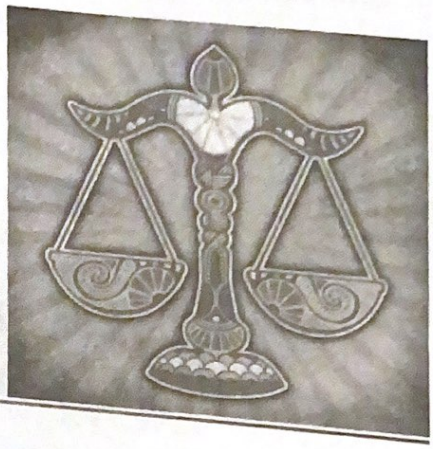
Service to others matters

by Debby Wynne Kelly



"Daddy, why are you visiting the prisoners? Mother, you are staying up so late baking for the nuns. How come? Why can't I play with the toys before you deliver them to the children, Daddy? Why don't those folks you're taking groceries to have any electricity, Mother? Why do the children have "outhouses" and no paved streets in Plunkett town, Daddy?"[1]

An inequity in the haves and have nots made my parents reel, and so they dedicated themselves to helping out in their church and surrounding community. It didn't matter that, at times, they struggled financially to make ends meet; they still reached out to others in need and shared what they had.

In the 50s and 60s, liberal thinkers were not a dime a dozen in Georgia! Maybe, even still scarce. But, that duo made up for the lack of such thinkers. Silence in the midst of racist comments was not golden. No, it meant consent to carry on with such conversation. My parents were never silent. They seemed to clearly understand MLK, Jr's message that "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends" (1967). And so my Mother and Dad seemed to live what I realize now was a form of ministry and civics.

At some point I stopped asking "why" and decided to follow their example of "doing." Service, it was all about service, I realized, and then attempted to emulate their actions. First, student council in school, Girl Scout trips to hospitals, nursing homes, and Young Democrats in college to learn how the

[1] An African-American neighborhood in southern Atlanta, called a "slum" in "Ghettoes: a change in their outlook," *Windsor Star*, 1969; described also in Benjamin Elijah Mays, *Born to Rebel: An autobiography*, Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press. 1971, p. 279.

political process works. And, then, I became a young parent and wanted pass the torch of service to my children as it had been passed to my fo sisters and me. Lead by example, I thought. In the cities where we have live Jackson, TN, Houston, TX, Boston, MA, Atlanta, GA, and Washingto DC, I have sought meaningful service in my diverse communities. Whether was in my children's schools, church projects, education programs, or elde care, I have tried to follow my parents' examples. For, my Dad, a hu admirer of Martin Luther King, Jr. in a segregated Atlanta, many a night the dinner table quoted MLK's words: "Everybody can be great . . . becau anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. Y don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. . . . You only need heart full of grace. A soul generated by love" (King, 1968). Love and gra and service seemed to be the lessons my parents lived. As my children ha grown. I have watched them take up the torch of service over the years. No they are passing the torch to my grandchildren by their example.

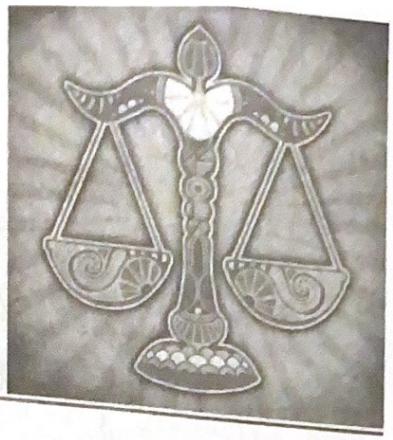
On a recent Sunday morning, I listened intently to the homily of my rectc Rev. John Beddingfield (2015). It was all about service and ways to serve. H spoke of Quaker author, Richard Foster, who talks about service as a spir tual discipline (1988). And Foster created names for different kinds of se vice. One kind, he calls "hidden service," where there is only one person wh knows of your service. Because it is hidden, Beddingfield explained, "Ove time, there will grow within you a quality that others will begin to sense, quality of a deeper love, a new compassion, almost a slight aura. People wi notice that you are different" (Beddingfield, 2015).

And in his book about spiritual discipline, Foster, using a personal story, fur ther explains this kind of serving. He describes an event from the most hecti and final week of finishing his doctoral dissertation, when a call from a frien who needed transportation for errands, brought him an unforeseen clarity Worrying about the precious time he was losing by helping this friend, Foste reluctantly agreed to serve as driver. As Foster waited in the car, he pulled ou Dietrich Bonhoeffer's little book, *Life Together.* We all know to have a boo handy while waiting! Opening the book, Foster was struck by the words "The . . . service one should perform for another in a Christian community i active helpfulness. This means, initially, simple assistance in trifling, externa matters. . . . Nobody is too good for the meanest service. One who worries about the loss of time . . . is usually taking the importance of his own career too solemnly" (Foster, 1988). While listening to Foster's words and experi ence, an admonition of Pearl S. Buck came to mind. She said, "To serve is beautiful, but only if it is done with joy and a whole heart and a free mind."

One of my sisters suggests that she has witnessed Civil Rights icon, Bob Moses, never too busy to perform the "trifling, meanest service" to whom ever is in need, children, parents, teachers, or colleagues. My parents

Where are the women?

by Joan T. Wynne



It's so clear that you have to cherish everyone. I think that's what I get from these older black women, that every soul is to be cherished, that every flower is to bloom.—Alice Walker

When I perused the list of essays for this book to organize them around possible themes of "Who speaks for justice," I sat stunningly silent. I saw not one essay, in the long list of titles, which spoke specifically to the voices of women. How had I not noticed that absence until the last moment of reading and arranging these essays? I had invited students, colleagues, activists to contribute their personal stories about justice, including the young, the elder, the male, the female, the non-gendered. Yet until this moment, did I even notice that not one piece explicitly explored justice for women or the reality of women's silenced voices.

