Excerpt from: *Creating Partnerships: Unleashing Collaborative Power in the Workplace* **(2005), Cynthia King, PhD. Santa Barbara, CA: Wisdom Way Press – Attn: Ordering Dept., P.O. Box 1055, Ventura, CA 93002**

♌ Chapter 1 ♋

Unpacking the Patriarchy

Why This Focus is Important at This Time

The huge drama that is now unfolding on the world stage makes anyone's particular humblings look like so much humus.   (Houston, *Jump Time* 8)

In the context of complex, disruptive social conditions that challenge organizations in the early twenty-first century, there is a deep and growing need to find another way of operating. On the large scale, these challenges include massive new epidemics such as AIDS and SARS, the institutionalization of so-called "free markets" that especially benefit large corporate and agri-business interests while forcing small entrepreneurs and family farms into destitution, and on-going, proliferating wars fought over ethnic and religious conflicts and long-simmering struggles for self-determination. On the smaller, everyday scale, millions of people experience mounting frustration at workplaces where they feel used and abused, and not respected for their potential contributions. When pushed to the edge of their frustrations, some individuals resort to domestic abuse, or explode in a reaction that has come to be known in the vernacular as "going postal."

Many are resigned to those conditions, and assume "that's just the way it is." Yet there is growing awareness that American society is in need of an operating system that promotes a wider base of participation rather than relying on exclusivity; that fosters organizational partnerships rather than maintaining strict top-down hierarchies; and that sustains personal, visionary leadership committed to stewardship of resources rather than their exploitation for the benefit of a select few. In that light, we are called to create a society where circles and communities of trust flourish, where collaboration replenishes our sense of security and direction, and where integrity grows from a larger sense of service to our shared progress.

A cultural transformation is called for: not just to repair the existing crumbling infrastructure, but to replace it. Indeed, as community activist and cultural theorist Sharif Abdullah observed in *Creating a World That Works for All*, "We live in a world that works only for a few." Therefore, he declares, "Our times cry out for change" because from his perspective, "America is coming apart at the seams" (28). While a fortunate few may be content to reinforce—and exploit—the status quo, there is growing discontent fueling calls for substantive transformation of social, economic and political systems. This book outlines a compelling and proven path toward such transformation, and the

fresh organizational framework offered herein seeks to replace the current system and its over-reliance on "might makes right" with a viable alternative.

I am writing about this path because I sense there is a deep yearning for an alternative to the heroic and patriarchal myths that inform our society and our organizational cultures; an alternative that both challenges and moves beyond the narrow weave of our traditional Eurocentric, and ultimately Americentric culture. I am outlining a map that integrates a wide diversity of perspectives, outlooks, and approaches within its circle. I believe it is not imperative that that context ever existed in the past, and that it is entirely possible for organizations to operate without having to rely on a previous model, although examples of partnerships within the organizational context are provided in this book. I have had opportunities to witness that within the partnership alternative there are other ways for human beings to operate and "be" on this earth, rather than perpetuating and enduring an oppressive, *power-over* existence within the historic patriarchal system based on competition, domination, and control.

The alternative I am proposing is an inclusive system of *power-with* partnership, where all voices have the right to be heard—not just the powerful voices of those in charge— and where all individuals have full membership in their communities—no matter what their gender, race, religion, age, sexuality, or abilities. This shift represents admittedly massive movement within widely held American worldviews, and yet I am not the first—and certainly won't be the last—to advocate this shift. There are many partnership advocates identifying key elements in the shift. As mythologist and United Nations consultant Jean Houston observes, this "new way of being in community" will require "movement from the egocentric and the ethnocentric to the worldcentric." Furthermore, she confirms, "Critical to this reformation is a true partnership society, in which women join men in the full social agenda" (*Jump Time* 13). Such a society invites and celebrates equally both feminine and masculine expressions of our collective humanity (both of which already co-exist within both men and women).

Throughout this work I examine and reference myths —the storylines of a culture and an organization—as a way to help explain how and why we have evolved to the current expressions of the patriarchal system. This examination is useful for understanding both what is important to keep and what must be dismantled and replaced if we are to move forward toward a system based on partnering.

