

The Beginning of the End of Racism

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Introduction

The phenomenon of racism, and more globally ethnocentrism, has probably been an integral part of the human condition since time immemorial. It is an innate survival-based mind-set which assumes that a cohort group is superior to another or other groups, based primarily upon physically-distinguishing characteristics. It is further assumed that such group characteristics are naturally associated with differing beliefs, customs, and behavioral and organizational patterns. At a more subtle level, within a survival-based paradigm, it is also assumed that a different way of being, thinking, and behaving is a fundamental threat to one's own way of thinking, and ultimately their physical survival. Therefore, what follows is the emergence of a context where one's own physical characteristics, system of beliefs and values, and way of organizing and living are deemed to be superior to any which differs.

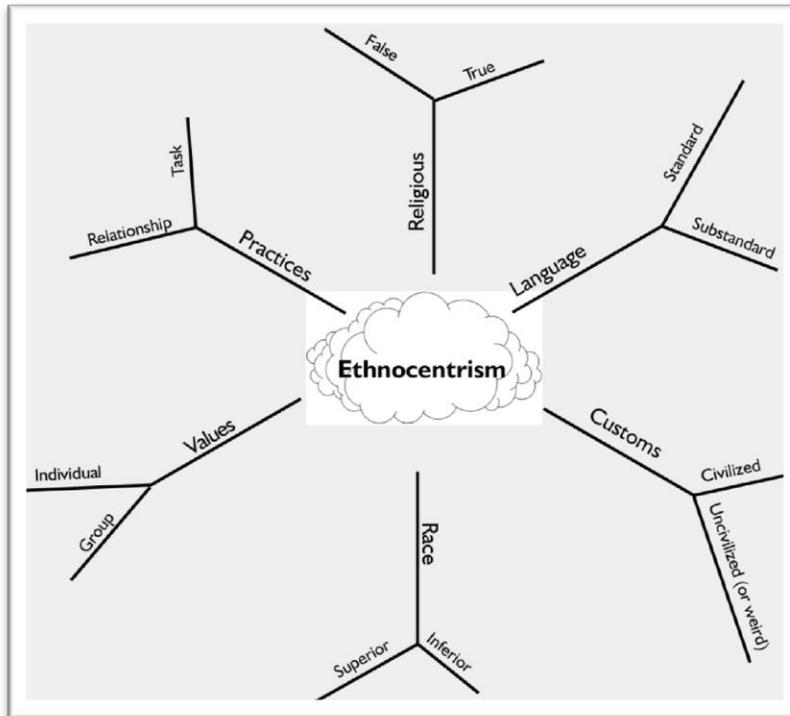
The validity of these assumptions is justified, at least by one's own group, by the use of domination, control, and power over others; in essence, the application of superior force as confirmation of their superiority. What quickly follows are esoteric documentation and expressions of art, music, science, and, most of all, religious confirmation of one's assumptions. This sequence of events obviously results in the declaration of superior and inferior human life forms—ultimately, justified by divine nature.

Within the context of this paradigm, I define *racism* as the belief that members of a race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that group, so as to distinguish them as inherently superior to another race or other races.

An Aside: Genetically proven, “pure” races do not exist.

Racism also implies that the inferior/superior dyad is justified by the differing relative value of characteristics of an individual, such as physical characteristics, intellect, ability, humanness, worth, etc. which predisposes differing behaviors. Comparisons are made

on the basis of their uniquely designed system of value reality. Racism is a normal, not natural, part of the context of a group based upon a “consciousness of survival.” Beyond racism, differences in one’s culture and way of life are also presumed to be superior to others. This phenomenon is known as *ethnocentrism*. Ethnocentrism, which is inclusive of race, is much more pervasive and includes every aspect of a group’s existence. The pervasive nature of ethnocentrism is, in part, shown by diagram below.



Therefore, any differences an individual experiences is consciously or unconsciously examined and tested as a possible threat in human interactions. For the average person, this process occurs mostly unconsciously. Historically, the easiest response to differences has been to conquer those possessing them and impose one’s own system of reality and the gradual minimizing of the one which presently existed, e.g., colonialism; often with eradication of the presently existing population who resists, e.g., the American natives.