I am a woman; in fact, I am an old woman. Where was my head? There seems no redemption for me here. Yet I continue to scratch my brain for reasons for this omission. But why bother? I guess because it's so excruciatingly painful to admit the neglect. And it does speak loudly about the dilemma of internalized sexism—that a woman who has researched, written, and spoken about issues of justice; taught students about Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Diane Nash, Anne Braden, etc. and always remembers to talk about Helen Keller as a socialist and activist, never noticed the exclusion in this text of a story about her own gender. Nonetheless, this book cannot arrive at the publisher's door, without, at the very least, one essay that speaks directly about the woman's voice for justice.

Nonetheless, while thinking about my gross oversight, one incident from my past did bubble up inside my psyche and seemed to muddy the waters of my unconscious disregard of the particular story of women. That forgetfulness, I believe, might have begun when I was teaching in high school in the south

in 1972. A white feminist came to speak to our faculty about sexism, and I told my female colleague that I wasn't interested in hearing the speaker. Of course, my colleague asked, "Why not?" And I attempted to explain that until white women stopped paying black women slave wages to clean their houses and take care of their children; stopped insisting that black women stay in kitchens instead of dining rooms to eat alone as they paused for lunch; until white women in mass hit the streets and the legislatures to fight for the rights of black women and children; and until white women quit fleeing to the suburbs so they could avoid sending their students to school with "those people's children," I wasn't really interested in anything a white woman in the south had to say about women's rights. So here I am, still stuck, reckoning with my seeming resistance to the specific plight of women.

But it is the midnight hour, and what do I do? There is so much to be said specifically about women leading for justice; women fighting for justice; women suffering across the globe because of injustice. Womanism versus Feminism. The sung and unsung she-roes who for thousands of years have advanced the cause of peace, democracy, spiritual and human rights, music and the arts, philosophy, epistemology, science, technology, and family. Certainly, at long last volumes of books are now being read and authored by and about women who have spoken for justice down the ages; though, too often, the ideas behind these books are not in the public discourse. Still, why am I, an educator, having to come to terms at this late date with my own oblivious slip?

Well, my personal neglect in this book may illumine the conundrum of another question, "With so many women teachers in public schools, where are the lives of women in our history books and all of the other textbooks?" Why, when there are 84% of us in public schools (2012), do too many of us ignore the power in our numbers to challenge the scarcity of our stories in the books we use to teach our children? No matter the research study cited, the statistics of the preponderance of male voices versus those of women in educational texts is still overwhelming. Maanvi Singh at NPR in April 2015 reported that "Gender Bias Pervades Textbooks Worldwide." Yes, another reason, beside my narcissistic need to assuage my guilt, for the necessity to include in this book a story about women who speak for justice.

Clearly not enough time remains before my deadline to develop a longer, well-researched historical saga about women and justice. So, in attempting to write myself out of this blunder with any sense of respectability, I've decided to share one woman's story, the story of a young fighter for justice, extraordinare! Her name is Maisha Moses.

Born in Africa, but raised in Boston, she is a graduate of Harvard who did not leave our children behind. With Harvard's diploma and her later Master's degree in mathematics, she could now be making six figures in many

arenas in this country. But she has chosen another route. She keeps intellectually alive, yet financially strapped, through her work leading the Young People's Project, an organization that develops youth as math literacy workers.

I first met her when Lisa Delpit and I created a site in Miami for the Young People's Project, a spin-off of the Algebra Project. At that time her brother, Omo Moses, was president of the Young People's Project (YPP), and Maisha was working with YPP helping to implement a competency-based Training of Trainers program that she previously had apprenticed for five years with Jim Burruss, a renowned professional development consultant. She also spearheaded a national management team to build the leadership of young people as agents of change (Profiles).

That was the beginning of my being drawn to the voice of Maisha and to her work. I often accompanied her to schools in Miami where she interacted with our children and evaluated our program, sharing her advice about how to operate and sustain our Miami YPP site. During those times, her serenity, her humility, her deep listening qualities, and her quiet leadership stilled an overanxious, over-energetic me. Her gentle presence with everyone in the room was enough to calm my angst about the elementary children, the high school mentors, the disorder that sometimes comes with youngsters tutoring youngsters, and the schools' unconscious oppression of our children. After every meeting with her, I went home and told myself that I wanted to become Maisha.

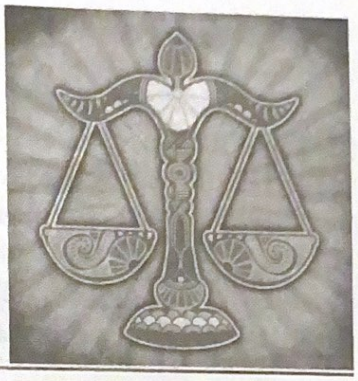
She comes from a lineage of strong leaders and high-achieving siblings. Yet, there is a quality to her that seems almost surreal—yes, she's practical, sensible, logical—after all, she is a mathematician—but it is difficult to capture on paper her capacity to establish tranquility in the midst of chaos.

Her academic credentials, her teaching and finely honed listening and leadership skills are all sterling. But it is her continuous day-to-day struggle to "raise the floor" (Moses and Cobb, 2001) of academic achievement for the disenfranchised; to network with people across the country to support the constitutional rights of children to receive a quality education; and to use tools of graceful yet firm principle to bring people into a circle from all cultures, political persuasions, and ages, regardless of the level of their consciousness, to stand for justice. She has a way of unleashing the human spirit to speak for the good, the right, and the just.

I will end my story about Maisha Moses with her own words about her work, about how she dedicates her life and "speaks for justice":

> We ask young people to give their attention to cultivating and growing their inherent abilities to learn, lead, teach, and organize in order to work with each other and their communities to improve their mathematical literacy and to address the institutional obstacles to their success.

Calm down, relax; it isn't that big a deal



by Sarah Schultz

I was seven. I heard thundering and the noise of large droplets of rain slashing the windows. My mother had gone to the store to buy groceries. Unlike my brother and sister, who were preoccupied with the television or computer, I peered out the window awaiting my mother's return. Thoughts began to race through my mind. *Why isn't she back yet? How many minutes does it take to get groceries? What if she got into a car accident? What would I do if my mother passed away? My father can't cook. Would he remarry?* With eyes glued to the window, I couldn't help but process the worst possible outcomes. My stomach churned and my breathing became shallow—and yet this was just a routine trip my mother made to the grocery store, each week.