I have found it possible to take threads from ancient myths and indigenous wisdom traditions, and combine them with the ideas of courageous, visionary thinkers and creative new views and thoughts, thereby standing on the shoulders of wise men and women who have pioneered the way and painted inventive and insightful images. With this combination, we can weave a new tapestry that addresses the challenges of our times—at both individual and collective levels—and that moves our collective mythology forward into a new era that honors all perspectives and makes room for all voices in the collective dialogue.

This process of examining, unpacking, elaborating, and understanding core myths reflects the kind of fundamental, systemic change that is portrayed, for example, by examining the styles and strategies of Athena, ancient Greek goddess of war and the city-state, side by side with those of Oprah, a modern American phenomenon who has created a powerful and popular platform for dialogue and reform. While Athena demonstrates partnership in her guise as Mentor in *The Odyssey*, she also provides the classic "father's

daughter" role model; the woman who aligns herself with and supports the patriarchy, or "rule of the fathers." On the other hand, Oprah offers a role model, and in some instances a support system, for women and other minorities seeking to rise above the systemic circumstances that would conspire to hold them back. Furthermore, while she speaks directly to women and minorities, her message also appeals to many men whose own philosophies resonate with hers.

Working in true partnership is not a brand-new innovation; it is an idea with a track record whose time has come, and which is steadily gaining momentum. I am adding my voice, concern, and efforts to advancing this partnership movement, which has already moved out of the theoretical realm and into real-life applications. Long-time community organizer and activist Grace Lee Boggs describes striking examples of individuals who are working for a fundamental shift toward a partnership ethic in the American social system, and who realize both the enormity of the undertaking and its critical importance. Boggs cites Pamela Chiang, an Asian-American environmental justice organizer, who asserts, "The democracy we're creating is not about winning a seat at the table but about changing the rules of the game" (59). This idea that the basic "rules," or operating systems need to be changed has been steadily growing within our culture. Boggs also endorses grassroots organizers Vincent Harding and Rosemary Harding, who worked closely with Martin Luther King, Jr. They remember that, in the last two years of his life, Dr. King "was calling for a radical revolution in values and a radical reconstruction of our society" that would make it more inclusive and just. Harding and Harding further believe, "Making a more perfect union is sacred work, requiring faith and courage" (59).

Contrary to those who label efforts to question or change the system as not being "team players," or even "unpatriotic," the Hardings conclude that based on their experiences, "The only way to protect democracy is to advance it" (59). An important benefit of the *Partnership Model* lies in its offering of a framework for all courageous lovers of egalitarian and truly democratic ideals. Thus, this book is not a surface-level attempt to change the levels of equality within the existing system, so that everyone has equal opportunity to dominate and be on top. Instead, this is a challenge to the substratum—the very system itself—that underlies thousands of years of history and the core institutions of the Eurocentric, Americentric, and androcentric (male-centered) models.

Challenging the substratum with this proposed movement from a *power-over* system to one based on *power-with* partnership represents nothing less than a cultural transformation. For those raised within the dualistic (either-or, rather than both-and), command-and-control paradigm, a truly alternative system is often difficult to imagine and comprehend. Nevertheless, I have worked with many people who do understand the need for a paradigm shift, who are uncovering the nuts and bolts actions required and committed to making the transition, and who are dedicated to working for the full integration of the Constitutional ideals of equality and justice for all. Given the core understandings of the partnership alternative and a few key tools, they can collaboratively move the myth of competition and control forward into collaboration and partnership in order to discover our collective potential, and to consciously co-create organizational partnerships and community-based solutions to solve the complex problems we face.

Together we are called to step powerfully forward into creating a new way of working together. With more awareness of organizational cultural patterns, it is becoming apparent that the old forms, which once propelled society, are corrupted from within, and a new paradigm is struggling to be born. As we labor through the transition into this partnership process, it is also important to investigate the shadow aspects of our organizations. These "shadows" represent the "dark side," or the aspects of the organization that are pushed into the background and often denied, even as they are mirrored in the individuals who make up the organization. They are the weaknesses behind the projected strengths, where the early benefits of the patriarchal system have disintegrated into rule by supremacy of power, and where a primal fear of losing control and dominance might dissuade organizational members from implementing key changes and transitions. These are also the places where we can find ourselves resorting to old patterns of exclusivity and manipulation when faced with threats and the stresses of a competitive society. Indeed, even with the best intentions of operating as true partners and teams, given that "under stress, we regress"—it is all too easy to revert back to our old habits, perspectives, and operating principles.

