

# Un-Democratic Acts

## New Departures for Dialogues in Society and Schools

Charles Lowery, Anthony Walker and  
Cornell Thomas (Eds.)



*SensePublishers*

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*New Departures for Dialogues in Society and Schools*

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CHARLES LOWERY, ANTHONY WALKER  
AND CORNELL THOMAS

## 1. DISSONANCE, DIVERGENCE, AND DEMOCRACY

### *An Introduction*

In our previous collection of critical essays, *Un-American Acts*, we explored the notion of identity—identity as it situates the young as students and citizens in U.S. schooling and society. From the beginning our project was looked at from the lens of invisibility and cloaking (or masking). We felt that in order to best entertain an authentic investigation and respect new perspectives on identity and invisibility, masks and cloaks, we as editors and contributors had to approach the project organically. To do this we allowed each piece to emerge and take on, well, the author's unique voice and ultimately an *identity* of its own. The essays seemed to materialize from the invisible recesses of our thoughts and assumptions. For us, and we believe for our other contributors, this was a powerful, emotional, and reflective process.

The result of that edited project was a series of vignettes rooted in critical theory, aesthetics, and moral imagination intended to prompt dialogues in a variety of settings such as university classrooms. These “portraits” were meant to engage change agents and lifelong learners in a critical reflective pedagogy, in edgy discussions held on the periphery of any number of concepts connected to educational leadership and educational studies. Our aim was, to some degree, to push the envelope in regards to how people conceive schooling and educative experiences in society. Therefore chapters included commentary and metaphors that related to events that had occurred in places like Ferguson, Staten Island, South Carolina, and elsewhere in the U.S. We viewed these events as relevant concerns that had influenced profoundly our perceptions of race and identity in our nation's educational systems.

Here in this current work we have attempted to accomplish a similar task. The essays that make up this book, *Un-Democratic Acts: New Departures for Dialogues in Society and Schools*, were likewise allowed to develop naturally, organically, respecting each contributor's voice as unique, each writing style as authentic and individual. Also, the chapters included were meant to make the reader consider democracy, democratic leadership, and democratic education differently. But most importantly these concepts were intended to create dissonance and divergence, a moving away from the typical and usual ways of doing, to break down the status quo thinking that dominates the related fields of academia and schooling.



While our hope is that these texts will be a stand-alone works, we also aim to create some connections between what it means to be so-called “American” and be allegedly “Democratic.” Perhaps some readers will struggle with how each of the chapters deals with each of these abstractions—these rhetorical truths. It may not be always obvious that the experiences and insights shared in each essay are “educational” or “educative,” these works both independently and as an integrated work attempt to move ideas beyond the hyper-political “realities” defined in the contemporary narratives publicized through countless mediated messages.

These vignettes as we have called them, while unique and stand-alone essays, share a common theme: *the hope of the Democratic in the face of the Un-Democratic*. Even now in our nation it seems that every time we turn a corner someone is trying to label un-American deeds as the “American” thing to do, trying to point to that which is counterproductive to democracy and call it “Democratic.” To stand against such un-American and un-Democratic works, we have created this text as a “democratic space,” a space in which numerous voices could be heard, sharing their interpretations of that which is American and Democratic.

In a poetic sense, this is our anthem from the shadow of a great White stone monument. We draw upon the individual, Star Swain, to form a fitting metaphor. Star Swain, a female assistant principal from Tallahassee, Florida, classified as Black and female in this great nation, made a major impact on her identity, external and possibly internally as well. Standing in the very spot that Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his gift, the “I Have a Dream” speech, Swain offered the American people her own gift. One impromptu moment in time, this event in this assistant principal’s life has indeed changed the perspectives of a few people, with the potential to change many more.

Swain’s is a beautiful voice singing our National Anthem and doing so within the hallowed space of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. A descendant of slaves singing of freedom in front of the monument of a president who, in part, ignited the end of slavery. One can imagine this voice and the words echoing throughout this space of symbolic freedom, and hope. Oh what symbolism, and hope for a better future.

A Black female from the Deep South serving as a wife, mom, and as an assistant principal causes most to ignore the extended descriptors while focusing only on the socially constructed stereotypes of being Black and female in this great nation. First, the prevailing beliefs of Black people as lazy, untrustworthy, drug addicted, and prone to criminal activities and sexual promiscuity. And second, the socially constructed stereotypes of the Black female in this great nation as welfare queens who would rather have babies, with a variety of men, and live off our government welfare rather than work for a living. Words associated with this stereotype of the Black female include lazy, sexually promiscuous, uneducated and immoral.

Yet this moment in time spoke of patriotism, passion, and hope. The extended narrative as wife, mom, assistant principal, and church choir member spoke to higher levels of education, a strong work ethic, and a praising Christian. She represents the

voice of countless African American women and leaders “bringing the gifts that [their] ancestors gave.”

One might bring forward the notion that Star might be considered a Black female that is an exception to the norm. However, it is suggested here that there are no norms. Rather, we are each unique gifts from God. Indeed of even greater importance here is the power of experiences and how each new experience has the potential to touch the heart in ways that broaden personal perspectives, leading to the eradication of stereotypes as the ones brought forth in this essay.

This person, unique, represented the intersection of the professional, the space, the moment, the voice, and the Power of democracy, singing out against the assumptions and attitudes of racism and hatred that too often still prevail in our nation. To many, Swain would appear to be first and foremost “a Black woman.” To them, she is an exception. Star is exceptional. However, she is not an exception. Her courage and her talent is the norm for all of the social markers that she stands for, African American, woman, educator, mother; and while her dedication to a message of hope in public spaces for all African Americans seems strange, she represents the strength and leadership qualities in countless individuals who have never been given a shot because of fear and prejudice, because of assumptions and asymmetrical power structures.

Some may label this as rare or strange due to the fact that in the light of such power structures, in the light of national events, they may ask why should she have hope? why should she sing? As Maya Angelou wrote,

... a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams  
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream  
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing

Angelou recognized the hopelessness of oppression, the helplessness of stereotypes, the evil of systems in place for years upon years that were designed to subvert and subject. But the poet Angelou, herself an African American female, went on to write,

The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.

Star’s performance on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial is one of spontaneity and chance. However, the circumstance is powerfully symbolic. The stone edifices

surrounding her at the grounds of National Mall are primarily those dedicated to white men. But the dominance, the engraved statues of European frames and faces, well established and long lasting, like the White supremacy that still boils up from murky waters of the nation, is cold and hard. The voice of hope – the true voice of freedom – in Star’s performance no longer disappears on the breeze of some distant hill. Today, the voice is memorialized in its own right – preserved digitally and shared democratically for every soul to see. Just like the deaths of so many young African American men over the last few years, “a fearful trill” recorded by hand-held devices, exposed to the world.

Oppression cannot hide behind white sheets forever. Stereotypes cannot be engraved in stone any longer. The post-modern world with its Momus technologies (as Max Van Manen called them) have torn away the masks and walls of privacy. The tune of the caged bird will be heard, “on the distant hill,” and can no longer be kept silent by mythical social constructs, lies perpetuated by ignorance and fear and “things unknown.” The oppressive forces, the stereotypical narratives, the hatred, ignorance, and fear are not going away – these things will continue to be metaphorical cages. But the song of the bird will be heard...and it will be shared with millions via YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter.

As Angelou wrote in another of her poems,

Out of the huts of history’s shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that’s rooted in pain  
I rise  
I’m a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.  
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

Within days of Swain’s song at the Lincoln Memorial, tragedy once again stuck a repetitive blow to our nation. In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, police officers held down and fatally shot the unarmed Alton Sterling. This 37-year-old African American, a father, trying to make a living, murdered. A day later in St. Paul, Minnesota, Philando Castile, a school cafeteria supervisor, “black in the wrong place,” was shot by a police officer, reaching for his driver’s license after a routine stop. Castile was shot four times in front of his girlfriend and 4-year-old daughter. These names add to the

list of the Walter Scotts, Laquan McDonalds, Michael Browns, and Eric Garners—gunned down by force. Not even a day later 5 officers are shot and killed, 7 others wounded along with 2 civilians in Dallas, Texas, ambushed by sniper, Micah Xavier Johnson, former Army reservist, angry with White people, especially upset with White officers, after the killings.

This brutal and horrific violence, cyclical and systemic, will not stop until the word “unity” that is being used becomes *a way of unity*—a democratic way of unity. The un-Democratic acts that have both led to and yet perpetuate this hatred and bloodshed must be countered with alternative answers, departures from old and outdated ways of thinking about humanity and this concept our world calls “race.” The lies we have been told from our childhood, the prejudices we have carried over from generation to generation must end. As a people, if the ideals of America and Democracy are to come into being, we have to come “out of the huts of history’s shame,” come “up from a past that’s rooted in pain,” and “leave behind nights of terror and fear” such as those in Louisiana, Minnesota, and Texas.

We have to seek out a means to disrupt the path that we are on, create some sort of positive version of cognitive dissonance that will interrupt the paradigm patterns and belief-oriented behaviors that we act out in our daily lives. We have accepted mediated versions of fear and hate as the norm, and it is destroying the alleged idea of America and the democracy we claim and so often falsely believe to be our way of life. As a people—people with various ways of speaking, with varying degrees of pigmentation, with numerous backgrounds and ancestral homelands—we must find a new way, a different way, to stand collectively in the shadow of that stone statue of Lincoln.

Like Star Swain’s rendition of the Star Spangled Banner, the American and the Democratic have get beyond the mediated images of violence, hatred, fear, and ignorance, to move forward past our innate drive to control and categorize one another. We have to come together, “bringing the gifts that [our] ancestors gave”—recognizing that our uniqueness does not have to prevent unity but could, if allowed, make it stronger. The nights of terror and fear from domestic enemies, powers of white dominance, aggressive actions based on mental stereotypes and assumptions, brutal force driven by fear and brutal reactions inspired by harmful thinking must be left behind.

In its place we must work as a people to create spaces—democratic spaces, not just in shadows of national memorials but on Chicago streets, on Staten Island corners, in South Carolina churches, outside Baton Rouge convenience stores, in peaceful protests on the sidewalks of Texas. In these spaces, like those “spaces” represented in this text, all people must be recognized, regardless of skin color, regardless of home language, regardless of religion, that we are all citizens of “the land of the free and the home of the brave.” Democratic spaces must be created in which “the dream and the hope of the slave” can be realized, where together we all can “rise” up out of the brutality and violence and live in unity.

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And so how do we get there? Well, first, we might arrive at that point by considering an alternative approach to education—a design not based on single-shot, one-size-fits-all high stakes testing, but designed instead on a curriculum that views students as democratic citizens, instructs the young with meaningful pedagogical practices, and measures learning with varied authentic assessments. We might also get to such a place by changing the militant and market-driven metaphors we construct around our ways of living life—eradicate the violence from our speech and we might be able to have democratic dialogue without it erupting into divisive and detrimental political debates that get us nowhere.

Another possible means to create democratic spaces in which there is hope of such unity and respect for uniqueness ...

... read on.

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## 2. RACE TO DE-DEMOCRATIZATION

### *The Militarization, Commodification, and Hyper-Politicization of Education*

... Like I said, they wanted to test us, see how we'd react to what they call the Variables, and to a problem that has no solution. See if we could work together—build a community, even. Everything was provided for us, and the problem was laid out as one of the most common puzzles known to civilization—a maze. All this added up to making us think there *had* to be a solution, just encouraging us to work all the harder while at the same time magnifying our discouragement at not finding one. – Thomas, *The Maze Runner*.

(Dashner, 2009, p. 168)

The young would have to be tested, even sacrificed, inside harsh environments, where their brain activity could be studied. All in an effort to understand what makes them different, what makes you different. You may not realize it, but you're very important. Unfortunately, your trials have only just begun. As you'll no doubt soon discover, not everyone agrees with our methods. Progress is slow; people are scared. It may be too late for us, for me, but not for you. The outside world awaits. Remember... Wicked is good. – Ava Paige, *The Maze Runner* [film].

(Bowen & Ball, 2014)

Love is a Rube Goldberg machine, bits and pieces knocked together, pushed down a chute. Pins pop and strike matches and ignite small flames.

(Welty, 2016)

Much has been said and published about the need for transformation in education. Arguably, in the current neoliberal climate of education learning *has* been transformed—transformed into a marketized, militant, and nondemocratic process. The term process here refers not to a proceeding onward or moving forward but instead to a systematized routine—a predictable, controllable method—tending toward a preference for automation over autonomy. As a procedure, the mechanisms and metrics of learning have left behind the learner in the past and in the present will most likely fail to ensure that every student will succeed. The Every Student Succeeds Act is like a man putting new wine in old wineskins—No Child Left Behind *Par Deux* (or rather *A Nation At Risk Revisited*).

While this may seem a doomsday prophecy, the prophetic movement and message attempted here is not one without hope. In fact, the assertion made in this essay is one that must make an attempt at leveraging hope, a human and spiritual hope in democratic ideals and the authentic humanism of this postmodern era. It is the only means of overcoming the obstacles of the over-standardized and overly commodified and commercialized educational machine that has recently and currently been the driving force behind the state-mandated accountability and high-stakes assessment measures. With the turning of the gears in this massive Rube Goldberg machine works the modern notions of testing and technology in schooling. Methods of pathologizing education and students without recognition of the systemic contributing factors have maintained as the status quo—not due to outdated educational practices and pedagogy as a whole, but by uninformed legislated slights of hand and mandated misdirections lacking pedagogical foundation. Students and teachers alike fall victim to undue stress, moral uncertainty, and punitive efforts that consistently and constantly miss the mark, at risk, left behind, and unsuccessful.

Parents and other citizens concerned about democracy should understand that teaching and learning are not broken. It is the system—the routine—in which teachers teach and students learn that has failed. This hyper-politicized system, predominantly neoliberal in nature, has failed both the educator and the educated. The power of a positive relationship between teacher and learner has been eliminated from the equation. They have fallen into a dominant metaphorical structure that creates an us-versus-them mindset, turning student into enemy and teacher into militant soldier, one that has turned lessons and learning—classes and curriculum—into for-profit mechanisms. Teachers, students, and school leaders are caught up in a complicated and convoluted apparatus that is intentionally engineered to distract participants with routinized slights of hand and normalizing programs that are over-engineered to confuse the fundamental and human aspects of teaching and learning. Instead of ensuring social justice and equity it has used uncertainty and ambiguity that have allowed and even fostered a deficiency in moral literacy and democratic education.

In this chapter I will attempt to name and call out issues within the metaphorical structures that make up the narrative of schooling and education. The aim here will be to reveal the ways in which schools have been transformed into commodities, militarized zones, and de-democratized spaces. Before delving into the key metaphors—militarized and commodified—some philosophical considerations must be provided for the politicized de-democratization of schools and society. For this I draw upon a metaphorical (an abstract and rhetorical) *Trump*—this is not intended to be a commentary on Trump the person or professional, but Trump the politician, specifically a mediated representation of Trump that speaks to the hyper-politicized system or milieu in which education occurs. In the end (hope upon hope) we will find new departures from tired old discussions about reform and entertain new dialogues, new possibilities, that present the potential to prevent the construction of educational walls between students and creativity and criticality.

## UN-DEMOCRATIC ACTS AS DE-DEMOCRATIZATION

Democracy in schools (and incidentally by extension, in society as well) is an abstracted or rhetorical truth. Allow hyper-politicians, such as Trump, to speak too long and we can quickly see how democracy can transform into fascism and plutocracy. A historical analysis of the complexity of events and issues leading to the secession of the South in the 1800s and subsequently the Civil War and we can begin to see how the U.S. has long struggled with the concept of democracy. Democracy quickly translates to states' rights and states' rights to individualistic rights; individualistic rights then become an excuse for the militant defense of personal property and right to protect material possessions at the expense of others.

In the course democracy becomes the oppression of races, and a voice of pro-slavery. There is no space provided for the *collective* people, the Democratic "We," inferred in our Preamble; no space anymore for the tired, the poor, the huddled masses that our nation's symbols once welcomed. The new "wretched refuse" is met with walls—ideological, emotional, and the potential of physical walls. In the confusion, ideals such as social justice, movements to empower black lives, and educational progress are labeled as communistic (incidentally, one could easily argue that just such an apparatus of labeling is a subversive cause and therefore "communistic" itself).

No wonder schools today struggle in this climate. We have been convinced that education is a conquest that must be "taken back" just as we have been fooled into thinking the nation is in need of being taken back. Yet it is the very public adhering to a dogma of angst, fear, hate, prejudice, and nationalism swayed by these hyper-political messages and mediated imaginaries, and as a result these have held both society and schools hostage.

In today's political landscape we see the metaphor of the non-politician defending "America" as a state right—but also as an individual or personal (self-serving) right. For this I employ *Trump* as both a symbol and a metaphor. People have become disillusioned with politics and politicians. Likewise people are disillusioned by the educational system. Trump sells himself as a legitimate candidate in and through mediated and over-governed realities and well-produced imaginaries; this in an effort to convince the populace that he is not the typical politician. Trump's so-called "straight talk" is often hailed as non-political. But this very idea is merely a politicized version of Trump's message or lack thereof. The mediated representation of Trump serves as a framework to discuss the underpinnings of what ails education (by education I mean teacher teaching and student learning) as it is dictated by the hyper-politicized educational system, non-pedagogical and de-democratized.

Therefore, systems governing education marketize the idea that public education has failed and charters and private schools are the answer. This system makes the same types of political claims, using the same types of tactics to mask the fact that charters and private school entities are "failing" by the same measures as public schools. Therefore, charters and private schools remain exempt. High-stakes



standardizations are manifestations of the same sentiments of fear and presumptions in U.S. culture that drives control away from the public into the control of the private sector—i.e., neoliberalism. As with Trump in politics, the privatization of education is a means to sell the people in the U.S. on the idea that education has failed. Trump exempts himself from being measured by the political plumb line because *he has not been* a politician—the slight of hand draws people’s attention away from the fact that *he is now* a politician. *Taking back* is a re-appropriation of sentiment of *taking over*, a pushing of the American people further away from a democratic republic model to a corporate model.

The aim is to flank politics and education with troops, set up a new government, if you will. However, embedded in the rhetorical truth is more of the same; the only thing that changes with the “new” offer is the packaging. In the end those in control gain more control; the wealthy monopolize more wealth; all of this managed at the expense of the people, by the people, for the people, all framed by a meritocratic system that squelches democratic hopes. The needs of the protected individual—the agent of super capitalism—the hyper-politician—the legislator-educator—the media messenger—outweigh the needs of the few who have been pushed to the margins, and definitely the many duped into believing in the mediated messages.

With Trump, mediated as the non-politician, the public sees (wants to see) only someone who has not functioned as a politician in the past—someone who can be a representation of strength and financial insight. However Trump has long since donned the mantle, the mold, and the model of every politician. The remaining difference is that it is a radical representation of the old. He is the hyper-politician disguised as the non-politician, a mediated imaginary of the non-politician. And within the rhetorical and abstracted truths of this hyper-political image hides a momentum toward the privatization of the public and a de-democratization of all things democratic—an agenda that drains power away from the common man, the everyday person, to a single charismatic and autocratic figure. Likewise, the discourse of privatization with schools seeks to capitalize on the lack of democratic structure in contemporary schooling, and instead of seeing more democracy as a means of repairing the problems it seeks to strip away even the inkling of democratic purpose.

As Capra (1996) noted, “The more we study the major problems of our time, the more we come to realize that they cannot be understood in isolation. They are systemic problems which means they are interconnected and interdependent” (p. 3). Capra provided the example of how stability in the world’s population, for example, is systemically possible only with efforts to reduce worldwide poverty (p. 3). But most important to this current discussion, Capra added, “Ultimately these problems must be seen as just different facets of one single crisis, which is largely a crisis of perception” (p. 4). According to Capra this perception is due to our perpetual subscription to “the concept of an outdated worldview” that maintains a perception of reality that is no longer capable of handling the problems with which we must deal.

The metaphor of Trump, the hyper-politician, points fingers at the system symptoms, calling up inadequate perceptions of reality, offering Band-Aid remedies, misdirecting the public attention away from the interconnectedness of our public problems, spewing layman's speech and derogatory language, stirring up strife and sowing discord. All distractions. Meanwhile, as a hyper-politician, also a corporate-man, a capitalist in the Marxist sense, more than well aware of the great economic concerns of the affluent, he is more than well aware that the systemic ills are neither current nor momentary. Privatization serves this same function in the discussion on education. Both discourage any authentic democratic purpose to take hold in schools.

What does take hold, however, are alternative techniques of truth grounded in a newly formed hyper-political environment. Circulating within this environment are the perceived failures of public education—the lack of “good teachers,” the “poor” performance of students, the “bad” behavior of students—the public school and its problems. No one considers any possibility that perhaps these are merely symptoms of the systemic problems—e.g. legislative mandates put in place by individuals who like the Trump metaphor operate by a model that understands nothing of pedagogy but instead seeks means for political control. Again, a pathological approach that considers the student, teacher, and principal as unable to learn, teach and lead.

Thus we see the rise of the privatization of schools movement. Such efforts will not change the process as a procedural routine. The routine will continue as is. Democratic dialogue will only become less effective in the process. While efforts to *dumb* education cannot be all attached to Trump (remember here he is merely a metaphor for an ideology), these fit the Trumpian motif and nature: to play to the fears of the under-educated and powerless, to further define and distinguish the social classes and social order, to build walls and construct cultural divides, to ensure that only the affluent regime survive, have choice, succeed, and increase.

The minoritized and the impoverished that public education has endeavored to serve and protect will perish in the process. And what does this process look like? We have seen it before through countless historical accounts, through endless narratives, through the mediated representations of black-and-white print and images. The history of the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. being retold anew in the guise of contemporary education; like the pre-Civil War slave of being sold from the public auction block, today students are exhibited and shamed from platforms of ignorance and fear; today teachers are deprived of their professional status and made to stand on a bus, enter at the back door, drink from a separate fountain.

What remains are schizoid rationales concerning education, dissociative disorders of schooling. Horn (1999) stated,

Metaphorically, the teacher's professional life becomes a cacophony with no discernible themes or continuities; a random eclectic mix of adversarial psychological strategies and tactics. In coping with these diverse demands,

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some teachers frenetically attempt to comply with these dueling psychologies and ideologies, while others withdraw or regress to the security of the old modernistic methods that were used on them. In either case the all-too-common result is the cognitive disability, emotional pathology, and social alienation... (p. 351)

Multiple and varied notions or regimes of truths have developed through the ebb and flow of legislative efforts; the result is a discussion about education (as with politics) that adopts both militant and economic (or capitalistic) language. In the milieu of this “multiple personality of education”—these dueling ideologies—we fail to recognize that it is the system of overly objectified and standardized mandates of education that fly in the face of the “compassionate, empathetic, and personal” work of teachers, and not the educators that fail our nation’s children. Any hope or faith in the educator to repair the world of learning over the reform of the milieu of schooling is lost in the mediated representations of teachers as bad or as failures or even as bumbling buffoons.

Therefore there exists the tension between teachers and leaders who are actually good educators who are viewed as “bad” and poor educators and educational leaders who are actually seen by the public as “good.” The distinction between the educators who are slaves to the system is lost in the images of the educator as soldier of the system. All this is wedged into this military metaphor and becomes devalued by the systemic efforts create a quantified, commodified, and marketable educative process. A blind eye is turned to the fact that the systemic issues at play through convoluted accountability systems and legislated securities prevent teachers from employing effective pedagogies, creating relevant curricula, and properly modeling democratic and civil education.

### MILITARIZATION

In this section I explore the way in which the military or war metaphor plays into creating an atmosphere of de-democratization in education. This military metaphor is nothing new. Education has long existed as a militarized zone. Metaphorical expressions have connected schooling and war for years. The metaphor of war and military even extends to parents and, of course, school leaders. While war can be twisted, fit sideways into a dialogue about freedom it is never the subject of life. War is not defined by life. Death is the first and last thought in war. Likewise the word *military* may be freely used in a discussion on peace (such as a discourse of protection), *militant* cannot be. *Battle*, *assault*, *attack*, *defeat*, *combat*, and *tactical* all imply opposition to peace, actively aggressive and violent measures. As Lumby and English (2010) recognized,

Though military metaphors in education may be frozen or dead, and the metaphorical implications unrecognized in the language of target students, parent incursion, or battles for resources, they may sustain particular attitudes

and a particular kind of relationship between people. Leaders are framed in a hostile or aggressive mode, enjoined in a process that is meant to defeat others... While school leaders may be cast in the heroic mold, those around them—students, parents, national policy makers—become enemies, targets in the field of battle. (p. 47)

Similarly, Badley and Hollabaugh (2012) stated,

Historically, many educators have used military and agricultural metaphors to describe teaching and learning. Military metaphors generally project messages of toughness, conformity, and uniformity. This last aim—uniformity—was shared by the many educators (mainly in another era) for whom schools served as factories whose purpose was to produce uniform and productive people. (p. 53)

As Dorn and Johanningmeier (1999) well noted, there has been a long association between education (i.e. schooling) and the military. Even the most common educational terms such as “dropping out” (when soldiers would drop out of their saddles in order to save their lives) is derived from a military trope. Dorn and Johanningmeier stated, “The fact that educators transferred the term ‘dropping out’ from the military to schooling in the late nineteenth century reflects the close comparisons educators made between the two social institutions” (p. 196). The researchers also went on to add,

Those who studied the process of public schooling and tried to invent ways to render it more effective and orderly turned to already existing organizations as preexisting metaphors for school and the problems of schools. The two to which they turned most frequently were the military and the business-industrial enterprise. (p. 196)

Even before the turn of the 20th century psychologist and pragmatist, William James, taught that pedagogy and war were similar sciences (Dorn & Johanningmeier, 1999). James (1899) has been cited in his work *Talks to Teachers*, stating,

In war, all you have to do is to work your enemy into a position from which the natural obstacles prevent him from escaping if he tries to; then fall on him in numbers superior to his own ... to hack his forces to pieces, and take the remainder prisoners. Just so, in teaching, you must simply work your pupil into such a state of interest in what you are going to teach him that every other object of attention is banished from his mind; then reveal it to him so impressively that he will remember the occasion to his dying day; and finally fill him with devouring curiosity to know what the next steps in connection with the subject are. (p. 9)

The idea of prisoners of war, positioning of troops, and bloody hand to hand combat fills this short excerpt. But then James (1899) went on to add,

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The principles being so plain, there would be nothing but victories for the masters of the science, either on the battlefield or in the schoolroom, if they did not both have to make their application to an incalculable quantity in the shape of the mind of their opponent. The mind of your own enemy, the pupil, is working away from you as keenly and eagerly as is the mind of the commander on the other side from the scientific general. (p. 9)

James' words speak to the way in which the U.S. education system has long maintained a theme of the student as the enemy or the opponent, of teaching as warfare, and of the classroom as the trenches or the frontline. Today, military phrasing as a means of expressing educational practices and problems is as commonplace as it was over 100 years ago. Our schools host writing boot camps in an attempt to increase writing scores on standardized tests. Doing well on a test or making an A on a report card is often said to be "killing it." And most obvious "drill and kill" methods for test preparation and test taking techniques (tactics) and strategies (stratagem) are prevalent. Educators combat ignorance and wage wars on the achievement gap. Discourses around closing the achievement gap bring up images of troops advancing on the enemy. And perhaps most commonly used, education is in *crisis*.

Additionally, the ordered factory-model management model applied to modern schools—a long-established holdover from societal needs in the industrial age—paired with the military metaphor. Ordering and orders given, flow charts and military formations all fill the halls and cafeterias and classrooms of our schools to this day. Students shift to and fro in a blurred metaphor of the cadet and the enemy, from the hallway to the classroom. As well, scripted lessons and testing manuals define improvement and assessment efforts. The duties and oaths of test security and training for the administration of the test likewise align well with the metaphor.

Finally struggling students—those that do not do well on the test—have to battle the test or the subject material. Struggling readers learn word attack skills. Whether it is a task or a test, student must "muster up" the will to give it their best "shot"—a reference to the act of gathering the troops together going back to the 1400s. In 1896, predating James' military metaphor, Dewey (2008) called out the procedural aspects of the military that he recognized, cynically paralleling teachers and soldiers,

There must be some schools whose main task is to train the rank and file of teachers—schools whose function is to supply the great army of teachers with the weapons of their calling and direct them as to their use. (p. 281)

In place of this, Dewey put forth the need for educators to not be "of the rank and file" but to "undertake experiment along new lines," and instead become developed as "leaders of our educational systems." These new lines and alternative metaphors have eluded educators until this contemporary, information-driven age. It is past time for a new motif to take hold—one of peace and promise over conflict and combat.

## COMMODIFICATION/MARKETIZATION

Although the language and metaphors we use to describe the work of education act as an influence of de-democratization, perhaps the most subtle and critical obstacle to authentically democratic schools is commodification. This commodification, or rather marketization of education, strips away from schools of any genuine democratic dialogue. This notion manifests in any number of ways in contemporary schooling.

First and foremost, this manifests as the commodification of education and teaching. Credentialization or licensure lends itself to this discussion. Years of training in higher education are insufficient to produce the skills needed to teach. Even though teachers will never be afforded the same professionalized status as lawyers or doctors, and are instead placed alongside armed forces, law enforcement, and fire fighters. Not that these occupations are not noble and needed professions; they are. However they do not require the same academic training that a teacher must have. Teachers may enter the classroom with a bachelors degree, however in many states the majority hold masters and even a number of doctorates and all for very little additional compensation.

Perhaps most obvious is the megalith that is the testing and metrics industry for state and national standardized assessments. Pearson has stood out for years as the Goliath of this business. Not only the producer of tests but also textbooks along with other major textbook and curriculum corporations such as McGraw Hill and Houghton-Mifflin. Along with information and assessment being commodified we have seen curricular packages and best practices instruction being bottled up like water and sold at a price. Most clearly commodified in this narrative is this canned curriculum and scripted teacher lessons along with the market-funded case study “research” for packaged learning programs.

Nevertheless, the marketized aspects of education do not stop there. Classroom space and spaces of learning are being marketed as objects of economic value by architectural firms that win bids on school construction. These companies make false promises to teachers and educational leaders to let them have input in the design of the structure for pedagogic purpose but then limit their insights to the selection of tiles and colors and types of cabinets in the classroom structure. The functionality of the classroom and the pedagogic environment of countless students are left to roughly sketched boxes on a white sheet of semi-transparent paper.

Lastly, the commodification of instructional time cannot be ignored. Time on task that amounts to ritual engagement holds value over authentic student interest and appreciation. Educators and students alike are prisoners of time, particularly time in past tense (Slattery, 1995). As Slattery (1995) stated, the modernist conception of segmented and linear time ...

... has resulted in an exaggerated emphasis on manipulation of time: time management, timed tests, wait time, time on task, quantifiable results over

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time, time schedules, time-out discipline centers, allocation of instructional days on annual school calendars, core academic time, carnegie units, time between classes, year-round schooling, and the like. Research efforts designed to manipulate time as an isolated, independent, and quantifiable variable can be traced to the assumption that the universe was created in time and space, as opposed to time and space being interwoven into the very essence of the cosmos. (p. 612)

At large the world is oblivious and misdirected by legislative and research slights of hand regarding time as it relates to schooling. Time becomes a commodity that has roots that tie it radically to the others issues identified in this section. According to Slattery (1995),

Educators are overwhelmed and frustrated as they try to implement ambitious goals, complete expanding curriculum requirements, and accomplish more complex objectives with “less and less time,” while also trying to be sensitive to the national educational reform movement and the public’s demands for accountability. Compounding these problems experienced by educators, economic crises have forced a reduction in personnel, thus increasing the job demands on existing administrators and faculty. Moonlighting, overloads, and overtime have now become typical for academic staff. Emotional fatigue and burnout reflect the psychic toll on educators. Ignorant of the negative impact of the modern conception of time on the human psyche, researchers continue to emphasize methods of restructuring, managing, or utilizing time to ameliorate the constraints experienced by contemporary educators. (p. 614)

The realization of learning is relegated to those that are normalized as “well-behaved” and “good students” because they are seen as students that help to preserve the current discourse structured around modern ideas of time. Disruptive thinking, challenging inquiry, and cognitive dissonance are invalidated through state mandated student expectations and standardized learning objectives because these things put a strain on the time needed to meet those constructs of standards. Any dialogue held by innovative teachers or creative leaders about transforming the daily schedule—an apparatus of time—or restructuring the programmatic configuration is viewed as being an impossibility or a drain of resources needed to pass the state test.

Instruction and assessing are now goods, products to be packaged, sold, and shipped. In democracy, teaching and testing (the testing of learning) should be acts, free and innovative acts of Liberty and Justice, an involving of both the teacher and the taught in the democratic act of learning. Implicit to this act is relationship. Converting teaching and learning into commodities is transactional and bureaucratic, stripping from them the freedom that defines the actions of human relationships. As a result the milieu maintains the moral uncertainty through marketized ideals of materialism. Once again democratic authenticity is thwarted.



## THE MILIEU OF MORAL UNCERTAINTY

The contemporary school is an expression of Foucault's milieu—a space in which uncertainty manifests. It is a “territory” capitalized by an unseen and unknown sovereign. As Foucault (2007) wrote,

The space in which a series of uncertain elements unfold is, I think, roughly what one can call the milieu... . What is the milieu? ... It is ... the medium of an action and the element in which it circulates... . The apparatuses of security work, fabricate, organize, and plan a milieu even before the notion was formed and isolated. The milieu, then, will be that in which circulation is carried out. The milieu is a set of natural givens – rivers, marshes, hills – and a set of artificial givens – an agglomeration of individuals, of houses, etcetera. The milieu is a certain number of combined, overall effects bearing on all who live in it. (pp. 34–35)

The school as milieu is a designed and designated, a planned space, in which miasmas thrive; a swamp covered over by newly constructed monuments to offer new faces over old failures. However, note that I do not say here “learning” or “teaching” but implicate instead “school” or “schooling.” It is the system—the governmentality of the system—that is the milieu.

Technological intervention comes to the forefront of the milieu like a magician's attractive assistant. A slight of hand distracts the stakeholders as viewers move away from the natural givens of learning to the artificial givens of consumerism, capitalism, and commodification—marketized, militarized materialism at the heart of the technological philanthropy. We bless the philanthropist who is no more than a heroine dealer ensuring that students become patrons who will purchase her or his products. Instead of becoming producers themselves students are programmed to remain consumers, and slaves to the producers and the product. These are the circulations that Foucault spoke of. The circulations, then, create the Uncertainty and Insecurity necessary to manufacture and maintain control, a technical device to keep teachers in check and students well managed.

Legislated curriculum and state-mandated standards offer merely a smoke and mirror response to this uncertainty, a false security or series of pseudo-securities for parents and the public. Unethical and immoral as they are, we have allowed the state and federal apparatuses at play to convince us as a collective that they are necessary and desired. Yet the reality of the connection between uninterested students and the negative circulations in the school milieu—drop outs, disciplinary issues, and truancy—are ignored or at best dismissed.

Still the issues such as drop out rates, disruptive behaviors, and attendance problems are not causes, merely symptoms of unengaged students consigned to an education to produce factory-line automatons. Classroom management is a series of tactics and techniques based on the management of a population. Instead of involving students in their own property right, they are excluded completely from



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the construction of the routine to the dissemination of the actions and the elements of circulations education within the milieu of the contemporary educational system. Our system of governance is based on control by a *talented tenth* (see DuBois) (King, 2013), and cloaked using concepts of difference as less than (Thomas, 2016).

The intersection of numerous possibilities and circumstances that is *life* is made sterile in the current state of education. If a butterfly inadvertently flies through an open window of a first grade classroom, a teacher is no longer able to capitalize on the students' excitement and interest of the beautiful creature before them because the life-cycle of the butterfly should not be taught until the second grade. The scope and sequence of a curriculum held captive by high-stakes testing cannot be transgressed. Moments of inspired teaching, movements of interest-driven learning have been smothered, snuffed out with the concern of punitive disciplinary actions that shift back and forth between state and federal powers.

Transference and authentic transformation are made neuter in the compartmentalized and commodified manner in which it now exists. Sciences are classified and segmented; histories are divided and deleted; mathematics are silo'ed and delineated into their own proper categories and storage towers; this to the point that interdisciplinarity and cross-curricular ideals are rhetorical and cliché. As such, Husserl's notion of any all-encompassing and all-embracing "science" (or way of knowing) is as dead as Nietzsche's concept of a loving "God." The natural complexities of human life have been rendered unrecognizable under the convoluted and chaotic narratives of accountability.

#### THE MAZE AND THE RUBE GOLDBERG METAPHOR

Complexities are a way of life. Our bodies, our environments, our means of creating organization—intended to simplify life—are all complex even if not complicated. Complexity is not however the same thing as convolution. An individual or an element can move forward, can progress, through complexities. We accept and willingly adapt to complex situations. On the other hand, convolutions are designed to spiral the individual, to circulate the element in a means that prevents progressing. Convolutions modify the shape of the milieu, express how one function (i.e. element) circulating in the milieu is altered or adapted by another. Convolutions prevent adequate space or time for personal adjustment. For example, take the assessment and accountability systems at play in our state and national testing systems.

Assessment policy in many states, as modeled by the federal government's system under NCLB, is a convoluted system that misdirects and misleads the public through unsustainable, chaotic, and confusion structures. In effect, the system operates like The Maze in Dashner's (2009) *The Maze Runner*, with internal structures—walls and cliffs—that shift every night, and mechanical beasts to test the young inside and prevent them from any level of actual mastery. As the character Thomas realized, "All of this—the Grievors, the walls moving, the Cliff—they're just elements of

a stupid test. We're being used and manipulated. The Creators wanted to keep our minds working toward a solution that was never there" (p. 168).

The apparatus attempts to integrate attendance, multiple testing mechanisms, testing manuals, district coordinator manuals, levels of active monitoring, various matrices and tables regarding past, present, and future accountability systems. It prevents and protects, depending on whether you are a prisoner of the maze or monitoring from outside it. Layered over this apparatus are dialogues and discourses of financial integrity, legislative budgeting, next-generation accountability, operating procedures, state superintendent/commissioner rationalizations, agendas, myriad hyperlinks on state agency websites to embedded texts and topics relating to accountability, and varying definitions of mastery from one test to the next (and from one administration of the assessment to the next).

As well these are all coupled with the massive amounts of data provided in summary on state, district, and school report cards. Labels such as Accredited, Accredited-Warning, Accredited-Probation, and Not Accredited-Revoked, replace terms such as Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable, and Unacceptable or those labels such as high-growth, high-performance, high-need all embedded with overlapping and under-clarified meanings. We *race to top* all the while promising to *leave no child behind*. These labels and discourses change on 3-year, 5-year, or 7-year cycles, preventing the practitioners and the public from ever fully comprehending them and never venturing near mastery.

What develops is nothing short of a Rube Goldberg machine. The Rube Goldberg machine metaphor has been appropriately applied to finances and budgeting (Williams & Onochie, 2013; Buchanan, Bui, & Garcia, 2015). Likewise, I view it as an apt metaphor for state and federal accountability systems. Reuben Goldberg was an American cartoonist and Pulitzer Prize winner "known for his drawings of ludicrously intricate machinery meant to perform simple operations" ("Goldberg, Rube," 2016). Today's accountability and assessment mechanisms are just that— intricate, convoluted machinations intended to accomplish the straightforward task of educating our students according to the current needs of our free democratic society and with the means to participate within the milieu of global interactions and transnational collaborations.

## CONCLUSION

Within the milieu circulates different and diverse elements. Even new mindsets. Mindsets of hope that embrace a new way of considering scheduling, de-compartmentalizing subjects, experimental cross-curricular, co-teaching modalities of instruction are needed. All of these can be a reality given the right space— provided the right environmental factors. Military metaphors and the push toward a commodified education must be eventually eradicated—for the moment, until that day they must be ignored. Assessment and accountability must become strictly

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pedagogical efforts—not some hyper-politicized aim that offers no more than shifting mazes that imprison our children.

For years we have been discussing a need to center the student in the act of learning. However this conversation has continued to get weighted down with images of the student as a customer who is always right or a consumer who needs to be enticed by commercials or spectacles, or worse as the enemy or inmate or a maze runner. But students are none of these. Students are vested individuals with an interest in learning and with a need to understand authentic democratic practice, not merely being a passive spectator. To get here, educators must reinvigorate of the concept of democracy in schools—democracy tempered and balanced with just and equitable social structures, symmetrical systems able to respect diversity, sustain peace, and foster care.

New conceptualizations of space and physical structure in the school milieu must be allowed, new forms of circulations and new elements to be circulated. Spaces for taking risk—places of experimental instruction and pedagogy—need to be formed. Pragmatic spaces with purpose and structure, aesthetic space—conducive of criticality and creativity, stimulating thinking and reflection for students and teachers should be contemplated and attempted. These should be conceived as open and flexible multiple purpose spaces that foster integration and interdisciplinarity, transformation and transference. Likewise, we need to infuse education with environmental and ecological justice and concepts that consider the collective and connected aspects of humanity, our local natures and our global existence.