But, whenever I became anxious and worried, people close to me said I was being "too sensitive." Or "It's just not that big of a deal." To me, it was a "big deal." Yet I knew something was not right. Why were other kids my age able to be unaffected by similar situations, while I couldn't purge anxiety from my brain? I wanted to tell my family how I was feeling, but I *had* to be the healthy one. My older brother had been diagnosed with Crohn's disease, and my sister had a rare form of cancer. So my parents thought they had won the genetic lottery when I was born. No visible problems. Except that I didn't wear my problems externally, but internally. I was dealing with my own raging storm. That storm was never addressed until much later in my life.

As I entered my first year of teaching in 2011, I felt an immense level of pressure from my administration, my teammates, and my students because I held myself to such high standards. Due to family expectations, I thought I had to be perfect. I often found myself worrying about what people thought of me and wondering if I were teaching the correct material. I would rerun scenarios over and over in my head and make myself feel guilty if someone was disappointed in my actions. By March of 2012, I had made myself so mentally and physically exhausted, that I finally decided to seek a professional.

Initially, I had resisted seeing a professional because I did not want to
labeled as a "crazy person." From previous personal experiences, I felt the
would be judged incompetent by others if I asked for help. I felt I would
to keep this a secret, so no one would see my "craziness." Over time,
noticed that there was a stigma attached to receiving mental health servic
and that people who suffered mental illness typically did not seem to sha
their problem. According to Patrick W. Corrigan and Amy C. Watson,
researchers who have studied mental stigma, "Stigmas about mental illne
seem to be widely endorsed by the Western world" (2002). Many times,
own family members and friends would tell me that I was being dramat
and that I just needed to calm down and relax. As if it were that easy. As if
wanted to feel anxious.

When I became diagnosed with general Anxiety Disorder (GAD), I felt like
had finally cracked the code as to why I began each day feeling anxious an
nervous. I understood why I wasn't able to let a simple mistake go, or why
felt a need to apologize profusely if I believed I had offended someone. Now
though, life started to make sense. I was taught by a therapist to evaluate m
circumstances. If I felt anxious about something, I would ask myself, "Woul
this matter in 10 minutes? Would this matter in an hour; in a day; in a
month; in a year?" I learned to practice deep breathing exercises to help alle
viate the physical aspects of the anxiety. I was surprised by how much these
seemingly simple things uncomplicated my world.

Being in therapy helped me to understand my thinking process, to be aware
of when I was having a panic attack, and to develop some skills for how to
remain calm in stressful situations. It freed my mind and opened me up to a
new world of rational opportunities. I felt that my storm had finally let up,
and I was able to control my anxious thoughts. I felt as though my brain
could finally fight my battle of anxiety and could combat the fear and wor-
ries, so I could, for the first time, be myself. My true self. I could go to the
beach on a cloudy day, without worrying if the rain would come. I learned
that if the rain came, I could embrace it.

A giant leap was my becoming unashamed of seeing a therapist. Yet, when I
shared my new found enlightenment with family and friends, I noticed the
reaction that I actually always had been expecting. People made me feel as if
I were making my symptoms too big a deal. They kept insisting that if I
would just be positive, I would have the same results as therapy brought.
With their negative reactions to my appreciation for therapy, I was no longer
disappointed in myself, but sorely disappointed in the reactions of the people
I had most trusted.

When others tend to make assumptions about issues such as anxiety, depres-
sion, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder, it can make a person who is

struggling with these conditions refuse or resist getting help. Professor of Psychiatry, Gregory K. Fritz (2007), indicated that "Most concerning for children is the fact that it leads parents to avoid seeking psychiatric treatment that could dramatically improve their child's condition" (p. 8). Fritz found that "In a recent study of 1,134 American parents, for example, about 30% said they would not want their child to become friends with a child who had depression and 25% said the same about a child with ADHD. Almost 20% of the sample even said they would not want a child with either disorder to live next door. Responses to the same question regarding a child with a physical illness such as asthma were much more generous" (p. 8).

According to the research conducted by Irene Covarrubias and Meekyung Han (2011), people with serious mental illnesses also experience decreased quality of life, fewer job opportunities, decreased opportunities for obtaining housing, decreased quality of health care, and decreased self-esteem (p. 317). Our culture too often does not tend to see mental illness as an acceptable illness; and, thus, victims of this illness are constantly experiencing prejudice and stereotyping. It is much more accepted by our culture to have something physically crippling than something that is mentally crippling.

Too often, the media has identified problems of mental health with psychopaths and criminals. Others often assume that issues with mental health are due to childlike perceptions. Or that the mentally MUST have weak characters (Corrigan and Watson, 2002). Those perceptions reinforce the stereotype that people should be afraid of anyone with mental illness. According to Social Learning theory, people who have never experienced or known anyone who has a mental illness use the television, newspaper, and other media sources to inform themselves and create perceptions according to those images (Stout et al., 2004). Unfortunately, people with mental illnesses have been portrayed in the media as violent and are, in fact, rarely represented well. In one study, Patricia A. Stout and her colleagues report that "Cultivation theory suggests that heavy exposure to consistent and recurrent messages on television will 'reiterate, confirm, and nourish' values and shape perceptions of social reality to conform to those presented on television" (Stout et al., 2004).

In the past, T. V. characters, the news stories in the media, and often movies have portrayed people with mental illness as violent, unapproachable, and untreatable. Urban educator, Lisa Delpit (Delpit, 1995) suggests in her research about power and privilege that "We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs." If the media is the only source we use to form our judgments of ideas and social issues, then we are doomed to lopsided perceptions of reality.