Racism, along with ethnocentrism, is probably the most comprehensive, inbred consciousness of the inhabitants of Planet Earth. Ethnocentrism, as described above, is probably hardwired into the human consciousness and passed from generation to generation. The dominance of racism and ethnocentrism are reflective of a species that has not learned to live compatibly with differences, which is the essence of diversity—

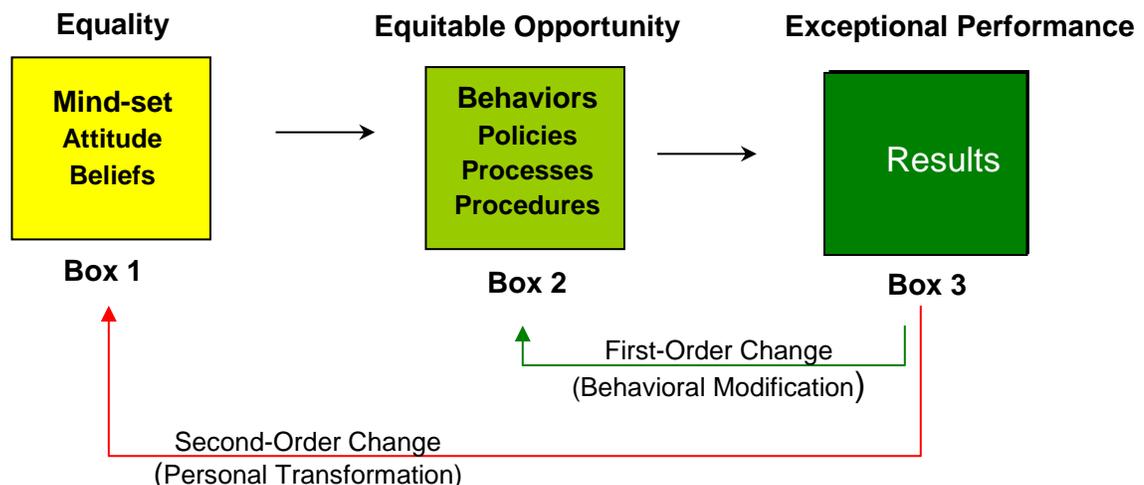
and cast doubt on the group’s *capacity* and *intention* to do so. We use advances in science, technology, medicine, etc. as evidence of our “human evolution,” but in practice, we *dominantly* do not “care,” about the wellbeing of others.

The Beginning of the End of Racism

The beginning of the end of racism, from a personal perspective, is the realization of one’s human equality with respect to all other human life forms: neither superior nor inferior, but equality. Such an experience is very humbling, because of the absence of the ego and the absence of a perceived threat from others. Most of all, it includes an overwhelming feeling of freedom. My first experience of this realization was when I was a postdoctoral fellow at the Sorbonne in Paris, France. The American environment has changed dramatically since that time, in spite of the huge divisions which presently exist in the twenty-first century. These divisions are visible manifestations of what has *always* existed and been practiced. Racism is such a pervasive and often invisible part of the American culture that it is only realized when it is no longer there. It is simply taken for granted from the day we are born, and is naturally practiced as an infant’s suckling of a mother’s breast. Racism is like the water fish swim in. Fortunately, this conversation suggests that no one has to wait for death to be freed of its clutches.

The point of this description is illustrated by the State of Mind Diagram and shown below.

STATE OF MIND DIAGRAM



This diagram was created by Innovations International in 1983 with inception of diversity in 1985 and is simply an extension of Erich Fromm's work from the book "To Have Or To Be." He labeled the first two boxes as "Be," and "Do," which is more generally "Context" and "Content." In essence, it proposes that what we believe (with strong emotion) drives our behaviors which produce the results we observe. It also suggests that *intent* and *commitment* in Box 1 are greater in determining a permanent outcome than the methodologies in Box 2.

As shown in the diagram, **Equality** is initially the result of a "cognitive realization" in mind-set which is ultimately transformed into a "*way of being*," as Fromm speaks of and Maslow's actualization, when reinforced by behaviors of commitment (Box 2) that result in measured, irreversible change. (Box 3) Within a diversity context, these goal-driven changes include: Recruitment; Development; Advancement (horizontal and vertical); Retention; and Inclusion. *These changes involve both personal and organizational transformation.* The most important personal transformation is the realization of one's inherent personhood as well as the invalidation of one's prior self-imposed limitations.