Most importantly democratic spaces need to become commonplace in school buildings and district board rooms, places of coming together for rich and robust dialogue, the questioning and confronting asymmetries in justice and equity, without risk of punitive backlash. Ideally, these would be spaces and environments in which we can disagree and debate, hold robust discussion and enriching dialogues, instead of fostering discord and division from behind podiums or from elevated platforms. These places would be where voices are given democratic due process, and the rights of free speech and the right to petition powers are valued and validated not being viewed as dissentious and divisive.

Financial efforts must shift from technology for the sake of technology to a purpose, a fixed rationale of utilizing and producing, void of inactive consumption of the technological product. This means embracing the device as an apparatus of access to innovative and indigenous ways of knowing and a means to achieving new understanding of others and other spaces. Implied is a respect to varied ways of learning, and a worldview of technology as a tool not merely for acquiring but as well for inquiring.

Educators must be provided the freedom to consider and examine the metaphors they use, and the possibility of new metaphors in schooling—emergent and divergent symbols and metonymies in the dialogue of teaching and learning. Development of a new language to describe schooling and learning that is not dependent upon war or industry is implied. This system of talking about education would include analysis

and synthesis, critical thinking and problem solving, conversations on nonviolence and peace education.

New structures are in need of being constructed. A re-envisioning of pliant systems should allow for various conceptualizations of time and pedagogic schedules—systems that are cautious of overly standardized and rigid metrics and tactics of normalization. Instead of trying to store new wine in old wine skins we need to fashion new skins capable of holding the aged wine needed to soothe the ills of a disconnected and disappointed society.

As well a new model of leadership based in faith, hope, and humility (Lowery, 2013) and with a strong concept of moral literacy must take hold in preparation and practice of principals and superintendents. These individuals should have an advanced understanding of authentic, ethical, and integrated (i.e. undivided) models of leadership. As well aesthetic modalities that are forward-looking and embrace real-world data gathered through the senses. These leaders need to comprehend the role of ethics sensitivity and moral reasoning in decision-making and sense making as it relates to dilemmas both within the milieu and those outside that impact it.

All this implies holding dialogues that accept the fact that progressivism, social programs, and critical theory are not communistic ideas but means of communicating liberty and justice for all. Education must not simply be a depository of democratic values. It needs to be the incubator of democratic voices, innovative in the development of common people (*demos*) who are empowered (*kratia*) to rule, make decisions, speak freely, worship freely, assemble freely, publish freely, and interpret the Constitution with a realistic and relevant point of view.

While in the midst of the current mediated world we view on a nightly basis this seems hopeless, I posit that by engaging in ongoing dialogue and introducing various and varied metaphors we can lay the foundation needed to build new ways of thinking. As educators we cannot waiver. In the words of *The Maze Runner's* Thomas, “Most people would’ve given up by now. But I think we’re different. We couldn’t accept that a problem can’t be solved—especially when it’s something as simple as a maze. And we’ve kept fighting no matter how hopeless it’s gotten” (p. 168).

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CORNELL THOMAS

### 3. FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE

#### *Defining One's Own Identity*

SETTING THE STAGE: FIVE BRIEF STORIES THAT HELP  
FRAME THE DISCUSSION

#### *Discounting*

In January 2000 I was officially appointed the first Special Assistant to the Chancellor for Diversity and Community at Texas Christian University. Our new Chancellor had given a number of major speeches during his first semester at TCU. The importance of diversity was a key point made during these speaking engagements. Given our history of talking about the importance of diversity, followed by merely actions of accommodation, I emailed this new Chancellor. In this email I suggested that we should talk about issues of diversity and inclusion at TCU, if he really believed in what he was saying regarding the importance of these issues on campus. I wanted to offer some ways to better prepare our students to live, work and share leadership in a more inclusively diverse world. He agreed to meet and talk. A series of additional and very frank discussions led to the Chancellor's decision to make this appointment.

Before this appointment, I was serving as an Associate Professor and Department Chair in the School of Education at this same university. I was also preparing to go up for full professor. When the Chancellor originally requested the move to his office, he had no title in mind. He did however understand, to some degree, the significance of an individual focused on issues of diversity and inclusion on campus, directly reporting to him. My request for a different title, Vice Chancellor (or Special Assistant) for Inclusion, was turned down by the Chancellor because he thought that I would be spending a great deal of time bringing clarity to this notion of inclusion. I thought that this was indeed a major initiative for the work ahead and should be discussed, dissected, and uncloaked as a way to clarify what a more inclusively diverse world meant and how each of us might find success in it. The Chancellor wanted me to lead a process that resulted in opportunities for our students, staff and faculty to become more understanding, thoughtful, and expressive about issues that impact their lives, especially as they related to living, working and providing leadership in what he thought was becoming a more inclusively diverse world.

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This work, he assumed, could be directed by me in collaboration with other campus administrators and local community leaders.

Initially the office was a staff of one. I was given permission to hire an administrative assistant for the start of the next fiscal year. There were no other position lines designated for this office. My success would be greatly impacted by the ability with others in an area, diversity and inclusion, which was very foreign and frightening to many of them. The title of Vice Chancellor was never really discussed, but would have sent a bold statement to the University and greater community. Not doing so sent a different message. The level of importance would have been perceived to be higher should the title of Vice Chancellor been designated. It was not. The title of vice chancellor at TCU signifies a higher level of permanence within the organizational structure. The title of special assistant does not. The only level higher than vice chancellor at TCU, within the administration, is chancellor. The ambiguity around the title of special assistant makes understanding its level of importance very unclear. A position with no line authority and a very limited budget tells most, if not all, of us that the role of special assistant is not as important as that of vice chancellor. It also tells us that the work is discounted. Despite the way the position was organized, we experienced five years of great success. Much of that success was impacted by taking a year to convince the Chancellor to allocate more funding, collaborating with vice chancellors, deans and others to provide much needed funding, and through external friend and fundraising. However, the pathway would have been much smoother and fewer battles would have been fought if the perception of importance had been conveyed in a different way.

Often it is our personal perspectives; our narrow lens used to view the world; or as Max Stirner described as the Wheels in our Head; and our reluctance to the expanding of our lens that represents one of the greatest barriers before us as it relates to the social, political, economic, and educational, challenges of these times. We must find ways to uncloak the negative images of other people. We must eradicate the belief that different means less than. New ways of thinking and new methods for engagement must be created and implemented to better address the social, political, educational and economic challenges before us. Our current approach makes the other's true identity virtually invisible. Instead we, knowingly or unknowingly, vilify the existence of individuals considered to be different with generalized stereotypes that are often very far from the truth. We must give space to allow each of us to explore and become better aware of our evolving identity, share our presence in positive ways, and become more intentional when working to create and sustain a more inclusively diverse society and world. We should embrace the premise that part of our work on college campuses, and in all educational settings, is to prepare students to live, work, and share the role of leadership with all kinds of individuals, anywhere in the world. If we truly want all of us to achieve at higher levels of personal and societal success, then actions of discounting must end.



*Seeing the Other*

A recent conversation with a co-worker sheds some light on this reluctance of some of us to expand the lens from which we view and make sense of the world. We were talking about the recent violence in Paris, France, the great loss of life, the feelings of insecurity all-over the world, and questioning why such violent acts seem to be so much more prevalent in our world today than ever before. While I have a hard time remembering all that was said, one statement by my friend continues to haunt me. My co-worker, formerly educated in the ministry, stated that a major part of the problem is that Muslims did not experience the Age of Enlightenment as we Christians did. I countered with the thinking that actions are often reactions to the actions of others; and that when treated in negative ways over and over again, people eventually strike back in similar fashion. I also emphasized the thought that those in poverty; those lacking a sense of their true identity; and those with seemingly no hope for a better future without systemic change are more vulnerable to voices that espouse a better way forward, even if that way includes violence towards those perceived to be unfairly holding them down. I pointed to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi movement, David Koresh and his form of Christianity, and Donald Trump and his followers as prime examples. The messages often frame current leadership as insensitive, selfish, and unwilling to help anyone outside of their circle, and those considered different or less than. These messages paint a picture of intentional unfairness, cruelty, and evil. They stoke the fires of hatred and eventually negative re-actions. In this case, the murder of well over 100 individuals. History tells us that our world has experienced these kinds of acts forever. Yet, I still believe that we can eradicate the environments that cause them to occur and often explode.

Maybe it is my understanding of the Age of Enlightenment that is misinformed, as I am no scholar of this area. I thought that the Age of Enlightenment focused on developing philosophical thought regarding issues of, for example, liberty, reason, and tolerance. Of primary focus was an attempt to limit the political power of religious organizations as a way to prevent religious wars. So, I guess my co-worker was trying to say that Christians, due to the Age of Enlightenment experience, no longer validated any wars based on religion, but Muslims did? He supported the premise that all Muslims believe in the definition of Jihad as “Holy War” and not the definition that calls for followers to strive to serve the purpose of God while on this earth. It is these very narrow and misinformed view of the world and of other individuals, and even of ourselves, which must be broadened if we are to move forward with a future of positive possibilities.

Your grandmother was not teaching me how to behave in class. She was teaching me how to ruthlessly interrogate the subject that elicited the most sympathy and rationalizing – myself. Here was the lesson. I was not an innocent. My impulses were not filled with unfailing virtue. And feeling that I was as human as anyone, this must be true for other humans. If I was not



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innocent, then they were not innocent. Could this mix of motivation also affect the stories they tell? The cities they built? The country they claimed as given to them by God? (Coates, 2015, p. 29)

*Who Am I? Who Are They? Who Are We? Drawing Myself to Consciousness*

I suggest that much of the conflict between groups, and individuals, is rooted in levels of identity and invisibility. It is the purposeful cloaking of the other's identity and a false but well developed identity of the privileged as a method of control. It is also the creation of real and perceptual barriers, formed by these false identities, which are indeed more formidable for some and easily traversed by others. The social construction of culture and race, as used in the United States, represents such a set of barriers that have become real in the lives of too many of our citizens.

Most literature describes culture from a group perspective. These descriptions have as a basic premise that culture consist of behaviors, beliefs, morals, art, customs and other characteristics that determine a person's status in a society. For example, people classified as black are often described as lazy, lacking morals, criminals, crack heads, uneducated, untrustworthy, and the women as welfare queens. This is an example of false identity and helps to make the individual invisible.

However, since culture represents the perspectives within one's life experiences; and since each individual's life experiences are unique; it is suggested here that these individual interpretations of experiences and how they impact one's beliefs and actions makes culture not a group but rather an individual identifier. For example, society classifies me as a Black or African American male. They also classify my brother in the same way. Yet, one of us is Catholic and the other spiritual; one lacking a high school diploma and the other with a terminal degree; one who values big homes, fast cars, and the fast life and the other who values critical thinking, golf, and intellectual dinners with friends. At the same time, neither of us are lazy, lacking of morals, drug addicts, or untrustworthy. And our mother was never on welfare. My brother and I have similar familial roots, but our experiences have helped to develop our levels of interests and how we prefer to live our lives in much different ways. I suggest here that we are all unique in certain ways. No two of us are exactly alike. Defining me using terms connecting to culture based on group identifiers and generalize stereotypes makes me invisible to you and helps to create that space where discriminatory actions take place.

Groups of people may have similar foundational ideologies from which culture emerges. However personal experiences often impact individuals in unique ways, resulting in a culture of one. Therefore, to understand someone simply from a set of socially constructed identifiers often impedes any attempts to really get to know them. These descriptors act as an anchor on the body, mind, and very soul of so many of our citizenry. They are designed to keep the pathways to social and personal success clear for a few, but full of detours, roadblocks, and other obstacles designed to cause many to quit trying to accomplish their goals in life. At some point many

get angry and others even strike back. Instead our focus must draw inward in order to bring outward a more personal consciousness of self that represents a truer identity of who one is becoming.

... identity contingencies – the things you have to deal with in a situation because you have a given social identity, because you are old, young, gay, a white male, a woman, black, Latino, politically conservative or liberal, diagnosed with bipolar disorder, a cancer patient, and so on. Generally speaking, contingencies are circumstances you have to deal with in order to get what you want or need in a situation. (Steele, 2010, p. 3)

For me, embracing a set of socially constructed group identifiers, especially when they are designed to vilify most while glorifying a few, and using these identities as a way to bring issues of inequality to the fore is similar to running a 100 meter race using rules that require only me to do so with one leg tied behind my back while all of the other runners are allowed to run with both legs. It is the acceptance of identity contingencies without any real attempt to eradicate the inequalities of the situation. Embracing this concept of culture as indeed a culture of one, clears the pathway for engaged leaders who value the gifts of each member of the organization. This concept of culture moves leaders away from generalized beliefs about people to more of an individualized approach. The approach results less in enabling groups within the organizations and more towards empowering individuals in ways that increase positive outcomes, both for the community, organization, and the individual.

Using the socially constructed notions of race that bombard us each day dehumanizes individuals. We are more than a word or set of generalized descriptors. Our identities are complex and unique, with gifts worthy of recognition and inclusion.

### *Self-Centeredness*

We once, well at least verbally, believed as the Romans did at first that the survival of our great nation depended on the capacity of the citizenry to put the public good ahead of their personal interest. The destruction of the Roman Empire can be traced, in part, to the diminishing importance of this premise and growing self-centeredness among government leaders and finally her citizens. Maybe a high level of self-centeredness was present, but successfully cloaked, for a time. Greed and a self-centered ethos led to the end of the Roman Empire. The cloak surrounding socialism within the United Soviet Socialist Republic disappeared, and so did the USSR. The internal desire to have more, greed, has now become very powerful in our nation and presents a major threat to who we say we are. We must take heed to this fact and make needed changes now. Yet, it seems that our agenda continues to reflect that of the failed Roman Empire and the former USSR.

There are major movements in this world and in our nation that are focused on notions of self-centeredness and exclusion. One such movement has decided to wage war against the premise of diversity and inclusion.

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I recently posted on Facebook a billboard standing along an Arkansas freeway that stated: “Diversity” is a code word for #White genocide. A cursory view of this website ([www.fightwhitegenocide.com](http://www.fightwhitegenocide.com)) is, for me at least, very disturbing. Supporters of this movement state that ant-racist is just a code word for anti-white. They want to take back the country. They want to keep America for the whites. Members of this organization go on to say that this diversity movement across the world is focused on bringing other races to white countries, and white countries only. Their interpretation of this final solution to the race problem is for every white country, and again only white countries, to assimilate by intermarrying with non-whites. How does such a distorted thinking become embraced by intelligent human beings? What actions emerging from diversity and inclusion work support this weird ideology? Answers can be found, within the false and socially constructed notions of race.

I equate this organization with the rise of the Aryan people and the Nazi movement of the 1930–40s. Instead of working to include the diverse voices that are a part of our citizenry, this movement utilized tactics to vilify and separate. Their work seems designed to subjugate the masses for the greed of the few. To educate through a mass miss-education, and a means to inform by promoting ignorance and hate. The Nazi movement promoted German pride and anti-Semitism. The movement was nurtured by a nation in near economic collapse and unstable government since the end of World War I. Adolf Hitler and other leaders within this Nazi movement blamed their plight on the Jewish citizens in the country and the corrupt and incompetent Marxist leadership for Germany’s problems. In turn, they promoted an extreme version of German nationalism and the proposition of a master (Aryan) race. History tells of that this movement led to the murder of millions of Jewish people. It was also the primary cause for the emergence of World War II, and even more deaths around the world. One can find similar language in the fight white genocide movement. Some would suggest that much of the philosophy of the Nazi movement is now embedded within this one. This movement is real. This movement is powerful. This movement is growing. This movement will continue to implement ways to eradicate any movement counter to their beliefs. This movement is on the kind of pathway that has the potential to be a major cause of the destruction of our great nation. It must end. It must end now.

We won the battle over the Nazi movement of the 1930–40s, when we no longer thought of ourselves only as British, French, Canadian, or American. Instead we fought united as Allies. We became more inclusive and focused on the belief that the needs of the many outweighed the needs of the few, or the one. Now we must fight as Americans, and even more as Humans. When we do, more will join us because discrimination will indeed be considered Un-American and Inhuman. Our fight is not one of guns and other deadly weapons. Rather it is a battle of the mind and heart. It is a movement focused on creating more and better opportunities for all who are willing to do the work. We must overcome our need for greed and be willing to find better ways to share. Happy people tend to live life in more positive ways.

Angry people act out in more negative ways. History tells us that as the divide widens between the haves (rich) and the have-nots (poor), levels of hate, discrimination, and other Un-American actions increase. We must work to create pathways leading to a better way forward for those without hope. It has been proven that we become nothing of worth when hope disappears. This lack of hope in a brighter future has led to the murder of many people, due to hopelessness and hate. The focus here is on Black men in this great nation.

*Another Great Nephew Murdered*

*November 23, 2015*

ST. LOUIS COUNTY (KTVI) – An argument led to a fatal shooting Sunday night in the Castle Point municipality in north county, the St. Louis County Police Department said.

According to Officer Shawn McGuire, a police spokesman, the shooting happened November 22 around 8 p.m. in the 10400 block of Prince Drive. Police found the victim, 34-year-old Otis Adams, lying in the front yard of a home with a gunshot wound to his chest. Adams was pronounced dead at the scene.

Investigators took 45-year-old ...into custody shortly thereafter, McGuire said. Witnesses told police they saw ...with a gun in his hand and telling Adams that he was going to kill him. Police later found the suspected murder weapon hidden inside the washing machine at ...girlfriend's house.

The St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney's Office charged ...with one count of first-degree murder and one count of armed criminal action. He remains jailed on \$750,000 cash-only bond.

Stop!

Another great nephew, dead. Another young black man, dead. Dealing drugs, in and out of jail, a life of trying to get over socially constructed obstacles. Barriers of inequality and injustice. They continue to die so young. My heart seems to have a permanent ache that takes over more space with each murder of a loved one. I don't understand, I can't understand. We grow up together, hearing the same messages, yet make different decisions. So many of these young men, even those who graduate from high school, leave unable to write a decent comprehensible sentence, secure a decent paying job, and become angry at the world. Their actions emerge from emotion and anger, with no thoughts about a more positive future, when all they see is hopelessness. There is no real joy, nothing to look forward to. So they live for the day, instant gratification – getting laid and/or getting high, and having babies that they can't take care of. Many eventually hurt others and murder – are murdered.

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What is wrong with us? How can we kill each other so easily? How can we live with ourselves when we vilify those different than us in ways that causes invisibility, a loss of humanity, and the near disappearance of any hope for a true democracy? How can we live with ourselves when we vilify and kill each other as if life is meaningless? What is so wrong with us?

At first I was frustrated, then mad. I moved from mad to a feeling of defeat and remained depressed for some time. I use to think that talking with young Black men and setting an example for them to see would create a pathway for more of us to follow.

Man, was I wrong!

It is a nightmare that never ends. A living nightmare wondering who will be next. Afraid to go home, with premonitions of a stray bullet coming my way. Afraid to go home, with premonitions of wanting to choke some sense into them. Afraid to go home, with premonitions of severing the last thin string connecting me with them, my loved ones. Afraid to go home, with premonitions that the nightmare remains real.

No connections. No joy.

No connections. No joy.

No connections. No joy.

To experience the joy of connection is life; to not experience it is death to our souls, death to our deepest desires, death to everything that makes us human.  
(Larry Crabb)

Darkness surrounds me. Darkness surrounds us. We hate and strike out. We hate and kill. No hope, no life. No hope, no joy. No joy, no life. So we kill to have joy? So we kill to feel good? We kill, get killed, and hide to avoid getting killed, no joy, and no life. Only darkness.

Only darkness. No light.

Only darkness. No light.

Only darkness. No light.

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. (Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

#### WHERE IS THE JOY? WHERE IS THE LIGHT?

The joy is found when each of us begins to take more ownership of our own destiny. The pathway to joy gains light as we gain a better understanding that each of us must work to develop our own sense of self and no longer allow others to do it for us. The light gets brighter as we move from a mode of reaction, to becoming more proactive in how we view ourselves, our communities, our nation, our world and our more positive place in it. The light remains bright when our actions now support this new

## FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE

vision of self and our responsibility to making life, and this world, better for all of us. The journey begins with the demystification of the concept of “race” and the racism emerging from this false ideology.

American ideas about race have changed significantly over time. Since the beginning, the way we have classified and defined groups, our laws, social policies, even our scientific discoveries—have all been shaped by shifting political priorities. – *Race: The Power of Illusion* (Herbes-Sommers, 2003)

Now is the time to totally eradicate all American ideas about divisions of humans by race. Instead we must embrace and actively support that we are all a part of the human race. Yes a daunting task before us, but worthy of our energy, especially if we are to survive as a great nation.

## RACE – A LIE

In an attempt to bring some clarity to the devastating effects regarding this concept of race as a socially constructed lie, I will share some of its negative outcomes in our attempts to educate so called Black children in urban school environments. I will also discuss the role of parents, as it relates to so-called Black children, and how we must change. In addition, a discussion will follow to challenge all of us to travel a different pathway for a better way forward. Let us all get off this current pathway of destruction called race and step on to the pathway of light and joy focused on personal identity and inclusion.

### *Premise*

Racism will continue to hurt us if we continue to react, primarily from our emotions, instead of proactively developing our own sense of self and presence in this great nation. We must continue to bring great attention to the devastating effects of racism, and even more actions towards becoming more proactive in defining who each of us is really becoming.

## RACISM AND EDUCATION

Instead, I’ve found that what is urgent for our world – and thus what we should consider most closely in education – is a student’s capacity to collaborate and think creatively. (Guinier, 2015, p. 2)

In my nearly 40 years of work with students as a public school teacher and administrator, a college professor and administrator, and the numerous seminars, workshops, speaking engagements and other interactions with educators across this great nation, I find that many educators still believe that these notions of “race” are based on scientific facts. They believe that the divisions based on race are real.

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Most of them also hold generalized assumptions about people based in the false notions of “race.” Just read what a recent student noted in his paper regarding race:

These groups are often based on ideas such as race and ethnicity, but more importantly with the characteristics often attached to these labels. These might include meeting someone who is a Black or Hispanic and assuming they are poor, or that they might have no father present in their lives, meeting an Asian person and assuming they are talented in mathematics, or even meeting someone who is white and assuming they are privileged and without financial troubles. I can be the first to admit that these stereotypes used to be frequently how I might have classified someone’s culture before taking this course. (Anonymous, 2015)

This evolving social construction of race in America has helped to create a morass of negative assumptions about people, based primarily on skin color, that form the basis upon which we interact with them. These sets of assumptions also help to justify, for some, many of the injustices occurring in our society. For example, some try to justify the current high rates of unemployment among black men in our society by saying that they are lazy, criminals, drug crazed, and just don’t want to work.

It is the actions taken from this social construction of race that are unjust, discriminatory and racist. It is suggested here that we must redirect our work with more of a focus on proactive initiatives and away from being reactive most, if not all, of the time. Our work must result in empowered youth becoming more proactive, instead of emotional reactive, to these acts as a way of dramatically diminishing discriminatory acts. Current arguments are based on assumptions that are full of lies, resulting in actions that discriminate. It is suggested here that parents have a major role to perform in this work as we try to create this better way forward.

#### PARENTS – EDUTAINMENT? PLEASE SAY NO!

I recently saw a series of pictures posted on Facebook entitled something like “The HBCU Experience College Fair.” Every picture posted shared the band playing and shaking, some guys performing a dance routine, and various groups of young ladies, scantily clad, dancing on stage. There were no pictures posted that focused on anything with an educational focus. So I asked, “Was the focus of this event on education and encouraging students to go to college, or entertainment as a way to interest them in a post-secondary education? The response: “We call it EDUTAINMENT.” Now, am I the only one that sees this approach as a problem? Am I one of a few which sees a diminished focus on thinking, learning, and individual empowerment with this notion of edutainment?

Our understanding of who we are becoming is influenced by our notions of success, failure, good, bad, entitlement, empowerment, compassion, ethics, honesty and many other elements that help to make up our identity. We all grow up learning, primarily from our parents and family, right from wrong, good or bad, smart or dumb,



strong or weak, pretty or ugly, acceptance or rejection. Each of these components of our identity is complex, and evolves when new experiences touch our heart.

It is suggested here that parents who instill values and actions that are counter to the importance of learning to read, think, calculate, and towards empowering their children to take more ownership of every aspect of their lives each year, are doing their children a huge disservice. While each of us is unique, we must have some set of key attributes to live by. These key attributes must include the expectation for all to maximize their abilities to learn and become a positive force in a more inclusively diverse world. Without these kind of key attributes our lives would be total chaos. Without these kind of key attributes, speeding along the roads would result in many more accidents and deaths. Without these kind of key attributes, we would live in communities where emotions control our actions more, making violence more the norm and the hurting of so many more of our youth each day. Without these kinds of key attributes, notions of good and bad, and right and wrong become so blurred that notions of social justice would simply disappear. Is it better for parents to model and practice reading at home or watching the Housewives of Whatever County ... with our children? Should parents bring more reinforcement for dancing and rapping, or for their children learning to read, understand what they read, calculate, and think with more depth each year? If confronted by the police while with your children, is it better to use a calm voice even when you know injustice is occurring, or cursing the officers and striking them?

Answers to these and similar questions seem obvious, at least for most of us. Yet we continue to model loud talking, dancing and sports over the kind of learning that paves a better way forward for their children, and doing your own thing over structure for our children. Teaching and learning environments are spending too much time these days simply trying to get students to pay more attention and to take an interest in learning. Even when some parents care, they model the very behaviors, loud talking, twisting necks, and striking other people, which their children exhibit while attending school. There is a need for more parents to help their students better understand the kind of key attributes that will clear some of the barriers along their pathway of life. I learned when very young how to interact with police, especially those trying to bait you into doing something so that they could beat the hell out of you. It was something bad police officers loved to do to us. This is no exaggeration. I have seen this happen, especially during my high school years, numerous times. Instead of thinking and using our skills to maneuver through a situation, we see our young responding through emotion and doing things that simply serve as gas to a fire burning just below the surface ready to explode. The explosions have resulted, in part, in the deaths of too many of our young men and women at the hands of the police and others. Yes, I have a terminal degree in my formal education. My brother help me earn a Ph.D. in urban living (living in the hood) long before entering college. Parents must do more to help their children better understand the importance of learning how to function within our society, to their advantage and as a way to limit the brutality imparted by bad cops.



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Some of our schools are becoming war zones once again. Students refuse to listen, even more students find school boring, teachers are pressured to increase test scores and principals are threatened with their jobs. Why is this so? What is causing students to check out of learning in schools by the third grade? Why are students cursing and striking each other and their teachers? While there are indeed a number of issues regarding how educators determine best practices for teaching and learning, the parent also has a major role to play particularly in how their child perceives the importance of a quality education. We should not just support Edutainment. Instead we must work with our children and model the kinds of actions that will help instead of hurt them.

This social construction of race continues to have a devastating effect on the thinking of many educators. It is a major cause for the continued lack of student success, especially by those labeled Black.

#### THE POLITICS OF RACE: WHAT WE SAY OR WHAT WE MEAN, AND DO

The question is not whether Lincoln truly meant “government of the people” but what our country has, throughout its history, taken the political term “people” to actually mean. In 1863 it did not mean your mother and grandmother, and it did not mean you and me. Thus America’s problem is not its betrayal of “government of the people,” but the means by which “the people” acquired their names. (Coates, 2015, pp. 6–7)

The Constitution of the United States of America proclaims a nation of freedom for all. Yet even some of the writers and signers of this great document, 41 of them, owned slaves. Slaves were not free. Lincoln’s “Emancipation Proclamation,” nearly three years into the Civil War, freed slaves, but only those in the confederate states and leaving slavery intact in the loyal border states, Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. The 13th Amendment to the Constitution, passed by the Senate in April 1864 and the House in January 1865, freed slaves in this country. The Black Codes were established after 1865 by new southern legislatures to control the labor and actions of newly freed slaves. These codes were established during what was called the Presidential Reconstruction under the leadership of Andrew Johnson. President Johnson was a staunch supporter of state’s rights. Under his plan southern state governments were allowed to rebuild as they saw fit. The Black Codes were not challenged by the federal government at the time. These codes, in many ways, established a new form of slavery and denied full citizenship to those recently freed from slavery. The politics of President Johnson were rejected by northern voters with the passage of the Reconstitution Act of 1867 which, in part, forces the southern states to ratify the 14th Amendment, granting citizenship to “all persons born or naturalized in the United States,” which included freed slaves.

A more “radical” reconstruction movement began in 1867 resulting in the empowerment of many of the freed slaves. However, the South’s attempts to

subvert this Act resulted in the establishment of the Ku Klux Klan and similar white supremacist groups that terrorized freed slaves who attempted to live a full citizens of the United States. The Compromise of 1876 ended army intervention in the south, resulting in the establishment of Jim Crow laws and the disenfranchisement of those considered black in the south. A new system of white supremacy and second class citizenship for those considered black emerged in the south. Many of the prevailing beliefs about those considered black also impeded full citizenship for them in northern states. The results were a different kind of servitude, discrimination, and a tiered societal system full of barriers. This tiered societal system of barriers, more for some than others, made attaining one's concept of the American Dream nearly impossible for those labeled black. This tiered societal system of barriers remains strongly in place today, just more cloaked, in many sectors of our great nation.

Laws to counter inequities in education, joblessness, voting rights, and segregated public facilities, for example, were just recently passed in the 1950s, 60s and 70s ... and still to this day are only selectively enforced in sectors of our society. For example, while some public schools desegregated, they utilized testing methods, and nearly predictable resulting scores, as reasons to place students in appropriate learning environments. These actions resulted in school within school settings that re-segregated the students, primarily based on the wheels in our heads that support the socially constructed notions of race. In addition, while the law states that all citizens can vote, some states have enacted policy, more stringent voter ID requirements for example, as a way to limit those of the darker hue to vote. And, while laws to prohibit employment discrimination were enacted, counter measures were developed to set new minimum requirements for certain positions, resulting in most of us representing the darker hue to settle for jobs on the lower rungs of the ladder of success. Joblessness, underemployment, under-educational practices, neighborhood redlining, racial profiling, and the right to vote are examples of discrimination that continue to demonstrate the fact that what we say we believe in as a people, and this notion of freedom for all, is quite different from what we mean, and do.

Much of the rationale for these Un-American acts can be traced back to our notions of "race" and the racism emerging from these beliefs. While there is indeed much work ahead to correct these wrongs at the government level, grassroots efforts must become a primary pathway to eradicate this nation's social construction of race.

Political actions in this country are most often fueled with green power, the almighty dollar. One does not have to think long to realize why millionaires bring and raise substantial financial support to particular candidates. Even the laws for political giving have been adjusted to cloak those who give, and ultimately, those who benefit most by the actions of the winning legislators. Businesses, organizations and individuals leaders who bring financial support to issues often have their opinions to emerge as the so-called voice of reason and have the greatest impact on how decisions are made and legislation is passed. This form of democratic leadership also continues to determine who are considered citizens of worth in this country and those who are not.

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It is suggested here that this premise regarding who is really in charge in this country has real merit. Therefore, those wanting a stronger voice for change in the lives of those labeled Black must find ways to build coalitions of wealth. In America's social construction of race, white power rules and is only diffused with wealth and/or self-empowerment. One of the best way to effect substantive change is not with black or brown power, but rather GREEN POWER, the almighty dollar. Another way is through self-empowerment.

#### UBUNTU: A WAY FORWARD

We must create environments grounded in the concept of Ubuntu. Within this environment is the belief that we are responsible for each other and that our relationships and interactions among each other are focused on empowering others as a way to empower all of us. In this case the focus is on those young citizens in this nation of the darker hue.

Taken further, my success requires me to help empower others toward achieving their dreams in life. I am reminded of Luke 12:48: "To whom much is given, much will be required." In other words, our gifts of talent, wealth, knowledge, etc., should be utilized to glorify God and to benefit others. Our egos are stroked when we see others also succeed. (Thomas, in this text)

There are a number of individuals in this country who can become a part of a coalition built on a foundation of Ubuntu. We must stop supporting more research or initiatives that merely enable, never eradicating the needs being addressed. Successful corporate executives, leaders of foundations, entrepreneurs, entertainers, and professional athletes, for example, can pool resources to start a set of new national initiatives. I am referring to initiative that empower individuals instead of enabling them. This work should be designed with a target date to end each initiative because the need will have been successfully addressed as new generations grow up empowered to move forward despite any odds. Instead of giving a fish, the work is designed to empower individuals to successfully fish for themselves. So, what kinds of initiatives work in this way?

#### READING

Reading empowered me to journey to places with the mind and imagination. Reading expanded my consciousness. Laying the foundation for a passion for words and ideas, reading made the impossible possible. (hooks, 2010, p. 132)

My father use to tell me that if I can read and understand what I read, then no one can stop me from learning. The ability to read, with comprehension, is the foundation for all learning. Yet when looking at national and statewide test data we notice that individuals classified as Black consistently have the lowest scores in reading, year

after year. Other subjects follow similar patterns. Even mathematic exams pose great challenges as standardized test developers incorporate more and more word problems.

How can we expect students to succeed academically when the most formidable gatekeeper is the inability to read and comprehend the written word? In addition most, if not all, of us write the way we speak, and we model the speaking patterns from home, from what we read, and from what we listen to most often. It is therefore imperative that we find better ways to encourage and support reading comprehension to open the doors of all kinds of academic success. We must place students in environments that promote the language of commerce. We must also find ways to promote reading in ways that cause students to thirst for new knowledge via books, and from a variety of genres.

If I were to wish for anything I should not wish for wealth and power, but for the passionate sense of what can be, for the eye, which ever young ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints, possibility never. And what wine is so sparkling, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating as possibility. (hooks, 2010, p. 138)

How do we help empower students to become more excited, and even develop a love for reading; how do we incentivize reading comprehension in ways that continues to energize our young to desire to read; and how, and how often, do we celebrate success along this pathway towards empowerment through reading comprehension?

I choose to live in what I call the world of “why...and then how.” This journey into the various discussions of why, and then how, finds its foundation, for me, within the questions regarding the social, political, economic, and educational challenges we face today. (Thomas, in this text)

- How do we help empower students to become more excited, and even develop a love for reading?
- How do we incentivize reading comprehension in ways that continues to energize our young to desire to read?
- How, and how often, do we celebrate success along this pathway towards empowerment primarily through reading comprehension?

One of the greatest challenges in many of our schools today is utilizing the art of teaching as a way to connect the information we want students to learn with the knowledge they already understand and value. The primary reason behind our limited success here is caused by the devaluing of the knowledge students bring with them from home to school. The result is a teaching, and so called learning, process that functions in the abstract; in a dimension existing between teacher and student with neither being able to fully enter. Maybe a better way to describe this challenge is by visualizing the gap between two plateaus in the Grand Canyon with no bridge

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connecting the two. Any attempt by teachers to connect with students on the other side become impossible. In many of our public schools curricula is designed in ways that cause teaching to take place on one plateau, while students attempt to grasp concepts sitting on another plateau. Teachers instruct from afar, in somewhat impersonal ways. The gap between teacher and student needs a bridge, connections that allow personal understanding to enhance the learning of new concepts. Think about it, we all take new ideas and connect them to existing understandings as a way to make sense of them. It is a way for us to better internalize new information and make it our own. While students learn, or memorize, some of the instruction, it is simply not enough. This form of teaching rarely reach students in ways that connect with them. Instead, most of the instruction falls into the deep canyons between the two plateaus. We need to become bridge builders to allow our children to traverse these huge gaps in the teaching and learning process a better way to connect new information with each child's existing set of knowledge.

#### PARENTS AND THE VILLAGE

The most exciting aspect of critical thinking in the classroom is that it calls for initiative from everyone, actively inviting all students to think passionately and to share ideas in a passionate, open manner. When everyone in the classroom, teacher and student, recognizes that they are responsible for creating a leaning community together, learning is at its most meaningful and useful. In such a community of learning there is no failure. Everyone is participating and sharing whatever resource is needed at a given moment in time to ensure that we leave the classroom knowing that critical thinking empowers us. (hooks, 2010, p. 10)

While we must continue to advocate for better teaching and learning environments in our public schools, a more focused effort must be led by us outside of the school experience. More specifically, an added and focused effort must be led by us to help empower our students to read and comprehend the written word with greater depth and understanding, and become better critical and creative thinkers. And, we must not wait.

Think about it. Children who typically experience high levels of academic success in schools have a parent or parents who read to and with them. They talk about what they read and find ways to connect readings and discussions to their daily lives. Parents then find ways to enhance new learning through experiences at, for example, the Science Place, Children's Theater, Museum School, Omni science productions and other similar activities. These kinds of learning opportunities also help to make the transition from home to school less traumatic for students. They also increase vocabulary and critical thinking skills.

Many of the students attending inner-city school environments are not afforded with many of these kinds of experiences. They hardly ever have opportunities to reflect on and discuss learning experiences outside of settings that demand

only certain, often impersonal, responses. However, we can form initiatives to successfully address these gaps in learning. We can become the initial bridge builders, connecting new information to their existing knowledge. We also help to empower students to become their own bridge builders with growing abilities to learn how to learn for themselves. In addition, this movement towards personal ownership of one's learning becomes the norm.

When student internalize new information, they connect what is new with something already known and understood. Therefore, experiences connected to new information and existing knowledge help us to understand the importance of learning. Students in this process also experience high levels of success. Through these types of experiences students begin to realize the joy of new learning. Most importantly, students begin to understand and appreciate the value of determining for self what something means. Students begin to thirst for more learning opportunities. Learning is seen and embraced as a life-long journey. Seeking knowledge and understanding becomes an energizing force along a personal and spiritual pathway of life. (Thomas, 2013, pp. 6–7)

More students begin to better understand that they can achieve their dreams, even when the pathway has more detours and roadblocks. They believe that success can be achieved. This is the kind of hope that keeps dreams alive, the pathways well illuminated, with high levels of engagement and success occurring. We teach students how to make needed connections on their own. We teach them how to learn without the help of others, when necessary. When students learn how to learn on their own, teachers become facilitators for even more learning to occur. Personal ownership of our learning results in deeper understandings and more knowledgeable individuals. As my dad once said, if you can read and understand what is read, then no one can stop you from learning.

The call here is for us to sponsor Saturday, evening and summer enrichment experiences that connect readings with a flow of ideas, imaginings, and reflections (connecting moments) to create and increase highly engaging teaching and learning opportunities. The rewards become the actual experiences. Imagine a group of students going to the science place with Kevin Durant, followed by educators empowering students to lead discussions about the experience and how it might influence them and their thinking. Add to this set of activities a fully engaged Kevin Durant. The activities, reflective processes and the many conversations emerging from this kind of initiative become powerful leaning experiences for our children. Think, which would be more beneficial to life-long learning, a basketball camp or this kind of experience?

Incorporating technology with this way of engaging students will also open the entire world to these students and help them free their minds of existing stereotypes about them. They become empowered to take ownership of their lives, their learning and their futures. They also become better able to speak and write in the language of commerce, the language that is used in the world of business and for successful

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careers. We include their parents in these opportunities with the goal of them better understanding the kind of models that they should represent to enhance their child's growth and future success.

The options for these kinds of learning experiences are limitless. Just thinking about the options is exciting. It is up to us to turn these imaginings into realities for our students. When we do, we broaden each student's understanding of the world. They will better understand that possibilities can be achieved and that their lives matter. These students also become prepared to enter the world of work, and position themselves to be agents of change using green power and their personal advocacy to make it so.

Again, we provide readings, include all kinds of technology, excellent hands on learning venues, and outstanding, enriching learning experiences for our students. We also connect these activities to opportunities for reflection, both verbally and in writing, to discussion how these experiences relate to their current growing perceptions of the world and their place in it. They become strong building blocks for the development of personal identities, leading to highly successful futures.

Human existence, because it came into being through asking questions, is at the root of change in the world. There is a radical element to existence, which is the radical act of asking questions... At root human existence involves surprise, questioning, and risk. And because of all this, it involves actions and change. (Freire & Faundez, 1989, p. 37)

Students become better readers and thinkers. They also begin to see the flaws in this social construction of race and learn to live by new sets of perspectives. These students learn to turn failure inside-out, and experience great success in all that they do. Our students will take more control over their learning, their lives, and become proactive advocates for positive change.

Let's Do This!

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## 4. GOOD INTENTIONS VS. INTENTIONAL ADVOCACY

The space between the private and the public is the nexus of the personal and the social, if not political. It's where we meet the strong or subtle cultural censors who attempt to define what community, race, class, or gender can or cannot speak, to tell us which stories are told and valued and which are not. In short, it's where we're reminded of the power of personal stories and the power of the storyteller.

(Capecci & Cage, 2012)

### INTRODUCTION

My thoughts and realities are congruent with the explicit teachings of John Dewey (1916) when he stated that adaptability is a necessity for a life of sustainability and growth (p. 2). For me, that life and adaptability has become in my ability and desire to unpack my multiple statuses of privilege. For this particular chapter my focus will glean from the development of my white racial identity and the progression from an ignorant, well-intentioned white person to a critically aware, engaged accomplice for social justice.

I think it is important to initiate the deconstructing of my journey by framing the context of the discussion with a few definitions. For the purpose of this chapter, I will use the definitions below:

*Privilege:* Corollary of discrimination; the 'upside' of oppression; unearned advantages that leads to unearned disadvantages (McIntosh, 2013).