Nevertheless, besides feeling discrimination from the general population, there is also a self-stigma that looms. Researchers D. L. Stuenkel and Vivian

Wong, indicate that "Stigmatized individuals may respond to the reactions of others in a variety of ways. They are often unsure about the attitudes of others and, therefore, may feel a constant need to make a good impression. Individuals living with stigma each and every day choose to accept society's or other's views of them, or choose to reject others' discrediting viewpoints" (2009, p. 49). Many people who feel self-conscious about their mental illness use strategies such as passing, covering, disregarding, resisting, rejecting, and isolating themselves to deflect their inner feelings about their mental illness (Stuenkel & Wong, 2009). These inner feelings can limit a person from seeking help or treatment. When we label and categorize people with mental illnesses, it discourages and often thwarts their sense of being an accepted human being in their society. Such behaviors increase people's sense of shame. Societies and the media create these social constructs, and too often inhibit people from receiving the care that they need.

My research helped me understand that every brain does not function the same way. Humans are not a "cookie cutter" species. In this world, there are different intelligences, different physical abilities, different personalities, different genetic makeup, etc. People often do not understand that we have different ways of using our brains. No two brains operate the same. Not even twins (Medina, 2014).

Mental illness stigmas keep people misinformed about the preponderance of this illness in our world. Often, for parents, it is hard to admit when a child may need help. Parents may think it means that they have failed. However, researchers like Gregory Fritz suggest that parents should be praised for helping their child build self-esteem by admitting there is a problem, and that there is treatment for that problem. Otherwise, as the parents are the ones who make all of the legal decisions, children will not receive the needed social services if their parents believe in society's mental stigma and ignore their child's condition.

For teachers and parents, perception of mental health service is key. It is important to understand that many children are not getting the mental health relief that they need and deserve because of these stigmas. I know that I would have benefitted from this knowledge and treatment at a young age. As a teacher, I want to protect children who experience the same frustration. Although these children may not express their mental health issues openly, they are in many of our classrooms silently begging for help. As challenging as it was for me to deal with my own anxiety from a young age, I can only imagine how difficult it must be for this generation.

As a culture, we seem to have been sent the wrong message. Mental illness is not something to be ashamed of. Pushing away our mental health needs will not make us better, nor happier. Becoming more open with expressing our

feelings and not feeling ashamed to speak about the way our minds work might anchor our imaginations in healthy contexts. There are so many beautiful things about human beings and so much each person has to offer this world. Why would we want any population to be silenced in order to conform to the social norm? Feeling shame about a chemical imbalance in our bodies seems like a throwback to unenlightened times. As Aristotle once said, "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it" (Philosoblog, 2012). Society needs to challenge the views that the media portrays about mental illness, without blind acceptance. Moreover, in schools, shouldn't we be creating spaces where all children's mental states are accepted and given healthy attention, so that they can experience a mental freedom and a relief from acute suffering.

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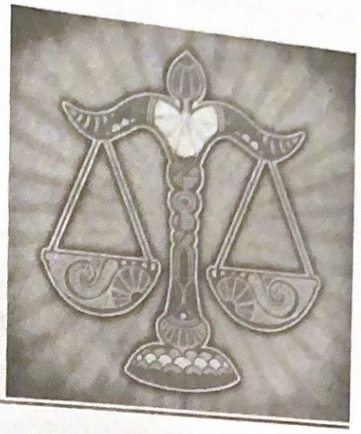
Creating paradise

by Martha Barantovich



I remember the moment that changed my education philosophy and practice as though it were yesterday. It wasn't. It was in 2001. I was teaching 9th graders in an urban school setting. My course was officially titled something like, Career Exploration, or some nonsense. I was working in a newly formed "school within a school" and was part of a team of educators who were tasked with teaching the "bottom 25%" of 9th graders. Most of the students in "The Academy" were Black and/or Hispanic. I think that during our first year, we had three "White" students. On paper, our goal was to address the academic deficiencies by providing a learning environment that was contained and connected. Contained there, those 180 students were being served by six teachers. Students rotated their day with only us. We worked as a team, the six of us, and planned prior to the school year and during the school year. We met regularly to discuss concerns and issues with curriculum and behavior. We involved parents and sent out multiple reports of academic progress. We visited homes and planned events that were "rewarding" to our students.

Again, on paper, we were doing everything right. We had identified the students who "needed" to be with us by combing through pages and pages of transcripts of incoming 9th graders from all of our feeder schools. We scheduled them and looked at deficiencies. We saw what the students weren't doing: attending class on a regular basis, completing homework and classwork, performing well on standardized tests, meeting standards, behaving appropriately, being "model" citizens. To say we actually knew what we were doing in our setting would be a lie. We were just part of a system that was in the process of perpetuating the hegemonic beliefs that have existed in this country for decades. We bought into the fact that the kids were the problem. They were the ones who were creating the issues and we were there to save them. Not save in a religious sense, but save in that we were going to graduate these poor souls and send them into the workforce ready to be upholders of the norms of

society. We were these poor students last great hope. As a unit, we attended a *High Schools That Work* conference to gather all the latest and greatest info on how to pigeon hole these students into the model of education that we were buying into. We had taken the cups of Kool-Aid being offered and demanded that they bring us gallons. I was so vocal when I returned to my school in the fall about how wonderful our classes were going to be and how great a system we were establishing for our students, that it never dawned on me to stop and think, instead of plowing straight ahead into all things status quo.

Never mind that there was no plan in place beyond educating these students in 9th grade in this system. Never mind that our plan was not well thought out. Never mind that our funding was tied to creating good little workers in a good little complacent society. Never mind that our philosophy of service was completely based upon Skinner-istic behaviorism and tied to punishments, not even rewards. Never mind that our little academy was only perpetuating the belief system that these students were broken. Never mind any of that. We thought, I thought, that what we were doing was just the best thing ever. I look back on that experience and am able to dig through the garbage and the mess and identify some positive outcomes. We really did create a community that was safe and protected many of our students from unfair educational practices. We did allow certain successes, academically, behaviorally, and interpersonally. I'd like to believe that we also made a difference in some of our student's lives by providing them with a safe haven.

