorous and mature manner more in keeping with the moral issues surrounding sexual harassment in the workplace. I wonder if we have often enough dug deeply into precisely why it is wrong ethically and morally speaking. That is why I attempt to do so in the next few paragraphs.

One might respond to me on the issue of why unwelcomed sexual advances or *quid pro quo* proposals are morally wrong by saying that "they are offensive to those who receive them." That is easily granted. But that simply moves the issue back

one step. Then the issue becomes "why do those who receive such proposals and advances find them offensive?" There are clear answers for both questions from our American political system and from the history of philosophy.

I will begin with some premiere thinkers and moral leaders of our American political system: Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln. Thomas Jefferson made some fairly enduring remarks about the nature of human dignity:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. (*The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776*)

According to Jefferson, there is an intrinsic dignity and an attending set of basic rights that come along with the fact that one is a human being. And also, according to Jefferson, there is no reason to argue that point. The truth of that fundamental human is "self-evident" (or, at least, it *should be so*).

So how does that play within the issue of the immorality of sexual harassment? I think that it involves the concept of "abuse of power." But, it might be asked here again, "why is the abuse of power morally wrong?" After all, people throughout history who have abused the power they had over other people surely have often profited from

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doing that.

Let's look at a simple scenario: you are above me on the corporate ladder and are my supervisor and, therefore, ultimately have quite a bit of power over my career and my livelihood. You can even create untrue stories about my performance in the organization to ruin me without any or many undesirable consequences to yourself. So clearly, you hold considerable power over me.

Yet, from a moral point of view, does that set of circumstances entitle you to abuse me or disrespect me in any way? I really do not see why you would become entitled to that just from the simple fact of your superior organizational position. Does that set of circumstances entitle you to ignore or dismiss the basic human dignity and the rights thereunto pertaining that Jefferson so eloquently spoke about above? Again, I do not see what it is about your superior position in our workplace that would entitle you to that from a moral point of view.

How about the thoughts of Abraham Lincoln on this issue of power? He said this about having illegitimate power over another: "What I do say is that no man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent." In short, the power you may have over me is not granted to you by anything like the possibility that you are somehow "better" or "higher" than I am. According to Lincoln, if you do gain the power to "govern" or somehow control me, I must hand over that power to you. You do not have that power as an "inalienable right."

Hence, from what we have seen of the thinking of two of our most prominent "forefathers," even if you find yourself somehow above me, you do not have the moral right to ignore, dismiss or otherwise abuse my basic human dignity and the inalienable rights I have as a consequence of that dignity by exercising illegitimate power over me. That includes, in a work setting, unwelcome sexual advances and proposals of a *quid pro quo* nature.

The most prominent philosophical treatment of the roots of this issue comes from the German enlightenment thinker, Immanuel Kant, in his renowned *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (translated by H. J. Paton, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964). There Kant posited what he called the "Categorical Imperative" to guide our

ethical and moral decision-making. In the formulation of this imperative that he calls the "practical imperative," Kant suggests that we test what we plan to do against the following rule: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end." But what does that mean, exactly?

Here we will use a scenario from one of our ILEA on-line ethics courses for an illustration: Let's say that you intend to visit your aging grandmother on Sunday afternoons, and bring flowers and candy with you, not from the intention of love and respect, but rather because you would like a larger portion for yourself in her last will and testament.

Kant would say that to intend to visit her because you want more inheritance violates the principle embodied in the practical imperative stated above: that is, to do so would be to use those visits to your grandmother as the means to a selfish end. Hence, to follow the guidance embedded in the imperative you would never decide to visit your grandmother from such intentions. However, to visit from love and respect would not violate the principle embodied in the imperative above, and therefore, such intentions could become your duty to enact.

So, feel free to set aside some time, flowers, and candy and say "hello" to grandma for us, but only from motives of love, honor and respect for her dignified position in your life. But many people have used others, even loved ones for their own selfish purposes and have gained benefits from that use. The question again becomes: "why not use others for my selfish ends?" What is wrong with doing so?