In the midst of polarizing debates about how best to proceed in the face of escalating global violence and eroding natural resources, we are called both individually and collectively to step away from perpetuating the current operating system. This requires fundamental changes, needed at both the societal and the individual levels. Those changes begin with individual actions. As sociology professor Allan Johnson declares in *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, by consciously choosing alternatives in our everyday lives that do not revolve around control and oppression, "we make it easier for others to do so as well, *and harder for them not to*" (238). Furthermore, he explains, we "weaken the patriarchal paradigm by openly choosing alternative paths in our daily lives and thereby providing living anomalies that don't fit the prevailing paradigm" (239). Even though stepping out as the odd one out requires courage, Johnson contends that contrary to popular belief, "We aren't simple prisoners of a socially constructed reality," and individuals can transform the ways we live and work together. He explains, "Reality is being constructed and reconstructed all the time, and the part we play in that, however small, gives us the chance and the responsibility to choose" to make a difference (154).

Eventually, by each person choosing to make changes, the ripple effects of those changes widen, and those forms and values that were traditionally held as normal and legitimate begin to lose their sense of obvious-ness, and new forms and values "emerge to challenge their privileged place in social life" (Johnson 239). Thus, in keeping with Gandhi's exhortation: "We must *be* the change we want for the world," it is important to realize that together we can and will make a difference. The *Partnership Model* offers a place to launch our individual and collective efforts for specific changes in our organizations.

We have collectively endured several thousand years of investment in a system of domination, which draws its potency from hierarchies of competition and control. It is ever more apparent that social and economic conditions within that system most favor those who view power as vested in positions, which to varying degrees enables them to control the lives of others through material means and narrow self-interests. Those privileged with such power, as well as many stifled by that power, come to believe in the

image of the "economic man," which is anyone motivated by a need to compete for scarce resources and an innate conviction that in order to guarantee survival one cannot not compete. That conviction, that competition is the only option, in itself becomes a trap. Lilly Tomlin aptly named the unfortunate fallout from this worldview, when she observed, "The trouble with the rat race is that even if you win, you're still a rat."

In that light, there is a growing need for a shift in the fundamental system that operates as the basis of American social, political, educational, religious, and economic organizations. In spite of unparalleled wealth, rising patriotic fervor, and the promises of democracy, deep cracks scar the façade of American greatness. The implications of core myths, or cultural stories that shape American culture, definitely require serious examination if we expect to emerge with viable organizing principles and leadership models in the face of increasingly complex global conundrums coupled with ever more pluralistic societies.

These issues are particularly pressing because the United States of America in the early twenty-first century is clutching its status as the single remaining "superpower." That standing carries an immense responsibility to affect future global trajectories, especially in the ways in which people organize and address common issues, make use of power, lead one another in the creation of wealth, and create a sustainable future. These conditions can be better understood by examining how certain core myths—including the myths of the hero and of the patriarchal system—have both promoted and constrained our definitions of progress.

This examination is important because we are living in a time of heightened terrorist threat and compromised civil liberties; exposed multi-billion dollar scandals of corporate greed; serial betrayals by political leaders that rock the trust of millions in and outside their home countries; relentless environmental degradation; global shifts in employment that leave one community with intractable unemployment while jobs are "outsourced" to people in another country, thereby dramatically changing the lifestyles and worldviews of that country; and over-stretched and under-funded social programs buckling from growing populations, increasing cultural complexity, and the escalating, daunting costs of human health care. Furthermore, even as access to unbiased information is rapidly shrinking due to steadily merging media outlets, the enormous impact of the Internet, which speeds global connections and requires increased flexibility, innovation, and intercultural competence, is stretching over and weaving through all of the above circumstances.

Even though the United States of America is still the richest and single most productive country in the world, that hegemony appears to be shifting. In the early twenty-first century, the rise of the European Union and China in the global market is being intensified by the decline of the dollar as the "gold standard." Meanwhile, national unemployment level statistics largely mask the harsh reality of a "jobless recovery." They do not reflect the millions of unemployed workers who have used up their benefits and are therefore no longer counted, or of "underemployment," which includes workers with higher skills barely making ends meet because they are forced in a tight job market to accept low-paying or part-time jobs that do not include access to health-care benefits, but are nonetheless counted as "employed" (Armas; James). This grim actuality is a far cry from the American Dream we are promised in ubiquitous advertisements that punctuate our consciousness as much as they foreclose on every acre of public space. It creates a

painful gap for many who dream the dream but are trapped in a harsh reality of shrinking labor opportunities and a rapidly eroding safety net. No wonder Americans feel more stressed at work, more disillusioned and divided when we go to the polls, more dissatisfied by the loss of leisure, and more prone to serious illness stimulated by stress.