But, really, I'm embarrassed. I'm embarrassed, because at the same time we started this program, I was enrolled in my doctoral program and was taking two courses: *Advanced Topics in Social Foundations* and *Curriculum and Theory and Research*. Up until that point in my doc studies, I was really just re-wetting my feet in academia. I started with a stats class because statistics is bland and unchallenging. I had been teaching for seven years and wanted to grow as a thinker. Taking these two classes together forced me into a process of thinking that I didn't know existed. I was not prepared for the amount of change I was going to move through, but I did, nonetheless. I found myself struggling through the courses and my daily life as a teacher. Not because I wasn't able or capable, but because I was a practitioner of education that I thought was effective and ideal, and I was reading about theory and philosophy that caused me to feel uncomfortable in my experiences. I was having a terrible time reconciling what I was doing and firmly believed in, and what I was reading and discussing in my courses. I was unaware, at the time, that I was beginning to undergo a transformation that forever changed how I view public education, my role in public education, the "truth" about public education systems and the like. We spent our weeks unpacking or repacking or just plain packing in the framework of philosophical belief systems that framed public education practices. On the surface, the ideology of essentialism and

functionalism made me squirm. Who believed that students needed a "common core of understanding"? Who worked in settings where only certain knowledge was deemed valuable and right? As it turns out, I did. And the moment that truth came flying at me was a day that shook my "work" in public education and my purpose as a human on earth.

My professor, of course, was having us research a topic and address questions from the perspectives we were dialoguing about. I was struggling. I was overwhelmed with all that I was learning and was excited about everything. Thankfully, he had been listening to the stories I was telling and paying attention to the difficulties I was having, bridging the theory and the practical. He suggested I look into this woman, Jeannie Oakes, as she wrote about the very issues I brought up in class. I didn't know who she was. I didn't know what she did. And if I ever get a chance to meet her in person, I will tell her how much I owe her for helping me forge a new path in my career. Call it cosmic intervention; call it right time/right place; call it fate; call it whatever. But I looked up Jeannie Oakes, and I found her book, *Keeping Track*. I checked it out of the library (we were still working with floppy disks then, I couldn't overnight ship it by Amazon), went home, and started reading it. It changed my life!

"Tracking is the process whereby students are divided into categories so that they can be assigned in groups to various kinds of classes" (Oakes, 1985, p. 3). What? Huh? How? Are you serious? I couldn't read this book fast enough. As I read more and more, I found myself sinking deeper and deeper into a pit of despair. I was overcome with contempt for myself and my school and my colleagues and the system and all of the ideas that I had bought into since I had fallen in love with teaching.

How could I be a part of this system and this process that proclaimed to be doing something in the name of progress and good? Yet what I was really doing was feeding into the abyss of the idea that some people's kids are just plain better than others? How? I was devastated. I loved teaching. I loved working with high schoolers. I loved working in the school where I was. How could I have become one of them? How? Ugh. I probably spent most of that evening reading phrases and such out loud to my husband and throwing my hands up in the air in complete flabbergastedness (is that even a word?). Maybe not, but that's what I was: flabbergasted. Shocked and disappointed and sad and angry and awake. Awake for the first time that I actually had a purpose. I was now arming myself with the knowledge necessary to address the inequities that I was also an active participant in perpetuating. I woke up the next day, went to work, walked into my classroom and prepped for the day. To say that all of my lesson plans were thrown out the window is an understatement. If we had lived in the north, I probably would've set fire to all things that had been "deemed" important by the district and my colleagues.

My first class entered in only a way that 9th graders can and once we were calm and settled, I had a heart to heart with them. They all knew I was in school. They saw me reading during our "silent reading time" and would ask about what I was learning. But, in recalling that day, my speech started out something like this:

> I'm sorry. I owe you each an apology. I thought I was doing the right thing by encouraging you all to be a part of this academy, but it turns out I'm wrong. What I'm actually doing is buying into a system that doesn't think you matter. The system doesn't think you're worth pushing and educating at anything other than a basic/remedial level. The school, your teachers, we've been duped into believing that success looks like something other than you. But that's going to change. Starting right now. Starting right now, I will do everything in my power to make sure you have the same opportunities as all the other students, and I will teach you how to stand up for yourself. I can't change the system, I can't change this school, but I can change what I do to make sure you get a fairer chance at succeeding.

And I waited. I waited for the questions and the discussion and the time it was going to take us to digest what was happening. This went on all day for two days. I had three classes per day, and I taught 180 or so students with whom I needed to have this conversation. So we talked. We talked about what it meant for them to be tracked. We talked about what it meant for their life choices. We talked about what kinds of changes they wanted to see. We talked about their life outside of school. We talked about their lives in school. We used language we hadn't used and grappled with ideas we didn't understand. It was new to me. It was new to them. It was new for us. We had work to do. I had guilt I had to address. I had to learn to use the language of the thinkers to start fighting for my students, rather than use the language of the establishment to keep them in place. And it was tough.

I stayed in that system for four more years. I stayed because I knew in my heart of hearts that if ***I*** didn't teach "those kids" (oh, and don't get me started on the number of conversations I had with my colleagues on that phrase) that they were for sure going to become a bunch of statistics, and the narrative would never change. I stayed so that I could work with the students who had been placed into a track of education they had no control over. I stayed so that I could teach them language that would empower their experiences with adults. I spent many, many hours working with my students on how to approach the powers that be: their other teachers, the principal, the assistant principals, their coaches, neighbors, and strangers. I didn't have a language for what I was doing then, as I was a Don Quixote riding into my own set of windmills. I was alone in my school, the only one who started questioning the practices of tracking and hegemony and elitism and

essentialism and the structure of the status quo. I found myself disheartened and isolated in the school and ready to make real change. So I left.