*Whiteness:* The production and reproduction of dominance, unknowingly, through the naturalization of white identity as a standard of normativity used to advantage whites and marginalize non-whites (Hartmann, Gerteis, & Croll, 2009).

*White Privilege:* The belief personal standards hold true and reflect accuracies of what is right and wrong as a means to establish and maintain dominance and control of social norms and constructs over other racial groups (Hays & Chang, 2003).

*Identity:* Definitions used to label and explain the self amidst social constructions, personal membership in, and affiliations with groups (Hill & Abrams, 2000).

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*Racial Identity*: Association with, or separate from, one or more socially defined racial groups (Helms, 1984) derived from viewpoints toward race, culture, and self (Goren & Plaut, 2012).

#### THE FRAMEWORK

Change is inevitable; growth is an option. (John C. Maxwell)

My life has, at times, been a mirror reflection of unquestioned teaching and ideals. As a result, my growth has also, at times, been stagnant, simply adjusting and assimilating to the changes around me. At other times my life has reflected intentionality connected with a focus on progression and growth. Regardless of the point of growth, my development has been guided by an intricately designed, delicately infused set of processes designed to be both invisible and unquestioned. Family, church, school, peers, media and many other variables have served as a conglomerate of identity development moguls, intent on keeping me invested in the myths of meritocracy and democracy. Further, under these teachings the development of my identity and identification of, and with others was, is, and will be the result of each interaction and experience that comprises my life. For, as Palahniuk (1999) stated, “Nothing of me is original, I am the combined effort of everyone I’ve ever known” (p. 104).

I am the middle child of three. I have an older brother and younger sister. I had the privilege of growing up in a two-parent household in a small, rural community. My childhood was full of countless blessings and teachings that continue to serve as cornerstones for who I am today. My parents balanced the work and responsibilities of parenthood well and made sure we had everything we needed. They always seemed to make time to be there and be engaged in our growing up. Whether it was a sporting event, band concert, academic team meeting, or any other of the multiple events I was involved in, my parents were there, supporting me along the way. Even now, in my mid-thirties, my parents are prepared to do whatever they can to show me the love and support that has grounded my sense of family, self, and success since my earliest years.

#### CHURCH

When I discover who I am, I’ll be free. (Ralph Ellison)

As I state before, I grew up in a small, rural community. Values and teachings of family extended beyond the nuclear household and included the community. Included in this tightly woven fabric of community was the church. As a child, my Sunday mornings were filled with Sunday School lessons, hymns of praise and worship, prayers of thankfulness and requests, and the weekly message. It was during these times that my sense of faith grew roots and flourished under the consistent watering and nurturing of the church, community, and family. Principles fixed in ideals such as love one another equally, show kindness and respect to all, and the Ten

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Commandments were ideological mainstays in how I was taught to live. Embedded in these teachings were the theoretical tenets of meritocratic individualism, choice, and a fabricated definition of right and wrong.

## SCHOOL

The illiterate of the future will not be the person who cannot read. It will be the person who does not know how to learn. (Alvin Toffler)

Inequality and discrimination are often cloaked with descriptions of difference among and between beings...The results are socially constructed way of life that provides privileges for an 'elite' few while vilifying others (Lowery, Hernandez, Walker, & Thomas, 2016). My K-12 education was in many ways a microcosm of the community. I attended a predominantly and historically white school that reflected the demographics of the rural community at large. Segregation and Jim Crow were official markers of a past tainted in racism and bigotry. However, honest reflections point to an understood and accepted maintenance of past practice, unquestioned status quos, and institutionalized oppression of the minoritized. There were three school systems in my hometown for the first half of my K-12 education. There was the private, faith-based historically white school; the public, urban and historically black school; and the public, county, historically white school. I attended the county school system.

My life as a student reflected my home and church life for the most part. The teaching and lessons learned went unquestioned and unchallenged. I accepted what the books, teachers, and principals taught and considered each to be trustworthy, valid, and authentic. Teachers were considered the experts of their field and textbooks were written testimonies of factual unchallenged truth. And I, an unlearned pupil, was responsible for learning these facts and taking advantage of the opportunity. These were the experiences that directed my education and much of the development of my racial identity.

## ANALYSES

For the past several years I have found myself becoming intentional in my engagement of reflections of my life. This practice initially began in 2006 when I began to transition from being a well-intentioned white person to an aware, engaged, and developing accomplice to the work of social justice. However, while I am now intentional in my work and efforts to use education and my life as my platform to unpack and promote principles of social justice, it was not that long ago that my work was fixed in and marred by ignorance and invisibility. What I will attempt to do over the next several paragraphs is analyze key moments in my life and demonstrate how systems of whiteness, white privilege, and racism have worked to develop my racial identity. What I am attempting to do is operationalize how hegemonic

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ideologies work to sustain systems of dominance and oppression by normalizing them as natural, unquestioned principles of life.

#### INVISIBILITY

The power of visibility can never be underestimated. (Margaret Cho)

I was raised to think, act, and feel in racist ways (Walker, 2013). As I reflect on my upbringing now, from a perspective of knowing the evidence of institutionalized whiteness as an unquestioned maker, or as Rosenblum and Travis (2012) called it “natural law language” (p. 334) is rampant throughout every aspect of my life. The church I grew up in, the school system I attended, the curriculum that facilitated my learning looked like me and as I know now, was developed for the most part by individuals who look like me. With whiteness being a consistent and constant variable in my teaching and learning, my sense of identity was, is, and continues to be the product of whiteness.

For the most part my teachers, church family, classmates, and family collectively looked like me. Given, as this was the picture of the majority of life, whiteness was never acknowledged, much less discussed or examined. Instead, whiteness was as Giroux (1997) lamented, natural and normal. Growing up under the guises of normalized whiteness, my early childhood, adolescence, and early stages of adulthood were performed in a state of blind ignorance and privilege. Knowingly or unknowingly, the key influences in the development of my sense of self and my racial identity reinforced the hegemony of whiteness.

McDermott and Samson’s (2005) depiction of whiteness highlighted how I was able to grow and develop with evidence of racialized privilege and lack an awareness or connection to my status and privilege. As they pointed out, whiteness is an unmentioned and unmarked category that operates with complete anonymity. With whiteness being normalized, I was unknowingly benefiting from the color of my skin. Does this mean that I did not work hard and earn the grades and success that I achieved? No, that’s not at all what it means. What it means is that people who look *like* me built the field I was playing on *for* me. This does not take away or discredit how hard I have worked to accomplish what I have accomplished. Instead it makes visible the previously invisible nature of injustice that too often victimizes those whose sense of self and identity do not reflect the teachings and values of whiteness. My becoming aware of these realities did not diminish my sense of self. However, removing the cloak of whiteness did remove the innocence that had guided much of the development of my identity.

#### VISIBILITY

Masks can hide our faces or shade our eyes...In either case this can serve to establish and provide identity or to hide us and obscure us in a cloak of invisibility. (Lowery, 2016)

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Seventh grade proved to be an important year in the development of my racial identity. It was during this year that I found significant changes taking place in my life. During my seventh grade year the two public school systems merged to form a single system. In addition to going through the biological changes of adolescence, I also had an entire new peer group to engage, learn, and grow with. With the integration of the urban, predominantly black school, I found my sense of self-changing. I became aware of a culture that, for the most part, had been vacant in my life up to that point. Clothing, language, music, and my identification with culture, from an individual and collective, shifted. These changes were evident in my actions and behaviors as I began to connect with cultural practices often associated with African American cultural norms and nuances. However, as I reflect back on these times it is apparent that the “what” of my identity was changing and how I was changing was evident but why these changes were taking place, or why these changes were potentially an issue remained vacant from thought and/or discussion. And, by the fact that I was not asking or trying to unpack the why associated with the changes reveals the reality that shifts in my identity were transactional rather than transformational.

With the transactional shift in my identity, difference slowly became visible. I noticed differences in the treatment of, and discussions about, individuals and groups of people. However, while difference was becoming visible, any form of critical thinking or awareness of privilege remained void of my thought processes and discussions. I still viewed teachers, family, church, and others with the same regard as before. I didn’t have the capacity or awareness to think about why the differences were a big deal. Instead, as Green, Sonn, and Matsebula (2007) pointed out, my core values and privilege remained in tact – unquestioned, normal, and guaranteed.

Although authentic reflections point to a continued state of ignorance during these times of my life, this was the time that would prove to play a pivotal role in the transformation of my identity, work, and purpose. If it were not for these experiences, at this particular time in my life; a time of increased awareness of difference and simultaneous maintenance of whiteness, my development as an advocate for social justice may not have occurred. It was during this transference of identity, one portraying the aesthetics of a minoritized culture yet fixed in an unacknowledged culture of dominance that the foundation for my identity development processes shifted from transactional to transformational.

## INTENTIONAL ADVOCACY

We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim.

Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. (Elie Wiesel)

Sitting in the back corner of the office I shared with a colleague, I received a phone call and email that would prove to change the trajectory of my life from that moment forward. It was at that moment, at the age of 26 years old, that the notion of white privilege became a part of my life. Never before had I been subject

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to a tangible artifact that resonated with me and, in its simplest form, made sense of too many pivotal experiences of my life. Until then, I was afforded the luxury; better yet, the privilege, of not having to think about race and racism that placed me as a direct corroborator and player in the inherent system of injustice. Instead, my whiteness served as a protector, a cloak that covered me from any sense of ownership of my status. Discussions, or any form of acknowledgement of how and why race operated in our social structure were as Harrison (1998) alluded to, absent from the developmental processes of my identity.

Although the majority of my life reflects a state mixed between being ignorant and blind to the realities of racial injustice, my personal development does yield some course of hope. Rather than walking blindly through life reaping benefits of unearned advantages and inherited privilege simply because I was born white in a white dominated social structure, I now seek ways to unpack systems of whiteness to promote equity and justice. My identity now fits within a frame of what Kincheloe (2007) described as principled in criticality. It is not enough to know that systemic privilege, and by default systemic oppression, exist. Now that I am aware, I have a responsibility to be an accomplice in the fight against institutionalized marginalization and *minoritization* of target populations. For me, such work begins with education. I once read that education is one of the most effective ways to control people. Control what is considered valid sources and forms of knowledge (curriculum), what are valid ways of teaching and knowing (pedagogy), and finally, how thinking and learning are measured (assessment) and a systematic approach to control is in place.

I wholeheartedly believe and agree with this statement and have to look no further than education reform and policy that has continued to juxtapose ideals of teaching and learning with ideals of standardization and normativity to witness the destruction firsthand. This is why educational practice must be built on principles of criticality and empowerment. In order to transgress the lines of demarcation that continue to victimize the victim, I believe educational practitioners must be intentional in our efforts to challenge the status quo and bring counter-narratives into curricula. The question now is, what does such practice look like and include?

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## 5. AN UN-AMERICAN HORROR STORY

*Reflections of a Writing Center Coordinator*

### HORROR IN THEIR STORY

Moving out of state to attend graduate school was an intimidating proposition. Finances were of primary concern, but I was fortunate to have made acquaintance with an exceptional group of educators. I was offered a position at a small, rural, private college as a Writing Center coordinator under the department of Academic Success. This institution had an open-enrollment policy, and I was informed that the student body would be underprepared for college and primarily comprised a large portion of a lower economic, urban background. Having a foundation in English Language and Literature, coupled with years of tutoring experience under my belt at a community college, I was undaunted by the prospect of working with “remedial” writers and was excited by the challenge of implementing my arsenal of tutoring strategies on a scale unprecedented for myself and the institution. What I discovered was that syntax, comma splices, and homophones were the least of these students’ struggles.

The student body at this institution brought the more unsavory aspects of their home life to the college. As a part a of the Academic Success team, I was encouraged to go out amongst the student body, offering academic mentorship and promoting the Writing Center as opportunities arose. My excursions were executed with varying degrees of success. On the rare occasion, I would very nearly be physically assaulted, but more frequently, simple conversational inquiries concerning the status of a student’s day would result in being regaled by tales of theft in the dormitory, altercations over hair care products, or personal problems ranging from general boredom to thoughts of suicide. I would lend a sympathetic ear or offer directions to qualified persons, but given the abundance of the student body’s woes, I discovered a feeling of vague uneasiness beginning to emerge, similar to what one may feel when they find themselves on the “wrong” side of town. With the uneasiness also came confusion. I found myself at a loss as to how to encourage students to become serious about their learning and taking ownership of their futures. Students appeared to cling to modes of living, behaviors, and ideals that were detrimental to their personal and intellectual growth. In light of the problems, both mundane and severe, and generally misplaced priorities, my focus became to gain a better understanding of the students in order to become more effective.

STUDENT WRITING

I first began my search for insight into the students' mindsets by looking for subtext within their writing. I found that nearly all submissions to the writing center contained phrases such as, "Born and raised in the unwilling, yet prideful streets of the south side of Chicago, I clearly remain focused on how was brought out of my situations that made me the man that I am today." and "People may look at me and see different but little do they know, I've been through it all but still overcame it all." What I began to see was a thread of a less-than-ideal pasts' lingering influence on the students emerging identities outside of their previous social conditions. The young man from Chicago, while acknowledging positive changes in his self, tempers that progress through partial identification with "the unwilling, yet prideful streets." The second student mirrors these ideas. She acknowledges her triumph over adversity, but that her current persona betrays her actual life experiences, or in a sense, who she *really* is. These students exhibit a fractured identity, where they are describing themselves in terms of previous influences, while simultaneously acknowledging that they have moved beyond those experiences. However, not all students had distanced themselves from their pasts in equal degree. In another student's writing, the past maintains a more prominent role in how she identifies herself.

In an assignment for a Diversity class, students were prompted to find a metaphor for themselves and draw a connection to a YouTube video as a critical thinking exercise. One young woman chose a chameleon as her metaphor and wrote,

... I feel that me being watchful is a good thing because knowing what is around is important in case something goes wrong. Not too long ago I was out with my friends and a fight broke out and an innocent bystander ended up being shot and killed. I told that story because I was already watching everything that was going on around me, and when the people started to argue I told my friends lets go now before somebody ends up hurt. If I had not been a watchful person that person that got shot could have been one of my friends or me. Just like in the video Taylor Swift was lost in the woods trying to find her way out, but she watched her surroundings for anything that might go wrong. Being watchful solves a lot of problems.

When I walk into a new place I automatically begin to look around. I like to try to remember something about the place. In the video "Safe and Sound" Taylor enters a house and upon entry she automatically starts to look around and learn her surroundings. Having the watchful instinct is good because a lot of people don't take time out to look around and end up in wrong situations. I am like this because when I was younger my mother always said, "pay attention to everything that goes on around you because anything can happen". That has stayed with me and I use it to my advantage.

My metaphor of being watchful like a chameleon is a good one to have. I feel that if people don't have knowledge of what is going on around them then they

don't really know how to respond if something happens. The "Safe and Sound" video is a good example of how to pay attention to the things that are around.

This writing sample illustrates how her prior life circumstance insinuates itself in how she views herself. Rather than choosing a metaphor that reflected her personal attitude towards herself or defines a belief system, the well of experience this young woman draws from reflects anxiety, a penchant for concealment/invisibility, and expectations for the worst. Again, the student's past experiences with hardship, more so than achievement, created a platform from which she forms her current identity. The students' prior experiences, seemingly infused with who they are, were not solely reflected in their writing; mentoring provided similar, if not grimmer, examples of interference of the students' pre-collegiate lives.

#### STUDENT MENTORSHIP

Mentoring provided a more potent perspective on issues that were affecting students' ability to focus on education. The first student that had a real impact on me was a light-hearted and enthusiastic young man. He first approached me about an outline for a Speech class assignment, where he wanted to speak about being a survivor of sexual abuse with an emphasis on how rape does not turn one into a homosexual. In his speech, he elaborated on his history of abandonment at a "crack house" as a boy, being repeatedly sexually abused until his eventual rescue. I did not balk at his experience and showed respect for the wisdom he had gained and wanted to share. I took him seriously. We discussed his topic, refined his outline, and found a compromise where his speech had a less homophobic tone, focusing instead on dispelling myth through information. He was pleased with our efforts, and I had gained his trust. We spoke irregularly in and outside of the Writing Center over the next year, about academics, the difficulties of being a student, and life. I watched his taste in dress, choice in companions, and demeanor change. A true sense of self-respect, genuine confidence, and maturity were gaining momentum in his life.

However, at the beginning of his junior year, this same man approached me in a rage. His sister had been a victim of domestic abuse. He was letting me know he was returning "home" to "take care of business." We had to discuss, on the way to his car, making good long-term decisions in the face of adversity. In the moment, I was concerned about the student making a life-altering mistake, ending up in prison or worse, but reflecting on the situation, I was struck by how quick he was to simply abandon all of the progress he had made in the last couple of years. Problems had arisen back home, and he was immediately ready to deal with the situation in a violent manner. Another student I mentored, though less academically successful, reacted very similarly when problems arose.

The second student I worked closely with was a very bright, thoughtful young woman. I initiated contact with this student out of concern for the rest of the student body. Her odd behavior was making some students nervous, and I heard about her antics on separate occasions from several students. I decided to speak with her in

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order to determine if there might be cause for legitimate concern. She had some morbid interests, which she was very vocal about, but what I found was a young woman doing her best to push people away by being shocking. At first, I may have randomly seen this student once a week, but before the end of the semester, she was coming by my office two to three times weekly. We spoke a lot about the issues she was having adapting to college life, and eventually she divulged details about her history, which included incest, rape, the eventual imprisonment of her father, and her foray into prostitution before entering college.

Despite our meetings, her lack of personal discipline began to show. As the semesters wore on, her low GPA was going to result in her expulsion. Naturally upset and disappointed, she came to speak with me about her situation, and not seeing any other options, told me about her contingency plan of returning to prostitution. One of our last discussions was about not wasting our intelligence, and with that in mind, exploring other, healthier, avenues of employment. Obviously, I was shocked by her decision. While not successful academically, she had shown a great deal of growth. However, her progress had not been sufficient to keep her in school, and she immediately accepted regression into her former mode of living. The similarities between the stories of my mentees, from seeking help to their troubling emotional connections with their former environments, demonstrate the students' experiences interfering with their ability to focus on their education.

What had become clear was that the students' experiences and backgrounds created obstacles that were difficult to overcome, and arguably, they never overcame them. Their pasts not only shaped how they saw themselves but also continued to influence their attitudes and mindsets. The young man and young lady both came to college from extremely difficult circumstances and were asking, in their own ways, for acknowledgement, help, and guidance. They were both willing to move beyond their pasts, but faced with genuinely difficult choices, both students were immediately ready to revert to ideals they had seemingly outgrown or reassume their roles prior to their college experiences. Neither physical nor mental distance from their prior situations had mitigated the impact of their previous experiences. Likewise, the mental and emotional habits of their former environments proved too strong for them to continue to move forward uninhibited, and the students' difficult pasts, whether evidenced in their writing or relayed in conversation, occupied a significant portion of their attention.

I wish that I could go on to write how a solution was discovered; how I was able to get students to move beyond the previous modes and impressions of their pre-collegiate lives. This, unfortunately, is not that kind of a story. Circumstances changed, and I resigned from my position to continue my own education. Though I feel I truly made a significant difference in a few students' lives, on a campus wide scale, my endeavors were a failure. Like a Lovecraftian protagonist, my investigation and inquiry brought me into proximity with a force that was utterly alien and insuperable. The remedies to my students' woes were totally beyond my experience. However, as my own education continued, I never forgot lessons I had

learned or the stories they told. I gained insight into student learning and, more importantly, a means to further contemplate and conceptualize their plight.

#### CONTEMPLATION

As I continued with my education, I became introduced to scholarship that, though offering insight into student learning, seemed incomplete, given my experiences working with the students at my previous job. In *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, Erika Lindemann (2001) asserts,

The evolving mind is not awaiting some transformation from within but responds to external influences... Learning depends on relationships with others. It requires a social network of teachers, classmates, friends, and family members, all of whom are essential to intellectual development. Many students, however, perceive education as an isolating experience. Knowledge seems divorced from their interests and lived experiences. (p. 106)

Lindemann's assertion is that learning is a process dependant on the environment and social interactions of the student. However, what is not contained in her discussion are the quality and kind of "external influences" which the students regularly have access or are exposed. The "social network," seems to be limited to those privileged with a system where emotional and academic support can be readily obtained. Considering a scenario where there is a lack of such a system, one must wonder how an "evolving mind" is altered when the positive influences are drastically skewed in favor of academia and what havoc is wrought on the student's resilience to non-academic pressures, especially during prolonged intervals, such as winter and summer intersession. While an underprivileged student may receive some encouragement from home, the student is effectively forced to oscillate between two worlds.

Education becomes an "isolating experience" for students from unprivileged, lower economic areas, as real, life-altering issues frequent their doorsteps. An appreciation for Shakespeare's understanding of human nature would be diminished when one's friends are being shot in the streets and there are concerns whether or not parents will be able to afford their electric bill. As the student is often faced with deciding between their aspirations and personal loyalties, knowledge and learning, then, would certainly seem "divorced from their interests and lived experiences." How can they learn, or why should they prioritize education, over the physical and emotional imperatives of their pre-collegiate life? One may believe that with resilience, fortitude, and time, any student may be successful. However, the past is not passive. Speaking figuratively, it is an active and aggressive entity, and students of unprivileged origins are often forced to exist in both the past and the present, between their home lives and their academic endeavors. It is this impression of duality and existing in-between in the students minds that endangers their success, and which I found applicable to ideas expressed in my study of Gothic Fiction.

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In studying Gothic Literature, I found a compelling metaphorical portrait of my students' experiences in Julia Kristeva's theory of Abjection. The psychological state discussed in her theory is one of simultaneous rejection and attraction, of existing in a state of contradiction. In her book, *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva (1982) uses the example of human remains in her efforts to explain and explore her theory. She writes, "The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the upmost of abjection... . It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (p. 04). Jerrold Hogle elaborates on this theory in his Introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, stating,

Whatever threatens us with anything like this betwixt-and-between ... condition ... is what we throw off or 'abject' into defamiliarized manifestations, which we henceforth fear and desire because they both threaten to reengulf us and promise to return us to our primal origins. (p. 7)

When considering abjection in relation to the conflicts inherent in my students' writing and mentoring experiences, the function of how a schism between learning, knowledge and the divorce from the students' "interest and lived experiences" is illustrated. The students are compelled by competing forces, academic and non-academic, which they both desire and reject. As art can be mimetic, literature provides a means of conceptualizing their journey and exploring the function of the students' contentious relationship with learning and the reality of their lives.

#### CONCEPTUALIZATION

Printing straggled its way across the concrete retaining wall. It said:

COME HOME COME HOME COME HOME

Bill looked up at Mike grimly. He had been bewildered and frightened; now he felt the first stirrings of anger. He was glad. Anger was not such a great way to feel, but it was better than the shock, better than the miserable fear. "Is that written in what I think it's written in?" (King, 1986, p. 510)

As an analogy, Stephen King's *IT* serves as appropriate vehicle for a discussion of how abjection functions in regards to unprivileged students' conflict with collegiate and pre-collegiate life. In the novel, the titular "It" is an ancient supernatural entity from an outer plane of existence that comes to Earth in a time before America has been discovered or colonized. Residing underground, civilization eventually springs up in the area the entity inhabits (King, 1986, pp. 757-763). It is at this point, from frontier settlement to modern times, that the entity creates a sphere of influence in what would become Derry, Maine. The malignant intelligence that is "It" insinuates itself in the minds of the denizens of the town, where racism, homophobia, and ultra-violent behavior are pervasive. It is in this sense, that "It"



becomes the spirit of the town, a powerful conditioning influence, which creates its own small, negative ideology (King, 1986, pp. 143–159). “It”/Derry is symbolic of a students’ lower-economic, underprivileged background, not meaning that it is intentionally violent or malicious, but that conditioning occurs which creates an obstacle, in the form of “external influences” for the students to move beyond in pursuit of their education, perhaps more commonly in the form of close-mindedness or poor prioritization. It is Derry/“It” that the young protagonists of the novel must confront and escape.

The narrative tension in the story is created via the conflict between “It” and seven children in Derry: Bill, Eddie, Ben, Beverley, Mike, Ritchie, and Stan. Assuming a corporeal form, “It” terrorizes these characters by assuming the shape of, or preying upon, their fears, threatening to devour them. Each child is individually confronted by the entity in a unique and personal manner, but they are able to evade destruction. Beset by a common enemy, the children band together forming the self-titled “Losers Club,” and they muster the will to confront and attempt to kill “It” (King, 1986, pp. 163–384; pp. 659–842). The children achieve moderate success, only wounding the physical form of the “It,” but their efforts only result in freeing them from its threat for a time. After the initial confrontation, the children make a pact to return to kill “It” should it become active again. With the exception of Mike, the children move away from Derry, eventually forgetting the town, their experiences there, and each other. However, nearly thirty years later, “It” becomes active in Derry again, summoning the protagonists back home. Mike calls the “Losers Club,” now in adulthood, to arms. Stan commits suicide after being reminded of the events of his childhood, but the rest abandon their lives, projects, and careers to return to face the reemerging threat. However, not all of the returning members of the “Loser’s Club” survive their rematch (King, 1986, pp. 40–142).

The children’s initial conflict with “It” is symbolic of their rejection of the conditioning of Derry, which threatens to metaphorically and physically devour them. They combat this force, and in turn, are able to leave relatively unaffected. However, Mike and the promise to destroy “It” provide a continual link to Derry at all times, remembered by the group or not. “It”/Derry becomes the abject. It is “something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object” and which threatens to “reengulf” the children (Kristeva, 1982). The protagonists, upon leaving Derry are bound to the town, continually remaining open to its invitation to return; Therefore, never breaking the connection from that which they fear with the intention of achieving that which they desire (the destruction of “It”). Aside from Stan’s death, Eddie is killed in the second confrontation (King, 1986, p. 1069). In other words, once he becomes reinvested too deeply in Derry again, he becomes “re-engulfed” by his past; a fate that endangers underprivileged students as well. The trajectory of the protagonist’s journey in the novel parallels that of underprivileged students. Both the characters and students remove themselves from undesirable situations, but maintain a connection to that environment. This connection imperils the characters’ lives, just as it endangers the underprivileged

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students' academic growth. The resilience of both to those environments over time determines the measure of success they achieve.

If one considers abjection in connection with the student writing and mentoring cases discussed earlier, it is not the horrific implications and details of their stories that are significant. Rather, the crux is the dynamic of Horror *in* their stories that demonstrates the precarious nature of underprivileged students' collegiate predicament. Though students may mentally reject and physically remove themselves from their conditioning environment, they are still very much linked to it as the origin of the support system learning depends upon. They simultaneously reject their old environment, but rely upon it for a foundation of identity, experience, and support, leaving themselves subject to discarded ideals in order to attain the new knowledge, skill, or degree that they desire.

In essence, what the students' fear- poverty, obscurity, danger- becomes inextricably interwoven with what they desire-wealth, acclaim, safety. This cocktail of fear and desire creates a precarious state for the underprivileged student, as the potency of physical and emotional imperatives provide an ever-present danger that threatens to inhibit their progress or return them to their origins. The torn nature of identity in the writing samples and the responsiveness of the mentees to assume their former selves, suggests a state of conflict in the students' minds, where they are simultaneously exposing themselves to competing influences. The students are embroiled in a two-front war, where they both fear and desire either outcome. Having recognized this struggle within students and the dynamics at play, I brought these ideas and concepts with me into the classroom.

#### FINAL THOUGHTS: UNEQUAL OPPORTUNITY

As I was nearing the end of my graduate work at a larger, state university, I was selected to teach a section of composition as a G.A. Keeping the writing center submissions and my former mentees in mind, I slightly modified my syllabus, highlighting practices and policies that I highly approved of, such as limitless rewrites and administrative withdrawals at the discretion of the faculty. I introduced the syllabus on the first day of class, explaining that I understood that life can occasionally surprise one with a cornucopia of vicissitudes, major and minor, and that was why these policies existed. I encouraged being open, with the omission of unnecessary specifics, if personal matters were becoming too complex, and that we would determine how to move forward with the course from there. Then came the personal introductions of the students.

My emphasis of class policies proved to be hasty and superfluous. The class, English Composition II, was the first writing course many of my students were taking in college. Approximately eighty percent of the students had taken A.P. English in high school. In the class, there were no less than: four Eagle Scouts; an engineering student, who was part of a competitive robotics team; and a very well prepared aspiring law student. My "class trouble- maker" was a Computer Science

major that had difficulties with assignments, as he was absorbed in developing his own phone application. Life, for the most part, was going according to plan for these students. In light of my most recent experience working with students at my former position, I secretly found these well-prepared, accomplished, inspired, and congenial young people disheartening. Of course, the students themselves were not the root cause.

The disparity between what my new and old students brought with them to college was outrageous. The students in my composition course entered college with buoyant attitudes, confidence, and skill, eager to get out into the world. My writing center and mentoring students came to college bearing a yoke of traumatic experience and hardship, hoping to do better in life. The situations of the students seems unjust in comparison. It would be difficult to argue these two groups of students truly share an equal opportunity to learn, achieve, and develop into skilled professionals. The issue of inequality affecting underprivileged students is deeper than college preparedness. It stems from social barriers presented by their backgrounds.

While they may enter college on a similar cognitive and emotionally mature level, they require far more resilience and fortitude to be successful in college due to previous experiences and continued influences from their former environments than more advantaged students. As in King's novel, the underprivileged student must overcome their previous environments, but once they have removed themselves, they are haunted, beset, and beckoned by their pasts-an "It;" a boogeyman ready to disregard their progress and gobble them up.

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## 6. DEMOCRACY DENIED

### *Public Education's Most Immoral Act*

Within the scope of this chapter it is not my purpose to fully explicate the most recent federal policy decisions that moves America's schools further from a democratic orientation, e.g., the "No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)" or "Race to the Top" or the "Every Student Succeeds Act" (ESSA). However, these national educational laws have ensured that often students experience "public school" as a place where the measure of their individual and collective successes are defined by an assortment of high stakes standardized test scores. These short-lived successes dramatically outweigh their individual development as citizens in a democratic society. My intent here is to argue that as a nation the United States of America has moved its public educational system in a direction that has the potential to unraveling the fabric of our democratic cloth. I find this reality not only frustrating for many educational practitioners and but detrimental to the long-term health of our collective democratic ethos.

It is apparent to me that many educators have not attempted to answer a question fundamental to the vitality of democratic life in the United States of America: "Does democracy go around education or does education go around democracy?" By this I mean, does American education, an education formally administered through America's compulsory public schooling, either wrap itself in the foundations of democratic values or effectively ignore, minimize and fully discard democratic practices in favor of autocratic political practices designed to achieve short-term outcomes via standardized testing.

William James (1907), illustrated the metaphysical dilemma inherent in the question, does democracy go around education or does education go around democracy? James wrote,

Some years ago, being with a camping party in the mountains, I returned from a solitary ramble to find every one engaged in a ferocious metaphysical dispute. The corpus of the dispute was a squirrel—a live squirrel supposed to be clinging to one side of a tree trunk; while over against the tree's opposite side a human being was imagined to stand. This human witness tries to get sight of the squirrel by moving rapidly round the tree, but no matter how fast he goes, the squirrel moves as fast in the opposite direction, and always keeps

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himself between the man, so that never a glimpse of him is caught. The resultant metaphysical problem now is this: *Does the man go round the squirrel or not?* He goes round the tree, sure enough, and the squirrel is on the tree: but does he go round the squirrel. (James, p. 141, in Castell, 1948)

I am confident that some will recoil at equating school to a metaphysical conundrum. I understand the initial readjustment of posture some will exhibit based on the physical reality of schooling; we can see buildings, hear teachers and students making busy, we can touch the books, pencils and papers that make schooling happen. However, from the beginning of our nation (the United States) the question “What is the purpose of school” has inspired venomous debates (Du Bois, 1898; Washington, 1900; Goodlad, 1994; Goodlad & McMannon, 1997), poor political decisions, and a general abdication of responsibility for the answer on the part of teachers, parents and the citizens of our democracy.

Giroux (2003) noted that those who determine the politics of education in America “are concerned less with [the] demands of equity, justice and social citizenship than with the imperatives of the marketplace, skill-based learning, and the needs of the individual consumer” (p. 76). He also observed that in the “28-page educational plan, *No Child Left Behind*” the words “democracy and citizenship are virtually absent” (p. 76).

Giroux’s work sparks a question of critical importance: “As a nation are we satisfied with pointing in the physical direction of schools with the hope that our future democracy is being nourished and handed down with the care and attention needed to propagate its success?”

I do not think we fully labor over the question “*what do our students learn in our schools about our democracy?*” I also do not think we have maintained a healthy infrastructure in our democratic society that allows for the teaching and practicing of democracy in our schools. Having studied democratic pedagogical theory, I have an educated guess that few educators and most citizens in the United States do not see public schools as a place where democracy lives, is taught, is practiced and is experienced by students.

#### A DIRECT RELATION: DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION

Returning to our metaphysical squirrel, William James answered the question “does the man go round the squirrel or not” by finding the location of what was being investigated. Specifically, he noted that the answer “depends on what you practically mean by going around the squirrel” (p. 24). By applying James’ argument to the question “does democracy go around education or does education go around democracy?” I have exchanged man and squirrel for education and democracy. I argue that the some educators understand that education and democracy cannot be torn from one another (Hutchinson, 1999; Meirer, 2002; Ohanian, 1999; Shor, 1992; Wood, 1992, 2005). These educators have wrapped the blanket of democratic

educational practice around their classrooms and have offered their students the opportunity to experience democracy.

#### NO EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC LIFE?

Do American citizens assume that schools in the United States (U.S.) are democratic sites because they exist inside a democratic nation state? After all, the U.S. has free and open elections that allow all citizens to vote. U.S. political elections ultimately result in the peaceful transfer of power between leaders. Displeasure with our elected officials is voiced through a new election process that offers citizens the opportunity to change their leaders. In addition, most schools in the U.S. have a student body government, most offer courses on how the United States government is designed to function and many schools offer students the opportunity to stop attending at a certain age.

However, it is clear in the work of multiple scholars that most schools do not teach the habits of democracy (Childs, 1956; Dewey, 1916, 1938; Finn, 1999; Giroux, 2003; Hutchinson, 1999; Kohl, 1994; Kozol, 1992; Meirer, 2002; Ohanian, 1999; Shor, 1992; Wood, 1992, 2005). In addition, students in U.S. schools are not offered the opportunity to explore the complicated life in a democracy. While it is true that most, if not all, high schools offer a class on civics, they do not always offer the opportunity to live democratically in schools. In essence learning about democracy is not the same as living democratically. Goodlad (2001) argues that schools must serve as a practicing place for citizens in our society to develop the capacity to live democratically. He states,

If our society were inherently just, caring, hospitable to the diversity of its inhabitants, and neatly balanced in the interplay of freedom and authority—in other words, democratic—we would have less need to worry about the demise of public schools. But thoughtful people writing about education and democracy view the conditions of humankind as not inherently democratic and in dire need of the responsible moral stewardship that only a democratically educated polity can provide. (p. 12)

Numerous scholars have written about the common place, the everyday, the accidental and marginalizing experiences of so many students in America's schools (Anyon, 1980; Finn, 1999; Freire, 1970; Gatto, 2002; Goodlad, 1994; Greene, 1995; Horton, 1998; Hutchinson, 1999; Kohn, 1996, 2000, 2004; Kohl, 1994; Kozol, 1992; Romano & Glascock, 2002). According to these researchers, too many of our children find themselves in traditional autocratic classrooms with teachers who either do not understand the educative potential of democratic educational practice or who consciously choose not to make this their pedagogical philosophy. Additionally, students and teachers feel the pressure of misplaced educational reforms (e.g., "No Child Left Behind" and its predecessors) via the harmful impact that standardization and high stakes testing has had on teaching and learning practices (Kohn, 2004;

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Meier, 2002; Meier & Woods 2004; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Poetter, Wegwert & Haerr, 2006; Ohanian, 1999). For example, Wood (2004) writes about an Ohio teacher's frustration at being expected to teach reading by following a set "script" (p. 39). The teacher in Wood's example stated,

I am to point to a letter in a word, say, for example, "not." The script tells me to point to the first letter and sing out "ready, what sound?" Then I point to one of the children who is to give me the "n" sound. I am to repeat this with each letter, then say "Ready, what word?" as I glide my finger under the entire word the children are to miraculously put the sounds together and read. (p. 39)

Wood adds that the teacher is explaining this "scripted" process, known formally as "Direct Instruction" from a 200-page book that contains each lesson from which there is not to be deviation (p. 39). Wood calls this practice "instructional destruction" (p. 39).

Not only do the current educational policies harm democratic education, but also the current process of formal teacher preparation restricts the development of democratic values in our nation's pre-service teachers. Specifically, Shor (1992) wrote:

The teacher plays a key role in the critical classroom. Student participation and positive emotions are influenced by the teacher's commitment to both. One limit to this commitment comes from the teacher's development in traditional schools where passive, competitive and authoritarian methods dominate. (p. 26)

A passive, competitive and authoritarian classroom is no place for contagious democracy and it cannot prepare children with the skills needed for democratic citizenship.

#### THE LOSS OF DEMOCRATIC LIFE

Apple and Beane (1995), quoting James Mursell, remind us how harmful suppressing democratic participation in schools can be:

If the schools of a democratic society do not exist for the support and extension of democracy, then they are either socially useless or socially dangerous. At best they will educate people who will go their way and earn a living indifferent to the obligations of citizenship in particular and of the democratic way of life in general—But likely they will educate people to be enemies of democracy—people who will fall prey to demagogues, and who back movements and rally round leaders hostile to the democratic way of life. Such schools are either futile or subversive. They have not legitimate reason for existence. (Apple & Beane, p. 23)



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Mursell (1955) continues the argument that education in a democratic society demands that schools function to “support and extend democracy,” he demands that schools rise to this essential task. He writes,

There is only one honest purpose for education in a democratic society, and that is to support and extend democracy. Moreover, education must fulfill this purpose not in word alone, but also in deed ... Democratic education is education that is expressly planned and conducted to support, perpetuate, enlarge and strengthen the democratic way of life, and all its practical operations are determined by this purpose. (p. 4)

Based on my work, I understand that there is deep commitment to democracy on the part of some the teachers.

## SOME EDUCATORS SEEK DEMOCRACY

I am fascinated by what I perceive to be a teachers’ continued desire to educate students from a life-giving democratic place or what Freire (1970) might call the biophilic force of authentic education (p. 77). This is especially challenging while working inside the landscape of expected conformity to the explicit mandates of imposed educational structures designed to meet the administrative realities of our current high stakes testing culture.

Additionally, I have wondered about the commitment and potentially unwavering drive held by some democratic educators over the “long haul.” I use the term “long haul” in the Myles Horton (1998) sense of shaping a career, a lifetime of work around certain democratic ideas, regardless of the political or societal implications. As I have been concerned with the tensions that exist between democratic educational praxis and the more common authoritarian market driven educational practices found in most public schools. I have searched for a collection of work dedicated to the individual experiences of democratic classroom teachers; I have found few. The work of democratically oriented schools is more easily found in the literature (Apple & Beane, 1995; Horton, 1998; Lightfoot, 1983; Meier, 1995; Rose, 1995; Smolitz, 2001; Wood, 1992, 1998, 2005).

## PLACES OF DEMOCRATIC EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

As I explored the literature sites of democratic practice in education emerged (Jacobs, 2003; Lightfoot, 1983; Meier, 1995; Wood, 1998, 2005). These schools include democratic teachers, but more significantly they are examples of entire systems moving in a democratic educational direction. In this section I will look at two schools in the Appalachian area, one working with adults and the other with high school students.

#### HIGHLANDER

I argue that our democratic way of life depends on citizens learning how to be democratic. Horton (2003) argues that practicing democracy is an important element of a democratic society,

I think it is important to understand that the quality of the process you use to get to a place determines the ends, so when you want to build a democratic society, you have to act democratically in every way. If you want love and brotherhood, you've got to incorporate them as you go along, because you can't just expect them to occur ... A long-range goal for me is a direction that grows out of loving people, and caring for people, and believing in people's capacity to govern themselves. (Jacobs, pp. xiii–xiv)

Horton spent most of his life being democratic and exposing others, mostly adult learners, to democratic education at the Highlander Center in Tennessee. In a speech given at the University of Tennessee in 1967, Horton said that the ...

... Highlander doesn't attempt to provide the total educational process of people with whom we deal. Our students bring to Highlander their experiences and ways of thinking and doing. We try to stimulate their thinking by exposing them to consultants, books, ect. But more important, they learn how to learn from each other. (Jacobs, 2003, pp. 6–7)

Horton's (1998) idea of democracy includes the words "free" and "empowered" (p. 169). He said, "when I use the word 'Democracy,' it is not limited to political decision-making, to voting. It is a philosophical concept meaning that people are really free and empowered to make collectively the decisions that affect their lives" (p. 169).

Highlander's democratic educational impact is illustrated in the words of DJacobs (2003). He wrote of Highlander that "from its inception, Highlander was controversial because education was seen as a way to understand and change one's world rather than as a way to advance within the existing socioeconomic system" (p. xv). Much of Highlander's early democratic education was controversial because it focused on the social injustice found in labor relations, civil rights and environmental issues and it worked to help people develop their own solutions to these significant social problems.