Equality:

- Cannot be earned by the attainment of goals, status, or wealth
- Cannot be granted by anyone, because no one has that power
- Cannot be made a reality by a written document, because
- ***Equality is a birthright!***

Equality is a way of being in the sense that it has authenticity, naturalness, and even spirituality. It is dependent upon how ***We think, We behave, and We perform*** within our self-imposed limitations and those of our organization or society. I am making a clear distinction between Box 1, where ***Equality*** exists, and Box 2, which is where ***Equitable Opportunity*** exists, of the State of Mind diagram: Mind-Set and Equitable Opportunity. It is crucial to understand the two are fundamentally different, and yet inextricably coupled.

Whereas, racism is a ***context of believing*** according to the descriptions in the previous section and its corresponding behaviors of discrimination, exclusion, and bias with respect to persons of color. My *perception* is that it is generally acknowledged that the U.S. is a dominantly racist society—and has always been that way since our inception as

an independent nation to the present. Even Abraham Lincoln, who is considered the great liberator, is quoted as saying, “If I could save the union without freeing any slave, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that.” The point here is that that historic decision had no concern for the welfare of slaves and absolutely nothing about their humanity; they were simply pawns. Fortunately, recapturing one’s equality does not require it being bestowed upon us, as cited above.

Although we can generally tell the truth about the condition which exists, there is little **personal ownership** of this context of belief—ironically, by both whites and persons of color. It exists, but none of **us** are willing to acknowledge our participation. After all, “it (racism) takes two to tango” or maintain a conflicting condition. That is the reason racism persists. Denial. The beginning of the end of this situation is posed by the question: *Suppose one or both participants decided to withdraw from the dichotomy and experience human equality through personal transformation, what would be the result with respect to the institution of racism?* That’s the essence of what this white paper is about and how to accomplish it! The beginning or the end of any “disparate relationship” based upon fundamental human value.

Following one’s **cognitive realization** or “aha” of one’s true personhood, literally out of the blue, comes a personal experience of one’s **equality**. Not inferior to someone’s superiority nor vice versa, but the “**mental cognition**” of being equal to others’ personhood in the most **natural** way.

An Aside: The facilitation of this process requires someone who is highly skilled in the process of having others experience personal transformation by having gone through this process himself or herself. Not simply someone with highly polished presentation or verbal skills.

This experience is commonly accompanied by a *feeling*, an *emotion*, and even an overwhelming sense of *freedom* to fully accept one’s self; perhaps for the first time. The freedom of self-acceptance immediately extends to the unconditional acceptance of others.

These experiences are the initial stages of transforming from a **human**, driven by survival, to a **human being**, driven by compatibility. The major distinction between a human and a human being is the realization that we don’t have to destroy each other,

figuratively or literally, in order to resolve conflicts resulting from differences. As occupants of this planet, we have not **dominantly** realized and practiced this “*nugget of wisdom.*”

Conclusion: *I am equal because I exist in human form. It is my birthright. Period, the end!*

A Conspiracy of Complicity

This discussion is very difficult to engage because it goes totally against our “sense of self-perception.” In general, we think we really know why we do the things we do—more precisely, why we behave the way do in response to our experiences. Scientific studies by psychologists, psychiatrists, including Nobel Laureate neuroscientist, *Eric R. Kandel* conclude that *eighty to ninety percent of what we do is unconscious*. Meaning that the majority of our unconscious mind (often depicted as the iceberg below the surface of the water level) is in control of what we truly believe and how we are programmed to react to the external world. We are, at most, only twenty percent aware of our behavioral patterns from the subliminal levels. In essence, most of our deeply embedded programming operates automatically, **beyond** our conscious awareness. Mainly because it has run that way from the very early stages of our lives. Only the form and characters have continually changed over time.

For example, I would suggest that it’s practically impossible to grow up in the U.S. (and probably the world) without having experienced the racial or sexual dichotomy of inferior/superior individuals, in the sense that I have defined these terms in the Introduction. This statement is also inclusive of individuals who have had sparse or no personal interaction with persons of color since their programming has primarily come about as a result of mass communication, and the influences of parental and community upbringing.