I tell this story not because I have done great work. I tell this story because now I see, as a college professor in the pre-service teacher prep courses at a large urban university, how easy it is to unconsciously mis-educate our teachers into assuming the false notion that there is a right/wrong binary set of experiences that should make up education and classroom practices. And if that's the belief, then there are right/wrong students who will continue on their chosen path and serve the system that has been created. My work now is addressing the status quo by teaching my students to develop a philosophy of education that doesn't begin with, "I believe all children can learn . . ."; rather, identifies what they believe about their pedagogy and philosophy. In addressing inequities and justice in education, my task has become narrowing the opportunity for essentialism to gain roots. I also want to expand the language that these young teachers will be using to understand what is happening in their schools. My students now are young adults who tend to believe that teaching is all about making things pretty and matching and such. And while I appreciate their effort in their belief that aesthetics matter, I'm working in earnest to address their understanding and awareness of justice and to increase their ability to have a voice. If I can help them get grounded enough so that they can speak up for themselves, it is my hope that they can transfer that same grounding to their students. This way, we can have a collective narrative that is about change and progress and justice and advancing the opportunity of all students. It wasn't until years later, when I was able to expand my understanding of critical pedagogy and inquiry as well as discover the authors and thinkers that have influenced my practices, that I ran across this quote from bell hooks, "I entered the classroom with the conviction that it was crucial for me and every other student to be an active participant, not a passive consumer . . . education as the practice of freedom . . . . education that connects the will to know with the will to become. Learning is a place where paradise can be created" (p. 14). Here's to classrooms that resemble paradise.

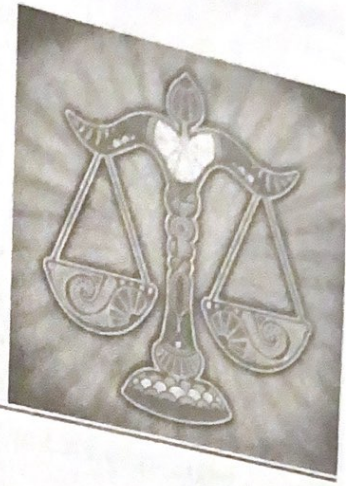
A sample of texts, "must-reads," for pre-service teachers, along with suggested videos

Delpit, Lisa. (1995). *Other People's Children.* New York, NY: New Press.

McIntosh, P. "White Privilege: Unpacking the invisible backpack" (1989). http://www.cirtl.net/files/PartI_CreatingAwareness_WhitePrivilegeUnpackingtheInvisibleKnapsack.pdf

Poetry school

by Alex Salinas



On a bone-gray concrete wall next to the Building A staircase, a chalk caricature greets Mr. Adenwalla. It's a smiling man's face wearing pink beach sunglasses, lenses flooded white as if holding intense light. "Where Are You Mi Amor?" hangs in a thought bubble. Mr. Adenwalla, on his way up the stairs to the first class of the day, smiles at the lovingly made vandalism. What is the story, he wonders.

Standing before his English Composition 1 class, whom he is meeting for the second time, he calls attendance.

"Camille DeLafuente." Mr. Adenwalla notes the lanky teenagers's face as she walks to the front of the room carrying a can of beans: the mild distress of going through a motion mysterious to her. She drops the beans in a plastic crate. "If you show up, you get ten points," announces Mr. Adenwalla, in what he thinks of as his ringmaster voice. "If you bring a canned good as a food bank donation, you get 20 points." Mr. Adenwalla asks students to make this daily offering instead of buying a textbook. He hasn't used a textbook in his classes for 10 years.

"Peter Feliu." Bemused confusion as his can drops with a hollow metal thud. The pile materializes, every day giving the learning in the room a specific heft and color with corporate touches: *Goya Beans, Campbell's Soup, Ramen Noodles.*

"Thank you," says Mr. Adenwalla.

"Nathaniel Greenfield-Baptiste." The muscled brown-skinned man in his mid-20s struts down the aisle joyfully. The nails on his left hand are painted blue, the ones on his right alternate red and silvery white. "That's what I'm talking bout, baby!" he sings. A collective chuckle breaks the solemnity of the ritual as he drops his can.

"Thank you . . . Ignacio Hurtado."

A tall figure speaks up from the back row of desks: "No! I have no can."

Mr. Adenwalla interrupts his steady intonation of names. "Even if you do bring anything, please come up, extend your hand, make the gesture generosity."

Ignacio laughs a mocking, attention-calling laugh. "That's kind of stup don't you think, making us come up like we're your little slaves or somethi You really want me to come up with no can and pretend, Mr. Profes Aaa . . . whatever your name is?"

A void yawns open that everyone wants Mr. Adenwalla to fill. He allows it suck in the space for a few seconds, then looks directly at Ignacio, drawi the whole class's gaze to him too. "Anyone who can't make the food offeri can still make the gesture to earn their ten points. You don't gesture, you not here, you get zero points."

Ignacio laughs loudly. He plods to the front of the room, quickly passes hand over the crate like a vaudevillian magician, and smiles widely at M Adenwalla, revealing a chipped front tooth nearly black with decay.

"Thank you, dear friend," announces the ringmaster with extra enthusiasm

Ignacio remains silent until the end of the period, in conversation with on himself. He slips out at the end of the period before Mr. Adenwalla or an one else can ask him unwelcome questions or make unwelcome eye contac He walks through the college campus, a converted office complex of nin boxy buildings connected by a web of walkways. He's looking at the though in his head rising like the spume of acid on metal. "I can't believe this is th first essay. What an idiotic assignment. Why do we have to do this? What pain. What a pain. Who does this guy think he is? He is soft, so I'm not doin it. What is he trying to do?"

Ignacio sees himself in the classroom again, looking at his own eyes wande ing around, his eyes shrunken grotesquely small, dice rolling back and for in the sockets. He sees himself a blasted wooden doll, joints broken, puppe strings snipped, and abandoned. He feels anger and feels the word *idiot. You an idiot.* He sees an axis across the classroom, with Mr. Adenwalla at one po and himself in opposition. *Idiot.* The word and its echoing come from with like tinnitus, at times barely audible, at times rising to a screech.

Ignacio finds himself in middle of the campus. He is disoriented, trying get out but, as it has turned out, pulled into the center. "All Your Dream Start Here" reads a large placard with red lettering. Arrows point into th building that houses registration, financial aid, and advisement.

"I'm sorry, but I get lost easily," he tells an administrator standing behind an information table.
"Yes, I know," she says. "It can be a little overwhelming at first. Big place."
"I can't keep all these buildings straight in my head," he says. "It all looks the same."

He passes through a courtyard lined with the flags of many nations into the noisy city. He pierces the membrane between the anesthetic order of the campus into the messy ardor of the city. A car horn pierces his bubbling thoughts as he arrives at a bus bench. On the bus, he finds a seat in the back. An old woman sits next to him, asking if he knows the stop for the free clinic. Ignacio notices the plastic rosary around her neck. "I don't know," he says. "God bless you."