#### FEDERAL HOCKING HIGH SCHOOL

Wood (2005) wrote of his work as a school leader at Federal Hocking High School (FHHS), located in rural Appalachian Ohio, that high school is "democracy's finishing school" (p. xxii). In his attempt to develop FHHS as a democratic educational experience for students Wood engaged the students in their own education, and the governance of the school. Wood outlines several strategies he

used in FHHS to help bring students into a democratic place of sharing the “power” in the school (p. 128). These strategies include several important ideas such as having students monitor their own progress toward graduation and “having every student do something significant” which means expecting students to engage in a meaningful internship project. However, it is the strategy of giving “students Decision-Making Power” that is of the most interest to this proposal (p. 137).

Wood states, “At FHHS we’ve worked to include students in as much of the decision making about school as possible” (p. 137). He notes, “Again and again it proves true: the more opportunities we give our students to be full-fledged citizens of our school, the more they amaze us with their ability to take on responsibility” (p. 138). In FHHS democracy is lived everyday as a community (p. 190).

#### CHANGING TO A DEMOCRATIC DIRECTION

A long list of scholars have observed, explicated and researched the relentless degree to which schooling in the United States has been critiqued, prodded, politicized, and changed in the name of higher academic standards via test scores (Kohn, 2004; Meier, 2002; Meier & Woods, 2004; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Poetter, Wegwert, & Haerr, 2006; Ohanian, 1999). Often these changes center on the urgency expressed by many politicians and business people to raise student test scores on various standardized measurements, many of which hold stiff consequences or high-stakes if the scores are judged to be sub-standard.

I think we should bring this level of scrutiny and sense of urgency to the ideas and philosophical foundations of “democracy” and its practices in our public schools. Drawing on the impassioned arguments found in the work of early twentieth century scholars like James Mursell, Myles Horton, and George S. Counts and more modern scholars such as James Baldwin, Cornel West, Michael Apple, Frank Adams and Deborah Meier, I move beyond the politeness of a recommendation to the declarative statement that “Our Public Schools Must Teach Democracy.” Furthermore, the public schools of the United States must hold the ideals of democracy in public trust as a set of undeniable rights that all students should learn and practice because schools are uniquely positioned to be one of the primary sites of early democratic practice.

#### PUBLIC SCHOOLS AS STEWARDS OF DEMOCRACY

I argue that, in a democracy, public schools must be charged with educating all young people to participate in the development and suitability of a deeply seated democratic ethos. This deeply seated democratic ethos is not the shallow understanding of democracy learned in civics class where one learns the three branches of government and how a bill becomes a law. I am reminded of the “Schoolhouse Rock” videos of the 1970’s and 1980’s. These cartoons introduced many U.S. children to the concepts related to the structure and functioning of the United States government, one of these

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cartoons was entitled, “Three Ring Government.” In this video the basic elements of the United States “procedural” democratic process was explained.

The poem is as follows:

*Three Ring Government*

Gonna have a three-ring circus someday,  
People will say it's a fine one, son.  
Gonna have a three-ring circus someday,  
People will come from miles around.  
Lions, tigers, acrobats, and jugglers and clowns galore,  
Tightrope walkers, pony rides, elephants, and so much more ...

Guess I got the idea right here at school.  
Felt like a fool when they called my name,  
Talkin' about the government and how it's arranged,  
Divided in three like a circus.

Ring one, Executive,  
Two is Legislative, that's Congress.  
Ring three, Judiciary.  
See it's kind of like my circus, circus...  
(Schoolhouse Rock, 1979)

The idea that democracy is primarily a process of the three structural components of governments and politics is central to the tenets of “Procedural Democracy.” However for the purposes of this chapter “Procedural Democracy” is not just the thin veneer of democracy found in democratic political elections or the democratic leadership of the three branches of the United States government. For the purposes of this work the ideas associated with procedural democracy are toxic to the tenants of citizenship and equity.

Several scholars have argued that a formal or procedural democracy functions to limit participation (Green, 1999; Grugel, 2002; Schumpeter, 1950). Green (1999) notes that,

In recent years, an odd international alliance of conservative and liberal political theorists has advocated *a purely formal, institutional conception of democracy* for very different reasons: as an expression of a filial piety to America's Founding Fathers, or as the most extensive conception of democracy compatible with individualistically conceived liberty, or in the belief that no shared conception of the goods or goals of social life can be justified. (p. vi)

For Green the avocation of a “purely formal” concept of democracy is problematic in relation to a “deeper conception of democracy that expresses the experience-based possibility of more equal, respectful and mutually beneficial ways of community life” (p. iv).

Another scholar who explores the rationale for such advocating expands Green's reference to an "odd international alliance of conservative and liberal political theorists". Grugel (2003) explains that in the mid 1940's "liberal democracy was no longer seen as one strand of democracy: it was presented as the only version" (p. 17). For Grugel, liberal democracy "was more and more equated with the political arrangements for government and, more generally, the empirical 'reality' of the west" (p. 17).

The dilemma of this interpretation of democracy, a procedural interpretation, can be found in the work of Schumpeter (1976) who wrote that,

According to the view we have taken, democracy does not mean and cannot mean that the people actually rule in any obvious sense of the term "people" and "rule". Democracy means only that people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them. (pp. 284–285)

It was this type of democracy, a formal or procedural democracy, that concerned Thomas Jefferson. For Jefferson governmental power was at the center of his argument for an educated citizenry. In a letter to George Washington he wrote,

It is an axiom in my mind that our liberty can never be safe but in the hands of the people themselves, and that, too, of the people with a certain degree of instruction. This is the business of the state to effect, and on a general plan ... I do most anxiously wish to see the highest degree of education given to the higher degrees of genius and to all degrees of it, so much as may enable them to read and understand what is going on in the world and keep their part of it going on right. (Honeywell, 1931, p. 13)

For Jefferson, an educated citizenry functioned in a democratic system to ensure that the leaders of that system did not skew the resources of the state in the direction of their own interests. He wrote,

I have indeed two great measures at heart without which no republic can maintain itself in strength. (1) That of general education to enable every [person] to judge for himself what will secure or endanger [their] freedom. (2) To divide every county into hundreds of such size that all the children of each will be within reach of a central school in it. (p. 13)

Jefferson understood that for a democracy to be of the people, the people needed an education that developed within them the ideas and understandings of democratic participation.

Regrettably, this hollow reduction of democracy does not teach children how to be democratic citizens. At the risk of sounding redundant, democracy must be lived in order to make it part of our collective citizen-based democratic ethos. The words of Mursell (1955) ring loudly in my mind as I make this demand, "There is only one possible honest purpose for education in a democratic society, and that is to support

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and extend democracy. Moreover, education must fulfill this purpose not in word alone, but also in deed,” (p. 4). Horton (2003) argued along the same lines,

I think it is important to understand that the quality of the process you use to get to a place determines the ends, so when you want to build a democratic society, you have to act democratically in every way. If you want love and brotherhood, you’ve got to incorporate them as you go along, because you can’t just expect them to occur ... A long-range goal for me is a direction that grows out of loving people, and caring for people, and believing in people’s capacity to govern themselves. (pp. XIII–XIV)

Horton’s belief in the people’s capacity to govern speaks to his faith in the power of a living democratic ethos. Mursell (1955) argued in democracy as an act of faith and he offers several important points about how democracy must be a lived and practiced endeavor. Mursell writes,

*Democracy is based on faith.* It is based on faith in man, and in his essential reasonableness and goodness. It is based on faith that if people are honestly and devotedly helped to understand issues and problems of life, they will be able to achieve understanding; and this if they achieve understanding, they will act on it ... No, one can prove that his faith is justified, If it could be proved, it would cease to be faith. All we can say is that there is nothing to refute it, and that when the democratic ethic is honestly and adequately put to the test, its workableness is demonstrated. (italics in original, pp. 25–26)

A faith in the people to be active, participatory and responsible is at the core of a social understanding of democracy. I think it is only through the practice, application and living of democratic ideas in our schools that we can, as a nation, fully realize our collective creativity, intellect and promise as citizens.

#### DEMOCRACY NEEDS DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

Several scholars have argued that democratic education serves to ensure a democratic society exists by providing students with the everyday experiences of living democratically (Apple & Beane, 1995; Counts, 1939; Dewey, 1916; Goodlad, 1996; Kelly, 1995; Ligon, 2005, Mursell, 1955; Parker, 2003; Sehr, 1997; Soder, 1996, 1997). For Mursell (1955) schools can have a profound impact on the development of a democratic way of life. He writes,

Our schools can make it their chief business, year by year, generation by generation, to promote and uphold democracy in American life. They can deliberately set to work to develop men and women who wholeheartedly accept the democratic ethic, and who are capable of solving the problems of its application. (p. 52)

Mursell argues that democratic education serves the greater good of developing democratic citizens. For him democratic education includes teaching the young to “bring reason to bear on all circumstances of living, to bow only and always to the demands of conscience, to exercise freedom by being worthy of it, to treat all men as brothers” (p. 52).

Soder (1997) argues that citizens in a democracy must have the skills to govern themselves and the attitude that they are capable of that act. He writes,

Citizens in a democracy must have a strong sense of their rights and what they should expect from their leaders. They must have a strong sense of the fundamental notions of the democratic political process, including notions of equality, fairness, and due process, and, in the United States, a separation of powers and an independent judiciary. And they must believe that they themselves are, with appropriate preparation, fully capable of governing themselves well. (p. 93)

Soder’s argument offers strength to the notion that democracy needs democratic education. Kelly (1995) writes that education cannot exist in isolation from the practices of a political life on the part of citizens. Rather, she argues, “In a democracy no political life is possible without a solid theory of education and an abiding commitment to the implementation and maintenance of practices informed by democratic ideals” (p. 14). It is with an ear toward Soder’s and Kelly’s words that this literature review now turns to democratic education and an explication of two important components of democratic education: educational relationships and social justice.

#### SOCIAL JUSTICE

Importantly, Democratic education and practices in public schools have the potential to influence and impact social justice at a societal level (Apple & Beane, 1995; Counts, 1939; Dewey, 1938; Green, 1999; Hutchinson, 1999; Hutchison & Romano, 1998; Parker, 2003). Counts (1939) argued that democratic education has an “obligation” to teach equality and equity in society (p. 18). He called upon democratic education to “develop in the individual a profound allegiance to the principle of human equity, brotherhood and worth” (p. 18). Counts demanded that democratic education make “every effort ... to fashion a mentality that would be uncomfortable and even outraged in the presence of poverty, injustice, ruthlessness, special privilege, denial of opportunity, persecution of minorities, exploitation of the weak, master-servant relationships” (p. 18).

Counts believed that this type of education would “at the same time” elevate the “level of consciousness, and sense of responsibility for correcting all violations of the democratic principle” in the minds of students (p. 18). Counts’ idea offers an interesting place for reflection about the physical and moral condition of America’s



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schools. He argues that a primary focus of education is to improve our democratic society, in particular the social form of democracy.

For Parker (2003), democratic education must help teach students a conception of “justice that is capable of discerning injustice” (p. 73). For him this means not just a surface level or shallow understanding of injustice but the ability to “see through the spells cast by ideology so that injustices that are legitimized by it might be revealed” (p. 73).

For Kozol (1992) the inequalities perpetuated in America’s public schools are “savage.” Kozol clearly explains both the inequity of school funding and the inequality this creates regarding students long-term life prospects. He clearly assigns responsibility for reshaping this problem to the government. Specifically he argues that the government ...

... does not assign us to our homes, our summer camps, our doctors—or to Exeter. It does assign us to our public schools. Indeed, it forces us to go to them. Unless we have the wealth to pay for private education, we are compelled by law to go to public school—requiring attendance but refusing to require equity, effectively requiring inequality. Compulsory inequity, perpetuated by state law, too frequently condemns our children to unequal lives. (p. 56)

Kozol argues that equality and equity in public education in America will only occur when the legislative bodies across America stand up and decide to make it happen.

#### CONCLUSION

I opened this chapter with a quotation from Myles Horton (2003) noting his instance that democracy must be part of our daily living if we want to have democracy. He said,

I think it is important to understand that the quality of the process you use to get to a place determines the ends, so when you want to build a democratic society, you have to act democratically in every way. (pp. XIII–XIV)

Horton’s belief in the lived experience of democracy as a way to help others understand a life of democratic action lies at the heart of the Highlander Education and Research Center he helped found. Horton (2003) argued that,

if we are to think seriously about liberating people to cope with their own lives, we must refuse to limit the educational process to what can go on only in schools. The bars must come down; the doors must fly open; nonacademic life—*real* life— must be encompassed by education. (p. 242)

Unlike Horton, I remain hopeful that institutions, especially colleges and universities have the potential to dramatically impact future teachers. Specifically, teacher and school leader programs are uniquely situated to encourage the

connections between theoretical underpinnings and the real life applications that Horton demands must occur if education is to have a lasting impact because its students are often working teachers.

The majority of teacher preparation programs situated in Colleges and Schools of Education prepare education students to become teachers and leaders who are very willing to carry out the demands of state and federal educational mandates. Many teacher and leader preparation candidates are given little reason to or knowledge of how to challenge the existing status quo of schooling or the political mandates imposed on them. Hence, they enter classrooms and often, without knowing, uphold the status quo, which is often devoid of democratic ways of learning and knowing.

I firmly believe that the radical act of teaching teachers and school leaders to be democratic is a first step in helping them to develop the democratic educational philosophy and pedagogical understanding that which will allow them to resist undemocratic policies and practices that harm students as they grow into citizens in our democracy.

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## 7. (UN)DEMOCRATIC CURRICULUM FOR A DEMOCRATIC EDUCATIONAL WORLD

### INTRODUCTION

Let's dream about that educational world where every child truly is free to make her/his learning decision and they are well supported, encouraged, and succeed. I am taking John Dewey's stance to define a democratic curriculum that needs "a continuous reconstruction" (Dewey, 1902, p. 11) to connect the learner's present experience to all possible new experiences. I believe in that educational world where the creative possibility of each child, no matter from which context the child comes, is in highest level. I believe in the interconnected educational world where hope, relationship, respect, and happiness exist. This educational world is a democratic society where differences are truly celebrated; everyone is safe and free to explore the limitless possibilities of learning. It is only possible in a true democratic educational world where a curriculum is a truly democratic construct.

As John Dewey said democracy is not only about shared common interests, but it is about the opportunity for all to develop their distinctive capacities (Dewey, 1916). This chapter discusses various aspects of curriculum, its processes, policy and politics to uncover democratic and undemocratic dynamics of curriculum. The chapter appear as a combination of authorial arguments, questions, and experiences. I occasionally use the first person pronoun 'I' to link the readers to my personal experiences with "curriculum". My intention is not romanticizing my own epiphanies of my journey through educational world. I argue that readers will reflect upon their similar and different (un)democratic curricular experiences as they pass through the content. Each section of the chapter asks a question followed by a discussion of the question. My intention is not to provide a prescriptive answer to these questions, rather I offer more questions to reflect upon democracy, curriculum, and education.

### WHAT IS CURRICULUM?

I am starting this chapter with this old same-old question, "What is curriculum?" But my intention is not to define it; rather I would like the readers to have a dialogue with the same question in their mind. As a reader, you might be thinking that it is confusing. Yes, it is. It is not only confusing; it is an extremely messy concept. When I read something by Brandwein (1977) "[a] curriculum is a perspective: it gives view to human knowledge, values, and skills. It imposes discipline because

it presumes to create a plan or a structure for seeking and recognizing and valuing experience” (p. 10), and by Dewey (1902) “[c]urriculum is a continuous reconstruction, moving from the child’s present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies ... the various studies ... are themselves experience they are that of the race” (pp. 11–12), I hardly can make a distinctive definition of curriculum. I believe that defining curriculum is a complex and risky business. Definition of curriculum differs according to the philosophy, knowledge base, context, and socio-economic structure. Once I had formed the question, “What does curriculum look like?” I hardly found a definite answer to the question.

Several pictures came into my mind. I remembered the incident of my undergraduate education years, probably it was winter of the year 1992. Our college campus was close to the curriculum development center at Bhaktapur, Nepal. Our professor gave us an assignment to collect a copy of national curriculum of school education (grade one- grade 10). During our lunch hour, we went to the center, and asked for the curriculum. They handed over a booklet. It had national goals, level wise aims and objectives, subject wise aims and objectives, class objectives, unit objectives, list of content, teaching learning strategies, and evaluation strategies listed in it. We were given projects to summarize a certain subject of certain class. We did well. When I take this memory as my first encounter with curriculum (as an object), I visualize the curriculum as a booklet that contains a list of objectives, content, teaching learning strategies, and evaluation strategies. Until now, I struggle to get out of this structured understanding.

Curricular goals, curricular content, and curricular process are probably the three aspects of the curriculum. However, we can see curriculum from different angles, viewpoints, and intentionality. My first exposure with the terminology curriculum has left a deeper mark in my mind of this concept. Later, when I got involved in the curriculum development process as a freelance, I got exposed to a greater philosophical world. I immediately noticed that curriculum was guided by certain principal or philosophical assumptions.

I looked at the “National Curriculum Framework for School Education” in Nepal (CDC, 2007), and found some guiding principles for curriculum development. The framework suggested several assumptions: comprehensive and balanced approach, organization of major learning areas, an integrated approach of curriculum development, child-centered curriculum development approach, basic education in mother tongue, inclusive approach in curriculum development, local need based curriculum development approach, Sanskrit education as the foundation of eastern knowledge and philosophy, information and communication technology, life skill based education, work oriented curriculum, child centered student assessment and evaluation, participatory curriculum development process, alternative, distance/open education policy, norms and values based curriculum development, research based curriculum development, teaching learning activities as an integral part of curriculum, and setting quality standards of school education (CDC, 2007,

pp. 1–2). Local schools were expected to expand the curricular objectives, content, and processes; however, it was very much directed by the national curriculum framework.

By this time, I got to know another three aspects of curriculum. Probably they were the most decisive factors or aspects of curriculum. For me they were philosophical, socio-cultural, and political. These aspects however were largely part of the hidden curriculum. During the meetings of curriculum negotiation, people were discussing ideologies. I largely found the learners being overlooked. Once those meetings turned into written words, they sounded good, but the hidden reality of curriculum discussion in the meetings of the central curriculum development office was not that pleasant for me.

#### WHAT CONSTITUTES KNOWLEDGE IN CURRICULAR STUDIES?

Is there presence of any knowledge? If yes, what is knowledge? I always see messy dialogues around the issue. Curriculum studies bring three kinds of priorities to the surface. The first one has to deal with the child, the second is about the content or knowledge, and the third is about the society (Lawton, 2012). For me knowledge in curriculum studies is to understand and redefine the tensions between the child, content, and the society.

We talk about creation of knowledge and letting learners take all possible routes to create and recreate. We observe the supply of knowledge. It is not pointless to argue that knowledge supply instead of getting weaker is getting more stronger and is also making more profit oriented ties with the business world. Dewey (1916) challenges me to think about knowledge. For Dewey (1916), “[I]n its honorable sense, knowledge is distinguished from opinion, guesswork, speculation, and mere tradition. In knowledge, things are ascertained; they are so and not dubiously otherwise. But experience makes us aware that there is difference between intellectual certainty of subject matter and our certainty” (p. 188). For me knowledge is the connection between what I have previously known and what I am experiencing today. I make my own set of assumption about a thing on the basis of my prior understanding and present experience. My knowledge of an object or a subject keeps changing, as I gain more information or experience. Probably I have borrowed the idea of John Dewey.

However, in curriculum studies, most of the time, I believe, knowledge is that content or subject matter which is placed there by the decision of somebody. This somebody or someone is mostly a so-called “expert” or “leader.” This somebody is powerful, or has an easy access to some kind of power. Probably, very few cultures of curriculum accept an organic process of curriculum making. The reason is politics of knowledge. Most of the time, the powerful entity controls the information, manipulates it, or abuses it. In this politics of knowledge, the most important part of the process largely remains outside. The teacher mostly gets what he or she should teach. The students also get what they are supposed to learn.



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Very often, teachers and students both fail to ask the questions, Why should they teach and learn what they are doing? Why not other things? Why those questions? Why not other questions? Why those methods? Why not other methods? Why those goals? Why not other objectives? Most importantly, the students hardly make sense of why are they learning what they are learning. They hardly ask questions: Who wanted this knowledge [to be learned]? Who values this knowledge? Why do they want this knowledge to be taught or learned? Who benefits the most? At this point I believe, the curriculum looks like the most undemocratic construct. However, this is not the only view of the curriculum.

The dynamic knowledge base of curriculum accepts the multifaceted view of curriculum. It is something like what Wiles and Bondi (2007) said, “curriculum represents a set of desired goals or values that are activated through a development process and culminate in successful learning experiences for students” (p. 2). Let’s move forward with another question. Which knowledge base of curriculum do we value the most?

#### HOW DO I KNOW WHICH KNOWLEDGE BASE TO FOLLOW?

When I start to reflect upon my knowledge base about curriculum studies, I have to think about my undergraduate classes in school of education at Sanothimi Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal. We had the professor who used to teach us about curriculum and instruction. We had named him “Hilda Taba”. The viewpoints he used to bring in the class often started with a quote of Taba. He reprimanded me to change my position to be as a co-learner, rather than supplier of knowledge. Later I found Hilda Taba to be one of the innovative theorist of curriculum design. I liked it.

Later, I joined classes of Master’s in Education. This time I chose to do M.Ed. in curriculum and evaluation. Probably, I became more aware about the role of mine as teacher and teacher leader because of this academic experience. For me, curriculum became more abstract, and complex matter. Instead of thinking linearly, what curriculum is? I started to question why the particular experience is there? And, why not the other? I remember the day, I got a book to study. The most transforming thing happened to me during my M.Ed. study was trying to understand the book by William Pinar (1975). The book *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists* was not an easy read for me at that time. I found an empowered position of myself as a future curriculum leader, which I wanted to be.

A third wave came in my life. I got to work for a teacher development unit of ministry of education. I was one of the team members for the teacher development material design team. I worked closely with the curriculum design team. I got an opportunity to work for the curriculum development center (at the primary, middle school and secondary level) of Nepal as a freelance consultant. I immediately understood, how centralized the curriculum-making process was in Nepal. I also realized the (un)democratic process of curriculum making and its use. I started to understand the extreme politics of curriculum theorizing, designing, and

implementing. My academic understanding of what a curriculum should be, and how it should be envisioned did not match at all with the practical aspect of my involvement in curriculum design meetings and discussions.

The fourth stage was to design and implement, and practice curriculum as a school principal as well as curriculum leader. I already had a level of understanding that the curriculum design process had to be more democratic. I equally understood that the role of students had to have space in the curriculum. I tried to redefine my own role as a leader. I rather wanted to present myself as a participant in discussions about the process of defining what should we do to teach and learn. I tried to involve parents and other stakeholders in this process. It sounds like fun but it was not. I had to deal with several controversies. Some questioned my capabilities of directing the school to its goal. Others asked me to be a bit more decisive. However, we were able to include varieties of areas like art, music, and sports, in the prescribed government curriculum for the schools. We were able to transform the process of content delivery according to the contextual requirement. Assessment became an integral part of teaching-learning process. Assessment for learning replaced the prescribed assessment of learning. We largely valued assessment as learning. It was Hilda Taba and Pinar who guided me during this process. Today, I am looking at the more complex nature of curriculum. I probably understand where and how my knowledge base of curriculum be applied through a process of reflection. I whole heartedly agree with Slattery (2012), “[c]urriculum debates must be redirected to the understanding of curriculum” (p. 239) itself.

#### WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ABOUT CURRICULUM THAT ARE NOT ASKED?

There are still two highways in curriculum studies. Some see curriculum as a process and others take curriculum as well articulated written document which has to be achieved by schools at any cost. There is no doubt that the concept of curriculum itself is confusing for many, since different interest groups, philosophical stand points, as well as context and time matters in understanding the dynamics of curriculum. Imagining and documenting curricular goals, curricular content, and curricular process are very much dependent on the influence of external and internal factors.

Who is in power? What drives the local, national, regional, and global society, economy and politics at the time of curriculum design? Who is involved and who is marginalized? This and many such questions surface from the careful examination of the various perspectives. We have not reached to the point where we should be. We might not reach there forever. However, the democratic ideal of “curriculum” reminds us about this never-ending journey. There are several gray areas, where the concept of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment cannot be separated. Curriculum becomes all of them or some of them. The only process that comes to my mind is to continue critical examination of the stated objectives or goals, content, and processes in relation to the curriculum.

Glatthorn, Boschee, and Whitehead (2006) presented the history of curriculum theory and practice in American school system in eight distinctive periods. Table 1 suggests various ideological and political interplay in the curriculum movement in the United States.

*Table 1. History of curriculum theory*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Period</i>
1890–1916	Academic Scientism
1917–1940	Progressive Functionalism
1941–1956	Development Conformism
1957–1967	Scholarly Structuralism
1968–1974	Romantic Radicalism
1975–1989	Privatistic Conservatism
1990–1999	Technological constructionists
2000 to present	New Privatistic Conservatism

*(Glatthorn, Boschee, & Whitehead, 2006, p. 33)*

My native country Nepal was not open to the outside world until 1950. Hence the formal education movement started in mid-1950s only. My experience as a student and a teacher educator in Nepal, provides me a roughs understanding of curricular movement in Nepal. There aren't many research documents that describe the curriculum development timeline. However, it is possible to relate Nepalese curricular movement to the American timeline. The consultant who was an expert to provide support to set up formal educational infrastructure, in Nepal in the mid-1950s was an American professor. We should critically examine this historical tie and influence to make sense. I would say Nepal has only 3 distinctive periods: 1956 to 1970 for scholarly structuralism, 1971 to 1990 for nationalist conservatism, and 1990 to present with privatistic conservatism.

The most problematic thing that is plainly wrong to me about curriculum theory and research, both in the United States and Nepal, is the politics of education at large. I hardly can find the representation of the dream of individual citizens or learners where curriculum is concerned. Things are made vague and abstract. I feel that curriculum has been the tool of maintaining the dominance of some and fulfilling the financial creed of a few. A global neoliberal invasion of the education world has almost rendered democracy in education invalid, in need of being admitted to a hospice. I know my metaphoric presentation here makes some feel angry and hopeless; others may feel helpless. My intention here is not to promote helplessness or hopelessness. We have got to do something. I say "we" because all of us are curriculum leaders in a democratic sense.

WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES OF CURRICULUM LEADERS?

According to Wiles (2008), “curriculum leadership as targeting specific knowledge, behavior, and attitudes for students and engineering a school program to achieve those ends. This is a highly active definition that accepts change in schools as a normal variable in planning” (p. 2). However, the curriculum traditions work differently in different settings. No two places, cultures, and learners are the same. Despite of knowing these fundamental realities of the human geography, and human nature, the establishments of the school governing entities always insert their ideologies, agendas, and interest in curriculum. The No Child Left Behind policy of US government can be taken as ideology imposition to education. The policy was a game changer. Pinar (2004) critically commented about it. The new act, “Every Students Succeeds Act, 2015,” is in place in the US. Let’s critically reflect upon this new law. Does it fundamentally change the present policy, practice, and politics of curriculum in the US? Does this new law allow all the stakeholders to provide opportunities to democratize the curriculum?

According to Pinar (2004), today, “educators have little control over curriculum” (p. 31) and in the name of accountability, teachers are teaching for testing, students are reading for passing the test. Curriculum has been reduced to some questions to tick. We can see a huge loss of learning. Our future generation of citizens, instead of cultivating creative imagination in them, are reducing their learning to meet the demands of certain businesses, or interests of certain politicians. This is not only the trend of the United States. The scenarios of developing countries like Nepal, where education system is fully controlled by the national government, are even worse.

I believe that, in the United States, the progressive and democratic forces who are speaking loud to free education from the chains of standardized testing based, accountability. A curriculum leader, in the era of standards and accountability, probably feels like a swimmer who is in the water but her/his hands and legs are tied up. Many get choked or waterlogged. Some metaphorically drown and die. Very few who are extremely skillful in swimming might make some creative body move in order to cross wide channels. However, the progress becomes very small. The primary responsibilities of curriculum leaders become to find out the shortcuts to pass the students. The curriculum leader probably becomes the closest witness of the waxing quantity of passed student and the waning quality of learning or education. Curriculum leaders if they are aware about the core purpose of education, which is guiding each child to her or his fullest potential, go on heartbroken.

How do leaders enact a curriculum focused on student learning? It is an important question to reflect upon. Is there a cookie-cutter solution to this systemic oppression? Obviously there is not one. Should the leaders then do nothing? Of course not. Curriculum leaders should have a critical understanding about the historical and political nature of curriculum. They have to develop creative ways to research, relate, and redefine curriculum and their own role as curriculum leaders. These curriculum

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leaders might find new ways of to refocus curriculum for student learning through encouraging, reflective, biographical, autobiographical, and phenomenological approaches in learning experiences for students.

These leaders create their own identity as poststructuralists, post-modernists, and progressive leaders (Slattery, 2012). A leader who believes in critical pedagogy and advocates for public pedagogy, eventually may be able to disrupt the situation created by standardization and the test-based accountability system. These leaders will have to muster tremendous amount of hope, trust, and courage in believing in education, learning, the self, and the public. In sum, they will have to spend their life dedicated to the democratic nature of education.

#### WHAT PARADOX OF DELIVERY OF DISCIPLINES EXISTS IN K-12 CURRICULA IN THE US?

Let's look at this paradox. According to U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2011), the United States assures the educational rights of all children regardless of their backgrounds, including national origin. Different *national origins* is often simply understood as speaking a different native language. Hence, as Kanno and Kangas (2014) said, “[i]f the education of a specific group of students is being compromised for reasons related to being speakers of languages other than English—which is considered part of national origin—their educational rights are in fact being violated” (p. 849). However, the national emphasis in English language creates a paradoxical lingual situation in designing and leading school curriculum.

Fillmore (2014) argued, “English language learners face obstacles in our schools stemming from first, fundamental misunderstandings about what they need, and second how to support both language and academic development at the same time” (pp. 624–625). Fillmore’s (2014) solution was to provide “these students access to the school’s curriculum by means of their primary languages at least part of the time while they are in the process of learning English as a second language” (p. 625). However, practically speaking, how many schools can create this environment when they are over governed by newly emphasized or overemphasized standards measures? The school curriculum becomes very limited. Not only will teachers and curriculum implementers become reductionists, the students will not have opportunities at all. Everyone is limited. A vibrant democratic environment is diminished.

National emphases on English language have facilitated schools as English-only zones, and the bilingual programs in the schools have become subtractive. Through this process, the students instead of being bilingual, eventually lose their bilingual capability. Students’ native languages get replaced by incomprehensible English-only standards (Baker, 2011). In cultural, social, and personal sense, learning of one language at the cost of other makes no sense. Curriculum leaders find this issue complicated to handle. As Ylimaki (2012) mentioned curriculum requires “complicated conversation and curriculum decisions as political acts” (p. 305).

The rational argument includes countless complexities but validates student and stakeholder voices and therefore is democratic in nature.

Additionally, the national emphasis on English language only policies has a political meaning attached to it. The students have to master English by any means necessary, Most of the time it comes at the cost of forgetting their native language (and by extension their heritage and history). Teachers come under the pressure of accountability because of the emphasis on English language only policies (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005). A country where non-English speakers (as their first language) are continuously growing would have more pragmatic language policies in place for curriculum development. According to Menken and Kleyn (2010) US schools are putting an overwhelming emphasis on English because of the national political emphasis and so-called public sentiment.

However, as Menken and Kleyn (2010) argued, “Overwhelming emphasis on English in the students’ schooling in the USA – over native language development and biliteracy – is a significant contributing factor to the length of time it takes them to acquire academic English, and particularly to develop literacy skills” (p. 400). No matter how capable, creative, and hopeful lingual minority students are, national emphasis in English language, enacts monolingual focus. “Respecting, and celebrating diversity” becomes biggest buzz phrase, in politics of curriculum.

#### IN WHAT WAYS DO THE NATIONAL EMPHASIS ON COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INFLUENCE AND REDEFINE THE CURRICULUM?

To answer this question, I would like to closely look and analyze the content provided in the website of common core state standards initiative (<http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/myths-vs-facts>). Here it is stated,

English teachers will still teach their students literature as well as literary nonfiction. However, because college and career readiness overwhelmingly focuses on complex texts outside of literature, these standards also ensure students are being prepared to read, write, and research across the curriculum, including in history and science. These goals can be achieved by ensuring that teachers in other disciplines are also focusing on reading and writing to build knowledge within their subject areas. (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d., para. 16)

The expectation is clear. Teachers of every subject area should provide a language focus—language here being the English language. Non-English background teachers and non-English background students (that is, English is not the first language or mother tongue) will have a tough time to assure that they are teaching well and learning well. The argument presented shows that the job of the school is to prepare students for college and carrier. A deeper dialog should be there about the importance of education and meaning of education in life. I believe that education should go beyond college and career.

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Some educators viewed the scheme of common core state standards as a *national* curriculum for US schools. However, the website of Common Core State Standards Initiative (n.d.) noted,

The Common Core is not a curriculum. It is a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms. (para. 35)

The claim of the possibility of flexibility indirectly says that the standards provide the common goals of education. Those goals are the curricular goals. When it says local teachers, principals, superintendents, and others will have freedom to think their own ways to meet the standards, it equally assumes that these teachers, superintendents, principals, and others need to be guided by some mandates or policies. There is no doubt that these standards play a vital role in reshaping curricular contents and processes. As I mentioned earlier, curricular goals, curricular content, and curricular process are the three aspects of curriculum. State standards are providing the schools those goals. These readymade goals will definitely impact designing, the content, and processes.

Because of the requirements of the common core state standards, the curriculum leaders have to focus only on, maintenance task as Wiles (2008) stated: “Keeping the school informed of district, state, and national initiatives, ensuring compliance with state and federal laws affecting curriculum, monitoring testing and the achievement of legislated standards, adopting textbooks and other learning materials, preparing for accreditation visits” (p. 5), etc. I question, will they have time for dynamic curriculum related tasks like providing a vision, moving beyond minimum standards, establishing authentic assessment, building a working curriculum team, engaging teachers, parents, and the school community, planning and leading the process of change, and empowering curriculum development? Core state standards matter. Do they help or hinder the democratic curriculum development process?

#### WHAT ARE THE TENSIONS BETWEEN CURRICULUM THEORY AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES?

Glatthorn, Boschee, and Whitehead (2006) defined curriculum theory as “a set of related educational concepts that afford a systematic and illuminating perspective or curricular phenomena” (p. 74). Curriculum theorists like Michael Apple and William Pinar are concerned about the critical aspects of explaining and describing curricular phenomena. Whereas the theorists like Ralf Tyler and others are more concerned about providing sequential reasonable choices to educators. Glatthorn, Boschee, and Whitehead (2006) further stated, “Curriculum theorists are becoming more aware that curriculum can be both the description of what happens in the classroom and



what actually happens in the classroom—and why not?” (p. 99). Curriculum theory building seems like the phenomenon that occurs in the philosophical domain. However, the pedagogical practices are the realities of the ground.

Most of the time, pedagogical practices evolve within the schoolhouse or outside the schoolhouse in educational settings. However teachers, or teacher leaders who create them, remain unaware that how important their task was. Very often, practice of a theoretical concept provides evidences that the theory of not applicable in a particular context. There appears a huge conflict between theory and practice. Largely, the process of curriculum development and implementation is a political act. The process includes a huge power struggle: “This struggle for power in the curriculum making process seems to occur most sharply at the federal, state, and local district levels and differently affects the recommended, the written, and the taught curricula” (Glatthorn, Boschee, & Whitehead, 2006, p. 106). The sole participants of pedagogical practices, the teachers and the students, are mostly found alienated during this process. Hence, theoretically a wonderful curriculum may be in place, but in practical aspect, the taught curricula may become very much reduced.

One way of reducing the gap between curriculum theory and pedagogical practices can be the adoption of a critical pragmatic approach in curriculum development and curriculum practice. When we empower, equip, and emancipate our teachers to be able to navigate an individual child’s possibilities, interests, and requirements, we probably will trust our students and teachers jointly be able to create the curriculum they want to practice. To do so, the researchers should be practitioners, and the practitioners should conduct research. The two ends, the theory and the practice should come to the middle ground. The educators or curriculum theorists once become scholar – practitioners (Jenlink, 2001), in my belief fill the gap between theory and practice.

One of the biggest concerns comes to my mind, in theory curriculum demands one thing but the teacher goes to the class and teaches the next thing. Finally, states or external bodies make the tests and they test entirely different thing. This problem is also related to the bureaucracy of curriculum envisioning, design, and implementation, how to align curriculum with pedagogical practices in a greatest tension. The only solution in my mind is designing curriculum in the classroom level rather than the state level. Theoretically, it is possible. However, the political nature of curriculum making would generally not allow us to do it. I really do not have a solution. Probably we have to continue this discourse and that is the only solution.

#### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS WE STUDY IN CURRICULUM?

Problems of definition, problems of philosophy, problems of practice and problems of representation come into my mind when I think about curriculum. I often see these as problems of Justice. The hidden curriculum might play a role to increase injustices. The curriculum field is so ambiguous that people often get confused what they are trying to understand and what they really found out. When I talk about the

problems of definition, I put emphasis on the definition of the key terminologies we use in curriculum discourses. My *concern* is about defining the curricular goals, curricular processes, and curricular content. Every definition is tentative, in reality. However, the positivistic dominant world views a definition as the only singular possibility. What makes a right or important curricular goal? Who decides that goal? Why? How to we define and set the limits or no limits of a particular goal? What resources are demanded by those curricular goals? Why?

Likewise, the problem of philosophy is another significant problem. Why do we need a curriculum? What are the major philosophical assumptions that help or impede us to include or exclude some experiences, contents and processes in curriculum? Behaviorists think in one way; constructivists think in another way. Positivists propose one thing and poststructuralists go for next. The issue of practice of curriculum is largely related to the context. Time and complexity matter (Slattery, 2012). It is also related to the human persons who are directly involved in the delivery or implementation of the curriculum. Does curriculum represent the need of the people, specifically the learners? Does it address their future needs? How do we know what will be the future needs of these learners? We know that most of the time curriculum focuses on the past. It tries to incorporate some aspects of the present. However, the most important function of education is improving the future of every learner according to her or his own judgment, and understanding is generally found left out. Curriculum designers spend too much of time looking at the past. But the world has to be redefined to meet the future needs. We live every moment. We live at the present. An uncertain future and messy present are to be major curricular matters. Does curriculum stand strong to ensure Justice? How do we define justice? The curriculum that fails to represent minoritized, vulnerable, and neglected group of society means curriculum never becomes a tool for justice and therefore cannot ensure justice.

When knowledge of someone, practice of somebody, and culture of “others” are imposed through curriculum, justice never gets served. Learners have to have freedom of defining their world and role in the world. They should be empowered to see, explore, and understand the world around them, so that they can freely without any restriction come to their own solution of the world problems. That is how human beings learn. That is our nature. Curriculum should be able to install hope and love among learners and teachers. Curriculum should be able to empower society. Curriculum should be the tool of refocusing humanness in human beings. What is meant by humanness? I would want to leave this question open forever?

Let the learners define the humanness through cognitive, dialogic, and participatory process. I believe that we as human beings have a responsibility to other human beings, nature, the world, the universe, and ourselves. We human beings do not have any limits of imagining better, safer, and prosperous world. We have equal responsibility to let other human beings in the world thrive, grow, and be happy. We have a responsibility to let the nature, other natural beings, and the earth also feel good. Education cannot be the tool of someone to dominate others. If

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education privileges one and deprives the other, that is not education. Curriculum in the same way cannot comfort one and discomfort another.

We live in the present so that the major content of curriculum has to be the immediate present. However, our intimate focus is unknown future. The future looks brighter and hopeful, reason, called scientific process of curricular practices have already failed. Since it has failed many. The educational establishment in the near future will wake up. Education can not only produce copy of something, education has to invent new products. The problem of curriculum is to understand the problems of its own.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG CURRICULAR PRACTICES, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND DEMOCRATIC PURPOSE?

When I encounter the terminology curricular practices, I cannot stop thinking about my childhood. I start to remember the dirt around me, my teacher who always had several pieces of white chalk in his hand, my small writing board of slate, the classroom of the playground, my friends shouting, and running around, and my teacher using his natural insights to guide all of us. He had individual stories to tell. He knew everything about our family, and happenings. He used to challenge us individually and collectively. My first formal school memory helps me to start thinking about today's pedagogical practices in the United States (may be most of the industrialized nation's present day schools). A teacher follows the protocol of teaching. Student is busy with his/her smart device. Teacher fears to make authentic and lively relationship most of the time, they are overly concerned about the right thing? Do I really know whose right thing am I following?

