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Thinking Outside the Box – A Practical Lesson

by Jay Herson

Thinking creatively and free of the constraints of the current structure is an essential requirement of all futurists. While we must take past and present trends into account we must restrain ourselves from considering only the most extrapolative scenarios. Still, on certain issues it is difficult to shed our red state / blue state upbringing, gender, race and religion. I find it useful to always refer to this lesson from Portia Nelson when pondering various scenarios.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN FIVE SHORT CHAPTERS

by Portia Nelson

I

**I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk
I fall in.
I am lost ... I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes me forever to find a way out.**

II

**I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place
but, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.**

III

**I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.**

I see it is there.
I still fall in ... it's a habit.
my eyes are open
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

IV

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

V

I walk down another street.

Next time you ponder a scenario or review those written by others try walking down another street. You'll get where you want to be much faster.

*References: **There's a Hole in My Sidewalk: The Romance of Self-Discovery.** Beyond Words Publishing Company, 1994. ISBN: 0941831876. Singer/songwriter Portia Nelson is also an actress, author, painter and photographer. Among her many accomplishments, she has appeared on Broadway in numerous productions, hosted the radio program **Sunday in New York**, appeared in films like **The Sound of Music**, **Dr. Doolittle** and **The Trouble with Angels** as well as in the TV soap opera **All My Children**. She also wrote the book **There's a Hole in My Sidewalk**, which was made into a musical featuring music, lyrics, direction and a performance by Nelson herself. Her song "Make a Rainbow" was performed at the 1993 inauguration of President Clinton.*