The patterns of our culture are compulsive, as reflected by the host of addiction-based twelve-step groups and the cycles of attack and retaliation that seem to feed some deep, addictive urge. Whether an attack springs from avowed terrorist organizations, is gang-related, or emerges from the organizational underground of ruthless competition and sabotage, the standard reactionary impulse is to crack down harder and faster on the perceived attackers, based on the belief that "the best defense is a good offense." In that respect, the current fascination with winner-takes-all "reality shows" showcases a profound willingness to win at the expense of the losers, and both reflects and reinforces the notion that "that's just the way it is."

In the geopolitical arena, we face an uncertain future because a controversial—and widely considered unprovoked —war in the Middle East has further destabilized the region by stirring what some Muslim clerics have declared is a "holy war" against the United States. Fundamentalists on both sides—Christian and Muslim—antagonize each other with judgment, blame, and demands. As a result of those calls to the faithful, which are reinforced by on-going attacks and steadily increasing desperation, the ranks of recruits into terrorist groups bent on creating fear and chaos within both industrial powers and struggling democratic movements have swollen exponentially since the initial 2003 invasion. With the U.S. Secretary of State telling the United Nations in 2004 that the U.S. forces may remain in Iraq until 2014, and the on-going alienation and polarization of former allies, the future seems uncertain indeed.

Meanwhile, grand displays of political power give lip service to the desperate human dramas—both from natural disasters and periodic genocidal rampages—being played out on the world stage. Periodic infusions of funds and personnel do little to resolve significant underlying social problems, and more to sustain a fundamentally *power-over* and codependent worldview based on competition, domination, and control. This system has at its ideological roots Eurocentrism, which is the view that European culture provides the most valuable central operating principles for all civilized societies. Yet this view has evolved since the shift of industrial power to the U.S. after WWI, and been fertilized by "Americentrism"—a perspective in which U.S. culture is held up as the measure of all greatness in the world, whether that be political freedom, standard of living, cultural creativity, or innovation and intellectual superiority. That self-indulgent and narcissistic belief system is being confronted by groups that espouse their own strident brand of patriarchal *power-over*, and foment their own ruthless attacks and retaliatory actions, such as the Taliban, Al Quaeda, and the myriad of off-shoot and independent terrorist organizations threatening the world today.

In the *power-over*, egoist organizational context, the role of the person in charge is to confirm that everyone is following the prescribed course of action, while guarding against mistakes and applauding loyalty and certitude. Thus, the old model with its focus on control made absolute clarity and certainty king, thereby denying the role that mystery and uncertainty play in fueling creativity and making space for differences which in turn make cultures rich and civility essential. When leaders are obsessed with unquestioning obedience and coherence they spend extra time worrying about maintaining complete

control and clarity, and tracking any deviations from the imposed vision. Rather than inviting collective problem solving, and innovative risk-taking, someone is blamed when something goes awry, which in turn establishes division among followers and fertilizes the ubiquitous organizational "rumor mill." Within the *power-over* model, while the leader's rhetoric may eloquently express the value of teams and cooperation, the fundamental reliance on positional power in fact yields little to the collective in any way that truly values partnership and collaboration.

In the *Partnership Model*, the alternative presented in these pages, leadership emerges at the confluence of creativity and constraint, where people come together to participate fully and practically in shared expressions of service to expanded definitions of both "progress" and "success." In this context, leadership is drawn away from a preoccupation with maintaining power over others, and away from narrow assumptions that unimaginatively assert that leaders are only those with some monopoly over, if not some preoccupation with, perfect rationality, consistency, and coherence. In later chapters, we examine power within the partnership context, the qualifications for the Partnership Leader, the need for community leadership, and a program for leadership training that emphasizes dialogue, stewardship, and service as visions and goals are enacted and accomplished.