Vogler's (2006) narrative of a public school teacher in the United States that he posited perfectly makes sense to me. The teacher who Vogler (2006) interviewed said,

My choice of instructional delivery and materials is completely dependent on preparation for this test. Therefore, I do not use current events, long-term projects, or creative group/corporate work because this is not tested and the delivery format is not used. All my tests reflect the testing format of the subject area tests- multiple-choice and open-ended questions. (p. 31)

There is no doubt, in my mind, as Au (2011) critically contested, most of the "public school teachers in the US are teaching under what might be considered the 'New Taylorism,' where their labour is controlled vis-à-vis high-stakes testing and pre-packaged, corporate curricula aimed specifically at teaching to the tests" (p. 25). The injustices sprout, grow, and start to give its fruits in those classrooms and schools. As Apple (2013) discussed the politics of official knowledge some groups enjoy the privilege of claiming their knowledge as official. Knowledge of some groups is taken "as the most legitimate, as official knowledge, while other

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groups' knowledge hardly sees the light of day, says something extremely important about who has power in society" (p. 195).

Au (2011) further alerted me, "Teachers are the workers who employ the most efficient methods to get students to meet the pre-determined standards and objectives... The school is the factory assembly line where this process takes place" (p. 27). How do I imagine possibility of equal treatment and social justice in these factory-like schools, where a teacher is just a worker who follows only instructions from the top? How do I imagine a democratic purpose of curriculum where curriculum itself is not free?

Carl Glickman (1998) provided some essential concepts about democratic purpose and practice in the classroom. Let's imagine a classroom where "students are actively working with problems, ideas, materials and other people as they learn skills and content" (p. 51) and they are "working and learning from each other, individually and in groups, at a pace that challenges all (p. 52). Do our muted or silenced factory like schools serve this purpose? Does our curriculum really intend to make democratic society where social justice is a reality?

#### WHAT IS IMPORTANT ABOUT CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION TO US?

For the believers of democratic educational world, curriculum largely is a universe where our young people find their world, dream for their new world, and live it. Curriculum should include, connections, fun things, hopes, and challenges for them. The curriculum for me is the knowledge, skills, and possibilities for all and of all. I do believe in the words of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) who stated "that of all the factors inside the school that affect the children's learning and achievement, the most important is the teacher—not standards, assessments, resources, or even the school's leadership, but the quality of the teacher" (p. xii). Hence, curriculum is the content and context that truly empowers students to explore new possibilities, and teachers to become co-explorer in the quest of knowledge construction process of a student.

It makes me sad that curriculum itself is the cause of school dropout for some students and curriculum causes some teachers to stop doing their job of teaching. Curriculum being the biggest battleground of the politics of federal, state, and local level, time and again loses its original intent. Curriculum should be a supporting factor to ensure social justice in the school and the society. However, as Brooks and Miles (2008) say, "Awareness of social injustices is not sufficient, school leaders must act when they identify inequity. School leaders are not only uniquely positioned to influence equitable educational practices; their proactive involvement is imperative" (p. 107). However, many bureaucratic minded school leaders, and factory worker minded educators use curriculum to marginalize students with various kinds of differences. Curriculum has to be a tool to create greater democracy, but in reality, has not happened yet.

Am I that anarchic to believe that we do not need curriculum at all? My answer is no, we need one. A turnaround situation is possible through curriculum. The original meaning of curriculum from Latin suggests an ongoing dynamic definition of curriculum that has an essence of running the race. It is not stopping at a point. A curriculum cannot impede a student, or a teacher learning at one point. It can never be an ideologically and philosophically fixed or rigid phenomenon. John Dewey's definition makes perfect sense to me. "Curriculum is a continuous reconstruction, moving from the child's present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies... the various studies... are themselves experience – they are that of race" (Dewey, 1902, pp. 11–12). However, we are stuck in the limited, reductionist view of Ralf Tyler. Tyler (1957) said that the curriculum is "all the learning experiences planned and directed by the school to attain its educational goal" (p. 79).

Curriculum has largely informed instruction in today's practice. I see a nonlinear connection between curriculum and instruction. The central intervening variable has to be learning. There should be a free two-way bridge between curriculum and instruction. One should inform and enrich the other. The central bridge 'the learning' has to have strong pillars so that this bridge never loses its quality. In practice, we mostly find a disconnect or a one-way flow, in which curriculum oppresses instruction. In this situation, both teachers and students feel disconnected.

Instruction is still important. However, instruction has to support children to learn. If they really learn and create new knowledge, who we are to tell them that they only need to learn a specific historical, cultural, or physical thing? My job as an educator, as an adult, has to be that of a critical facilitator. We have to teach the kids to think and form questions about what they are thinking and doing. By doing so, we let students identify what works and what does not for them as citizens in a democratic community.

#### WHERE WILL WE GO FROM HERE?

I started this academic and reflective journey with a puzzle in my mind. As I reached to the end of this chapter, I wonder, do I claim that I know something? The answer could be 'yes' and 'no' both. During this process we walked through many views about curriculum. We also learned that curriculum was more a political material than educational. We learned that till now, the curriculum is largely prescriptive solution to classroom fever. We also learned that the old formula of common core, which is still prevalent, is going to fail and there will be a day, each child will enjoy learning.

I realized how complex the curricular environment looks like. I equally learned that the self-looking, autobiographical, and reflexive process prepares me as a better curriculum leader, or a better teacher for future. According to Tilley and Taylor (2013), we constantly evolve ...

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... understanding their identities (and those of their students); the knowledge circulating in classrooms, the curriculum that is assigned and evolving, the tensions that emerge, and the pedagogies that are helpful for educators with social justice goals. By viewing ourselves as intricately tied to the differences that exist in our educational spaces, we make visible the ways in which the bodies in the room (teachers and students), individual ideologies and beliefs, and the micro and macro structures, influence how curriculum evolves. (p. 427)

It was my passion when I started to teach in Nepal that one day I will be able to become a really good teacher. It did not take much time that schools offered me leadership roles. I accepted the challenge, my fundamental quest remained the same. I wanted to be a really good educational leader as well as a really good teacher. The scariest and unknown thing was not knowing what makes a really good leader, or a really good teacher. What are the qualities of a good teacher or a leader? I encountered with so many ways of defining, describing, and analyzing the “good” of teaching and leading. Then I realized that I was transforming each day. I did not know when—could not pinpoint when—I wanted to become a transformative leader in education (Shields, 2013). As Shields (2004) stated, “Transformative leadership, ... inextricably links education and educational leadership with the wider social context within which it is embedded” (p. 559). I need to understand that the process of transformative leadership journey sometimes become alienating and exhausting. I need to know the ways of keeping the passion of always learning, becoming, and self-transforming.

I know for sure that the modern era of accountability and standards has abused the total phenomenon of education. Lipman (2004) explained:

Students, as well as teachers, with all their varied talents and challenges, were reduced to a test score. And schools, as well as their communities, in all their complexity—their failings, inadequacies, strong points, superb and weak teachers, ethical commitments to collective uplift, their energy, demoralization, courage, potential, and setbacks—were blended, homogenized, and reduced to a stanine score. (p. 172)

What I do not know is, what will be my future role to disrupt the neoliberal abuse of and takeover of education. Constantly hoping for a better society and world, where democracy will be the culture of education, I will continue learning new things and ways of educational phenomenon. I will always carry a critical pedagogical lens with me to understand the injustices caused by various forces of education including the undemocratic curriculum, and other structures. As Mahiri (2005) said, “[s]tandardized teaching and learning correspond to standardized tests. Specifically, teaching and learning become Taylorized” (p. 82). My future job is being active in the movement of [de]Taylorizing education. Let’s ask another important question. Are we doing enough to (re)democratizing the educational world? Should we?

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## 8. FOSTERING DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES IN THE CLASSROOM

*An Ontological Model*

Colleges and universities are being challenged to prepare students to become empowered leaders who know themselves as engaged, active participants in the creation of a future for society. Unfortunately some students are graduating from of our higher education institutions without having acquired the critical skills needed to navigate life with power. Some students are not getting sufficient opportunities for critical thinking, self-agency, and social action in the classroom. Without engaged and empowered learners, the future of education and society is at risk. Perhaps the implementation of an ontological model in the classroom can be one key contribution to the development of students and educators and the reformation of American education. When educators and students are invited to examine who we are being as leaders in the classroom and the world, we are then better equipped to engage as citizens and agents of change. Collectively, we can renovate education and empower individuals from all walks of life who may then inform and create the future of American education and society.

Educators might then give consideration to ontological inquiry and how it might inform the work we do in the classroom. Ontology puts learners in touch with their being and its relationship to self and the world. Once this relationship and the associated dynamics are accessed, they can be critically examined and re-contextualized. Applied specifically to pedagogy, ontology can make available to the educator and learner who they see themselves to be, how they show up in the world and how the world shows up for them. Perceptions and the perceived can then be critically examined, challenged, and ultimately given a new context that would allow for more effective personal and social agency.

### PREPARING FOR MY JOURNEY IN ONTOLOGICAL INQUIRY

It is the summer of 2013. I prepare to fly to Canada to take a leadership course that my dissertation advisor recommends. “Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model”. Before taking the course, I had no idea what to expect. What I discovered in the process of taking the course is that one’s “being” is not regarded as immutable when ontologically examined.

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That is, one's being is dealt with as changeable and unfixed. Approaching "being" from this perspective allows me to experience myself in ways that are not limited. Applied specifically to pedagogy, ontology can make available to the learner who they see themselves to be, how they show up in the world and how the world shows up for them. Once established, meaning can be made as to how perceptions and the perceived intersect. As a participant in the course, my perceptions and the perceived are critically examined, challenged, and ultimately given a new context that would allow for more effective personal and social agency.

It is not to say that after taking the course, I reached a high degree of mastery in my exercise of ontological inquiry. I still find myself grappling with some of the same issues I had before taking the course. However, in taking the course, it is made clear that transformation is not a one-time occurrence. Rather, as a life-long learner I will continue to experience breakdowns, to critically reflect, and to discover. However, what ontological inquiry offers is the revealing of those breakdowns and on-going opportunities to examine who I am being in those moments. In discovering, examining, and loosening the constraints that limit me as a leader, I am able to experience myself more powerfully in the world. I am also able to continually make myself available to life's possibilities and create futures bigger than myself. Such possibilities include a created future where my contribution to higher education is one where I generate opportunities for educators and students to experience themselves as active participants and contributors to learning and the creation of created futures that others can come to live into.

It's not to suggest that ontological inquiry is the only answer to educational reform or that it results in immediate transformation. The very essence of transformation is that it is a process and often not instantaneous. As we explore the nature and function of human behavior, it is inevitable that our relationship to ourselves, others, and the world will continue to shift. What ontological inquiry calls for is the on-going commitment to the discovery of who we are being. It calls for us to consider a paradigm where we do not have all the answers but rather we are constantly engaging with the questions in order to remain present with how we are showing up in the world, how the world occurs for us, and ultimately discovering what our contribution to the world will be.

#### AT THE AIRPORT

I am sitting in this small airport waiting to board my flight. I am all in my head and I cannot hear or see anything around me. It's all a blur. I am a bundle of nerves right now. I have a million questions running through my head. What will Vancouver look and feel like? How will I convert my money to Canadian dollars? I am feeling sad and alone. I miss my family already. Am I doing the right thing? Will this be worth it? What it will be like? My advisor told me to dump everything out before I board the plane. I need to be an empty vessel. I am writing this all down. I am emptying my soul onto this journal. I am not quite empty yet. I am still swimming in what's left of my

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thoughts. I ask myself: “before I board this plane, what do I want to leave behind?” My answers: (1) Fear. Fear of my power. Fear of the unknown. (2) The high level of pressure I put on myself. (3) My diminishing of my authority and validity as an African-American woman because I assume others are as well. I feel a bit more open now. I just dumped years of “stuff” on this sheet of paper. I am boarding the plane. I hope to leave as a scared little girl and return as a fearless woman.

#### ENGAGING IN THE COURSE

I walk into the course room. I am the only African-American woman in the room. I already feel like I don't belong. We jump right into the material. Moments later we are in a group activity. I am the only one with a Student Affairs background. Everyone is from the business world. They don't understand me. I retreat. It doesn't matter because no one will notice anyway. I am glad to be finished with the group activity but these feelings of isolation are lingering. In fact, these feelings are relentlessly piercing through me and won't leave me alone long enough for me to focus on the instructors. What is the matter with me? Why do I feel like I don't belong? Why do I always do this to myself? I tune back into the course just in time to hear the instructors talk about the difference between “conditions” and “contexts”. Conditions are the facts with which one is confronted. Contexts allow one to see the possibilities in those conditions. I am thinking to myself, “So you mean my conditions won't change but I can change the context that I bring to it?” There is this idea of choice and freedom. The group exercise was a condition; the contexts I brought to that situation shaped the way that condition showed up for me. Could I have chosen another context?

It suddenly hits me; my contexts were showing up for me while I was in the group. Actually, my contexts have been showing up undetected in just about every “condition” in my life. Suddenly, I want to be on the court. I came here to be transformed right? I cannot continue to allow these contexts to run my life. My mind is made up; the only way to loosen the power that these contexts have on me is to share it openly and authentically in front of the entire class. I raise my hand. There is no turning back now.

The moderator is approaching me with the microphone. My heart is racing. I feel the eyes of everyone in the classroom burning through me. The silence in the room is deafening. I am fighting back tears. My voice is shaking. Here goes. “I have discovered that my contexts are victim, not good enough, not smart enough, and as an African-American woman no one cares about what I have to say”. I am speaking from the depths of my heart and soul. A hidden, unexamined reality shows up. A burden that I silently carried for most of my life just purged itself right out of my mouth. I feel liberated yet deeply sad about what I just said.

Nozick (1989) writes: “When we guide our lives by our own pondered thoughts, it then is our life that we are living, not someone else's. In this sense, the unexamined life is not lived fully” (p. 15). Erhard et al. (2012) write:

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The good news is that most of what limits and shapes our perceptions – that is, our network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions – is in fact accessible through language. Since language is a faculty over which we can exercise real choice and through which we can employ our emotional and rational intelligence, an effective use of language provides access to a high degree of mastery in the exercise of leadership. (p. 41)

Bay (2011) notes:

Critical reflection provides one way of stepping back from practice. By locating ourselves directly within the incident or event, we subject our practice to a critical gaze, unraveling the meanings and discourses embedded in our sense-making and narratives, scrutinizing knowledge claims—our own and others. (p. 748)

To further hone in on the limits we place on ourselves, the course leaders engage us in an exercise where we discover the difference between “I am” and “the way I wound up being”. During this exercise, I write sentences that begin with “I am” then rewrite those sentences by beginning them with “the way I wound up being.” When writing sentences that begin with “I am,” I experience myself as limited and with without options for other possible ways of being. However, when writing those same sentences and beginning them with “the way I wound up being”, I experience myself as having options and choices that do not confine me to limited traits or characteristics. Having discovered the power of living life without boundaries and limits, the course then invites me to discover a commitment to creating futures that I never would imagine. By considering myself beyond the “way I would up being”, it occurs to me that the way I occur for myself does not have to be fixed and *unmalleable*. This discovery creates access for me to consider the possibilities I have for creating futures that are not connected to a fixed way of being. Rather, I can create futures from a space of freedom and possibility.

I discover the areas in my life where I have not made myself available to greater possibilities. I am able to discover how experiencing myself as “I am guarded” as a result of losing my mother keeps me from experiencing the fullness of meaningful relationships and close friendships. I also discover how experiencing myself as an African-American woman whose perspectives are not understood or valued keeps me from fully expressing myself in a professional setting. In those moments, I find myself holding back from sharing my thoughts and opinions. As a result, I experience myself as confined and inauthentic. The ontological model used in this course invites me to create a future where I am fully self-expressed and actively engaging with life. The ontological model provides me with access to how powerful contexts are and opportunities for other possible ways of being.

I am aware of when I retreat and diminish my power as an African-American woman for fear of how I will be perceived or as a result of how I perceive the world

around me. For example, I can recognize this constraint when I am in a meeting with other directors in my department. I occur for myself as one of two women and the only African American among a group of seven directors. When the meaning I place on this experience is grounded in “no one cares what I have to say”, I find myself holding back. In these instances, I am aware of how my actions become correlated with the way the situation is occurring for me. It is the ontological model and a phenomenological method used in the course that provide me with access to ontological constraints that are limiting me.

This course, unlike other courses I have taken, engages me in a way where I am an active participant in my learning. On a number of occasions, I am challenged to critically reflect on the assumptions I make about myself, others and the world. Additionally, unlike other courses, this course is designed in such a way that I am actively engaging in the material, participating in dialogue with the instructors, and learning from the sharing and discovery of others as they also grapple with the material. I discover how easy yet challenging it was to shift my contexts after becoming present to the constraints that limit me. I find myself teetering back and forth between freedom and fear; this is also a reminder that ontological learning is an on-going process of breakdowns and discoveries. In one moment I am embracing the freedom of having limitless possibilities ahead of me. In another moment, I am frozen in fear of the idea of facing a world of unpredictability; one where there are no boundaries or limits; one where I have the power and authority to fully define; one where I would have to leave my comfort zone and let go of my need for structure; one where I can unapologetically take risks. However, I also recognize that this is what ontological inquiry is calling me to do; to make myself available for all of life’s possibilities, dance with the unknown, and engage in life-long discovery and learning.

Through ontological inquiry, I discover what is possible when I learn how to engage the world around me and make a commitment to being a contribution to the world. Through critically reflecting on what my life, career, and education is really about, I am able to discover what is possible as a higher education professional. I create a future where my contribution to higher education is one where I generate opportunities for educators and students to experience themselves as active participants and contributors to learning and the creation of created futures that others can come to live into. I think about my role as an educator and the opportunity I now have to empower others. As Osteen and Coburn (2012) note, the “growth of our students’ leadership capacity is in direct relation to our leadership capacity as educators” (p. 13). I leave the course with a renewed commitment to higher education. I become reacquainted with the power of discovery and self-agency that education can provide. I leave with a new commitment to inviting my staff and students to experience themselves and the world differently. Being committed to empowering others and inviting them to create futures bigger than themselves would not have been possible if I did not first learn how to lead myself.

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As an educator, I am left wondering how ontological inquiry can inform the work that I and other educators do in the classroom. How can we invite our students to limit the barriers they and society have placed on them? More importantly, how can we as educators create the type of spaces that allow for such possibilities? How do we create democratic spaces where pervasive paradigms of power and privilege are challenged? How do we ensure that every students' narrative can be valued and seen as a critical contribution to everyone's learning?

One possibility might be the incorporation of ontological inquiry into liberal arts education. Certainly liberal arts education has much to contribute to the development to graduates who can experience themselves as creators of a future for society. Thus, an integrative approach to ontological inquiry and liberal arts might enhance the learning that occurs in the classroom. As McGowan (2014) notes:

Not unlike the journey of life itself, the liberal arts journey is indirect, textured, often difficult, but ultimately rewarding. This is because liberal education is about discovering your passion and developing your capacity to pursue and realize a life that is successful and meaningful. Liberal arts students learn more than intellectual content; they learn how to learn as a way of being in the world. (para. 2–4)

As such, ontological inquiry might support liberal arts education in realizing its goals of providing “students with knowledge, values and skills that will prepare them for active and effective participation in society” (Barker, 2000, para. 6). Ontological inquiry, much like liberal arts education aims to develop one's capacity for critical inquiry and understanding. Therefore, ontological inquiry can provide students with actionable access to who they are being as they engage in learning that invites them to negotiate their relationship to the larger world.

Ontological inquiry can also support educators in realizing their capacity for critical inquiry and understanding. That is, if we are to invite our students to develop their capacity for inquiry, we ought to engage in critical inquiry as well. As educators, if we are seeking to foster the sort of learning that liberal arts education calls for, we ought to engage in practices that model on-going inquiry and discovery for our students. That is, we ought to find comfort in not being the expert in the classroom. We ought to be able to stand in the inquiry with our students rather than resorting to the “banking model” that Paulo Freire (1972) argues against. That is, as educators it is critical that we not view our students as empty vessels into which we are to deposit knowledge and information. Palmer (2010) writes:

When we honor the hidden aquifer that feeds human knowing, we are more likely to develop a capacity for awe, wonder, and humility that deepens rather than diminishes our knowledge. And we are less likely to develop the kind of hubris about our knowledge that haunts the world today. So much of the violence our culture practices at home and exports abroad is rooted in an arrogance that says, “We know best, and we are ready to enforce what we know politically,



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culturally, economically, militarily.” In contrast a mode of knowing steeped in awe, wonder, and humility is a mode of knowing that can serve the human cause, which is the whole point of integrative education. (p. 22)

It is imperative that we consider the power dynamics that we create in the classroom by examining who we are being as educators, who we are assuming our students to be, and how learning in the classroom occurs for us. If we are seeking to realize the goals of liberal arts education yet learning occurs for us as only the teacher can be the knower, then we may fail to develop our students as global citizens with the capacity to pursue lifelong learning and become valuable members of their communities (Haidar, 2014).

## EDUCATORS DOING THE WORK

After taking the course, I had the privilege of interviewing national and international educators who are engaging their students in ontological inquiry. These educators are part of a group called LECOLE (Learning Community for Ontological/Phenomenological Leadership). They are an extraordinary learning community of individuals who are committed to creating futures for higher education and students. While they do not directly quote scholars like Paulo Freire or Henry Giroux, nor do they specifically talk about evidence of critical pedagogy, it is clear that they recognize the value of ontological inquiry in the classroom. With ontological inquiry, there is always something new for them and their students to discover about themselves. However, with on-going discovery comes some challenges. As one educator states:

The primary frustration is the willingness to be in the gap, in the breakdown, and reconcile the cognitive dissonance. In an ontological inquiry the question is where is the gap going to show up, and am I willing to be in that gap to deal with it? I am still discovering that each gap invites a new discovery, and new discoveries lead to new breakdowns. The challenge is in becoming comfortable with questioning the premise of something. We have to be willing to inquire into the premise of our beliefs to reveal our faulty assumptions; otherwise we put them in action and they become the truth. The truth becomes something to protect and we hold on. To engage in ontological learning, we have to have a beginner’s mind.

While the ontological model creates opportunities for on-going discovery, it also invites participants to confront their beliefs, grapple with breakdowns, and embrace a learning that requires continuously seeing the world new. Another educator states:

We are always disclosing. Whatever we engage in is disclosing who we are. The self and the students are the material, the students are the material and the interaction generates new material-if we are willing to see it. We need to bring all of that in the classroom. I am committed to developing leaders but also

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the 'being of being in a human way.' I believe that peace will never occur in the world until people feel fully heard and feel like contributors. Much of the peace that the world does not have is rooted in the insecurities that people have because they are not heard or valued. That aspect of humanity is not always addressed. Education should be a natural place where this happens.

Through ontological inquiry, these educators are able to recognize themselves and their students as active participants in their learning and experts in their discoveries. This sort of learning experience mirrors the type of pedagogical approach that Giroux (cited in Polychroniou, 2007) advocates:

... [one where educators provide] the conditions for students to engage in unlimited questioning and sustained dialogue so that teachers and students can experience themselves as critical agents and learn how to oppose dogmatic forms of education which not only limit critical thinking, but also close down the capacity for self-determination, agency, self-representation, and effective democracy. (para. 1)

In the most fundamental way, we ought to give some reconsideration to the way we teach and learn. How might we invite educators to consider possibilities for creating the sort of learning experiences that cultivate leaders who know themselves as engaged contributors to society. As Giroux (2013) notes:

There is a need to invent modes of communication that connect learning to social change and foster modes of critical agency through which people assume responsibility for each other. This is not merely about skill sharing or democratizing education and politics; it is about generating a new vision of democracy and a radical project in which people can recognize themselves, a vision that connects with and speaks to the American public's desires, dreams, and hopes. (p. 19)

American higher education not only has a responsibility to leave learners transformed but also with the tools needed to create futures that might not happen without their leadership. That is, educators and students must move beyond social barriers and towards a social movement that embodies democracy, agency, and contribution from all walks of life. This can only be realized when educators and learners experience themselves differently, more powerfully. As educators we might consider challenging our taken-for-granted assumptions about ourselves, others, and the world. How might we reconsider the limits and barriers we place on ourselves and our students? How might we disrupt the social paradigms that assume racial, gender, and economic hierarchies? As Jenlink and Jenlink (2012) write:

A fundamental concern for social justice and democracy is at the heart of educational leaders' work in schools today...Importantly, a stance for social justice recognizes that passive leadership practices lead to the reproduction of the existing society with its inequities; historical and structural inequities

in society, and through its educational systems, that disadvantage many while benefiting a few. Equally important, a social justice stance warrants the need for a critical, active role that challenges dominant social orders, and the need for a public pedagogy that works to effect the transformation and the realization of a just, democratic society. (p. 2)

Perhaps we might reconsider the sort of learning experiences we are creating that reproduce such dynamics in the classroom. Part of achieving this is fostering learning experiences that empower students to discover things for themselves. We might then find value in the unique and individual experiences of our students and validate those experiences as valuable contributions to the world. In doing so, we empower our students to consider themselves beyond the “way they wound up” and experience themselves as contributors to the creation of futures for society. As noted by Tomas and Levine (2011):

Every citizen has a voice in the management of the community. The progress, and even the safety, of a democratic community depend in part upon the intelligence of the citizens, and by thus we cannot mean the intelligence of some citizen, but the combined intelligence of all. (p. 154)

What is critical here is that “every citizen” has a voice in the development of a democratic society, especially those who have been traditionally underrepresented. All students, including women, people of color, the underprivileged, and the underrepresented, warrant opportunities to see themselves beyond the way they have been defined by society and self. This requires the creation of new and empowering contexts that offer possibilities for other ways of being in the world.

As educators, how can we empower our students to transform and expand their opportunity for other possible ways of being and action? It is important that we invite our students to be active participants in learning and social change while celebrating their unique contributions to the world despite whatever conditions they are encountering. As educators, we must also rethink the power structures created in the classrooms. As educators, are we willing to allow ourselves to be the student and the student to become the educator at any point in the classroom? Doing so creates a spirit of investment and collaboration that calls for everyone to be accountable for the learning and success of each other. Certainly this requires vulnerability and openness on the part of both educator and student. Sharing experiences creates a space of humanity and connectivity. We are then able to see ourselves and our students as a part of the greater fabric of life. We become accountable for each other and work together for the greater good. As such, one also cannot underestimate the value of authentic listening in the classroom.

It is also important that we consider the listening we have for our students. That is, it is essential that we create a space where their aspirations are heard and celebrated. In doing so, we also invite them to be a listener for themselves in the way they language their beliefs about themselves and the world. As Souba (2011) notes:

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This idea that reality is constituted in language is core to an ontological approach to leadership. Language reframes our observing, sense-making, and feelings so we can be a different kind of leader. When we change our thinking and speaking, a different reality becomes available to us. Shifts in our mental maps generate new possibilities for desires, actions and outcomes not previously accessible. The distinctions that we share with one another, with the intent of achieving mutual understanding, are those that occur in language. This...is the foundation for connectivity, collaboration, and alignment. (p. 8)

There is an internal dialogue and external language that proves essential if individuals are to experience themselves differently. Critical reflection is essential to this internal dialogue. Additionally, this dialogue is best navigated through the sharing of such with others who can challenge, support, and inspire us to be our best selves. As educators, it is important that we take the time to authentically listen to the concerns of our students and thus challenge them to self-reflect and consider their internal dialogue. Imagine creating a space where students can share the challenges, struggles, and successes through their self-reflection with others who are a supportive listener for them. And as they become more aware of their humanity, it is essential that we invite them to celebrate it as a contribution to the world.

Imagine a system of education that invites educators and students to be contributors that engage in democratic practices within and beyond the classroom despite whatever conditions they are facing. That is, despite social conditions and the personal narratives we assign to ourselves as a result, we still powerfully engage with the world. Souba (2011) writes: "While we cannot do much about what we know, we can alter the way we know it. We have the freedom to alter the way we distinguish the situations that occur in our lives; we can shift the context" (p. 8).

Essentially, when people have a commitment bigger than themselves, they become connected to people in a different way. When individuals continuously make themselves available to the possibilities of creating futures that require their leadership, they become keenly aware of the world around them and can choose a life of freedom without limits. Individuals might then see themselves as part of the world around them rather than a person who happens to simply exist in the world. The result is a web of connectivity that invites all voices to the table in the creation of futures for society. Imagine if education occurred to us as communities of learning, discovery, sharing and action. This is what an ontological and phenomenological approach to learning can create and how such an approach can reform American education.

Having established the need to rethink the way we approach education we might now consider how to prepare people for the kind of learning that ontological inquiry requires. Those who are engaged in ontological work are cognizant that we have a commitment larger than what the current educational structure provides. We are grappling with how to engage our colleagues in this work although many are still operating from a different paradigm. Certainly, the reformation of American higher

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education will not happen overnight. Much like the process of transformation, it will require on-going critical reflection, discovery, and action from all those involved. As educators we are called to consider new pedagogical practices that invite our students to experience themselves as part of the future they want to create. This will require from both educators and students a commitment to a better future for themselves, others, and society. It will collectively require educators and students to critically think about who we are being in the world and what our contribution to it will be. It will require us as educators and students to align our present actions with what is required to create a future founded in democracy, inclusivity, access, agency, and the elimination of social inequalities.

We ought to invite our students, regardless of race, gender, SES, or ability, to create a future bigger than themselves; one where their being and action in the present is consistent with the future they want to create. As educators, we are also invited to engage in life-long discovery, on-going inquiry, and to dance with the challenges and successes that come with on-going critical reflection and discourse. As educators, we must think critically about the ways we are informing educational practices that foster the development of future leaders who can democratize education in the classroom and thus help to inform the creation of a better future for our society.

## QUESTIONS

- As an educational practitioner, who am I assuming my/our students to be? And, how does my practice of teaching and leadership cultivate and/or stifle learning that links identity development, critical thinking, and social justice?
- What is my identity as an educational practitioner? How did this identity form? Have the ways in which I have “defined” my identity limited me as an educator?
- What social paradigms (both consciously and subconsciously) influence my identity of self and students?
- How do I use my practice to deconstruct paradigms of thought to promote equity in teaching and learning?
- How does or can this ontological stance influence axiological and epistemological stances for educational practitioners in the classroom?

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#### REFLECTION

Hello Uchenna,

There is indeed a great need to empower students to become more critical in their thinking, more aware of their ever changing identity, and how they can become more engaged in a world crying for the eradication of discriminatory acts. The ontological model as presented holds great promise as a pedagogical tool, especially for educators.

Incorporating deeper notions of cause and effect into this process, from social, political, economic, and educational perspectives, can help turn our world inside-out. You tell the reader, “Essentially, when people have a commitment bigger than themselves, they become connected to people in a different way.” I believe this to be a very powerful statement of fact. This kind of commitment reminds me of dialogue from one of the Star Trek movies that basically told us the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, and the one. This statement also supports Carl Glickman’s focus on developing a “cause beyond self” within the culture of an organization.

I believe that we must continue to find ways for our future generations to save this world by taking their blinders off and broadening the lens from which they see the world, their place within it, and their commitment to it. It is indeed my hope that our readers will embrace this ontological model, as they read each of the following essays, and find ways to utilize this process as they reflect and prepare to act as we work to eradicate discriminatory acts across this world.

– CT

CORNELL THOMAS

## 9. THE FLAG

Symbolism: the use of symbols to express or represent ideas or qualities.

We take the stars from Heaven, the red from our mother country, separating it by white stripes, thus showing that we have separated from her, and the white stripes shall go down to posterity representing liberty.

(George Washington)

### INTRODUCTION

Most, if not all, nations ratify and fly a flag that is designed as a symbol representing who they are. For example, the Flag of the United States of America consists of thirteen horizontal stripes, alternating in color from red to white. The Flag also has a blue rectangle covering the upper left portion bearing fifty white five-point stars. The thirteen stripes represent the thirteen British colonies that declared their independence from Great Britain and became the first states making up the Union. The fifty stars represent the fifty states of this nation. The Flag ratified by the Second Congressional Congress consisted of the same thirteen stripes but included only thirteen white five-point stars as there were only thirteen states at that time. The colors of the flag represent purity and innocence (white), hardiness and valor (red), and vigilance, perseverance and justice (blue).

I recently posted a message on my Facebook page and received some interesting responses. The post is shared below, along with a few of those responses.

We live in a community that was farm land just ten years ago. One must travel down an old road in order to enter this community. Just on the other side of this road sits an older home. When we moved here this older home across the road flew our nation's flag. I looked forward to seeing it each day. After the issues in South Carolina this year, the confederate flag was added at this older home. Since around Thanksgiving this older home has taken down our nation's flag, leaving only the confederate flag waving in the wind.

A few responses:

- It's hard for me to imagine what thinking process that goes through the mind of someone who does that. I kind of want to understand it and kind of don't. Ugh!
- Please stay safe.

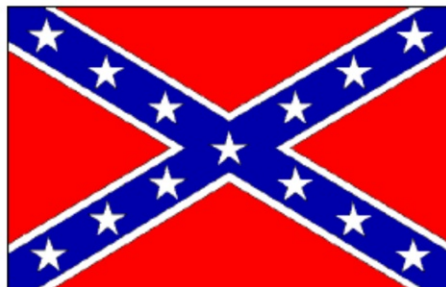
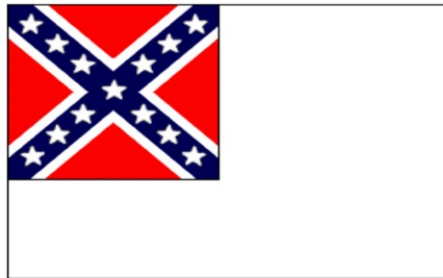


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- I guess that demonstrates what they think being an American means – the right to embrace racism and enjoy discrimination. They’ve been wrong a long time, although way too many elements of our society hold similar beliefs.
- I’m so sad that you must have that image shoved in your face every day! Too many people embrace hate. We all lose.
- So how do we fix this?

I also posted this message the same day.

Most of us know what the confederate flag looks like. So, after the issues in South Carolina one of the club members started flying the confederate flag on his golf cart. I questioned this decision with management who asked him to remove the flag. He stated that the flag represented a part of his heritage but took the flag off his gold cart. The next day or so he replaced that flag with the original confederate flag – what should I do?



The first confederate flag had seven stars and eventually included thirteen, even though Kentucky and Missouri, two slave states, never officially left the Union. The “Stars and Bars,” as it was often called, look very similar to the U.S. flag. It was said that this flag was so similar that it caused confusion on the battlefield, once the actual war began. The second flag was often called the “Stainless Banner” referring to the pure white field – symbolizing the purity of their cause. The third flag, “Blood Stained Banner,” was adopted by the confederacy a month before the end of the war. This is the version of the confederate flag that is seen most often today. Symbols of the confederate flag can still be seen embedded in the state flags of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Yet many of us seem to not know these fact or choose to ignore them.

Defenders of the confederate flag often say that it is a symbol of southern heritage, not racism. Some defenders of this flag and its heritage describe themselves as confederates first, and Americans second.

There continues to be much debate over the reasons for the secession of the southern states. However, a closer examination of documents reveals some common themes. For example, two primary themes emerge when reading the Articles of Secession for each of the southern states. These two primary themes are somewhat cloaked under an umbrella calling for state’s rights and a weak federal government. Debates regarding state’s rights had been on going at least since around 1840. However, the election of Abraham Lincoln, a member of the anti-slavery Republican Party, led southerners to become convinced that Lincoln and the Republicans would find a way to diminish state’s rights and strengthen the role of the federal government, abolish slavery and thus destroy the southern economy.

So, discussions of southern/confederate heritage had/have as its foundation a system that did/does not consider the premise that all of us are created equal endowed by our creator with certain unalienable rights (life, liberty, pursuit of happiness). After all the very economy of the south was dependent upon the continued enslavement of people, right? Defenders of this southern way of life argued that an end of slavery would also have a very negative impact on their economy because the cotton, tobacco and rice fields would no longer have free labor to take care of it. They argued that an end of slavery would result in widespread unemployment and chaos. I wonder why they did not think of developing a fair wage for those who would be freed. Good business leaders can develop cost ratios resulting in profitable ventures that do not include the total mistreatment of some for the pleasures of others, right? Or is greed such a powerful desire that we find ways to justify inequality while espousing life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all?

No matter how you parse the arguments, states’ rights were code words for greed and the unequal treatment of some people for the pleasures of other people. This fact is still true today and is the primary factor weakening the very foundation of our espoused existence as a nation. Over the past seven years or so the Tea Party movement has been calling for states’ rights and a smaller role for the federal government. States with governors representing this ideology have, for example:

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- Slashed state funding for public education;
- Cut the duration of state unemployment compensation during the height of our most recent recession;
- Found ways to restrict voting rights;
- Reduced state Medicaid coverage;
- Cut taxes on businesses and the wealthy;
- Diminished the power of unions;
- Weekend environmental regulations; and
- Refused to participate in the Affordable Care Act, while doubling premiums for many of the state's citizens.

While these and similar actions were implemented, they said, to stimulate the economy and bring back trickle-down economics, the results have eroded the middle-class while making the wealthy, wealthier. History has proven that trickle-down economics never works.

Let's dig a little deeper, while still calling for the eradication of racism, as I hold true to this work, we must also address the root cause. The root cause is GREED.

What is the chief end of man?

To get rich.

In what way?

Dishonesty if we can, honesty if we must.

Who is God, the one only and true?

Money is God. God and greenbacks and stick – father, son, and the ghost of the same – three persons one: these are the true and only God, mighty and supreme; and William Tweed is his prophet. – Mark Twain, "The Revised Catechism," 1871

All rhetoric aside, the pictures below share what the confederate flag has represented to most, if not all, of us.



Both the confederate secessionist and Tea Party initiatives were/are cloaked under an umbrella advertising states' rights, a weaker federal government, and increased economic growth. Trickle-down economics has only ever worked well for the rich. Both initiatives have resulted in a wider divide between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the disenfranchised.

Given this brief history, why do so many citizens of this country continue to perceive the confederate flag as a symbol of hate? The flag has been used as a symbol for a number of movements throughout our history. However, the confederate battle flag re-emerged and became the symbol of protest against civil rights, in support of Jim Crow segregation during the Southern States Rights Party convention in July of 1948, and waved proudly by many white segregationist as federal troops were deployed to escort Black children into once segregated public schools. As the civil rights movement gained momentum, defenders of segregation increasingly utilized the flag as a symbol of their cause. A cause representing white supremacy and white privilege; a cause calling for the separation of the "races" and constructing walls to keep "those people" out; a cause representing religious discrimination, especially those of the Muslim faith; a cause that supports the defunding of public education; a cause that wants to control the bodies of women; a cause that supports bans on same sex marriage; a cause based on the belief that all of us are not created equal nor endowed with gifts worthy of full inclusion as citizens of the United States of America. It is seen today by many as symbol of white supremacy and its symbolism is indeed far from its original intent. Yet actions in the name of the confederacy continue to enhance its symbol of hatred. I provide a recent example.

#### CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA – JUNE 18, 2015

A 21 year old male from Lexington, South Carolina created a website in 2015, which he called The Last Rhodesian. The website offers his thoughts regarding the civil war in this British-ruled African country before it became Zimbabwe. This young man, I am purposely not using his name, included in the manifesto on his website comments denigrating black people as stupid and violent, but can be very slick to get their way. There are pictures posted on the website of this young man posing on sites connected to the confederacy. In this manifesto this young man tells readers that while he would rather go into the ghetto, he chose Charleston, South Carolina to carry out his actions because, among other reasons, it had the highest ratio of blacks to whites in our nation. It seems that somehow this young man found potential parallels between the country of Zimbabwe and Charleston, South Carolina.

People who claim to know this young man described him as a heavy drug user who was full of southern pride, and told a lot of racist jokes. Some said that he would rant about the murders of Trayvon Martin and Freddy Gray as being blown out of proportion. He feared that black people were taking over the world and that someone needed to stop them. This is just one example of the skewed thinking that continues

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to poison the hearts and minds of so many Americans. How can anyone find merit in this ideology?

#### RECONNECTING THE FLAG

The confederate flag emerged on numerous occasions as a symbol of separation and hate. The flag emerged to represent the fight to maintain a way of life which was greatly dependent upon the continuation of slavery. It re-emerged to represent a fight against the reconstruction of the south because, in part, of the opportunities being afforded to former slaves. The desecration of public schools and emergencies of the suburbs (white flight), civil rights movement, and the Tea Party movement all represent fights against initiatives focused upon eradication discrimination in this great nation. A recent comment by one of the presidential candidates brings support to this work.



“The fact is since then many killings, murders, crime, drugs pouring across the border, are money going out and the drugs coming in. And I said we need to build a wall, and it has to be built quickly.”

I am saddened by our history of discrimination. I am even more distraught by the comments of some of our presidential candidates. The talk to build a wall to our south, not allowing Muslims to migrate to our country, banning same sex marriage, privatizing public education, and fighting against raising the minimum wage all speak to an even more ideology that is controlling our thoughts and actions.

It is this use of the confederate flag that is evil. It is this use of the confederate flag that is Un-American. I believe that the two major sides of the argument would agree to these two statements. Therefore they must join together to eradicate the use of this flag as a symbol of hate, segregation, and racism.

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## 10. W.E.B. DUBOIS

### *Elitist or Realist?*

The Negro problem, it has often been said, is largely a problem of ignorance – not simply of illiteracy issues, but a deeper ignorance of the world and its ways, of the thought and experience of men, an ignorance of self and the possibilities of human souls.

