

Spring 2010

Mediation and Blue Monkeys

I look for mediation messages in the books I read and other events in the current culture. I can't help myself, so when I saw *AVATAR* during the winter holiday break, one of Selfridge's statements (he was the chief of the earthlings' mining operation – "Sky people" as they were called) caught me. "Find out what those blue monkeys want". The troublesome blue monkeys were the humanoid natives of the alien planet/moon Pandora. It became clear that Selfridge really didn't want to find out at all. Instead, he wanted to find out how to elevate his own constituents' wants and needs, even if it meant destroying the blue monkeys. In the end, the failure to truly understand and compromise was catastrophic. But you need to see the movie.

Selfridge's statement signifies an obstacle often encountered in mediation; namely, getting disputants to truly understand the wants and needs of everybody at the table so that they can comprehend where their own fit in and how to make the necessary compromises so that interests can be fulfilled without further conflict and dispute. I shall be writing more about this in the coming months as it lies at the heart of understanding conflict resolution.

In the meanwhile, I would enjoy hearing from you about what's going on in your mediation world.

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