

Award Acceptance Speech

By Howard Richards

Recipient of the 2021 HumanDHS Lifetime

Commitment Award

Limache, Chile, New York City, U.S.A., Virtual

December 10, 2021

Hi !

I do not receive an award like this very often. So far in my life I have received such an award only once in 83 years. At the rate I am going I would have to wait until after my 166th birthday for another opportunity to explain such an important concept to such a wonderful audience. The important concept is structural humiliation. The wonderful audience is you.

Structural Humiliation has a flip side. It is Create Dignified Livelihoods that do not Depend on Sales. Humiliation is the problem. Dignified livelihoods are the solution. They are two sides of the same coin.

Structural humiliation is the inevitable consequence of a labor market that depends on sales revenues. The employees make goods and services. The firm sells them. Part of the money from sales goes to pay their wages.

Thinking globally, in the modern world system, the overall result is that the people who need to sell something to get money vastly outnumber the employers who find it profitable to hire them. Similarly, it is impossible to lift all the poor out of poverty by making them into micro entrepreneurs with micro businesses.

Inevitably, millions will be humiliated because they cannot perform as a human being is expected to perform. They cannot comply with normal expectations, like dressing nicely, paying your bills, and supporting your children. A world where decent jobs are scarce, is a win or lose world. In the ensuing conflict, racism, sexism, mass migration, prejudice against migrants, violence against truth, violence against basic civility, and violence against mother earth become inevitable.

Therefore, the ethical imperative: Create dignified livelihoods that do not depend on sales. Donate regularly to a nonprofit. Your donation helps pay for a dignified livelihood for somebody.

At the level of public policy, move income from natural resources to the public purse. An example is Norway's huge sovereign wealth fund. Then from the

public purse pay people to reforest after fires, and in general to save humanity from ecological disaster.

These two examples could be multiplied. When you understand the problem and think about ways to solve it, you find that the positive possibilities are unbounded.