***

I am here
to be
with people.
Why are you making us do this?
Why should we feed the poor when the poor want to stay poor?
Why do the poor leave so much garbage on their streets?
Is this for a grade?
Why do those people's hungry children walk around their neighborhoods all alone, uncared for, vulnerable to their own bullets?
Why do you turn us toward evil?
Why would we spare Adam Lanza after what he did?
Why does he deserve any compassion after what he did?
Why doesn't your syllabus mention extra credit?
Who do you think you are anyway?

***

Ignacio Hurtado
1/6/14
ENC 1101
Prof. Adenwala

Diagnostic Essay: Creation Stories

Extremely Important Note: This is based just on my imagination, and I don't mean it to be the truth, I am turning this in as an exercise in creative writing according option #3 in your instructions, I prefer not to compare my "traditional" creation story to another (option #1) or to analyze what it means to me (option #2) in this environment as I feel that is totally uncalled for. Thank you and enjoy.

Revising Salvation

In this essay, I will tell a story that looks at a new version of the Christian creation story known as Genesis, which is a relationship between God and his son explaining the nature of human beings, I will attempt to interpret the Bible as well as my knowledge of Christianity that makes up my spirituality.

First of all, in the beginning, the Lord almighty was floating in the vast emptiness of space. He found the emptiness unbearable so finally squeezed it into the first word, which was love. All he wanted was love, so he made his son together they worked on creating the Earth like a jewel floating in the center of the universe.

Secondly, to make the sky the Lord asked his son to run as fast and as far as he could so the blue fields were his open heart, the sky was the first laughter. To make the ocean, the Lord brought his son into deep sleep, so the waters were those dreams then they painted the grasses and trees. They made the animals out of the mud. The land was father and son playing.

On the other hand, it was on the seventh day that we came along. The Lord wanted to rest, but the son was restless, he wanted to keep playing, he wanted to make the whole situation a simple game, he wanted to throw dice, in a fit of craziness he copied himself, however, it was a bad copy for only god is god, HE is supreme, but he was a foolish son.

Furthermore, this outrageous action enraged the Lord so he punished his son. "You are aborted, the one who makes the fatal error." Like a wrathful fist the Lord's words punched the son. His broken teeth, the blood from his mouth, his tears watered the Earth, he lay motionless on the ground with the painful anger inside his temples. The tears fell into the ground, all the poison has been soaking the ground ever since, we try to clean ourselves so that we are pure.

In conclusion, this is the big secret. There was no magic rib or fruit tree in paradise. It's us, we are the sin, the son, the same son, has been eternally walking the earth to suffer to show us our sin and wash his own from his hands. Only some of these men have been remembered, we are the mistake that comes from love, that's how I see it with my imagination in this story.

***

Nathaniel Greenfield-Baptiste bursts through the door of the classroom about halfway through the period. All the desks have been pushed to the walls, dissolving the familiar forward-facing grid ingrained by 12 years of schooling. A rope is spiraled on the opened space of the gray tile floor from the center outward. Mr. Adenwalla came to class 15 minutes early today to arrange 22 unlit candles at regular intervals along the length of the spiral.

"Oh my god, please tell me I didn't miss it!" Nathaniel says. He finds two girls who have become his desk neighbors, pecks each one on the cheek, and chortles in Gringo-accented Spanish: "Estan muy muy lindas hoy. Te quiero mucho!" Everyone, including Mr. Adenwalla, responds with an uneasy smile.

"Just in time, dear friend," Mr. Adenwalla says to Nathaniel.

Mr. Adenwalla stands at one end of the room with his students, all washed in the light of an image projected on the whiteboard. Green and red nebulas rising in cosmic blackness soften into the background for a poem:

Everyone
Is God speaking.
Why not be polite and
Listen to Him?

The ghostly digital letters seem to melt into the imperfect letters the students have brainstormed onto the board—looping or jagged letters, some stretched into hieroglyphic beauty that can carry independent meaning beyond the cribs of their native words, or shrunk into slanting illegible tracks of textual crumbs, thickets criss-crossed with paths in a wilderness.

Earth learns how to fly + rock knows how to say I love you to his children
Awe? miracles? ?aliens?
agua astiroids atoms
Sex "invented"??? Que? *DNA*
The first cell / eye / leg ⟶ *MYSTERY*
ashes to ashes dust to dust
Neotony
baby monkeys leave the trees
Africa ⟶ *all the races*

His face in dark projector light, Mr. Adenwalla reads from his smartphone

Grace Moment 1: Great Emergence. Out of the mysterious chaos some 13.8 billion years ago time, space, and energy stabilize into the gift of existence. Our Universe is born hot and tiny . . .

A woman in her sixties, the oldest student in Mr. Adenwalla's classes this semester, flits out of the cluster. "Lista!" she says, taking her place at the outermost candle. Her small, smiling face pulses with energy there. In Cuba, she worked as a Kindergarten teacher for 25 years before immigrating to the United States, and she relishes her role in this stagecraft. She's wearing a smart blue suit for the special occasion. "I believe it in the Bible, teacher," she says gravely, "but I think that can be the same with the big bang. Ok?"

She slowly bends down to light the candle. An open flame in the classroom a violation of campus policy that Mr. Adenwalla knows can result in suspension or even termination, just like laying your head down to take a nap your office, loaning an office key to a student, or sneaking out during the ignated office hours posted on his door for a Cuban coffee boost at the teria across the street.

The student lifts a poster of a black cross engendering a sky of stars orange sun, a gray moon. "If the big bang is the true, then who did it?" pauses, scans faces, makes an interrogative "*aaaaaaaaah?*"

"My picture shows it that maybe it is the Christian god who made the bang. It can be, no?"