Based upon my thirty years plus of diversity and inclusion consulting, globally, I would guess that both groups participating in the dichotomy would deny that they play their roles in a reinforcing and/or complicit manner. For example, if the individual in the inferior role is discriminated against and/or insulted in some capacity, the most common **reaction** is to become angry or even attempt some form of retaliation—or even violence. Such reactions, although presumably justified, are suggested as

corroboration that something (such as a deeply programmed belief) within that individual has been triggered. In other words, the superior-acting individual is a stimulus and the inferior-acting individual is an automatic-reaction machine. These roles are also commonly reversed. This entire process occurs at the unconscious-unaware level of our programming. And has been repeated over and over and over again throughout our lives without a first, second, third, or.....thought! The denial, typically, of both participants is the essence of a conspiracy of complicity. They are both willingly participating, unconsciously of course, but in a conspiratorial manner. Both of their behaviors are more confirming that the dichotomy is alive and well rather than behaviors which reflect constructive resolution of the generic incident.

This discussion is an opportunity to awaken from this process, reflect, and decide if either one, or both want to opt out of the "movie" or continue with clear awareness (in spite of denial) that a complicit process is occurring. The future will be a direct reflection of the past, but in different updated form. In fact, no true resolution is possible within the conspiracy. That's the "bad news." The conspiracy and dichotomy live on despite the result.

The "good news" is that one does not need the agreement of the other to opt out. Either can proceed to acknowledge their participation in the conspiracy and begin the process of recovering his or her authentic self of equality without the agreement of the other participant—telling the truth and deciding not to participate in the future. ***This is the beginning of the end of the racism dichotomy, because it takes two actively participating individuals.*** When these actions are taken, we begin the process of transitioning from ***realization*** to the ***reality*** of implementation and its possible consequences and/or opportunities.

Conclusion: Freeing one's self of the inferior/superior dichotomy is one of the most courageous actions for opening one's self to the full experience of ***equality, empowerment, and self-determination of one's life journey.***

Transitioning from Realization to Reality

The next stage of ***actualizing*** one's equality involves the ***tests*** of living consistent with that realization in a world dominated by a consciousness of racism and ethnocentrism or the comprehensive acceptance of differences. In order to deal with the external

environment we must develop a transformed inner fortitude and resolution. These involve the adoption of two major resolutions, in practice, resulting in a natural state of empowerment:

1. **Zero Victimization**—Past, present, and future related to inequitable practices, and opportunities.
2. **Ownership of 100% Responsibility and 100% Accountability**—for responding, not reacting, constructively, in spite of existing organizational inequities (prejudices, biases, and discrimination).
3. **Empowerment**—the capacity to perform, free of personal limitations, in terms of one’s acquired competencies and skills; as more equitable opportunities continue to emerge.

Zero Victimization—past, present, and future means that we choose not to use “guilt” in any capacity as a weapon to bring about the transformation of someone who assumes himself or herself superior in any capacity or succumb to “threat.” Instead, we use the memories of slavery as well as unacceptable practices over time as inspirations to perform in an exceptional way, limited only by *presently* existing external practices of bias and exclusion. External inequities are subtle and overt forms of bias and exclusion for personal and professional development and advancement. We begin to view our learning and performance capacity as the true source of professional security.

Ownership of 100% Responsibility and 100% Accountability means we assume full ownership for everything related to our performance—no if, ands, or buts. It is acknowledged that there is an overwhelming probability that biases and inequities are existent where there is an uneven playing. The focus is continuing to build one’s personal and professional stock, while being continually observant for opportunities. Finally, adopting a mind-set that YOU create your own reality. Your stock is your major asset of mobility in any system where performance is valued.

An Aside: These statements apply to anyone who experiences the inferior/superior illusion in any way, shape, or form.

Empowerment is the capacity to perform. It is a natural result of the adoption and practice of the zero victimization and one-hundred percent responsibility and one-hundred percent accountability for our performance; even on an uneven playing field. The first focus is on eliminating any and all self-limitations that we might have used as a result of existing perceptions of others and a lack of constructive proactivity in our own behalf.