More simply still, Kant would point out to us that to visit her for her money, to use her as a means to an end is to treat her as something she is not: she is not a mere object to be used. We are not to use people as means to other ends, but we are, instead, to treat them as ends in themselves. To treat human beings as means to other ends is to use them like objects. We are not to use people like we do objects, very simply, because they are not objects. They are people and, as such, they have a special ontological and a dignified moral status that precludes them from being and from being treated like objects. A shorthand way of say-

that is to say that because people are not objects, they should not be “objectified.”

Once we realize how simple a fact this is about who we are and how we should be morally treated, it should stagger us to know how often throughout human history this simple fact of our being human and our not being objects has been ignored, forgotten, disbelieved and even mocked. This is “objectification” is also the reason that human slavery is wrong and why international human rights violations are equally wrong. People *qua* people have an intrinsic moral worth and dignity that should not be violated.

Given that the foundations of the reasons for why sexual harassment is wrong are so profoundly simple and clear, is it not also clear that our organizations, especially our American organizations which function in the political system that is founded on the concepts already noted above in the words of Jefferson and Lincoln, should find it their moral obligation to do everything they can to prevent such a clear violation of basic human dignity and rights as this? And given the prestigious and highly visible nature of American police organizations which are charged with protecting these fundamental American political concepts and rights, should they not be in the very vanguard of doing everything possible to educate their workforce concerning this *moral* issue in an effort of preventing these violations of these self-evident truths of human dignity that come along with sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment, then, first and foremost is a *moral* issue about people and their basic human dignity that should remain inviolate. It seems to me, therefore, that there is nothing superficial, unimportant or boring about that.

### *Ethics Corner*

A very sharp-eyed alumnus of one of the recent ILEA Schools of Police Supervision locked onto a brief blog article concerning Machiavelli. He sent it along to me because I taught his school a section on classical ethical leadership theory. N. Machiavelli was someone we discussed.

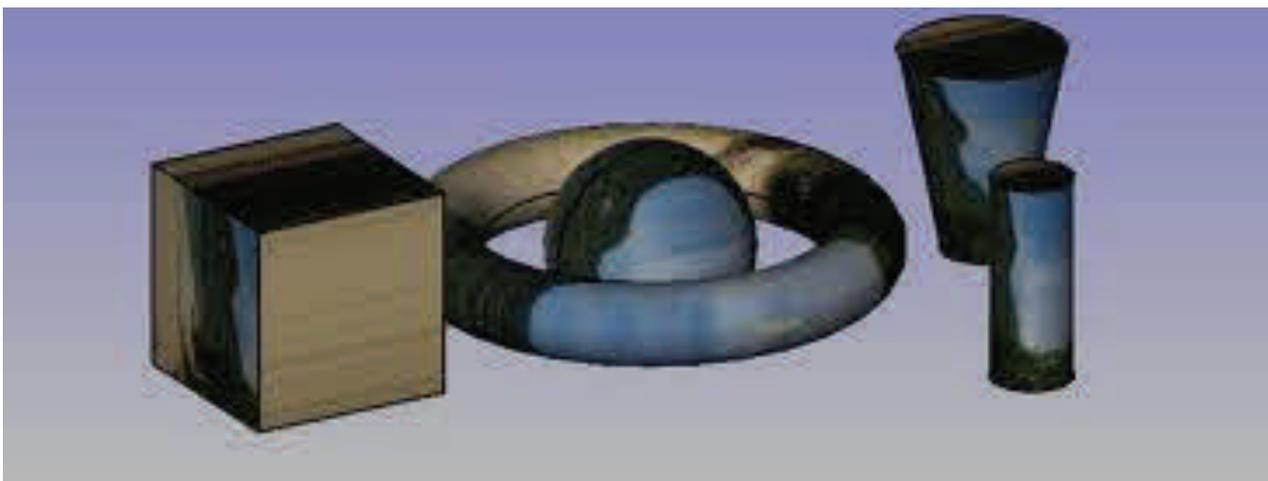
In the article, “A Call for True Machiavellian Leadership,” (<http://www.strategy-business.com/blog>), Theodore Kinni brings our attention to a new book titled *Redeeming the Prince: The Meaning of Machiavelli’s Masterpiece*. (Maurizio Viroli, Princeton University Press, 2013)