(DuBois, 1903, p. 1)

What was W.E.B. DuBois trying to tell us about the Negro, now Black, problem in the United States? Was he saying that the issues are complex? Were complexities embedded in the social, political, economic, and educational issues during this era of our great nation? Major questions impacting the identity of the United States and our expressions of equality seem fraught with actions of hypocrisy. Our actions, Jim Crow Laws, Black Codes, separate but equal, the denial of civil and voting rights, and more challenging pathways towards economic attainment and educational access for some, contradict the premise that we all have equal opportunities to achieve our notion of the American Dream as respected citizens of this great nation. For example, the call for a basic education for those classified as African American and the poor has evolved, using different language, with actions remaining the same. More recently back to the basics movements have evolved into high stakes testing programs. Both of these movements represent a drill and memorization only process called learning.

Is a basic education consisting of the traditional reading, writing, and computing enough? Are additional skills and training enough? Were these thoughts expressed in the quote above, and essay containing it, an attempt to challenge the philosophy embraced by Booker T. Washington during this time? Or is an educational process focused on self-empowerment, the seeding of critical thinking and the exploration of the possibilities in one's life a concept worthy of all Americans, not just for some? Maybe, as some have suggested, DuBois was merely espousing an elitist, almost racist, perspective; one that has been informed within the halls and classrooms of the ivory towers of higher education. Or are answers to this challenge so complex that DuBois' thoughts are worthy of our consideration, especially since the 'problem' still exist?

Answers to these questions about DuBois' notions of the Negro, now Black, problem are indeed complex, open for debate, and deserving of our attention and actions. Attempts will be made here to ascertain if there are any messages within



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this quote from DuBois that can possibly help us to isolate real and perceptual barriers regarding the Negro, now Black, problem in order to eradicate them. Bringing renewed clarity to the messages in this quote from DuBois just might lead to better ways forward for those considered to be part of the disenfranchised in our great nation. It is also suggested here that the eradication of the Negro, now Black, problem will benefit us all. My approach will be to elaborate on the messages that I glean from this quote by dividing DuBois' thoughts into five areas of major significance: thinking, worldview, history, identity and hope.

Mr. Washington represents in Negro thought the old attitude of adjustment and submission; but adjustment at such a peculiar time as to make his programme unique. This is an age of unusual economic development and Mr. Washington's programme naturally takes an economic cast, becoming a gospel of Work and Money to such an extent as apparently almost completely to over shadow the higher aims of life ... Mr. Washington's programme practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro race... In the history of nearly all other races and peoples the doctrine preached at such crises has been that manly self-respect is worth more than lands and houses, and that a people who voluntarily surrender such respect, or cease striving for it, are not worth civilizing. (DuBois, 1903, p. 41)

#### THINKING

...a problem of ignorance – not simply of literacy

Most, if not all, of us agree that our nation and its citizens benefit in numerous ways with a more educated populous. However, when comparing teaching and learning environments I often wonder if our purpose for educating children has two separate agendas. My question: Are we educating the masses in ways that result in educated followers, and the chosen in ways that result in educated leaders? In other words, instead of allowing individuals to choose their own paths, are there attempts at hand attempting to manage the number of individuals prepared to lead and for the masses to follow?

Our public educational systems, at least for the masses in urban school environments, is designed to generate better test results. There is very little attention given to the support of engaged teaching and learning environments focused on creative and deeper thinking. Nor will you find curricula that strives to connect new information with the base of knowledge that each student has. A review of teaching and learning processes in our urban school environments, for example, offer limited opportunities for student discovery, conversations which help to connect new information with existing personal knowledge, reflections on new learning and how their growing abilities might impact the world in the near future. Instead of cultivating a love for learning, current systems push our students out of the teaching and learning process, and many out of school. Some would suggest that many of

these students are never invited into the process of teaching and learning. They are merely allowed to partially participate, from afar.

In many of our public schools, curricula is designed in ways that cause teaching to take place on one plateau, while students attempt to grasp concepts sitting on another plateau. Teachers instruct from afar, in somewhat impersonal ways. The gap between teacher and student needs a bridge, connections that allow personal understanding to enhance the learning of new concepts. Think about it, we all take new ideas and connect them to existing understandings as a way to make sense of them. It is a way for us to better internalize new information and make it our own. While students learn, or memorize, some of the instruction, it is simply not enough. This form of teaching rarely reach students in ways that connect with them. Instead, most of the instruction falls into the deep canyons between the two plateaus. (Thomas, In Press)

Our attempts at to teaching and learning, it seems, are designed in ways that dumb down levels of understanding, teacher proofs the process, and turn principals into nervous robots unable or unwilling to modify instruction that leads to environments where connections are real and where students gradually become empowered to take responsibility for their own learning.

Just what are the real expectations and goals for our children? Are there really two sets of goals? Some would argue that everyone cannot become a successful college graduate; that everyone cannot become creative and deep thinkers. While this thinking might have some merit, our tiered educational system should not attempt to control who will and will not be academically successful. However, they go on to say that if everyone was equipped with the abilities to learn how to learn for themselves, understand the social, political, economic, and educational issues of our world, who would want to be told what to do? Who would want to sweep our floors and clean sports stadium toilets and be thankful to just have a job? So, the levels of education afforded to some limits their opportunities to achieve high levels of academic success. After all, I believe, decision makers understand that if too many of us really learn how our country tries to control us, total chaos would ensue. Our democracy is designed for the masses to follow and for a few to lead. W.E.B. DuBois simply suggest that leaders should emerge from all sectors of society, even from citizens of the darker hue.

#### WORLDVIEW

... a deeper ignorance of the world and its ways

In today's hyper connected world, the rewards for countries and individuals that can raise their educational achievement levels will be bigger than ever, while the penalties for countries and individuals that don't will be harsher than ever. There will be no personal security without it. There will be no national security without it. (Friedman & Mandelbaum, 2011, p. 100)

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The topic of national security has emerged as one of the top concerns among voters as we prepare to elect our next president. The Office of Homeland Security, CIA, FBI, and local police agencies remain on high alert. Yet we are still experience growing numbers of terrorist acts across the country. For sure, a more educated populous of creative and critical thinkers will improve our efforts to defeat this growing threat to our way of life. The age of technology has created a new way for the enemy to spread its propaganda and recruit members. We need to find ways to win the technological battle. This need for more thinkers and to win the technological battle, should also include those of the darker hue.

There are numerous ways for us to fight against terrorism. While improving safety measures and detecting potential attacks is a must, there is a need to bring clarity to the issues causing this growth of terrorism. I want to focus here on stopping the recruitment of our own citizens who become radicalized. Anger ignites a desire to right perceived wrongs and the lack of hope becomes the fire.

Under-education, the loss of good paying jobs to other countries, greed, and much of the current political banter over the past ten or so years has almost destroyed our middle class. The creation of the middle class in this country was, in part, supported because it did help to create and maintain the belief that each of us could progress economically and socially, with hard work. Manufacturing jobs, for example, offered many individuals with opportunities to earn a good wage. Hard work might also result in promotions and even higher wages. Most of these kinds of jobs have been moved to other countries in attempts for companies to weaken, and even destroy, unions and to keep a larger share of the profits. At the same time crime has risen, hope for better futures had diminished, and the combination of these two factors has opened the door for radicalization to occur.

If DuBois was alive today he might suggest the need for Negro/Black leadership to come together to build a coalition designed to successfully address the need for more good paying jobs and the skills needed to succeed. While there are more educated Black people these days, there still seems to be this lack of the kind of worldview needed for building a better way forward.

The silent growing assumption of this age is that the probation of races is past, and that the backward races of to-day are of proven inefficiency and not worth saving. Such an assumption is the arrogance of people's irreverent toward Time and ignorant of the deeds of men. A thousand years ago such an assumption, easily possible, would have made it difficult for the Teuton to prove his right to life. Two thousand years ago such dogmatism, readily welcome, would have scouted the idea of the blond races ever leading civilization. So woefully unorganized is sociological knowledge that the meaning of progress, the meaning of "swift" and "slow" in human doing, and the limits of human perfectibility, are veiled, unanswered sphinxes on the shores of science. Why should Aeschylus have sung two thousand years before Shakespeare was born? Why has civilization flourished in Europe, and flickered, flamed, and died

in Africa? So long as the world stand meekly dumb before such questions, shall this nation proclaim its ignorance and unhallowed prejudices by denying freedom of opportunity to those who brought the Sorrow of Songs to the seats of the Mighty? (DuBois, 1903, p. 186)

#### HISTORY

... of the thoughts and experience of men

The history of the people of the darker hue in this country did not start with slavery. Just with any other group of people, there is greatness to be shared. Within most, if not all, groups of people are leaders, thinkers, inventors, and all kinds of positive descriptors. The narrative that tells us anything different from this fact, for example Blacks as only lazy, untrustworthy, drug crazed, etc. people, is just not true. As discussed in other parts of this book, even the social construction of race as a valid measure of the reality and potential of people is blatantly false. As a matter of fact, I take it as Un-American.

It is suggested here that DuBois was suggesting that our history, and the history of the world will help to empower the Negro, now Black, person to better understand the possibilities in life. Uncloaking the lies will free us to become more proactive, taking more control of our lives with the belief that our work will lead to positive outcomes. The enemy within us is the most overwhelming enemy that we must defeat. As a song once told all of us, "Free your mind, and your – well everything else will follow.

This history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face. (DuBois, 1903, p. 9)

#### IDENTITY

... an ignorance of self

It is suggested here that much of the conflict between groups, and individuals, is rooted in levels of invisibility; the purposeful cloaking of one's identity as a method of control; and the real and perceptual barriers that are indeed to be more formidable for some and much less challenging for others. The social construction of culture and race, as used in the United States, represents such a

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set of barriers that have become real in the lives of too many citizens. (Thomas, in press)

The signs said “White Only”. At the restaurant, they told my dad to go around back to order some food for us. As I grew up, all the heroes and good guys on television were all white. Pictures of those living in fine homes and on quiet streets never had people who looked like me living on them. “Boy, you are in the wrong part of town. I suggest you take your ass on out of here, right now boy!” The officer didn’t even know me. All he saw was the color of my skin. These are examples of things that occurred primarily during my early days while traveling with my parents through Mississippi. My parents experienced similar occurrences of discrimination much of their lives. The neighborhood scenario actually occurred when I was a teenager living in St. Louis. We were not supposed to drive to the south side of town for pizza, after dark.

What kind of democracy finds justification to purposely vilifying a part of its citizenry while privileging the other? Why is it so hard to allow individuals to determine who they are and how they will attempt to live their lives without interference from those in control? More important, how do I and others still deal with the inequities of this society and find paths for a better way forward? It is suggested here that the journey begins with an end to reactive responses to socially constructed, negative, and false identity claims. A more proactive approach to *know thyself* must take over.

The black world was expanding before me, and I could see now that the world was more than a photonegative of that of the people who believe, they are white. “White America” is a syndicate arranged to protect its exclusive power to determine and control our bodies. Sometimes this power of domination and exclusion is central to the belief in being white and without it, “white people” would cease to exist for want of reason. (Coates, 2015, p. 42)

DuBois was right, I think, in saying that an ignorance of self allows others to control every aspect of one’s life. There must be a more proactive agenda in place that is focused on self-awareness, personal identity development, and self-determination.

But back of this still broods silently the deep religious feeling of the real Negro heart, the stirring, unguided might of powerful human souls who have lost the guiding star of the past and are seeking in the great night a new religious ideal. Some day the Awakening will come, when the pent-up vigor of ten million souls shall sweep irresistibly toward the Goal, out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where all that makes life worth living – Liberty, Justice, and Right – is marked “For White People Only.” (DuBois, 1903, p. 146)

## HOPE

... and the possibilities of human souls

I believe. I believe in God. I believe that all of us are indeed created equal, and that we are all endowed by our Creator (God) with unalienable rights including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This is where hope rest. In our understanding that we are all God's children. This realization brings with it new beginnings and better futures.

DuBois, I believe, would tell us to unmask the veil, uncloak the warbird, and begin to see with our own eyes. The path before us will lead to better days, a much better way forward, when we believe that "the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams" (Eleanor Roosevelt).

## CONCLUSION

DuBois – elitist or realist? I believe that you have my answer.

### *Questions to Ponder*

- The author states, "Major questions impacting the identity of the United States and our expressions of equality seem fraught with actions of hypocrisy." How do you respond to this statement?
- Do you believe that DuBois was championing an elitist, almost racist, perspective regarding the education of African Americans? Please explain your response.
- How do you respond to the author's suggestion that our system of public education has two separate agendas?
- "The enemy within us is the most overwhelming enemy that we must defeat." How do you respond to this statement?

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KATIE HOCKEMA

## 11. CONFUSED

Fed up. Hopeless. It makes sense.

How can we make it not make sense? It all fits, when we live, if we choose to live, in the carved out world. The world we reinforce.

We don't make the world. We fit the mold. Once again I'm so far in the mold, so complacent in reality, that I struggle to write. I struggle to find questions. Theoretically and practically I know there are issues.

Scared of myself. Scared that I have reverted back to my pre-graduate grey. Pre questions, pre grey, pre critical... I'm back.

I know I'm back, but I'm unsure how to get back. That's a lie. I'm exhausted. I'm hopeless. I'm un-motivated.

My thesis provides light. A pathway to interrogate. I can interrogate the world and any realities again and again. But I need, we need, to interrogate the self.

How can we pretend to know systems, know the world, if we do not know all of the selves. The self writing. The self speaking. The self listening. The self standing. The self next to me. You. The self across the room.

We "problem solve." We question. We answer. We rarely interrogate.

Come with me. Help me. Interrogate.

Our world equates to many shallow beliefs, one being—different is less than—less than you, less than I. We say and believe this without knowing you and I. So we live and become pretenders that evolve into hypocrites, hypocrites that evolve into individuals filled with hate. As we do this in large groups, we reinforce the ideologies of the larger group because we want to belong. However, we can and should, belong to ourselves. We can and should, investigate our own identity.

The examples that follow are messy and unknowing. However, they do provide a model for investigating and complicating identity. As I use my personal experiences, dreams, and reflections to investigate my own "identity" and the ways I mark another because of their "identity" what does become clear is one thing: the messier your reflections and questions get, the more transparent it becomes that labels and group identity markers are detrimental to the idea of democracy and everything it encompasses. Labels take away our power as individuals and as a collective unit. So here we are: living, breathing, and acting on tricked feelings. Many us of, not aware that there is a life of investigation and questioning with the potential to change our souls.



K. HOCKEMA

An Uber driver.  
Winding roads, in an unfamiliar space.  
Occasional headlights blaring in my eyes, shifting my attention.  
The smell of smoke.  
Five drunk women longing for a bed.  
In town for my friend's wedding.  
An Uber driver.  
North Carolina.

We waited on the street corner for more than thirty minutes; bars were closed, trying to find a ride home. As my buzz wore off and the minutes passed, my sleepiness grew. "We have an Uber," my friend shouted. "Halle-freakin-lujah," I thought, "it's about damn time." The silver Lincoln pulled up and we excitedly hopped in, ready to go home. An older black man sat in front and surprised me with his peppy attitude. We gave him our address and we were on our way.

An Uber driver  
Winding roads, in an unfamiliar space.  
Occasional headlights blaring in my eyes, shifting my attention.  
The smell of smoke.  
Five drunk women longing for a bed.  
In town for my friend's wedding.  
An Uber driver.  
North Carolina.

The driver began to talk about his life. How long he had lived in the area- you know since I asked "How long have you lived in the area?" I was assuming a black (was this important?) Uber driver "lived in the area" and not "in the city" because I knew the city was outrageously expensive to live in and because I had heard this reply too many times before. In a way, I was trying to avoid a feeling of guilt and discomfort. My attempt to be courteous, since I anticipated a reply explaining that he lived just outside the city, was radiating with absurd assumptions. Assumptions dependent on the subliminal messages, beliefs, and language that tells our society older people should have "9:00-5:00 salary jobs," that driving to provide a service to others is a "low-class" job that someone couldn't possibly enjoy, and that any narrative outside of these two would be ridiculous. As I reflect back, I'm not sure why I feel guilt in these situations. It is not as though personally I would be able to afford living in a prime area. However, a part of me knows my whiteness is indebted to situations of marginalization. Small talk shifted to one of the few people, well no there are plenty of people, that make me cringe: Joel Osteen. "Why the hell are we talking about him? Just my luck," I thought. Occasional whispers amongst my friends about the night broke my attempted attention. Blaring headlights, winding roads. More distractions. Why the hell was I even trying to pay attention to a conversation about Joel Osteen?! I needed to talk to the driver, not for his sake,

for my own. I needed to feel as though I had tried to show him five drunk, mostly white, mostly privileged girls cared about the conversation. “Sure”, “right”, and “interesting” are words I used to show the driver that his voice was heard and valued. I remember thinking this very clearly. I was basing my responses on the assumption that because this driver was black and a “driver”, he must’ve experienced many moments of silencing or feeling as though his voice didn’t have a space. But how can I remain mindful of oppression without defaulting to privilege? So, there I was, sitting in the back seat, a young, white, female, trying to save a black, older, man. Who was I helping? Why did I feel the need to help? Of course I had moments of genuine interest, masking my need to save. Who needed to be saved? Not the driver. Maybe the passengers? I remember thinking, “This is good.” If my friends can hear me talk to him and more importantly, see him for more than the service he provided, see his beautiful mind, then maybe they can grow. His mind was truly beautiful; he was intelligent and very charismatic. There I was again, trying to save. But what about being an Uber driver screams, “I need to be saved”? White privilege shadowed over my being. Shadowing provides some comfort as a white person; comfort in knowing the shadow is not me. I know the shadow follows me, but the workings of a shadow provides some space; space in between my body and the shadowy figure. Some room to trick myself into thinking I can sometimes escape white privilege. Laughing, I remember my shadow was present, even on the dark ride home, in the silver Lincoln.

An Uber driver  
 Winding roads, in an unfamiliar space.  
 Occasional headlights blaring in my eyes, shifting my attention.  
 The smell of smoke.  
 Five drunk women longing for a bed.  
 In town for my friend’s wedding.  
 An Uber driver,  
 saved me  
 in  
 North Carolina.

Identity, race, experiences, privilege, and voice all influence the way we are situated and interact in the world. They have all contributed to the history and design of the United States, making them hard ideas to escape. These concepts are also hard to work with because they have been present, and in a way become presence, or at least the way it is marked.

The driver of the Uber car I was riding in provides an interesting moment for me, for us, to stop and reflect. During the time this story happened I think my thoughts would have been in alignment with looking at the context of the male, black body. It is not that for every black male I see I have assumptions about their life. However, in certain situations I do. Reflecting back on my story, I felt that because the man driving was black and was an Uber driver, the combination of the two, allowed

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myself as a white woman, to in some ways feel the need to not only “save” by showing interest, but to break assumed biases that the driver would/should have of my friends and I. In the process of trying to break perceived barriers, I allowed myself to reinforce tendencies of colonization through my thoughts and reflections of the situation. Through this I wonder if in some ways my reasoning for my thoughts regarding why the driver needed to be saved, i.e. Being black AND presumably poor, have allowed comfort for me personally and at the same time supported white privilege. The comfort I feel comes from a defense against racism because my reaction seemed more appropriate given that I was looking at intersections of the man’s identity, making it easy to cover up the racist assumptions. Because you know, since I looked at the context of the black man beyond race, and considered something like economic status (my assumptions about this are ridiculous), or age (since older people must have 9–5 salary-type jobs) then I was beginning to buy into and justify my reasoning as acceptable and even “critical.”

Through this reflection on my experience, I see hope, I see racism, I see problems, but I see hope again. Hope that the way I pay attention to by own assumptions will help better inform my next experience. Hope that my questions inspire others to question their assumptions. As I write this, and question my own questioning, I am haunted by the words Dr. Cornell Thomas writes, “Defining me using terms connecting to culture based on group identifiers and general stereotypes makes me invisible to you and helps create that space where discriminatory actions take place.” Dr. Cornell Thomas’ voice reminds me, that my initial thoughts created the space for me to discriminate. However, my secondary reflections, I believe, have power. Noticing our discriminatory acts is, and never has been, enough. The work lies in questioning. We have dented the identity labels but we have not cracked. So we continue, to question—in different ways—that allow us to dent again; over and over again.

“No one wants to be the girl at Capital at 12:44 A.M. sitting on the side of the stage refusing to dance because of a sexist song...” I wrote this in my phone as I was out with my friends at a popular bar in Fort Worth. I love being able to improv and make up moves on the dance floor, so I was definitely looking forward to this opportunity with some of my friends. However, this night was different. I vividly remember laughing, sweating, and dancing for what seemed like an hour and then a wall. A wall that immediately turned me into a slow-moving robot hit me and then my body came to a complete stop. There I was sitting on the side of the stage, watching my friends and the rest of the crowd dance, just as I was a few seconds before. To be honest, I do not remember what the name of the song was or who the artist was. However, I did know that the lyrics in the song were extremely degrading to women and made me feel physically numb and mentally sick. I took a moment to reflect on what I chose to do. I remember the dialogue in my head: “do I sit here as a personal resistance to sexism?” “Yes, of course” I told myself. But wait, another part of me chimed in, “You are missing out on an opportunity to live in the moment with your friends.” Another voice chimed in “Ok so am I willing to

compromise my resistance for one song? Almost cutting off the previous question, I responded by thinking, “NO WAY is this no compromise! By stepping on the dance floor you are reinforcing sexism on a larger level and consenting to being called ‘bitch, slut, ho,’ etc.” So I sat there for what seemed to be an eternity, feeling angry, sad, and ashamed at the situation. Not only was I ashamed with the situation, I was ashamed with myself. This example of shame is not real shame when I begin to reflect on the experience, but it is an echo of shame that has the tendency to follow me, and probably many females, wherever I go. Shame that I am the one sitting as an outsider. Partly upset with myself that I made the choice to not dance because of lyrics. As one of my friends reminded me she was just dancing to the beat. Why couldn’t I JUST hear the beat, or JUST give in to one song, or JUST be ignorant in ways that I sometimes miss? Because, the truth is sometimes, it is exhausting and depressing to be in a space where I feel that I need to think and act critically: costing me moments with my friends or family. How can I sometimes be okay with choosing to do or not do something based on critical reflective thoughts, over the real, living, breathing, human beings I am surrounded with?

I use this story to illustrate the complexities of not only my identity, but also the extra complications that follow when a part of my identity feels as though action needs to be taken; all while other aspects of my identity leave me talking myself out of the action. Can I, can we, ever just be? Will I have to literally negotiate parts of my being depending on the situation? With each complex identity we carry, negotiations become more frequent, more intense. The society we live in, the beliefs we embrace, the narratives told, the power structures created, shape when, how, and why negotiations of our identity are needed. The rules of negotiation are very clear- some are in constant negotiation, while others are not. If a way of life is created for you, then there is no pressing reason to examine the circumstances in which you live – or at least privilege tells us this.

As I lived and reflected on this experience, I felt and wrote as if my marginalized identity—being female—was the only part of me in negotiation. I am wondering if and how this experience would change if other parts of my identity were not in the “dominant” group. I say this, disgusted by the terminology used but at a standstill to find words that illustrate my positionality in a larger context recognized by most. Another aspect of this experience that grabs my attention is feeling and writing as if my marginalized identity, being female, was the only part of me in negotiation. My immediate reaction thinks this can’t be true. I don’t think I live as sometimes choosing a combination of my identities. I think I live in whole and in connection to others. I don’t act onto the identity markers; they act onto me. This is not to say, that I don’t pick and choose how I am in a certain space, or that some of my identities are more apparent in given situations. However, if we buy into these markers from the start and others do as well, they are always representative of the whole and I just know, whole is how I want to be. Will we ever make it to a place of wholeness? To a place where identity is described by the whole and not marked by the parts. I wonder, can identities be isolated from the whole? Perhaps for conversation they can, but in

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reflections regarding the person, you are always you, nothing more, nothing less, not in part, but in whole.

I live in whole.  
You are always you.  
Nothing more,  
Nothing less,  
Not in part,  
But in whole.

I just know,  
Whole is how I want to be.

I propose questions and questioning as our way of engagement, to expand, complicate, and give us the chance we need to become whole. Reflections of our actions and experiences become disheartening. Yet, they have been my only way to separate myself from the immediate physical reality I live and act in. Questions give space to interrogate the discriminatory space, they become the way to create space.

*Katie Hockema*  
*Texas Christian University*

#### REFLECTION

Hello Katie,

As I read this essay, again, I was compelled to think about wholeness in a more internal, heartfelt way. Sadly, it seems that this notion of wholeness; being comfortable with one's evolving identity; feeling a part of the whole; and envisioning a future where this desire towards wholeness is not so traumatic for so many as I grow older.

You tell the reader, "So we live and become pretenders that evolve into hypocrites, hypocrites that evolve into individuals filled with hate." Sadly, again, I see your point so clearly. This pattern of thinking is even reinforced by religious ideologies that perpetuate hate and the premise that different means less than. This pattern of thinking is also reinforced by the political dogma of individuals like Donald Trump and Ted Cruz. And this pattern of thinking, hateful demagoguery, is reinforced by an economic system that rewards certain ways of life over others.

You also ask, "But how can I remain mindful of oppression without defaulting to privilege?" I would suggest that one can remain mindful of oppression by being a conduit for these kinds of conversations with positive action steps eventually emerging that will eradicate the steep slopes, non-essay detours, and the numerous potholes thus creating more equal path forward for all of us. We then use our privilege, in its various forms, to move the agenda forward.

CONFUSED

I share my thoughts here while in this brief euphoria of hope. To be honest, these brief feeling of euphoria are becoming much less frequently. Now in my sixties, I often find myself giving up. I find myself living in frustration and anger with hope slipping away. Yes, I see cracks in the walls of privilege and isms, but then think of the past actions and degrees of failure. There have been steps forward, followed by other steps backwards. It is indeed heart wrenching when I think back in a career and life focused on the eradication of discrimination and the evolution of a better world for all of us – and see almost total failure. Yet hope remains, through individuals like you, Whitnee, Anthony, Uchenna, and Chuck. For me, the once bold, bright flame of hope that emerged from the very depths of my soul now only flickers, occasionally. However I still believe that the fuel that once energized this flame will re-emerge. Yes, there is a hole in my soul seeking wholeness, but I am not yet ready to give up.

There is a hole in my soul  
It grows bigger everyday  
I don't know when it arrived  
But I wish it would not stay

I cannot see into this hole in my soul  
But I know how it feels, sometimes

There is a hole in my soul  
A hole called emptiness, sometimes

There is a hole in my soul  
A hole of darkness, other times

There is a hole in my soul  
A hole of sadness, all of the time

There is a hole in my soul  
I hope you don't have one  
It takes me to depths of deep sorrow  
With deeper depths each day

There is a hole in my soul  
It seems to almost take over, at times  
I try, but can't close this hole  
It just refuses to disappear

There is a hole in my soul  
Yes, I admit it – there – is – a – hole – in my soul  
Pray for me, please  
Pray for all of us

JON DEAUX

## 12. SKOOL DAZE

You ever felt so far gone you couldn't be sought?  
During this journey there were some things I had to learn that couldn't be taught.  
The flux from boy to man and how to be one,  
with questions to be answered like will I live to see one?  
Obviously not the type of education I'll find in this location.  
All I could think of is time is money, and the time I'm wasting.  
While day dreaming of investing my time times the time running the pavement,  
someone looked me in the face n' told me:  
"Think about your homeboys and the time they gave 'em.  
Then be sure to multiply that by whatever you're contemplating.  
Son, you here for concentration, be wise not to lean on your own.  
This is your home away from home, a place to find yourself and get in your zone.  
Life is about decisions and I'm here to help you choose.  
Here you have everything to gain out there just everything to lose.  
Friendship here is God given not about what you have to offer.  
The only handouts given here challenge with the intention to help you prosper.  
Son, I want to see you succeed..." It was hard for me to receive,  
though I started to believe as he educated on my race and he come from a different  
creed. The moral to this here class is  
life's about who make it out, not who make it the fastest.  
Establish the right path and watch your purpose become clearer.  
The best example of a man starts with the one in the mirror.

*Jon Deaux  
Dallas Baptist University*



CORNELL THOMAS

## 13. NO MORE DIKES OR DAMS

### INTRODUCTION

A dike can be described as a wall built to prevent flooding from a body of water. In the past when leaks would appear along the walls of the dike, citizens simply plugged the area to stop the water from flowing and flooding the area being protected. Remember the story of the little Dutch boy from Dr. Boli's fables? In this story a little Dutch boy discovered a leak in the dike near his home. He struggled over what to do if the dike were to break his entire world as he knew it would be flooded with everyone that he knew and loved would drown. So the little Dutch boy stuck his finger in the dike to stop the leak and save his world. We all know that this act was merely a temporary fix, and if nothing more were done major disasters would soon occur.

Just as in the story of the little Dutch boy, dikes often would become very saturated with water, thus creating the kind of pressure that eventually caused the dike's destruction and often a devastating disaster upon the community it once protected.

Dams have become a better option than dikes to control bodies of water. Dams were engineered, in part, to control even larger bodies of water. The Hoover Dam is one example of how engineering has been utilized to control a large body of water. Control included the ability to relieve the water pressure on the dam as needed through the releasing of water in safe ways as needed.

The actions of social justice issues, primarily based on perceived differences among groups representing this great nation, are analogous to the water pressure behind the dam. However, instead of water, the negative pressure behind this dam is identified as privilege.

“White America” is a syndicate arrayed to protect its exclusive power to dominate and control our bodies. Sometimes this power is direct (lynching) and sometimes it is insidious (redlining). But however it appears, the power of domination and exclusion is central to the belief in being white, and without it, “white people” would cease to exist for want of reason. (Coates, 2015, p. 42)

One can find numerous and excellent narratives in the topic of white privilege and its impact on citizens of this great nation. I choose to provide a more personal, yet brief, interpretation. For me, “white privilege” is a socially constructed ideology that grants one so called group of people to find justification for the actions of the said dominant group at other individuals and groups, which they have labeled,

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in discriminatory and unjust ways. This socially constructed ideology places one group, designated as white, above all others thus avoiding the guilt that they should feel for the discriminatory and other un-American actions that are sure to weaken and possibly doom this great nation. The fact that we are all human beings, equally endowed, has not stopped the establishment and perpetuation of a society that provides smoother pathways in life for “white citizens” and more treacherous pathways to traverse, in varying degrees, for all others.

Imagine if the water pressure behind the Hoover Dam found a way to flood the communities currently protected. Now imagine if the pressure of white privilege continues to grow stronger and becomes even more dominant in this great nation. The levels of religious intolerance and hatred would grow; the call for closing our borders to the south and building a great wall would become a reality; the refusal to allow Muslims to migrate here would become the law of the land; racial profiling and the unjust incarceration of our youth of color would become even more of normal operating procedures; same sex marriage would disappear; the huge gap between the rich and the poor would become much wider; and the premise within the Preamble to the U.S. Declaration of Independence, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men (and women) are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness,” would officially become a lie. If indeed these actions would ever come to pass at these levels, the desolation of this great nation will not be far behind.

A major point of pressure threatening to weaken this great nation is the growing prevalence of discriminatory actions based on socially constructed notions of race, in particular those classified as Black. There are members of this great nation who frown with frustration, disgust, and even anger when issues of racial inequality emerge. These individuals express a belief that racism is a topic of history, and that every citizen is now offered equal opportunities to pursue the American Dream. They point to the Brown decisions, Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of the ‘60’s, and Affirmative Action legislation as actions that have leveled the playing field.

While other citizens would agree that legislation and court decisions such as the ones shared above have diminished the effects of racism in this country, they also agree that there is much work ahead if true equality is to ever become the norm in this great nation. For example, the quality of public education is at its lowest levels in communities of color. In addition, the poor academic success of schools, particularly in poor urban environments, is a direct correlate to the high rates of criminal activity among these same students.

#### BROTHERS TALKING ABOUT RACE

What are they talking about? Racism is a thing of the past. We no longer need to keep talking about that stuff! Our great country offers everyone equal opportunities to pursue the American Dream. I know that in the past we had problems, but constitutional amendments and other legislative actions have ended issues of racial

inequality. They should just stop all this crying and move into this the twenty-first century.

Well, I have to disagree with you. Yes laws have been passed. Yet, for some reason or two, people still find ways to limit access in many areas within our society. For example, do you really believe that inner city children have the same opportunities to a quality education as those going to some of suburban and private schools in this country? And do you realize that most, if not all, of the children in these substandard schools are Latino and Black? Why do we allow these substandard schools to exist when we obviously know what needs to occur to have quality schools? Do we still adhere, maybe subconsciously, to the belief that being black or brown means being less than others? If not, please tell me why inequities in so many sectors of our society still exist?

Those schools are full of discipline problems, underage sex, and students who just do not care about getting educated! Their parents, well parent most of the time – single mother – is out prostituting herself or just laying around and living off her welfare check, food stamps and pimp’s drugs. They just don’t give a rip! The schools in these areas work hard just to maintain a small level of control. Those kids are heathens! They act like wild animals!

You must understand. Children’s actions are often reactions to adult behavior. I remember reading that a principal would tell his staff that children will be good at something. If they are not successful doing the class work that you give them, then they will find ways to be successful at disrupting your attempts to teach. These children are confused and/or crying out. Children, all of them, want to feel good about themselves. They want to be successful. When they are not treated well; when they feel the dissatisfaction regarding them from the adults in their lives, they often act out in negative ways. As a matter of fact, most of us react to these kinds of situations in the very same way! When people, including children, feel mistreated they strike back or go into a shell. Either way a wall, of perceived protection, forms. This wall often thickens with every insult, perceived or real. So, I say that it is not the fact that inner city schools are failing because of the students and their parents. Rather, it is the set of beliefs that we carry deep within our consciousness that we use to justify our lack of effort to utilize ways to improve these teaching and learning environments. Our thoughts and beliefs must change regarding “those people” before real positive change can occur!

What beliefs are you talking about?

I mean those thoughts about people being lazy, prone to criminal activity, overly emotional, and lacking the ability to learn at high levels no longer exist, in most of our minds.

Then why are certain legislators calling the President of the United States lazy and the President of welfare; why is there such a strong movement in some states to make it more difficult for certain people to vote; and why do we still see highly segregated cities? Why do we have such a high disproportion of people of color in

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prison; and why do we continue to support a tiered educational system with people of color, for the most part, being the recipient of an inferior education; why?

They get what they deserve! They are not willing or even interested in working to improve their lives; they would rather have a hand out instead of a hand up! They are lazy! My tax dollars are wasted on these parasites. We should stop all of this government support and let them sink or swim on their own efforts. I really believe that this is not racism. It is the American Way. Those that work hard move ahead and the lazy ones... Oh Well.

This discussion between brothers about racism could go on for a very long time probably with no changes in their current beliefs and/or actions taking place. However, if we want to continue as a great nation, we must find ways to stop this kind of divisiveness within our society. History clearly shows us that the destruction of great nation starts from divisions within. We, the United States, have lost our way. We seemed to have lost our identity as a nation of immigrants. One wonders if some of us want to ignore our dark past as a nation birthed as a penal colony and originally based on a system of oppressed indentured servitude. Our sense of humanity has been cloaked with personal materialistic desires and misunderstandings regarding the people who make up our country. Our heads are buried deep in the sand of the uninformed. Instead of a wheel of fortune, many in our society can only spin a wheel of misfortune, having no options for success.

How do we move forward as a nation to make positive change? What steps can we take to obliterate these negative stereotypes about race? Our task, if you choose to do so, is to find answers to these and other similar questions as we work to re-envision notions of Race in the twenty-first century.

This type of discussion regarding issues of race, and often the actions that follow, represent attempts to plug the dike or release the pressure on the dam. One such dike/dam attempting to hold back a huge flood of hate, bigotry, and deadly rage today is weakening due to growing notions of privilege and the actions emerging from this way of thinking about other people. Justifications for gay bashing, redlining neighborhoods, under performing schools, racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination are weakening our core beliefs and the very foundation upon which this great nation was established. Evidence of this weakening is also marked by the increase and less secretive militia type activities among our citizens who support Nazi ideologies; the increased justification and support from some of us regarding the publicized police profiling, beating, and even murder of people of color; and the dumbing-down of teaching and learning among our most vulnerable youth. These actions, and others, represent pressures that continue to challenge this great nation. Similar to the eventual results of plug the dike, our current efforts to address discrimination will surely fail us. We must find ways to create a new dialogue. We must no longer use discussions and actions that simply fuel divisiveness among our citizens. We must find ways that will result in the eradication of so many early deaths of many of our young black and brown citizens. We must move away from labels and group identifiers. Instead we must realize that each of us are unique individuals

with gifts worthy of full citizenships. We must begin to believe in the fact that we are all citizens of the United States of America and that we are only as strong as our weakest members. This fact alone should cause us to improve opportunities for all, especially those who are currently representing our weakest links in our chain of success. Now is the time to end the need for dikes and dams as a way to control, but not end, injustices in our great nation.

We must change our thinking about our fellow citizens who may look, act, pray, etc. in different ways that may be considered the norm. And we must stop just plugging the dike if we truly want to eradicate Un-American, and therefore, discriminatory action. More specifically, it is suggested here that there is a great need to adjust the focus of our thinking, talking and actions. For example, instead of a focus on racism, I suggest we address all actions that go counter to our beliefs about what this great nation says it stands for. It is further suggested here that personal stories become a pathway for change. Personal narratives move us away from the current generalized stereotypes utilized to rationalize our actions. Personal narratives bring us out of the darkness of invisibility and into the light so that we can really begin to see one another more clearly. Personal narratives have the potential to touch the heart in ways that can cause even the strongest opponents to change their thinking and actions. How do the following words of the song “Fragile” (Sting, 1988) and the personal narrative that follows impact your thinking?

If blood will flow when flesh and steel are one  
Drying in the color of the evening sun  
Tomorrow's rain will wash the stains away  
But something in our minds will always stay  
Perhaps this final act was meant  
To clinch a lifetime's argument  
That nothing comes from violence  
And nothing every could  
For all those born beneath an angry star  
Lest we forget how fragile we are  
On and on the rain will fall  
Like tears from a star  
Like tears from a star  
On and on the rain will say  
How fragile we are  
How fragile we are  
(Sting, 1988)

HE DIED THIS MORNING – AND I CRIED

He died this morning. I heard of the murder about five hours after my family was informed by the police back home. It's really strange. I was talking with one of my

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other nephews concerning him just two day ago. I was worried about a reprisal. See, about a year and a half ago he was shot in the arm, along with another nephew who was shot in the thigh. Well about a month ago he was accused of killing the same young man who shot him in the arm. The police, at the time, released him due to a lack of evidence. I was concerned that he or a loved one near and dear to him or us would be the recipient of a reprisal. It turned out that he became the recipient this first Sunday in April 1995.

So while he was in the pay phone booth talking with his grandmother, they shot him. He lay dead on the ground while they shot him again and again, over ten times, until his face was no longer there. They then began to shoot at the van that he had gotten out of. Another nephew, his first cousin, was in the driver's seat and had only one option – so he drove off as fast as he could, screaming, crying – already experiencing a living nightmare over and over again. His van had sixteen bullet holes in it.

We try to talk with our loved young men. Yet, choices continue to follow along the same pathway. A road of self-destruction, all curves and forks leading to an early death. They die, they die, and they die so very young. He was 21 with four children. The last three children all born within about a one-year time span, different mothers. He leaves many loved ones hurt, again.

He died this morning – and I cried.

I still cannot stop thinking about him and my other nephews. What can I do? What can anyone do to stop this rapidly growing form of genocide? We give control of our lives to this anger and begin to destroy the perceived evil, the bad, the man in the mirror. As a young man thinks, so he becomes. He becomes a murderer, he becomes a corpse due to murder or he becomes a convict because of murder. He leaves behind loved ones who cry and pray to God for answers, for His Grace and Mercy.

He died this morning – and I cried.

November 2015, almost 20 years later, and his only brother is shot to death in his front yard.

He died last night – and I cried, again.

How fragile we are, how fragile we are, how ...

So many of us have hearts that are scarred by the viscous murder of loved ones. Their blood spilled on the street, dried by the heat of the sun. Yet while rain washes the blood stains away, our hearts, and our very souls will never be the same. Our sense of joy is diminished by the re-occurring pain of their deaths. Our sense of hope is dampened by the pain of their deaths. We see no end to this disastrous pathway they choose to travel, even though we know how so many of these stories end. While they often think of themselves as invincible, we know just how fragile we all are. There must be another way forward. Maybe answers to the following questions can pave the way.

QUESTIONS: IF ONLY WE COULD, WOULD WE?