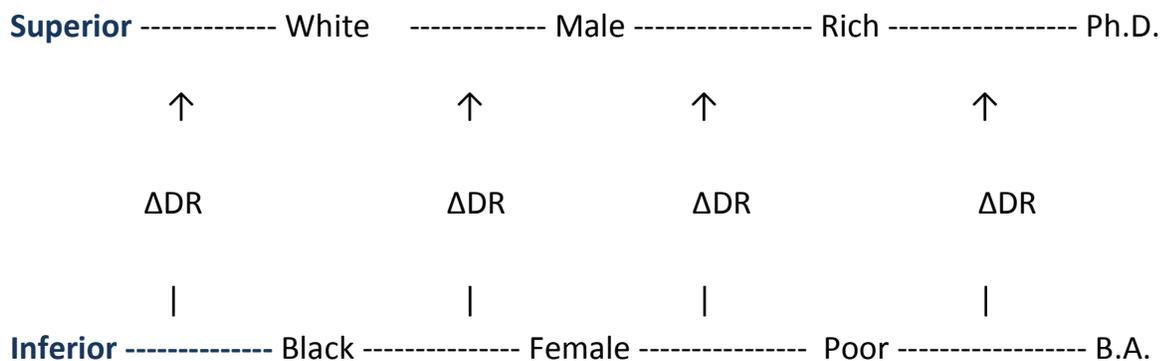
The second focus is on what *appeared* to be an external limitation until we learn that even they are subject to question when approached with constructive, proactive strategizing. This is the meaning of “thinking smarter” rather than “working harder.” Like seeking the support of a respected manager or a vice-president who fully supports anyone who is proactive about their career development, as well as those around us who have succeeded, “in spite of.”

Conclusion: The ownership of one’s inherent *personhood of equality* and the corresponding practice of *empowered behaviors* resulting in exceptional performance are the most powerful ways of permanently invalidating the illusion of Inferior/Superior humans, by nature.

The Pervasive Nature of the Inferior/Superior Illusion

If we begin to explore the breath of the Inferior/Superior dichotomy, we begin to discover that *whenever* a “disparate relationship” exists, the illusion is also naturally present. A disparate relationship is one where there is a formal or informal (often unconscious) acknowledged or implicit connection where one individual is assumed to be superior to another, *by nature*. The disparity provides the basis for the separation in relationship as illustrated below. Such disparities include race, ethnocentrism, sex, homophobia, immigrant status, wealth, intellect, academic degrees, professions, exceptional physical or mental abilities, celebrities, and on and on infinitum!

Disparate Relationships



So when we put someone on a pedestal relative to ourselves, we are either acknowledging his or her performance, innovative/creative product, or way of living which enhances themselves *and* others or acknowledging that they are of fundamentally greater inherent value, relative to ourselves. (Next time you ask some celebrity for an autograph, reverse roles, and ask them do they want your autograph,

and see how they react/respond to you!) For example, relationship disparities involving race, ethnicity, sex, wealth, education, immigrant status, and other human dimensions of diversity appear to those involving the various “isms.”

However, those involving invisible dimensions are far more extensive in the human experience as illustrated above. The *tricky* question is how do you go about distinguishing a disparity *truly* based upon extraordinary accomplishments, ability, creative and innovative expressions, spiritual enlightenment, etc. from those where a superior human individual is implied, *by nature*. Or even those cases where the two appear to be intertwined! The expression is used as proof of one’s human superiority. This raises the fundamental question, “Does one’s ability to create something extraordinary imply a superior individual, by nature?” I would suggest that, we as humans believe it is so routinely; obviously unconsciously.

On the other hand, those we appear to respect most, as human beings, are those who exude greater *humility* and *wisdom*. For example, Einstein is reported (Internet) to have given a bellboy a piece of paper, in the absence of a tip, with the following quote: ***“A quiet and modest life brings more joy than a pursuit of success bound with constant unrest.”*** Others who are well-known by most of us include Mother Teresa, Albert Schweitzer, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Susan B. Anthony, Harriet Tubman and her entire Underground Network, as well as our own parents, grandparents, and respected friends—irrespective of race, sex, color or creed. *Humility* is the defining characteristic of the realization of human equality—where the dichotomy of inferior and superior no longer exists as a reality for that individual.

In the final analysis, perhaps only the individual really knows for sure: an individual who has engaged in-depth personal introspection and exploration or perhaps a life-changing experience. One who naturally *cares* about the well-being of others.

“Caring is at the heart of human existence.”

Philosopher Daniel Engster.