In that book, Maurizio Viroli tries to “redeem” Machiavelli’s notorious reputation for advising leaders to become manipulative, immoral tyrants: for urging leaders to believe that “the ends justify the means.” Viroli maintains that Machiavelli has been vastly misunderstood and vehemently mischaracterized. He says:

Niccolo Machiavelli’s famous sentence from *The Prince* — ‘So let a prince win and maintain his state; the means will always be judged honorable, and will be praised by everybody’ — has been used to justify the acquisition of power and profit in business by any means. It suggests that as long as business leaders can capture and keep market share, the methods that they use are of no consequence. But this is not Machiavelli’s true message. . . A true ‘Machiavellian’ entrepreneur or executive would be an innovator capable of creating new and better ways of producing and distributing products or services. . . Such a leader might be excused, not justified, if he

Usually, terrible things that are done with the excuse that progress requires them are not really progress at all, but just terrible things.

-Russell Baker

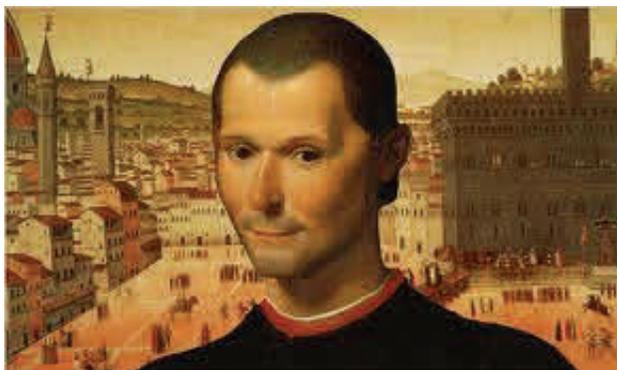


or she violates the principles of honesty. But only on the condition that it is absolutely necessary to accomplish a great deed of innovation that would benefit a great number of human beings, like the ideal prince whose highest value is the good of the people of his country. (*Ibid*)

Perhaps I am simply not seeing the distinction between “the ends justify the means,” and the excuses and justification that Viroli offers above. It seems the same move to me, with the possible exception of the fact that Viroli insists that it is all better if the Prince does whatever it takes for the good of his people and not for personal power or profit.

However, the rest of *The Prince* will not support the spin here that it is alright to lead unethically if the end is a utilitarian “greatest good for the greatest number.” I cannot read that book in that way because there is too much else in it that points to the accumulation and enhancement of the personal power and profit of the Prince himself. See if, after rereading the work, you agree with Viroli or with me (if you have the time, energy and will to do so).

Nice try, Mr. Viroli. But it seems that you might here have offered a thinly veiled Machiavellian justification for the immoral advice of Machiavelli to leaders.



*The Seventh ILEA/Lebanese ISF Executive Leadership Seminar: Another Bright Spot for International Ethical Leaders*

From November 4-15, 2013, ILEA was delighted to have the opportunity to host and teach the seventh Executive Leadership Seminar for the Lebanese Internal Security Force (ISF) at our headquarters at the Center for American and International Law in Plano, Texas. Eleven high-level participants from the ISF (Colonels and Generals) travelled to our shores to engage in lively and meaningful dialogue concerning crucial topics and best practices in law enforcement leadership. The agenda was a full one and a rich one as well. It included:

“Leadership: Military and Civilian Policing,” by General Michael Marchand (Ret.), President of the Center for American and International Law;

“Ethics and Integrity in Policing,” by Dr. Dan Primozić, Associate Director and Resident Ethics Scholar of the Institute for Law Enforcement Administration;

“Leading Change,” by Dr. Patrick Oliver, Director of the Criminal Justice Program, Cedarville University, Ohio;

“ROPE Course” at Group Dynamix, Carrollton Texas;

“Leadership Styles in Policing,” by Mr. Gregory Smith, Associate Director of the Institute for Law Enforcement Administration;

“Leadership in a Connected World,” by Douglas Kowalski, Chief of Police (Ret.), McKinney Police Department, Texas;

“The Duty of Care,” by Dr. John Jones, Ottawa Canada;