- If individuals could learn to love self and begin to realize their awesome God-given gifts, would they model the attributes of love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?
- If people could develop clear understanding of their past and, in the present, envision futures full of love, unity and prosperity, would they possess within themselves great potential and a powerful inner desire and drive for a productive and deeply spiritual life?
- If persons described here could develop a high regard and respect for their fellow person and seek strength of community through unity and honest communication would this become a positive, energizing and unifying force helping to create a strong and powerful collective mind-set within our society as we attempt to achieve desired goals?
- If spirituality provided strength against evil thoughts often controlling our actions including lust, sheer materialism, and selfishness while at the same time forming a strong, solid foundational base for the enhancement of positive attributes such as equality of membership for all within the human race, higher levels of trust between all individuals regardless of, and because of, differences, love, compassion for others, and peace would this become a pathway worth traveling by all?
- If the questions presented could generate issues for fair and impartial discussion and exploration in our colleges, universities, schools, homes, legislatures, and other forums of influence, would these ideas possibly enhance the daily interactions of individuals with others from differing backgrounds and lifestyles?
- Would future school teachers be better prepared to create classroom environments conducive to teaching and learning for all students?
- Would more students then reciprocate these positive attributes from such a classroom environment?
- Would more students and teachers be afforded better opportunities for success?
- Would parents model the kinds of thinking, attributes, behaviors, and hope needed to better prepare their children for lives full of joy, peace, and thankfulness?
- Would their children be better prepared to transition from home to school, to home to adulthood in more successful ways?
- Would all of us reap the benefits of these actions?

Can you see how the promotion of these questions would have a positive effect in all our school systems, communities and this great nation? In retrospect, are these attributes that can become commonalities connecting us all and thus reinforcing the creation and continued positive evolution of our great society? Or do we ignore these thoughts, call them unrealistic, naïve, excessively simplistic, and continue trying to



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plug the dike as we travel this current road leading to a flood of disastrous events? If we do indeed continue to ignore these thoughts, more and more individuals will learn to hate self. They will continue to turn this self-hate into harm to others. More and more individuals will agree with Mr. Trump to not allow Muslims to enter this country, promote bigotry, reinforce stereotypes, and perpetuate notions of privilege. More and more of our children will be under-educated, under-employable, and perpetuate this cycle of poverty. In addition, more and more of our young men and women will be murdered, by their friends, neighbors, and police. When will we learn from our errors? Inside of more dikes and dams, let us promote and live by our foundational creed ... all of us as God's children endowed with His blessings – with no exceptions. No More Dikes!

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## 14. ACHIEVING CONSONANCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOL MISERY

Some values become so flexible and overused that they cease their autonomy, and people use them in vain. You might find, for example, some of these statements listed on public school websites: “Providing a nurturing environment committed to achieving excellence,” or “creating responsible citizens,” or “Independent thinkers who contribute to the wellness of the society.” But perhaps these phrases have lost their meaning, despite the countless hours of professional development spent interpreting them. Perhaps they are used as a cover up; something to shade deficiencies in our current system. We use these values to implement more treatment in our schools in order to achieve better results; a flawed logic once truly dissected. These phrases are notable around the entire nation. In this essay, I will discuss some of the true dialogue I heard in my everyday teaching experience. I seek to explore cognitive dissonance, as the tension between day-to-day teaching expectations are contradicted with the theoretical grasp of what should be done. Here lies the challenge, which poses the question: what is the purpose of public education?

### VOICES

#### *Voice 1*

“What happened here?”

I received my classroom key two days before the first day of school. Starry eyed, I walked into my classroom with high hopes for my notable first year teaching. I had planned my classroom for years: decorations of pastel colors, a nature corner, books galore, wooden desks and manipulatives, all natural and spontaneous. I think of Elliot Eisner who said, “...teaching is an art in that the ends it achieves are often created in process... teaching is a form of human action in which many of the ends achieved are emergent- that is to say, found in the course of interaction with students rather than preconceived and efficiently attained.” All of this begins with the classroom, a blank canvas. For these reasons, it is pertinent that personality is illuminated through the classroom, and that it is designed for young learners to imagine and investigate.

I began decorating. I built my own teacher desk, made my pastel wall hangings and window drapes, designed a photography area in the classroom along with a calm-down corner and nature center. Commercial materials, posters, or banners on

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the walls had no place in my classroom, as I believed these supplies over stimulate students. For two days I worked to create a classroom of warmth, simplicity and comfort. I was not finished, but my time was up when the first day of school arrived. My supervisor walked in early that morning and was not pleased. “What happened here?” she asked, “Where is the color? Where are the word walls? Your students will not respond well in this environment.” She then gave me a list of classroom nonnegotiables, including anchor charts, word walls, student work display areas, a bulletin board for each subject, and so on. My first voice in school, my first contradiction, my first value denied. Six months later my classroom had every nonnegotiable; in turn there was no room for the nature center, the calm down corner, and my desk was removed.

### *Voice 2*

“Bubble in your mouths.”

“Hands behind your back.”

“Find your square.”

This routine has been developed for hallway etiquette. Not only did I experience this as a first year teacher, but also while student teaching in many other schools. When I first heard this routine I remember feeling puzzled, deceived, stripped. In school I studied theorists Alfie Kohn, Freire, Skinner, Piaget, Dewey, and nowhere in classroom management theory did I see this procedure. I thought about this procedure a lot, even putting a bubble in my mouth myself, soon realizing that I could not breathe shortly after. “Why is it so important that students place pretend bubbles in their mouth, and why should they be restricted to a 5×5 square in the hallway?” I thought. To make these practices more interesting, if a student defies any of these hallway procedures they are forced to the back of the line. Typically students in the back of the line knew it was punishment, and would then linger in the hallways longer, causing continued disruptive behavior. “Is anyone else picking up on this vicious cycle? I will never require this of the students,” I thought.

For weeks I wondered if asking students to fulfill these procedures sincerely benefitted their character and morale. I wrestled with this. Contrary, when you have a class of 27 transitioning three times a day, it is less about “whole child” and more about crowd control. The ideas shift; now you want 80 first graders in one hallway to quietly and quickly walk to their next class. Some may argue that this voice encourages the value “creating responsible citizens.” Others might consider it verbally abusive, or what Ivan Illich describes in *Deschooling Society*, “Under the authoritative eye of the teacher, several orders of value collapse into one. The distinctions between morality, legality, and personal worth are blurred and eventually eliminated. Each transgression is made to be felt as a multiple offense. The offender is expected to feel that he has broken a rule, that he has behaved

immorally, and that he has let himself down.” Six months later I often heard myself using this voice.

*Voice 3*

“Is everything okay, Miss Kittleman?”

I am leaving school and walk past my two supervisors. They say, “Miss Kittleman, is everything okay? You look sad, like something bad happened to you. Are you sure everything is ok?” “Yes, I’m fine, sometimes I look dazed,” I responded. “Well,” they continued, “you are going to need to fix that look. Your kids will rub off on your energy and it will poorly reflect in your classroom management. They don’t want their teacher to be moping around.” This conversation happened before the first day of school.

In a short time, I felt coerced to surrender to the supervisors’ classroom expectations which I did not personally embrace as part of my own classroom teaching philosophy. In so doing, I felt compelled to please them; after all, I was the new teacher entering the school, and of course, I wanted their approval. Yet, I was surprised that they were quick to judge my teaching concepts as inferior to those already in place. I understand that every teacher must make exceptions to their teaching methods based on the students, the prevailing school goals, and the parental desires; I also believe that excellent teachers never stop learning from their peers and from their teaching experiences. I was completely willing to learn from the more experienced teachers, but I was amazed at the lack of support I received, and the quick judgment I was given based on appearance and not a depth of understanding or observations. The voice I heard from the supervisors and some of the other teachers planted a concern inside me that I could not reach their standards, nor did I privately want to. I felt judged, not supported and encouraged. Perhaps I can develop enough self-confidence that I can approach people who are making judgments about my teaching style with insufficient evidence. Perhaps I can reach out in a way that would invite them to give me an opportunity to practice teaching methods that I have studied and anticipated for a time. Or maybe in the teaching profession, there are some situations where the established atmosphere is not a good fit for every person.

*Voice 4*

“Now I understand why my child does not respond well to you.”

Jeremiah struggled with following directions. He frequently defied my authority and would not complete his work. In an effort to soften this behavior I attempted a conversation technique where I would spend 2 minutes each class period talking with him. We didn’t talk about school or home life; we just talked about things that

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he liked. I felt that we both needed to get to know each other better so he could find place and safety in my classroom. I called a parent conference to learn more about him. When his parents walked in that evening his mom took one look at me and exclaimed, “Well, now I understand why my child does not respond well to you!” She did not like my 2 minute conversation approach, and believed I needed to be harsher with my words and actions. Jeremiah’s dad then told me to call him whenever Jeremiah was “acting up” and he would take him to the boy’s restroom to solve the problem.

There are some deep seated issues here that are not easily understood or named. I realize that certain cultural concepts are deeply implanted, and they are sensitive issues. I was fully prepared to be conscious of Jeremiah’s perceptions of me and of himself, and of my own perceptions so that we would see each other as individuals and not with certain prejudices. I believe this is an important, albeit not easy, task of teachers at every grade level. Teachers must rise to the highest level in understanding this challenge, and when they do, the rewards will be great.

#### *Voice 5*

“Why did I do that? That was not me.”

As the school year progressed, these words became a daily mantra. Why did I take away that students recess when they did not finish their work? Why did I choose busy work over conversation and problem based learning? Why did I choose to isolate and punish rather than patience and mindfulness? But, this is the voice of someone who has lost part of their moral identity. “Self-understanding requires studying not only the self as an individual but also the self that belongs to various groups. As a group member, a person is likely to be persuaded more by group-think than by careful, critical thinking.”

Again, this is a challenge to understand for every teacher because we are part of the group-think profession, but at the same time, we must retain our own voice, our own self as an individual. Our professional training must provide us with the necessary understanding of what the purpose of public education really is. When we are secure in understanding our purpose—to enhance the natural abilities and talents of the student, to provide a safe and secure environment for the student to grow and learn, to provide the educational fundamentals required for a particular grade level, to assure the student is developing in a challenging academic environment and also maturing in a social environment, and others—then as we understand out student-centered focus, the teacher must move forward to create this environment in the best way they know how. To ask myself, “Why did I do that? That was not me?” perhaps reveals that in the future, I must embrace the education environment with an understanding that it is not a perfect environment, and yet, I believe there is a strong need for teachers who can work within the group environment and still keep their independent goals to improve the system always in the best interest of the children we teach.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

1. Loss of autonomy – Why?
  - a. Experience 3: walking through the hallways and seeing Rubrics and Criteria charts associated with every students work hung up. All students work looked the same. Hallway work is to be changed out every two weeks. My administrator told me that if there was any wrong spelling in a word, take it down and ask the student to redo it. One I posted student work without criteria chart or rubric and it was taken down and placed on the floor of my classroom.
  - b. The longing for meaning, to be a part of something larger than the self, is again evident. And again, we are led to ask why many lives are meaningless that people should welcome \_\_\_\_ (war).
  - c. Critical lessons demand critical thinking on all sides of an issue.
  - d. What students can and should consider are the motives and reasons that lead people to uphold their initial positions or to reject them. Harvey Siegel wants people to be moved by good reasons. I doubt that people are often moved by reasons (as Hume insisted, we are moved by emotions), but I agree with him that reason should be examined, and we should ask what motivates us to select and prioritize our reasons.
  - e. Glover points out that some people have “found it a relief not to think”... to submit to orders, to stop thinking for oneself can be a relief; one is no longer responsible for one’s moral conduct.
  - f. The desire to believe a comfortable lie in the face of an uncomfortable truth is a powerful blinder, and it gives the official propaganda machine an enormous advantage.
  - g. Can we claim to educate young people if we do not prepare them for the psychological upheavals that accompany war and violence?
2. Motivation—must we motivate?
  - a. Two theories: (1) internal motivation and intrinsic interests, properly guided, are sufficient for learning whatever the student needs to learn. (2) external motivation must provide students with the incentive to learn what they should learn.
3. Education jargon and meaning—cloaking devices
  - a. Classroom management
  - b. Blooms taxonomy
  - c. Word wall and anchor charts
4. Focus on professional developments—banking method both in our schools and in our development
5. Cloaking device

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6. Dialogue heard outside—voices heard inside

- a. Heard outside: Bubbles in mouth, foot in square, hands behind back. You need to know this, you need to know that. You have no choice. No lunch until you finish this work.
- b. Heard inside: John Dewey

7. Cognitive dissonance

From *Life in Schools*:

It generally serves to reproduce the technocratic and corporate ideologies that characterize dominant societies.

Teaching is often viewed as nearly synonymous with “executing” pre-fashioned methodologies and delivering prepackaged curricula.

*Elizabeth Kittleman*

*Dallas Independent School District*

REFLECTION

Dear Lizzie,

I think that these stories are very powerful reminders, for educators and other, regarding several of the challenges we face as the struggle to educate all of our children continues. One challenge that I pull from your stories is the disconnect that seems to exist between what you were taught while in college and the realities of public school settings, especially within large urban school districts. You were taught to engage students in a process of discovery, enlightenment and eventually helping to empower them to take larger roles in their own learning. Yet, in many public school settings, notions of, for example, John Locke’s philosophy of education is more prominent. Within Locke’s philosophy is the thought that a child’s mind is a “tabula rasa,” or empty slate. Within this approach to teaching, the child is invisible and has no real individual identity or knowledge worthy of consideration when planning curricula and pedagogy. This way of teaching devalues the mind and personhood of the child. It is, for me, a system of control and memorization instead of active engagement leading to empowerment and real internalized learning.

Secondly, I believe that your stories help readers to see the huge injustices being perpetrated and the damage being done to the minds and hearts of so many children. When interviewing students from urban public school settings a few years back, I learned a new yet disparaging terminology that brings some clarity to my remarks here. Time after time students described their classroom experiences in very negative ways. They talked about how most of their teachers did not really know or care about them. They shared negative feelings about their education as boring and how they thought classes had nothing to do with their lives. They talked about the way to pass a class was to just not be disruptive. Some even see series of boring, irrelevant, overly structured experiences as Pre-Prison classes. The students that I interviewed believed



that they no longer had the option to go to college due to their poor education. They also state that this system of education is a primary reason that so many of their older friends have turned to a life of crime, and eventually time in prison.

Is this a vision of the future we want to instill in any child? Of course the answer is no, right? Can educators not see the cause and effect/ action and reaction phenomenon that continues to impact the outcomes within our urban public school settings? Do we want control or engagement as the primary energy supporting teaching and learning environments? Which approach do you think will have better outcomes?

For me, this kind of urban public school system of teaching and remembering, not teaching and learning, does indeed lead to student apathy, anger, and does impact higher rates of crime. It leads to the kind of educational deficiencies that limit college access and, of often even greater importance, a population of US citizens who are unable to imagine the possibilities in their lives. They cannot see very far beyond their current circumstances and believe that the only ways out are sports, entertainment, or crime.

School systems, and our great nation have a growing population of followers and not enough leaders who can truly imagine the possibilities when moving from poor to good and to fantastic teaching and learning environments where all feel empowered to turn dreams into realities. Instead we are populated with too many individuals who embrace comments like, “drill baby drill,” “we will build a wall and send them back,” and “taking back our country.” The current state of education within a number of urban public school settings in our great nation are paving pathways of mediocrity at best, remaining blind to notions of true excellence from students.

Perhaps it is time for educators like you to stop enabling this devastating process of teaching and remembering. There is a great need to establish more space that sits between current urban public school practices and the ivory towers of academia. Now is the time.

– CT

IMRAN MAZID

## 15. NEGOTIATING VISIBILITY AND SURVEILLANCE

*'Social Movement Ecology Framework' to Explore the Interplay between Surveillance, Social Movement, and Mediatization*

Our presence on digital platforms generates digital footprint, and our electronic communication is subject to constant surveillance. For example, our phone conversation, web surfing, e-mail, web preferences and habits, credit/debit card information, bank, and insurance records are under surveillance (Baran, 2015). Such pervasive practices made American citizens concerned about the protection of their personal information. For example, a Pew Research Center (2015) study reveals that 87% Americans are aware of Federal surveillance programs. Furthermore, 93% Americans voiced their opinion for some sorts of control over their personal data, and 90% want to have control over what kinds of information government collect about them. Reporters Without Borders (2012) compiled evidence that indicates that government agencies surveil Skype chats, VoIP conversation, web surfing, download history, data on computer hard disks, mobile phone data, geographical location, and social media data of activists, bloggers, and protesters. Furthermore, tech corporations like Gamma, Trovicor, Hacking team, Amesys, and Blue Coat provide technological support to authoritarian governments like Vietnam, Bahrain, Syria, Iran, China, and Egypt to monitor online activities of their citizens. For instance, to monitor online activities of protesters and activists, authoritarian governments often hack computers, IP address, recover passwords, access instant messaging, and send malware to targeted protesters and activists to dismantle or weaken anti-government protest and democratic practices (Reporters Without Borders, 2013, 2014).

This chapter has two primary objectives: (a) situate electronic surveillance in social movement studies and (b) provide a framework that helps to understand the interactions between surveillance, mediatization, and social movement. The surveillance scholarship can extend our understanding of social movement in three ways. First, scholars in surveillance studies analyze the agents, institutions, networks, technologies, practices, and functions of surveillance in society. Second, surveillance research extensively interrogates the role of the Internet in surveillance practices. The Internet is one of the pivotal tool activists use in contemporary social movements. Third, surveillance literature helps us to decipher the enabling and constraining features of the Internet especially the social media platforms in a social movement.

I. MAZID

This chapter articulates a ‘social movement ecology framework’ that initiates a dialogue between surveillance studies, media studies, and social movement scholarship. This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I critically explore surveillance literature and elucidate how Foucault’s idea of ‘*bio-power*’ and ‘*governmentality*’ help scholars to conceptualize contemporary surveillance practices. In the second section, I sketch a ‘social movement ecology framework’ to integrate conceptual insights from surveillance studies, social movement scholarship, and mediatization. Mediatization reveals how “social processes in a broad variety of domains and at different levels become inseparable from and dependent on technological processes and resources of mediation” (Jansson, 2013, p. 281). The third section employs the framework to explicate the dynamics of the Egyptian revolution. This ‘social movement ecology framework’ captures the constant struggle between the democratic norms and authoritarian control that shapes the democratization process of a country.

#### A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

##### *Contemporary Electronic Surveillance*

Surveillance scholars widely used Foucault’s (1995) ideas of *discipline* and *Panopticon* to explicate surveillance practices (Elmer, 1997; Castells, 2001; Turow, 2006; Andrejevic, 2007). Scholars have also introduced new metaphors like panoptic sort (Gandy, 1993), new surveillance (Marx, 2002), dataveillance (Clarke, 1988), super-Panopticon (Poster, 1990), digital enclosure (Andrejevic, 2007), and electronic Panopticon (Lyon, 1994) to illuminate the Internet-based surveillance practices. However, scholars also highlight the participatory aspects of contemporary surveillance (Albrechtslund, 2008; Romele et al., 2015). Building on the conceptual typology of modern surveillance practices (Allmer, 2012), I categorize surveillance literature into two spectrums: (a) surveillance as control and (b) surveillance as participation.

Such categorization is useful because it resonates with the theoretical impetus of discipline and bio-power (Foucault, 1995, 2004). Critical surveillance scholars (Fuchs, 2012; Fuchs & Trottier, 2015; Haggerty & Ericson, 2000; Hill, 2012) identify surveillance as control and tend to highlight the mass surveillance of population by state apparatuses and corporations; thus, claim that such practices created a surveillance society. However, surveillance scholarship (Albrechtslund, 2008; Lyon, 2015; Romele et al., 2015) also argues that netizens often voluntarily reveal their personal information to the public, and government and corporations capture publicly available data. Scholars argue that practices like this foster the emergence of a “surveillance culture” (Lyon, 2015) where “Surveillance is not just practised *on* us, we participate *in* it” (Lyon, 2015, p. 3). In the following, I explore two trends in the surveillance literature. First, I delve into surveillance literature that

considers surveillance as a control. Second, I elucidate the participatory aspects of surveillance.

Surveillance literature that identifies surveillance as control situates the Internet-based surveillance practices within the modern social structure and capitalist economy (Foucault, 1977; Fuchs, 2012; Andrejevic, 2012; Castells, 2001; Garfinkel, 2000). Surveillance is a core practice of modern statecraft (Giddens, 1990) and contemporary state surveillance is more organized, formal, and pervasive than ever before (Weller, 2012). Furthermore, the mediatization of culture (Hepp, 2013; Hepp & Krotz, 2014) anchored in the information capitalism in which corporations surveil consumers for capital accumulation. Governments surveillance apparatuses are also vigilant to capture and monitor online activities of their citizens. The emerging connection between governments and corporations has created the state-corporation nexus of the modern surveillance assemblage. Invoking Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Haggerty and Ericson (2000) articulate surveillance assemblage as complex arrangements of scientific, mechanical, and technical competencies that constantly collect, process, and deliver information to monitor the population. The exponential technological advancement in communication sector enhances the capacity and functionality of surveillance practices. Scholars contend that the Internet and social networking sites facilitate panoptic surveillance practices. Corporations transform user generated content into commodities and make a profit from accumulated information (Andrejevic, 2012). Further, many governments, whether they are democratic or authoritarian, are using communication technologies for mass surveillance (Hypponet, 2013; Soghoian, 2012). Therefore, for surveillance scholars, two questions appear as crucial: (a) who control the surveillance assemblage (corporations, governments, or a nexus of corporations/governments), and (b) who are subjects of surveillance (consumers, netizens or citizens) to understand the power relations in society (Andrejevic, 2012; Fuchs, 2012; Clarke, 1988; Cohen, 2008; Gordon, 1987).

Andrejevic (2007) posits that our every interaction in digital realm generates information about us. He identifies such practice as ‘digital enclosure’—an interactive space that monitors users’ activities. Fuchs (2012) argues that social networking site like Facebook is a panoptic machine that collects, stores, assess, and commodifies our personal data. Social media platforms work as a mass self-surveillance machine (Fuchs, 2012). Gandy (1993) coined the term ‘*panoptic sort*’ to refer “the complex technology that involves the collection, processing, and sharing information about individuals and groups” (p. 15). Panoptic sort is a discriminatory technology that manifests the instrumental rationality. Gandy (1993) contends, “panoptic sort is a system of power” (p. 15) as such practices are designed to serve the purpose of government and corporate bureaucracies. Information about our role as citizens, consumers, and employee are the raw ingredients of panoptic sort mechanism.

However, surveillance scholars also focus on the participatory aspects of the Internet-based surveillance. Albrechtslund (2008) argues that online environment provides a fluid performance of identity and subjectivity that transform users “from passive to active since surveillance in this context offers opportunities to take action, seek information and communicate. Online social networking, therefore, illustrates that surveillance – as a mutual, empowering and subjectivity building practice – is fundamentally social” (p. 8). Koskela (2004) contends that mobile phones and information technologies facilitate the counter surveillance practices. Koskela (2004) highlights the flux of private/public in reality television shows and argues that “By revealing their intimate lives, people are liberated from shame and the ‘need’ to hide, which leads to something called ‘empowering exhibitionism’” (p. 199). Farinosi (2011) explicates that panoptic metaphor of surveillance fails to capture the horizontal surveillance of social media—“Web 2.0 services changes the role of observer and observed and offers new opportunities for participation that – involving users in sharing personal details – empower people to spread information about each other” (p. 73).

Invoking La Boétie (1997), Romele et al. (2015) argue that the users are aware of surveillance on social media; and despite having such information, users are revealing personal information on social networking sites. Romele et al. (2015) identify such practices as voluntary servitude. To sum up, surveillance scholars have explored the issues of power, control, inequality, commodification, and participatory aspects of surveillance; however, they rarely engage in a dialogue between surveillance studies and social movement scholarship. However, social movements scholars illuminate the role of state surveillance and the limitations of using corporation controlled social media for activism and social movement (Castells, 2015; Howard & Hussain, 2013; Tufekci, 2014; Youmans & York, 2012). Though such literature explores surveillance practices in collective action, such exploration often fails to engage in a systematic and critical analysis of surveillance assemblage and how such practices play a crucial role in a social movement. In the following, I problematize the conceptual lens of discipline and panopticon in surveillance studies. Then, I explore the Foucault’s ideas of bio-power and governmentality and how such conceptual lens help to understand contemporary surveillance and social movement.

#### *Bio-Power, Governmentality, and Surveillance*

In this section, I problematize the *Panopticon* metaphor for surveillance and also point out the challenges to conceptualize surveillance only in term of participation. I believe such binary framing of surveillance fails to capture the dynamics of surveillance practices and the agency of social agents. To capture the dynamics of contemporary surveillance, we need to understand surveillance as a continuum rather as either control or participation. First, I argue that scholars need to be cautious when they use Foucault’s (1995) ideas of *Panopticon* and *discipline* to tackle the

complexity of contemporary electronic surveillance. Second, I explicate what is at stake when we conceptualize surveillance only as participation.

Foucault (1995) articulates the binary of ‘visibility/powerlessness’ and ‘invisibility/source of power’ to delineate the technique of surveillance and *discipline*. To explain the *Panopticon* mechanism of surveillance, Foucault (1995) posits that “Visibility is a trap...He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject of communication” (p. 200). The *Panopticon* framework exercises power by disciplining *individual bodies* in a prison: an *enclosed space* where the mechanism of power can be exercised in its fullest. Thus, the visibility of a prisoner to prison authority is symptomatic of using power. In the *Panopticon* mechanism, the exercise of power remains invisible, but prisoners, the object of information, are condemned to visibility. Foucault (1995) argues that “The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad; in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen” (pp. 201–202). Furthermore, Foucault (1995) argues that the exercises of power through the mechanism of discipline had extended to other institutional settings—“Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons” (p. 228). Such process led the development of disciplinary society rooted in prohibition and punishment.

However, the application of the *Panopticon* mechanism of power is inadequate in conceptualizing contemporary surveillance practices relate to the Internet and social media. Visibility or the ability to capture public attention on digital platforms often indicate a better positionality in power-relations. In many instances, visibility works as social capital in the digital platforms. Social agents, government, corporations, civil society, and others are always vying for visibility in digital platforms. For example, Boko Haram, a terrorist organization in Nigeria kidnapped 276 school girls. Later, a Nigerian activist started to use hashtag #bringbackourgirls to organize a grassroots campaign against the inactivity of the government to bring back the girls. The hashtag was picked by Nigerian diaspora and spread worldwide garnering political and social support for the campaign. Michelle Obama, the First Lady of the US, and P. Daddy, a popular culture icon, exhibited their support to such grassroots campaign by posting their pictures holding the hashtag sign. Such campaign demonstrated how the visibility on social media worked as social currency.

However, the scholarly position (Albrechtslund, 2008; Romele et al., 2015) that emphasizes visibility and the agency of social agents in using the Internet and social media as a negotiated space for democratic iteration efface the pervasive grasp of surveillance assemblage. The Western governments including the US, UK, and the others continually monitor trillions of user data on the Internet, social media, and other digital sources. For instance, in the Netherlands, government ministries use social media surveillance technologies to monitor activities of their citizens, and such practices often remain as a covert operation (Bekkers, Edwards, Kool, 2013). Many authoritarian governments in developing countries have employed the western tech corporations to monitor digital footprint of their citizens. For example,

tech companies like Hacking Team and Gama Corporations provide technological logistics to the authoritarian government to surveil population (Electronic Frontier Foundation, 2015). Tech giants like Google, Facebook, and Twitter sell our personal information to their clients. Thus, instead of conceptualizing surveillance either as control or as participation, I believe scholars need to engage with Foucault's later scholarship on bio-power and governmentality to develop a theoretical argument on surveillance.

In the following, I argue that Foucault's (2007, 2008) ideas of *bio-power* and *governmentality* provide a solid understanding to capture the intricacies of contemporary electronic surveillance. First, I will explicate the ideas of *bio-power* and *governmentality*. Second, I argue that the corollary development of *bio-power* and *governmentality* is the informatization of human lives as population. Then, I explicate how technological development accelerates the process of informatization of human lives. Such practices triggered a paradigmatic shift in our understanding of surveillance, as the core of such process is the triangular relationship between "security-population-government" (Foucault, 2007).

In his lecture at College de France in 1977–1978, Foucault focuses on the genealogy of bio-power, its instrument, and economies of power. He (2007) attempts to conceptualize *bio-power* as a "set of mechanisms through which the core biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power" (p. 1). The focus of *bio-power* is the entire population and its management. Population as the subject of human inquiry give rise to a new understanding of governmentality as the nexus of power-resistance shifted from enclosed space and individual bodies to entire population.

Foucault (2007) uses the idea of *governmentality* in three ways. First, governmentality is an ensemble constituted through institutions, strategies, and tactics that open up the new formation of exercising power. The target of such form of power is population. The political economy works as a knowledge base and the apparatus of security functions as the instrument of such practices of power (Foucault, 2007). Second, the development of a new form of power known as 'government' led towards new governmental apparatus and series of knowledge (Foucault, 2007). Third, such process forged our path from administrative state to 'governmentalization of state' (Foucault, 2007). Contemporary governmentality incorporates freedom or specific limits to this freedom as a crucial factor. In short, elements of society, economy, population, security, and freedom are fundamental features of contemporary governmentality (Foucault, 2007).

Contemporary governmentality emulates the core features of a liberal art of government. Liberalism involves the management and organization of the conditions within which an individual can be free and aspires to delimit the intervention of government. According to Foucault (2007), liberalism deals with the interest of economic man and attempts to ensure minimum intervention in individual or community activities. The principle of 'calculative cost' in manufacturing the conditions of freedom is security (Foucault, 2008). It is the instrument of the modern



Table 1. Matrix of Governmentality (Foucault, 1990, 1995, 2007, 2008)

<i>Political Formation</i>	<i>Concern or Focus</i>	<i>Forms of Power</i>	<i>Mechanism of Power</i>	<i>Modulations of Power</i>	<i>Time Frame</i>
The State of Justice	Borders of a Territory	Sovereign	Juridico-Legal	Prohibition and Punishment	Middle Ages until 17th and 18th Century and so on
The Administrative State	Bodies of Individuals	Disciplinary	Disciplinary	Prohibition, discipline (surveillance), and transformation (correction)	From 18th Century
A State of Government	Mass of Population	Pastoral	Apparatus of Security	Freedom, Regulation and a bandwidth of acceptance	Started to appear around the middle of 18th century

form of governmentality. The economy of the power of liberalism sustains through the interplay of liberty and security. To sum up, the power relations in modern governmentality is paradigmatically different from the mechanism of power in the discipline.

As stated earlier, Foucault's concept of *bio-power* concerns the management of the population. The management of population requires information and data about the population, information about average life expectancy, public health, child mortality, income, education and so on. The development of statistical techniques worked as a contributing factor for the emergence of *bio-power*. Statistical techniques help to understand different attributes, characteristics, and elements of the population. It also contributes to compare and contrast between the various sets of variables, and mostly enhances the power of prediction. Thus, bio-power since its inception relied on information (Koopman, 2014). The corollary effect of the emergence of the *bio-power* is the development of info-power (Koopman, 2014); which is anchored in the techniques, mechanisms, and assemblages of communication technologies that continuously gather, store, process, retrieve and analyze personal information about individuals (Koopman, 2014). I argue that the subject info-power create '*info-person*' who is constituted by the assemblage of information or emerged from multiple data points. To understand the emergence of '*info-person*' we need to examine the development of two elements—first, information database; and second, profiling.

Technological advances worked as catalysts for the emergence of computerized database systems. Three contributing factors work as catalysts for the development of giant databases (Nissenbaum, 2010). First, technological advancement in data

*Table 2. Differences between discipline and security (Foucault, 2007)*

<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Security</i>
Centripetal: the operation of power in discipline works in fullest in enclosed spaces	Centrifugal: security continually expands the organization of new elements in operation of power
The target of disciplinary apparatus of power is individual bodies	The apparatus of security is concern about the entire population
Discipline is preventive and regulates the minute detail to function adequately.	Security keeps forces/elements free so that the reality emerges through the interplay of different elements.
Discipline categorizes elements into two categories: the permitted and the forbidden.	Security focuses on natural occurrences and tries to “grasp the point at which thing are taking place, whether or not they are desirable” (Foucault, 2007, p. 46).
Discipline started with a preconceived sense of a norm and aligned training to reproduce such norm.	Security works with a certain distribution of norms and norms emerge through “an interplay of different normalities” (Foucault, 2007, p. 63).

processing, storage, and retrieve. Second, technological affordances to capture real-time communication and information sharing. Third, advanced knowledge of computer science, mathematics, statistics, artificial intelligence, and cryptography contributed to transforming a diverse set of data into a knowledge system (Nissenbaum, 2010). Furthermore, four pivotal transformations have changed computerized personal record-keeping systems: (a) cost reduction of technological hardware and software, (b) digitization of information (c) strategic information aggregation, and (d) mathematical and statistical advancement to process information (Nissenbaum, 2010). Furthermore, the development of sophisticated algorithms and online tracking systems render us visible to surveillance assemblage.

Technological developments like click tracking, log files, JavaScript, web bugs, and cookies can track, monitor, and gather information about our online behavior (Allmer, 2012). Emerging new technologies like RFID, augmented reality, cloud computing also facilitates the collection of personal data in real time (Baran, 2015). Such pervasive collection of personal information provides the raw materials of giant database corporations. These databases have aggregated data about nearly every American citizens.

Databases solved a crucial problem related to the emergence of info-power. However, such process also created a new set of problematics—(a) intelligibility of massive data and (b) social sorting. In their relentless search for profit and elimination of risks, organizations have developed sophisticated algorithms and categories to profile consumers. With the help of databases and advanced computing, companies continue to accumulate massive data about customers to develop customer profiles. The government also has used databases to profile or categorize citizens. I mean

it is not enough to collect massive data unless corporations and government can systematically classify and develop profiling on behavioral, psychological, financial, and many other attributes of individuals.

Thus, the profiling of personalized data makes personalized data intelligible to surveillance apparatuses. For example, organizations collect 736 pieces of personalized data about individuals every day (Baran, 2015). Such practice is alarming because our different pieces of our data, when combined, create our digital identity and can be used as a mechanism of social sorting: “social and economic categories and the computer codes by which personal data is organized with a view to influencing and managing people and populations” (Lyon, 2003, p. 2). Categorizing computer codes based on social stereotypes and using such categories to profile citizens and consumers generate a set of risk for citizens. For example, if health insurance companies can buy our everyday grocery purchases data from databases businesses; and based on purchase behavior insurance companies can selectively deny coverage to someone if s/he deemed risks for insurance. Such profiling renders us visible to surveillance assemblage. To sum up, technological development and advanced knowledge apparatuses equipped corporations and governments to collect, store, and retrieve personalized information of citizens; and such process led to the practice of continual mass surveillance.

I believe the digital realm surveillance apparatus and democratic iterations are in constant struggle. Such polemical presence created a new set of problematics for scholars. This chapter engages with the new problematics to the extent it relates to social movements, mediatization, and surveillance. The informatization of our lives positioned us visible to surveillance assemblage; however, such process also equipped us to surveil government, corporations, and other institutions. Scholars (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Tufekci, 2013; Garrett, 2007; Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2012) illuminate how citizens use the Internet and social media as a discursive space to shape public opinion and resist against surveillance. Furthermore, dissident voices can garner necessary attention about their causes and grievances, exert control on their contentious narrative, and can contest domination by using the digital realm as discursive space. Scholars illuminate that citizens use social media for democratization mainly in four ways: (a) digital storytelling (Lundby, 2008), (b) digital communication networks as an organization (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013), (c) constructing virtual communities of dissident voices (Gerbaudo, 2012; Howard & Hussain, 2013), and (d) mobilizing people for collective action (Lim, 2012). This chapter articulates a ‘social movement ecology framework’ to explicate the intricacies of the struggle between democratic struggle and surveillance apparatus in the context of social movements.

#### SOCIAL MOVEMENT ECOLOGY FRAMEWORK

Building on the earlier work of Mattoni and Treré (2014), this ‘social movement ecology framework’ incorporates three constitutive elements: (a) surveillance

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assemblage, (b) social movement repertoire, and (c) mediatization process to understand the dynamics of social movement. The framework also delves into the details of different element of social movement ecology: (a) public spheres, (b) contentious contexts, (c) social agents, (d) actions, (e) temporality, and (f) social movement outcomes to capture the nuances of socio-political environment relate to social movement, mediated practices, and surveillance. Invoking Bogard (2006), I identify surveillance network as ‘assemblage’ to refer to multiplicity and diversity in gathering, sorting, and processing information. Surveillance assemblage not only incorporates monitoring devices but also include a matrix of power-knowledge relationship (Bogard, 2006). The concept mediatization delves into the interrelation between the change of media and communication and the change of (fields of) culture and society (Hepp, Hjarvard, & Lundby, 2015, p. 320). Public spheres indicate a strategic field where a plurality of public opinions, belief, values, morals, lifestyle choices, and ideological practices compete for visibility, recognition, control, and domination.

The idea of contentious contexts refers to the social, economic, cultural, and political opportunities for social movement. Social movement agents are the individuals, collective, and institutional forces. The idea actions refer to the strategic enactment of protest-related practices. The time-frame or the cycles of a social movement is identified as temporality. The end results of a social movement are conceptualized as an outcome. In this framework, surveillance assemblage, mediatization process, and social movement repertoire are interconnected; thus, highlights the role of communication technologies in social practices. The other social movement elements—contentious contexts, social agents, actions, temporality, and outcome—are also interconnected with surveillance assemblage, mediatization process, and public spheres. In the following, I describe the elements of integrated framework to study surveillance, media, and social movement.

#### *Surveillance Assemblage*

I argue that we need to consider surveillance as a continuum; it does not function only as a control mechanism or solely as a participatory practice. This section is divided into two subsections. In the first subsection, I discuss how corporations and governments collect information about consumers and citizens. In the second subsection, I explore how technological enablement equipped us to initiate counter surveillance and talk back to corporations and government. Furthermore, I discuss the implications of corporate and government surveillance in a social movement.

#### *Corporate and Government Surveillance*

Both companies and governments collect extensive information about citizens. In the annual report, the data broker and reseller firm Acxiom claims that it maintains 15,000 databases and executes more than 1 trillion global data transaction per week.

It provides more than 3,000 propensity of nearly every consumers in the USA and can reach nearly 1 billion of addresses worldwide. Every year Acxiom updates 11 trillion customer records. In 2014, its annual revenue was more than 1 billion (Acxiom Annual Report, 2014). Governments are harvesting our social media data, tapping our phone calls and text messages, read emails, track citizens movements, remotely turn on our webcams and microphones on our cell phone (Electronic Frontier Foundation, 2015). US-based corporations Narus and BlueCoat System provided technological means to authoritarian government in Egypt and Syria to surveil electronic communication of their citizens. German Tech company Trovicor has sold surveillance technology to a dozen of Middle East countries (Electronic Frontier Foundation, 2015).

Apart from collecting information from data brokers, the government has the technological means to collect massive data about citizens. Different government agencies are involved in tracking and collecting an enormous amount of data for surveillance. The high-tech surveillance machine drone has a device known as 'Air Handler' that can collect all wireless data in a particular area (Andrejevic & Gates, 2014). Stingrays a cell phone surveillance device that can collect location and identify information of all mobile phones in specific locations. Automatic license plate reader, RFID Microchips, Biometric databases, face recognition software, and many other technologies are used on a mass scale to surveil US citizens.

Governments have hacker units that hack citizens, corporations, and organization server, laptop, computers. In the USA, NSA has a team named TAO (Tailored Access Operation) and GCHQ in the UK has NAC (Network Analysis Center) dedicated to hacking (Mikko Hypponen, 2012). The FBI is developing hacking tools for more than a decade. This organization internally developed hacking tools, buy hacking technologies from private organizations, and also hires hackers for their job (The Wall Street Journal, 2013). The government has the infrastructure like data centers and data cloud to store massive data. The infrastructure and technological expertise help state for data mining, data fusion, image/speech recognition, and social networking analysis (White House Report, 2014).

Many authoritarian governments do not have the capacity to build surveillance technologies; instead, they purchase technologies from the Western companies (Reporters Without Borders, 2016). Western high-tech corporations like UK-based company Gamma International and Italian company Hacking Team provide surveillance technologies to the western as well as non-western clients. Gamma sold advanced spyware technologies to Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (Reporters Without Borders, 2016). It sells Finfisher technology that can read encrypted files, emails, voice and IP calls, Skype calls and also create Trojans to infect laptops, computers, mobile phones and other electronic devices for the purpose of surveillance (Reporters Without Borders, 2016). In Egypt, both the government political party and the police had ad hoc committee to monitor online activities, and they bribe pro-government people to post positive messages online. Security services also abuse, torture, and even imprison bloggers and online activists. During

the protest, Egyptian police used social media alert to anticipate protest activities and arrest online activists. When the Egyptian protesters raided secret police offices, they found the invoice from Gamma International for surveillance technologies they intended to sell Egyptian government (Soghoian, 2012). In short, governments and corporations are prepared for surveillance activities and vigorously active to curb the democratic potentials of the Internet.