One who takes a stand, in his or her own unique way, in behalf of those who are excluded, ignored, or treated with discriminatory behaviors. One who has learned to transcend and respect the differences in appearances, mastery of the arts and sciences, and the vast variety of human expressions. As Rudyard Kipling, the English writer born in

India, has expressed in the poem, **“IF.”**

*“If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all humanity count with you, but none too much;
Yours is the Earth and all that’s in it ...”*

In the final analysis,

*“You can only measure the value of another
Through the wisdom of your own soul.”*

--Unknown African Philosopher/Shaman

Conclusions

The focus of this conversation has been on the phenomenon of **racism** in America. From an expanded perspective, much of the discussion and solutions proposed apply equally to **sexism** and **ethnocentrism**. The reason I have highlighted these three dimensions is because of the number of people impacted by them. The U.S. is roughly 60% white and 40% persons of color (including Hispanic ethnicity), both in population as well as workforce composition. The number of women is approximately half the U.S. population and 47% of the American workforce. And the number of immigrants subject to ethnocentrism, whether Caucasians or not, depends on when, in time, we begin counting. In truth, we are all immigrants and the number continues to grow in the U.S. All three groups experience prejudice, bias, and polarization with respect to a significant number of Americans. These phenomena have considerably tested America’s commitment to the reality of “United States” as well as loss of respect as a global leader.

I have outlined a stepwise process to begin addressing these issues by the significant participation of those impacted most—the shift from **victim** to **empowered**. The essence of this shift is a transformation in the mind-set of those most negatively impacted. Although each racial, ethnic, or sexual group might begin by addressing issues unique to them, the ultimate resolution can only come about through our unity. We rarely acknowledge the prejudice and bias which exist among ourselves as persons of color. If we don’t realize the wisdom to unite, then there is little hope for those groups

who choose “to go it alone,” with a false sense of security. Whether we admit it or not, as individual groups, what we all have in common is the inferior/superior complex, in our own unique way, regardless of how much or how many of us continue to achieve the “American Dream,” in terms of wealth, title, position, awards, achievements, etc. The dyad is a Box 1 issue and generally cannot be resolved by Box 2 and Box 3 accomplishments alone or by choosing to live as isolated groups in a multicultural society.

In any case, the stepwise process to freedom from the inferior/superior dichotomy begins with the non-superficial inward focus on our own self-imposed programming. And begin discovering the myriad of ways we are *complicit* in the illusion prevailing as reality. This examination and admission is an extremely difficult process for the human psyche. However, if we don’t begin “fixing the inside, then there is no hope of permanently fixing the outside.” Every time we react in a counterproductive way with respect to ourselves and others, when we experience discrimination, we simultaneously confirm the illusion of our own inferiority. I suggested the first step is the *cognitive realization* of own **Equality**, as a birthright. Recapturing this sense of self is sometimes described as self-discovery or even self-mastery for some—along with the nugget of wisdom, “the outer is a manifestation of the inner.”

Reinforcing this realization to have it become a natural part of who we are requires a mind-set of zero victimization and 100% responsibility and accountability; or at least somewhere in the 90s. I am clear that the non-selective adoption of this way of thinking is often unfair, unreasonable, and unethical, but is also *unlimited* in creating possibilities that we could have never considered. Adopting this mind-set involves a “shift in perspective,” not more work, effort, or time. This is the essence of working smarter, not harder. The result of implementing this way of thinking and behaving is true *empowerment*—which is the capacity to perform, limited only by our continuing pursuit of expanded learning. This is a Box 1 way of being, which drives Box 2 ways of executing, resulting in Box 3 exceptional performance, that is *not available* with a victimized mind-set!

We are now prepared to authentically support the success of others in terms mentoring, coaching, and leading regardless of whether they are struggling with a mind-set of inferiority or superiority. Bottom-line: As long as we participate in the illusion, we can never really perform in an exceptional manner since such performance requires the

realization and adoption of one's natural self, free of self-imposed and external limitations.

What I have been trying to express using an excessive amount of words is very simply captured by a few from the recent movie, "A Star is Born" accessed by the U-Tube link below.

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=song+lyrics+of+a+star+is+born+%22maybe+it%27s+time+to+let+the+old+ways+die%22&qpv=song+lyrics+of+a+star+is+born+%22maybe+it%27s+time+to+let+the+old+ways+die%22&view=detail&mid=580985C2DB0A67BAED67580985C2DB0A67BAED67&&FORM=VRDGAR>

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