“Introduction to Community Policing,” by Dr. Neil Moore, Vice President of the Center for American and International Law and Director of the Institute for Law Enforcement Administration;

“International Issues: The Role of the F.B.I.,” by Mr. Oliver “Buck” Revell, Associate Deputy Director of Investigations, F.B.I (Ret.);

“Organizational Change,” by Dr. Alejandro Del Carmen, Chair and Professor of Criminal Justice and Criminology, University of Texas at Arlington;

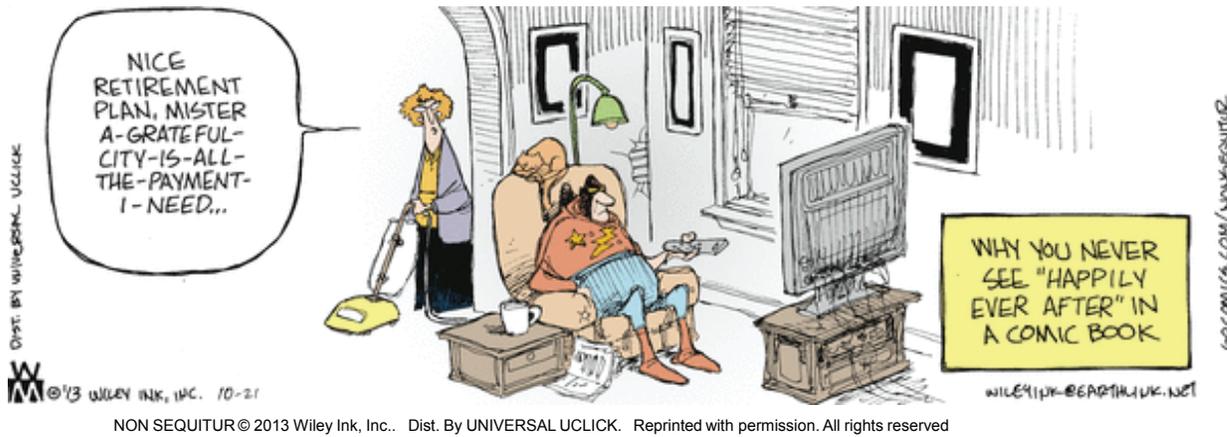
“Servant Leadership,” by David James, Chief of Police of Carrollton Texas (Ret.).

The participants also visited the Sixth Floor Museum Book Depository and the South Fork Ranch and were also invited to a ranch in Cleburne Texas for Lebanese food and fellowship and a day full of lively activities.

The seminar was another success story for the ILEA and for international education in ethical leadership.



Where JR was killed (again). South Fork Ranch



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## Schedule of Future ILEA Programs

### *School of Police Supervision*

What's a supervisor? What's a leader? What's the difference?

January 6 - 31, 2014 in **Arlington, Texas, USA**

**Arlington Police Department Training Academy**  
6000 W. Pioneer Pkwy.  
Arlington, Texas 76103

### *Crime Analysis in the Information Age Using MS Office, Access and Excel for Law Enforcement*

January 6 - 7, 2014 in **Fort Worth, Texas, USA**

**Tarrant County Community College**  
4801 Marine Creek Parkway  
Fort Worth, TX 76179

### *Police Leader Development*

February 10 - 14, 2014 in **Fort Worth, Texas, USA**

**Criminal Justice Training Center**  
Tarrant County College Northwest  
4801 Marine Creek Parkway  
Fort Worth, TX 76179

### *50th School of Executive Leadership (formerly Management College)*

March 3 - April 25, 2014 in **Plano, Texas, USA**

**ILEA Headquarters**  
at **The Center for American and International Law**  
5201 Democracy Drive  
Plano, Texas 75024

### *Internal Affairs, Professional Standards and Ethics Safeguarding the Commitment to Excellence*

April 7 - 11, 2014 in **Plano, Texas, USA**

**ILEA Headquarters**  
at **The Center for American and International Law**  
5201 Democracy Drive  
Plano, Texas 75024

### *Leadership Conference*

May 5 - 7, 2014 in **Plano, Texas, USA**

**ILEA Headquarters**  
at **The Center for American and International Law**  
5201 Democracy Drive  
Plano, Texas 75024



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