*Counter Surveillance*

The Internet, social media, and smartphone have created spaces for new narratives of lives, politics, and everyday experiences that can challenge or disrupt the normative or traditional understanding of human experiences (Pullen, 2009, 2010). Such new media provide a communicative environment of opportunities and affordances. It also highlights “how users exploit these affordances to manage their emotions and their relationship” (Madianou & Miller, 2012, p. 172). In Egypt, when the government shut down the Internet and mobile phone networks, activists

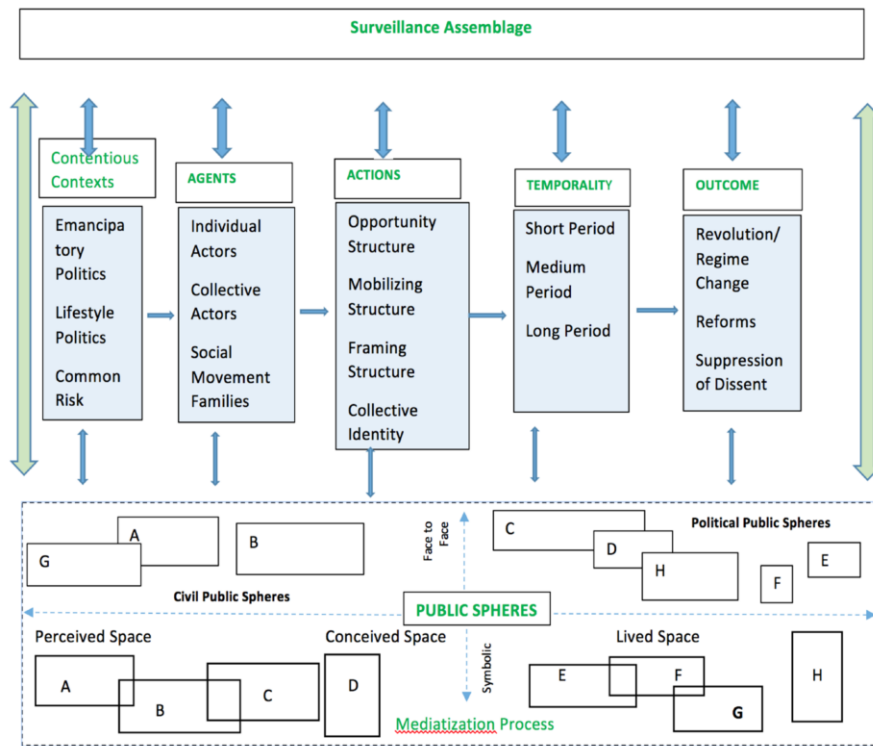


Figure 1. Social movement ecology framework

started to use dial-up connections, landlines, fax machines to connect and circulate protest activities. In many cases, police had not attacked protesters because they have mobile phone camera (Howard & Hussain, 2013). During the protest, when Al Jazeera was not able to report from the field, they used videos, pictures, and messages from the citizen journalists who were involved in protest activities (Howard & Hussain, 2013). When Mubarak revoked satellite broadcast licenses, Google began to stream Al Jazeera English through YouTube. When Gaddafi blocked Facebook, activists started to use online dating services to circulate their activities (Howard & Hussain, 2013). In short, networked individuals can use new media spaces for democratic iterations and can carve an oppositional discursive space to disrupt or subvert normative, powerful, and taken for granted practices.

#### MEDIATIZATION PROCESS

Media scholars who explored the relationship between media and democratic process process (Kutz-Flamenbaum, Staggenborg, & Duncan, 2012; Rohlinger, Kail, Taylor, & Conn, 2012). However, in many instances, scholars are not careful to document the intricacies of the relationship between citizens and mediated environment: everyday negotiation of power and resistance, the tension between dominance and marginality, the nuances of visibility and invisibility to democratize social practices. Furthermore, scholars often fail to acknowledge the historical amalgam of social, cultural, political, and economic contexts that shape social agents use of mediated channels to enhance democratic participation (Ali, 2011; Bennett & Segerberg, 2011; Christensen, 2011; Cottle & Lester, 2011; Harlow, 2012; Juris, 2012; Axford, 2011; Gladwell, 2010; Howard & Hussain, 2011; Khondker, 2011; Zhuo et al., 2011). Rodríguez, Ferron, and Shamas (2014) suggest that media scholars need to integrate the insight of political economy of media to explore the relationship between media and alternative voices. I argue that media scholars need to capture the complexity of socio-political realms: economic-political-cultural nexus, prevailing power relations, resistance to dominant practices, and renegotiation of social norms within which social agents appropriate communication technologies to circulate dissident voices and mobilize citizens for collective action. I believe the concept 'mediatization' helps the researcher to explore the socio-political complexity and how citizens appropriate communication technologies to resist non-democratic practices.

The concept mediatization integrates both traditional and the emerging new media like the Internet, social media, and smartphone and explores how media use anchored in social practices. Building on the theoretical propositions of Jansson (2013), I articulate the contour of mediatization process. Invoking Lefebvre (1974, 1991), Jansson (2013) proposes a triadic model of the sociospatial regime of mediatization which include perceived space (material indispensability and adaptation), conceived space (premediation of experience), and lived space (normalization of social practice). The thrust here is to explore how communication



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technologies affect the mediated experiences, the transformations as well as the maintenance of sociospatial arrangements, and the mixture of various mediated practices that create the texture of communicative experiences (Jansson, 2013).

In the perceived space, certain communicative gadgets become indispensable and integrated to social life. The general acceptability of the communicative tool or system becomes a cultural form. The conceived space refers to our expectations and anticipation of a future event shaped by our mediated experiences. The idea of premediation is crucial here. Grusin (2010) coined the term premediation which indicates “mobilizing affect in the present, by deploying multiple modes of mediation and remediation in shaping the affectivity of the public” (Grusin, 2011). In the final arrangement of lived space, certain mediated practices become part of our everyday lived experiences and practices. These three regimes of mediatization work in concert with each other, rather than in isolation. Such conceptualization acknowledges the duality of mediatization: communication technologies shape our social practices and social practices also determine the acceptance and development of communication technologies (Jansson, 2013).

#### PUBLIC SPHERES

The idea of the public sphere refers to space where private individuals gather, participate, and exchange ideas, opinions, and political views by equal participations. This idea has generated numerous interpretations and conceptual revisions. In this framework, I employ Breese’s (2011) reconceptualization of the public sphere. Instead of using the public sphere, Breese (2011) extends a framework that embraces the existence of multiple public spheres. Breese (2011) broadly categorized two forms of public spheres: face to face and mediated or symbolic. Public spheres have two different orientations: political and civil. The boundary between these two spheres is very porous. In public spheres multiple publics interact for legitimacy, visibility, and representation. Their interests or goals in many cases overlap with each other.

In this framework, I use different letters (like A/B/C/D) to signify the presence of multiple publics vying for representation. Public spheres represent both face to face and mediated or symbolic nature. The boundary between mediatization process and public spheres is porous, and one influences the other. For example, the state-controlled media in Egypt rarely portrayed public grievances. The presence of social media has enabled multiple publics to share their opinions and voices. It helps to challenge the legitimacy of the authoritarian regime. Within the protesters, there were multiple publics like Muslim Brotherhood activists, freedom technologists, young entrepreneurs, women’s group, urban middle class, 6th of April activists, and revolutionary socialists. They formed “Revolutionary Youth Coalition” for the communication, coordination, and mobilization for protest activities (Gerbaudo, 2012). They were active both in online and street level protests.

## CONTENTIOUS CONTEXTS

This framework identifies three contexts for the emergence of a social movement—emancipatory politics, lifestyle politics, and common risk. Justice, equality, and participation are the core thrusts of emancipatory politics. It attempts to break the shackle of domination, exploitation, inequality, and oppression (Giddens, 1991). Giddens (1991) defines emancipatory politics as a “generic outlook concerned above all with liberating individuals and groups from constraints which adversely affect their life chances” (p. 210). The aim of emancipatory politics are two folds—first, reformulate the discriminatory social structure of the past through a transformative process; second, overcome the illegitimate domination (Giddens, 1991).

To understand the connection between mediatization and contentious politics, we also need to look into the institutional or structural changes in late modern societies. The institutional transformation in late modern societies like neoliberalism, deregulation, economic crisis, and environmental risk have contributed to the rise of lifestyle politics (Beck, 1997; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Giddens, 1991; Melucci, 1980). Giddens (1991) argues that “life politics concerns political issues which flow from processes of self-actualization in post-traditional contexts, where globalizing influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self, and conversely where processes of self-realization influence global strategies” (p. 214). Individuals are more concerned about freedom of choice, moral and ethical formulations of life, and reflexive self-identity (Giddens, 1991). Furthermore, in a globalized planetary system people are more exposed to the risk that is beyond the control of individuals and this scenario connect locally to global spaces (Beck, 1991; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Giddens, 1990). For example, global warming, environmental pollution, and global financial crisis are global issues which encompass every human being. Such interconnection between the local and the global and the infusion of new communication technologies generated conversational spaces where citizens generate solidarity for collective grievances and deprivation.

## SOCIAL AGENTS

Individual actors are at the forefront of the contemporary social movement. Based on the anthropological work in Spain, Tunisia, and Iceland, Postill (2014) coin the idea *freedom technologists* to refer—“geeks, hackers, online journalists, tech lawyers and other social agents who combine technological skills with political acumen to pursue greater Internet and democratic freedoms, both globally and domestically” (p. 403). These freedom technologists have played a crucial role in 15-M movement in Spain, the Arab Spring, in Iceland. For example, in Egypt bloggers and online civil society played a key role in organizing protests. Nobel Peace Prize winner Egyptian Mohamed ElBaradei also played in protest against Mubarak.

Collective actors or social movement organizations like Greenpeace, Oxfam, Drop the Debt, and the Climate Action Network play a significant role in collective

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actions. They train activists and individuals, work for a common goal, mobilize resources, organize campaigns, create and maintain a coalition of other organizations, and identify the opponents (della Porta & Diani, 2006). These organizations can maintain horizontal or hierarchal organizational structure. In many cases social movement families—“a set of coexisting movements that, regardless of their specific goals, have similar core values, and organizational overlaps” (della Porta & Rucht, 1995, p. 114) work together to achieve common goals. In Egypt, political parties like Muslim Brotherhood, and Leftist political party have contributed movement activities significantly. Furthermore, worker unions and women rights groups had also fostered protest activities during Egyptian revolution 2011. Building a coalition with other social movements is crucial for the success of a social movement. For example, LGBTQ rights movement can build a coalition with ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement to bolster visibility and garner support.

#### ACTIONS

To elucidate actions in a social movement, I incorporated mainly the McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996) framework of a social movement. This framework highlights three factors—political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes in a social movement. I also add one more element—collective identity for this framework. Political opportunity refers to the conditions that help to emerge a space for dissent, protest, and even trigger a social movement. The prime factors are access to the political system, stability or instability of elite alignment, presence or absence of elite allies, state’s propensity for repression (Brockett, 1991; Kriesi et al., 1992; McAdam, 1996; Tarrow, 1994). Internet or social networking facilitates activists in diverse ways like coordinate public dissatisfaction, fostering collaboration between activists and providing/circulating movement related necessary information, exposing repression, create national and transnational ties, low cost, first communication, alter the scope of authority, polycentric, segmentation, and reticulation (Lynch, 2011; Turner, 2013; Youmans & York, 2012). In the Egyptian uprising 2011, political opportunity arise due to the Tunisian uprising and the killing of a young blogger by the security services. Moreover, there was a split between the Army and business elite like Gamal’s boys who received patronage from Mubarak’s family (Castells, 2014). Furthermore, within the business community, there were divided between domestic groups and globalized business forces led by Gamal’s boys.

Mobilizing structures are key to any social movement. Scholars identify mobilization structures as “those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective actions” (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996, p. 3). In the contemporary social movements, the Internet, and polymedia-centric activism played a crucial role in mobilizing people and resources (Castells, 2014; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). For example, in the Egyptian revolution, online activists have used blogs and social media platforms

for mobilizing people. In the first day of launching the Facebook page, We Are All Khaled Said garnered 36,000 supporters and attracted more than a million users by the protest period (Gerbaudo, 2012; Howad & Hussain, 2013). Female activist Nawara Negm posted YouTube videos calling to join in the protest. Activists posted minute by minute updates about the protest through social media. They circulated different advice like which streets to avoid, how to organize, and how to avoid police and government thugs (Gerbaudo, 2012; Howard & Hussain, 2013). Activists also used social networks, and public places like mosques, cafes, coffee shops, and soccer fields to mobilize people (Lim, 2012).

The framing process refers to the “conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and themselves that legitimate and motivates collective action” (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996, p. 6). In the Occupy movement activists frame the movement as “We are the 99%”, and in the Egyptian movement the Facebook page “We are all Khaled Said” helped activist to incorporate a significant section of people with their struggle. Egyptian activists Ghonim in the Khaled Facebook page used several techniques like using Egyptian dialect Ammeya, avoiding confrontational language, answering and engaging individuals on the page, and incorporated First Person to project a personalized touch (Gerbaudo, 2012). Furthermore, I believe we need to consider collective identity as a crucial element for a social movement. Thus, I incorporated collective identity in the proposed integrated framework.

Activists, protesters, and civil society actively cultivate a sense of collective identity for a social movement. Collective identity refers to—“an interactive and shared definition produced by some individuals (or groups at a more complex level) concerning the orientations of their action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which such action is to take place” (Melucci, 1996, p. 70). Collective identity construction is a self-reflective process that requires active identification of social agents as a member of a community or a group based on a shared framework or consciousness. The construction of collective identity involves interactions, negotiation, production and circulation of symbolic resources. Thus, the role of media is significant because it is the domain of symbolic production of reality. Social agents use both traditional media and emerging new media like the Internet, social media, and smartphones to construct a collective identity based on shared cognitive and emotional reference points.

#### TEMPORALITY

Social movements differ regarding its temporal existence. Some movements last for the short term, some creates cycles of protests, and some take an extended period to achieve strategic goals (Mattoni & Treré, 2014). Social movements are dynamic and continuously unfold in the different temporal framework (Blee, 2012; Mcadam, 1982). For example, the Arab Spring, the Occupy movement, and M-15 movement in Spain had a short span of life. However, Egypt has witnessed several massive

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protests in the last decade like the Kefaya movement and the April 6th movement that had consolidated the repertoire of dissent and helped 2011 revolution. Scholars identify the short-term temporal dimension of a social movement as “punctured events” (McAdam & Sewell, 2001). In the medium-term social movement emerges in different cycles (Tarrow, 1998; Koopmans, 2004; Beissinger, 2002, McAdam & Sewell, 2001). For example, Mattoni and Treré (2014) explicate that in the Civil Rights Movement, the first phrase was the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Southern resistance activities marked the second phase (1958–59), and the third phrase started with Greensboro sit-in on February 1, 1960, and sustained through the Selma campaign in 1965 (McAdam & Sewell, 2001). Movements like the Women’s Movement and the LGBTQ liberation movement have taken a long time to achieve strategic goals.

#### OUTCOME

Not all social movements have been able to reach their objectives. Some social movements can trigger revolutionary outcome. For example, the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 and the Chinese revolution in 1949 had changed not only the political dynamic at the state level but also influenced global politics. Activists and the protesters in the Arab Spring were able to overthrow the delegitimize dictators like Hosni Mubarak, Zine El Abidine, Ben Ali Muammar Gaddafi. Social movements also target social, cultural, and political reforms. The Civil Rights movement, the Women’s movement, and the LGBTQ liberation movement target different sets of reforms and were able to achieve certain aspects of their desired goals. However, sometimes social movement face state repression and fails to generate enough momentum to survive. For example, Chinese student movement in 1989 faced extreme state repression that threatens their existence. In the Occupy movement, activists and protesters failed to address specific movement goals and concrete strategic plans to achieve these aims. Thus, the movement was not able to survive.

#### CASE STUDY: THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION 2011

To explicate the integrated framework, I consider the Egyptian movement 2011 as a case study. At first, I will explicate the mediatization process and how such process enacted multiple public spheres in Egypt. Second, I will explore five aspects of social movement repertoire. Finally, I will elucidate the response of state surveillance apparatuses during the Egyptian revolution. An exploration of such aspects of Egyptian socio-political scenarios will provide an in-depth understanding of the interplay between mediatization, social movement environment, and surveillance assemblage.

Khamis (2008, 2011) sketches the transformation of Egyptian mediasphere in two periods: (a) pre-and-post-1952, and (b) pre-and post-1990. The pre-1952 period, when Egypt was under Ottoman empire and fighting against British and French

colonial powers. During that colonial era, newspapers were critical of foreign occupation and generated heated political debate (Hamroush, 1989). However, after the independence, Egyptian government strictly controlled newspaper ownership and owned the broadcasting channels like radio and television. Such practices limited plurality of political opinion formation and repressed any anti-government voices (Khamis, 2008, 2011). President Anwar Sadat opened up space for political plurality and freedom of expression. However, his regime was marked by the ambivalent position toward media freedom—allowed a plurality of opinions and simultaneously repressed journalists and media practitioners (Khamis, 2008, 2011).

When President Hosni Mubarak came to power in 1981, he permitted oppositional political parties to own and operate newspapers. In the 1990s, the government of Egypt introduced Satellite television service and opened space for privatization of television channels (Napoli et al., 1995). During this period, the presence of many oppositional newspapers and publications were an indication of media plurality (Atia, 2006). The Egyptian government introduced the Internet in 1993, but the use of the Internet took off after 2002 when the government provided support for the access to the Internet (Abdulla, 2006). However, President Mubarak in many instances crushed political opposition and repressed journalists, editors, and political opponents (Khamis, 2008, 2011).

Access to digital platforms and the Internet have fostered the emergence of an online civil society in Egypt (Mourtada & Salem, 2011); and activists have been able to create a network of dissident publics. Civil society used the digital platforms for two reasons: first, restriction of participation in dominant print and broadcast media; second, access to the Internet facilitated to bypass state censorship, control, and repression (Howard & Hussain, 2013). Howard and Hussain (2013) documented that the Internet facilitated civil society to connect foreign and domestic publics including Egyptian diaspora, create networks, mobilize resources, provide social service, and generate support in times of crisis. Activists and protesters embraced the Internet and social media in organizing various protests (e.g., Kefaya movement in 2004, April 6 movement in 2006, and others) from 2004 to 2010.

The Internet, social media platforms, and mobile phone played a crucial role in the initiation, communication, coordination, and channeling the Egyptian revolution (Castells, 2014; Cottle, 2011; Gerbaudo, 2012). The main goals of the Egyptian movement were bread, freedom, and social justice (Castells, 2014). The rigged 2005 and 2010 election, unemployment, state repression, growing inequalities, corruption, and economic crisis were the crucial factors that stir citizens for dissent (Tilly & Wood, 2013; Lim, 2012). Egypt witnessed cycles of protest in the last decade. Several hundred worker protests were demanding for pay increases, set a minimum wage, and price control (Tilly & Wood, 2013). Muslim Brotherhood organized a massive protest in 2009 protesting Israel's invasion of Gaza. The two most significant movements in the last decade were the Kefaya movement and the April 6th movement. However, Tunisian uprising coupled with the killing of a young blogger Khaled Said by the secret police poured fuel on the fire. Online activist and



Google executive Wael Ghonim created the page *Khulna Khaled Said* to protest against the killing of Khaled. The devastated pictures of his tortured face awaken Egyptian public about the continual human rights violations and state repression. It was an emotional triggering points for public.

Ten factors decisively worked as catalysts for the Egyptian uprising. First, rapid diffusion of the Internet and its corollary social media platforms, blogs, mobile phone, and web-based news. Second, the growth of tech-savvy young demographic and youth unemployment; thus digital platforms worked as space where they can blow off some streams. Third, vibrant online civil society generated a sphere of dissent and use digital platforms as “information equalizer”—circulating anti-government stories and manage communication during a protest (Seib, 2008). Fourth, the preexisting connection between online activism and offline protest networks of activists, opponent political parties, and young leaders cemented the foundation for anti-Mubarak protest networks. Fifth, cooperation between organized political activists like Muslim Brotherhood, soccer fans, labor unions, women activists groups, young freedom technologists, and diaspora enhanced the presence of multiple public spheres where citizens expressed their vulnerability and grievances. Sixth, activists, protesters, and young leaders used personalized framing that helped to connect with a large population and generated a sense of a collective identity based on injustice and oppression. Seventh, activists used public spaces like cyber cafes, coffee shops, mosques, cabs, food stores, soccer fields, and streets strategically to connect to a wider community of citizens to enhance the participation in political dissent. Eighth, the presence of divergent and plural sources for news and information worked as “cognitive liberation” (McAdam, 1982) and also helped citizens to take informed decisions. Ninth, cooperation between local, regional, and global freedom technologists facilitated to organize networks of dissent both online and offline and attracted world attention to the protest cycle. Tenth, increasing adaptation and convergence between digital platforms, satellite television like Al Jazeera, print communication medium like flyers, pamphlets, and words of mouth helped to coordinate the protest and generated a real time updates of the protest activities.

To crash digital dissent Mubarak’s political party and the police formed ad hoc committee to monitor online activities. They bribe people to post pro-government messages on social media. Bloggers and online activists were subject to torture, abuse, and human rights violation. During the protest, government gathered their followers in particular places and ordered mobile companies to send messages so that the pro-government thugs can misdirect protesters, and police can either disperse them or pick the protesters from those places. The government also cancel satellite television transmission. Security forces used social media alert to anticipate protest activities (Castells, 2014; Howard & Hussain, 2011; Howard, Agarwal, & Hussain, 2011). In a futile, desperate attempt, the government shut down the Internet and mobile networks. Activists used a landline, fax machines,



ham radio, and Speak2Tweet application for mobilizing protest and ultimately toppled Mubarak government.

#### CONCLUSION

This chapter extends our understanding of the intricacies of social movement in four ways. First, it integrates the role of surveillance in social movement scholarship. Second, this chapter conceptualizes mediatization as a sociospatial concept to delineate the role of the traditional media and the emerging new media in a social movement. Third, the ubiquitous presence of the Internet especially the social media platforms added new dimensions to a social movement. Thus, the chapter highlights the tension between collective action, government repression, and technologies of surveillance. Fourth, this integrated framework will help activists and scholars to understand the interplay between the social, political, economic, and cultural elements that shape the emergence of a social movement.

Social control and democratic iterations are in constant struggle to formulate our consciousness, worldview, and ideology. This chapter explores how surveillance practices and mediatization process have altered social movement dynamics. The surveillance practices on the Internet, social media, and digital devices are part of a greater assemblage of ‘digital governmentality’ of cybernetic capitalism. However, democratic iterations have always transgressed the restrictions of dominant political power and capitalist profit motives. The more government try to colonize the cybersphere, the more networked-individuals become creative to neutralize the threat. Activists often use coded words, taking out mobile phone batteries, and using privacy enhancing technology during social movements (Leistert, 2012). Further, networked individuals are using the Internet to criticize government using satire, jokes, songs, poems, and code words (Qiang, 2011). The integrated framework of social movement acknowledges the asymmetry in power relations on cyberspace and argues that power is not equally distributed in cyberspace, but citizens can create a space for protest. Thus, the emergence of new social movement depends not only on the creative potency of networked citizens but also on an amalgam of social, cultural, institutional, historical, economic, demographic, and political practices of society.

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## 16. UBUNTU LEADERSHIP

*Let Us Begin the Work*

*Ubuntu*: the belief that people are empowered by other people, that we become our best selves, and organization, through unselfish interaction with others.

### SETTING THE STAGE

I grew up in a home that seemed to have people in it all of the time. I am the seventh of seven children; some of my siblings had children before I was born; and many of my nieces around my age had children while very young. My family is large. My parents welcomed our extended family members to the *Big House* (an apartment until I was 14) all of the time. They also welcomed their friends, neighbors, people in need of a meal, bath and/or a good night's sleep. My parents often asked us, them/us, what we were going to do about our issues and concerns. Instead of trying to give answers or just a hand out, my parents would explore options with us as a way to provide a hand up. Their focus was on empowering instead of enabling individuals to succeed.

My mom would talk about how I would just disappear at times due to the number of people always at the Big House. At first she might find me in the basement reading a book. Later I would find myself at the museum, primarily in the area full of African artifacts. Internally I had to escape the crowds. I often felt like a sardine in a can designed for half of the bodies filling the rooms of our home. My parents didn't have much money, but they shared all that they had, and did it with so much love. We lived in a very violent neighborhood, but no one ever did anything negative to my parents or our home. All knew that our home was off limits when it came to negative acts. Even two young men who eventually were sentenced to life in prison would protect my parents with their own lives.

While I often escaped the crowds, I grew to really appreciate how my parents embraced everyone. I learned, even before totally realizing it, the value of seeing the possibilities in individuals. I learned to be aware of danger, but to also seek the *why* behind the actions. My parents taught me to work hard to avoid making quick judgmental decisions of other people, simply through my personal lens. My parents also demonstrated the value of broadening one's lens each day. My mom believed that we all become better people by getting to know others well beyond the stereotypes we are bombarded with each day. My parent's home became a community of people

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from so many walks of life, yet all were seen as individuals of promise. My parents taught us to live in the why and in the possibilities for all of us, and to love the journey. They taught us to embrace and internalize the South African Philosophy of Ubuntu—human beings empowering other human beings through the collective responsibility of kindness and sharing. Ubuntu speaks to the moral responsibility of leaders to recognize that others matter.

#### MATTERING

Most, perhaps all, of us want to believe that our lives matter in this great nation. We also want to be part of a nation that values, respects, and includes our thoughts and opinions in the decision-making process. Most of us want to feel as though there are opportunities to effect positive change in our great nation, and especially in our sphere of influence. We want to be able to have voice in the decision-making process and be afforded opportunities to work towards desired life goals. In other words, we want equal access to quality education, housing, governance, leadership, safety, career options, technology, and etc. To be sure, most of us desire to be part of a society that values our presence and actively seeks to include us in the daily and long-term activities that support and direct our lives and our country. To be included as valuable (*and valued*) members of this nation is something most of us desire. Most, perhaps all, of us want to help create an even better nation and future for our children. I would suggest that most, perhaps all, of us want to believe in the *American Dream*. Adams described the American Dream for us:

... that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us over selves have grown weary and un-trustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances or position. (Adams, 1931, pp. 214–215)

Is the American Dream really attainable by all Americans? What is our responsibility as Americans to try to make this so? Or, is there a belief, by most if not all Americans, that we live in a nation where some pathways are cleared for passage, while others remain full of pot-holes, detours, and other impediments? Are some afforded the opportunity to spin a wheel full of fortune, while others must spin one full of misfortune?

#### WHY – AND THEN – HOW

I choose to live in what I call the world of “why...and then how.” This journey into the various discussion of why, and then how, finds its foundation, for me, within the

questions regarding the social, political, economic, and educational challenges we face today. For example:

- Why should we make sure that more learners have access to a quality education?
- Why should we work to be sure all can afford health care?
- Why should we work to create more job?
- Why should we work in support of the Dream Act?
- Why should we support same sex marriage?
- Why do we continue suffer from un-American acts?

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. – Preamble of the U.S. Constitution

Answers to the questions posed above must support this preamble to the Constitution for the United States of America. Therefore we move away from high stakes mandated testing practices and move towards more engaging teaching and learning environments focused on connecting (bridging) the existing knowledge of each learner with the information we know that they need to succeed in life and as successful citizens of this great nation. We must move away from the economic greed that continues to weaken the ethos of this great nation and move towards the rebuilding of our country through the creation of jobs leading to careers, which will result in more individuals with excellent health care, especially with the enactment and continued support of the Affordable Care Act. *Liberty and justice for all* means just that, for all of us. Included in this premise of liberty must be the right to marry the person of your choice. All other actions that negatively impact these and similar questions are un-American (Lowery, Hernandez, Walker, & Thomas, 2016).

I call this emphasis on the social, political, economic, and educational challenges before us as an Educational Philosophy that *Imagines the Possibilities* of each learner. Imagining the Possibilities is imbedded in an educational philosophy that is considered by some to be counter to other movements that have been diluted in our attempts to make sense of teaching and learning by understanding and classifying learners based on, for example, test scores, gender, culture, race, and/or socioeconomic status. It can be said that this philosophy of Imagining the Possibilities of each learner embraces the premise of Ubuntu: the belief that individuals are empowered by other individuals, that we become our best selves and our best nation, through unselfish interactions with others. Taken further, my success requires me to help empower others towards achieving their dreams in life. I am reminded of Luke 12:48: “*to whom much is given, much will be required.*” In other words, our gifts of talent, wealth, knowledge, etc., should be utilized to glorify God and to benefit others. *Our egos are stroked when we see others also succeed.*



This premise of Ubuntu can also inform our successful attempts in teaching and learning environments. To teach using Ubuntu as a strong element of your foundation and with Imagining the Possibilities of each learner as your primary point of focus means to understand that every individual has the ability to learn. The work focuses on making the kinds of connections needed to help empower each learner to take personal ownership of their learning, with the belief that learning is indeed possible. Larry Crabb (1997) reminds us that, “Connecting is the center of everything, and a vision for what we could become gives it power” (p. 52). He goes on to remind us that connections result in wisdom – the wisdom to understand right from wrong, and deeper levels of critical thinking. Parker Palmer, in his book *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, talks about how dysfunctional our government and people have become. It is this high level of dysfunctional that is causing even more division, splintering the very core of our strength – unity. Parker goes on to say:

How shall we respond to these cultural trends that diminish all of us? On this question, I, too, have a nonnegotiable conviction: violence can never be the answer. Instead, we must protect people’s freedom to believe and behave as they will, within the rule of law; assent to majority rule while dedicating ourselves to protecting minority rights; embrace and act on our responsibility to care for one another; seek to educate ourselves about our critical differences; come together in dialogue toward mutual understand; and speak without fear against all that diminishes us, including the use of violence. (Parker, 2011, p. 4)

Parker goes on to suggest a set of foundational pillars designed to support and empower our society away from the splintering that is currently occurring. Parker’s notion of healing moves us towards a more inclusive, engaged, and highly successful democracy focused on bringing us closer to common ground. He also tells us:

If American democracy fails, the ultimate cause will not be a foreign invasion or the power of big money or the greed and dishonesty of some elected officials or a military coup or the internal communist/socialist/fascist takeover that keeps some Americans awake at night. It will happen because we – you and I – became so fearful of each other, of our differences and of the future, that we unraveled the civic community on which democracy depends, losing power to resist all that threatens it and call it back to its highest forms. (Parker, 2011, p. 8)

The five premises that Parker Palmer presents and expands on are: togetherness, appreciation of others, holding tensions in life-giving ways, personal voice and agency, and the capacity to foster community.

1. *We must understand that we are all in this together:*

The premise can be directed to a multitude of challenges we currently face as a nation. For example, the recent video-deaths of black and brown men and women by police officers provide one of our most serious challenges. Will the call for more

police *training* resolve much of the challenges? It is suggested here that we need more. We need reflective and engaging conversations and experiences that touch the heart on all sides of the challenges. It is the only real way to eradicate the stereotypes about the *other* that continues to divide us and provide the rationale to kill another human being. It seems that more of a Socratic process, with much dialogue among participants, is needed as individuals are empowered to say no to stereotypes, and yes...that we are all individuals with gifts that can become critically important components to the success of the whole, all of us, all citizens of this great nation.

2. *We must develop an appreciation of the value of “otherness.”*

Yes, we are all unique individuals. The key word here is *individuals*. While we identify ourselves often using group identifiers, our affiliations with these groups vary from person to person. And these variations often change as new experiences impact our thinking, beliefs, and actions. We are ultimately unique, interesting, valuable, and evolving individuals. For example, I am labeled by our society as an African-American or Black male. The generalized stereotypes of being a black male in this county provide more negative than positive images, at least initially. Some would argue that these negative images of the Black male seem to be much more persistent and pervasive in rural, more isolated, lower socio-economic communities. I would suggest that the actions of those who do live in large cities with very little isolation, and from more affluent socio-economic communities think in similar ways, but are just a little more politically correct, when needed. Just take a moment to review the results of their actions, the perpetuation of these negative images. However, this social construction of my identity follows a very narrow and destructive pathway, if I buy into the hype. You see, I am also a husband, father, grandfather, sibling, golfer, scholar, and, most important for me, a child of God. It is this last descriptor that helps to frame a mind-set for our future attempts to build a better community and nation. While we are different, most if not all of us seek joy, the opportunity to pursue our dreams, peace, limited stress, and a better future for our next generations. Can we then begin our relationships with these thoughts in the fore instead of the negative stereotypes that seem to create the kind of perceptual barriers that cause us to vilify *otherness* rather than embrace one another? Now is the time to start anew.

3. *We must cultivate the ability to hold tension in life-giving ways.*

The demonstrators raise signs that say, “Black Lives Matter.” While some say yes, others among us say, what? ... And still others say, “All Lives Matter.” The thoughts and opinions of most, if not all, of us fall somewhere along a continuum of thought between these responses. The task for us is to find ways to have the kind of meaningful discussions that lead to more informed understanding of each of our opinions and of each other. The development of broader understandings as discussed here helps all of us to focus on a better way forward, for all involved. Of even greater importance is a continual set of actions leading to a community that utilizes inevitable tensions among us as part of a process leading to more unified and inclusive efforts to clear pathways as we all strive to live the American Dream.

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4. *We must generate a sense of personal voice and agency.*

Building on what I just said regarding holding tension in life-giving ways, a major key towards building the community we seek is the inclusion of all voices as a way to make more informed and successful decisions. If I say that I have a torn ligament in my knee yet you believe that I only have a slight strain, the differences in prognosis will lead to remedies that could prove disastrous. One can use this example to bring clarity to the recent shootings and other physical violence leading to death such as in Staten Island, as partially caught on video, of Black males by police officers. For example, some Black males may talk about the almost daily interactions with police being treated as the enemy, the scourge of society, as less than a man. Such negative interpretations often never end in positive outcomes, especially in the heat of the moment. While the same police officers might express the belief that Black males are lazy, drug smoking, jobless, boys who are always up to no good, thugs carrying concealed weapons, and individuals that need to be monitored aggressively in order to maintain some semblance of peace and safety in certain neighborhood. Such negative interpretations often never end in positive outcomes, especially in the heat of the moment. Educational opportunities, not just *training*, that encourage and support opportunities to come to the table to discuss and work through these kinds of negative and poorly informed beliefs will lead to improved connections and relations between these men and the police. The same process will also lead to a much-improved America.

5. *We must strengthen our capacity to create community.*

*They* must become *Us*. A stronger community and nation becomes more possible when *We* no longer set aside others as *Those People*. We must better understand that each of us has a complex individual identity that continues to evolve. Experiences, especially with those outside of given comfort zones, can help us eradicate the generalizations about the *other* that often dominate our thinking. Many of us are flooded with negative stereotypes of the *other* through the media, school and home, most of our lives. We must strive hard to counter these images with ones that are more representative of the individuals who make up this great nation. *They* become *Us* and the invisibility that currently blinds our vision will disappear. This work will indeed lead us towards real community. A community where all believe that their lives matter, and what we seek is indeed attainable. This is my prayer.

#### SCHOOLS AND TESTING

Diane Ravitch tells us that:

Children in the early elementary grades need teachers who set age-appropriate goals. They should learn to read, write, calculate, and explore nature, and they should have plenty of time to sing and dance and draw and play and giggle. Classes in these grades should be small enough – ideally fewer than twenty – so that students get the individual attention they need. Testing in the early

grades should be used sparingly, not to rank students, but diagnostically, to help determine what they know and what they still need to learn. Test scores should remain a private matter between parents and teachers, not shared with the district or the state for any individual student. The district or state may aggregate scores for entire schools but should not judge teachers or schools on the basis of these scores. (Ravitch, 2013, p. 23)

Numerous reports over the last three decades have expressed concerns about our educational systems. These reports, initially gaining the public's ear with "A Nation at Risk" in 1984, attempt to provide data showing the great declines in academic achievement among students attending school in this great nation. The response to these reports have been numerous, but none more damaging than the implementation of mandated testing procedures. This damage was increased when teacher salaries, and even their very careers, became dependent upon the test score results of students in their class. While teachers, if given some level of autonomy, can control the process, they have very limited control over the actual product. However, school districts have addressed the call for mandated testing and higher scores by restricting teacher autonomy!

There is nothing wrong with testing, especially when result are utilized as a diagnostic tool to adjust teaching practices. However, the interpretation of mandated high stakes testing has resulted in more rote learning and less development of the mind; more lecture as a teaching practice and fewer engaging and often student lead discussions as a way to explore new concepts and theories; and teaching as a task instead of an exploration into the unknown with the excited anticipation of new discoveries, and thus higher levels of academic success. Most public school systems across this country must adhere to this high-stakes testing calamity or face the loss of much needed federal funds. Yet while proponents of high stakes testing claim success, traditional high achieving private schools continue to ignore any adoption of these high stakes testing procedures for their schools. One wonders why? We know why.

Not being allowed to find a better balance between preparing students to maximize their efforts on assessment tools and helping to empower them to think more deeply and take on learning as a personal priority has caused many excellent teachers to leave our most challenging schools. We must better understand that in our most challenging schools the transition from home to these types of classroom environments can often be very traumatic. The day-to-day structure of the classroom is often very different than life at home. Relationships between the learner and teacher are often very shallow and the true identity of each child becomes invisible with the use of descriptors such as at-risk, poor, second language learner, or 504 student. Instead, teachers need to spend time getting to know their students in order to better connect life at home with their time in school.

While most, if not all, teachers have command of their subject matter, many lack the opportunities in today's high-stakes testing environment to apply the *art* of

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teaching in their classroom. The art of teaching referenced here focuses on the ability of teachers to utilize a variety of creative approaches to teaching and learning as a way to connect with each individual learner. The *art* of teaching encompasses the ability to build connections between the knowledge students already have with the information we want them to learn.

What can we do to maximize teaching and learning in this environment of mandated high stakes testing? How do we best accomplish the mission before us to prepare our learners to reach higher levels of academic acumen? Where do we go for much needed strength as we seek a way out of what seems no way?

Answers are found in our hearts and in our very souls. God has *called* us to teach. He will provide a pathway for success. Our task is to follow this pathway and to avoid the dangerous detours that try to convince us to go another way.

It is suggested here that these same foundational pillars, and this premise of Ubuntu can be utilized to form and empower educators towards an educational philosophy resulting in more inclusive, engaged and highly successful teaching and learning communities. Ubuntu will provide the focus needed to continually promote the premise that all of us can and do learn. Given the importance of how our environment impacts teaching and learning, it is imperative that a focus on community, inclusion, and Ubuntu become the driving force – the philosophical premise – behind our thinking, decisions, and actions.

Many of our neighborhood experiences fill the lives of learners with ways of life that are counter to most efforts that promote quality teaching and learning. Media outlets also create images of life that diminish the importance of teaching and learning. When we realize that a primary difference between successful and unsuccessful learners revolve around the inputs in their lives, it becomes more and more obvious that part of our work as educators is to counter those experiences. For example, my mom worked most of her adult life as a domestic. She would often bring home old *Look* and *Life* magazines for us to read. These magazines were full of beautiful homes, awesome vacation sites, and great adventures. My mom would tell me that there were people who actually lived their lives in this way. She also said that a good education would open doors for me to have similar life experiences. My father was a self-taught reader. He would read the newspaper, while I read my books. While talking with him about what I read, he would also ask why I thought the way that I did. He would also asked me to explain my opinions and answers to his questions. Our arguments about our favorite baseball and football teams and players became epic. Most importantly, he invited me into the dialogue of *why and then how*; and now I continue to live in the world of *WHY...and HOW*.

#### TEACHING AND LEARNING

The utilization of Palmer's five *habits of the heart* can also empower all involved towards the building, sustaining, and growing communities where teaching and

learning flourishes—means to foster compassion and generosity toward others (Ubuntu). These five pillars can be turned into *WE WILL* statements and can become a driving force behind turning unsuccessful school inside out.

1. We will always work together to determine next steps with a focus on the academic and social growth of all learners.
2. We will value all of the voices/gifts of all learners and connect these gifts with new information as a way for knowledge to be internalized and expanded.
3. We will better utilize the tensions within our teaching and learning environments in positive ways to diminish division, welcome community, and grow intellectually.
4. We will help to empower all learners with the purpose of utilizing their experiences as a bridge to new knowledge and understand that all of us are learners.
5. We will focus on *Us* and *We* as our starting point for the work ahead.

Ubuntu, as described here, provides the underpinnings of the kind of philosophical foundation needed to continually promote the premise that all of us can and do learn. Those of us that choose to embark on this journey will work to enrich teaching and learning environments with highly engaged and interactive communities where technology is utilized to bring the world to the classroom. Students who lack the financial resources to explore the world will be able to do so, right in their classrooms. Of even greater value will be the conversations that emerge between the students and others from across the world, in small classroom groups, with their teachers, and at home with family members.

A primary goal within these teaching and learning environments will be the development of deeper levels of thinking about those things that promote the kind of learning needed for academic success and lives full of great promise. It is suggested here that most, if not all, students can think critically. Those that know how to disrupt your classrooms consistently; those who develop drug selling organizations; and those who learn to hack your computer much use levels of critical thinking to get their work done. Our task is to connect their abilities to think with the kinds of thinking and doing that will promote their opportunities for both academic and social success.

We understand that our nation is only as strong as our weakest links. Those suffering from a system of education that fails represent some of the weakest links in our great nation. Ubuntu brings focus to the work ahead and causes actions leading to a much stronger and successful citizenry. Let us continue to support this democratic and spiritual philosophy of teaching and learning.

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