One candle flame at a time, the students trace the history of the universe the dinosaurs give way to mammals, it is Ignacio Hurtado's turn to illust a creative grace moment: the evolution of flowers 114 million years ago. stands before the illicit points of light. Mr. Adenwalla senses an infra crown around Ignacio much brighter than the puny flames. "I would lik say to this whole class here, no thank you to this activity." In Ignacio's pu classroom voice, the words come out at a lowered octave, pushed throug strainer. "You know, I'm really trying, but I don't agree with this. I'll just t the consequences." He stands back with his arms crossed, face tense. neighbors inch away to make a buffer.

Mr. Adenwalla announces that if Ignacio or anyone else is interested in alternative assignment, he doesn't mind "making a deal." In response, Ig cio walks to other end of the room, noisily dragging a desk, and sits to w He scratches away at a furious pace, head almost pressed down to the d top. At the end of the class, he interrupts a group of students asking Adenwalla questions to drop a folded yellow legal-paper note on the d "That's for you," he says blankly. "I felt I had to write it instead of doing cosmic walk thing."

For the first time, for a split-second, Mr. Adenwalla has a close look at the ta on Ignacio's neck. A pink bubblegum heart with two daggers crossing it, bl dripping from the bottom, lake of fire licking upward. The imperiled h crosses ever so slightly onto Ignacio's jaw and cheek. Such a sloppy autogr thinks Mr. Adenwalla, on a canvas that can make such precise poetry thro miniscule gestures. How much that needle must have hurt on such thin flesh

Mr. Adenwalla puts Ignacio's note in his pocket and walks to his office, ing attention to the contact of each step on the ground, sounding the w *I'll just take the consequences* in his arboreal mind over and over. The words tle like leaves, float down through the canopy, and fall away into ground roots.

At his office he looks through what he tells visitors is his backward window, for it opens, incongruously, into the building rather than out to the busy streets and strip malls at the edge of the campus. He occupies an interior office that overlooks a vast computer lab with a cathedral-like ceiling. He sees the tops of dozens of heads. Students are writing school assignments, doing book reports on classic American novels, doing journals on what they learned today, doing Powerpoints for oral presentations on current events, doing what they're told, writing on *Facebook*, e-mailing distant family members, wasting state resources, applying for government assistance, pouring out love letters, hate mail, moving avatars in virtual realities, paying bills, plagiarizing and proselytizing, moving through dimensions of confusion and discovery, reading the *Miami Herald*, reading *Siddhartha*, reading *Fifty Shades of Gray*, reading *Wikipedia*.

At the top of the cathedral, through the bubble of computer noise and static electricity, a second window reveals the sky. Mr. Adenwalla must crane his neck to get just the right angle. He has been feeling the sky-like longing today. He has been spending one of his periods in the airless place within. He knows well a ripped hidden bleeding. Just before he reaches the emptiness, the emptiness about to come again, he burns a way out, engulfs the outer world, dances fire around the massive glass and steel structures sealing him in. This is his devotion, to burning.

He reaches into his pocket for Ignacio's note, feels moist contact with the paper, his sweat and his student's. Ignacio's big angular letters, the sickled spines, the square serifs feel sharp-edged in his eyes. After he reads it, he feels a great flowing within. He feels spent, parts of him breaking off like brittle paper. Words emerge. "I need to do something else," he says aloud. He closes his eyes for a few minutes, sees himself as though looking through a window. On his computer, he clicks a box indicating that Ignacio Hurtado completed his assignment with great merit today.

***

I am here
to be
with people.
Are we allowed to use I?
Are we allowed to use outside sources?
Are we allowed to listen to rap music in class with prostitutes
the f-word, the n-word, the b-word?
Why are you contradicting what they taught me in high school
Where I always hooked my reader with a question?
Are we allowed to talk about science vs. religion?
Do white people really control the world?

Is it mostly the Jews?
So who is the racist here, you or me?
So are you saying my personal American Dream is bad and dead?
Who do you think you're calling a slave?
Do corporations control the world?
When and where do these secret kings meet to rig this game of chess?

***

To: Prof. Adenwalla.
From: Ignacio Hurtado

Re: Serious Issues I'm Having with Your Class

This communication is to inform you that the topics you discuss in your cla
are very controversial, well, it is one month into the semester, and I do n
think we should be talking about god in class, we have been talking abo
god or ideas about god at least a few times a week at least and I think it
controversial, have you heard about the separation of church and state? I c
believe in god but I do not wish to share my god with other people. I wro
the essay about Jesus. I used all my creativity for it. It was like I was n
thinking when I wrote it. The essay almost wrote itself. To be honest I fe
like I did something wrong afterward. On top of all that you gave me a C+
I know this is not the real grade yet since this is just a practice, and we have
chance to keep working on the essay to get a real grade; but I do not fe
comfortable doing it all over again. Yes I know, I have problems with my log
cal bridges but I am beginning to have my suspicions that you are a Muslin
therefore you have problems with my Christian faith that is the real problen
Are you a Muslim? I know I have to work on my punctuation, but a C+
That's extremely ridiculous and insulting.

Also, I still do not think it is fair that we have to bring your cans as part o
our grade or be shamed if we don't. That makes me very angry and fru
trated as you know that me and my mom are struggling to get jobs right no
You see the situation is I decided from the first few days of this class that yo
try to understand your students; you treat them as people, but the thing i
now I want to do well not like before so as you notice I'm trying my best. I'
trying to follow the rules you have about open dialogue. I know I can agre
to disagree, and I know all my emotions are ok; it's about expressing them.
hope you understand that I am just trying to do what I have to do in order t
get a degree and start my business. Sir with all due respect your job is just t
teach us to write. Your job is just to give us the work. I am willing to mak

that sacrifice, but I am NOT willing to compromise my beliefs. Do not get me wrong, I think you are a good teacher, you create many intriguing situations, but I think you are going too far. You are making me uncomfortable. My point is that we will talk about this after class next time, that way I won't be forced to go to the higher authorities at your institution in order to rectify this situation. I apologize once again if I have upset you or your students in any way, shape, or form.

Ignacio Hurtado
ENC 1101

Ref. #938347

***

Two 13-year-old boys, apparently twins, walk through a landscape of swaying, rasping waist-high saw grass. Each step in the hot mud releases a mineral perfume. A forest of white pole-thin slash pines rises above the horizon. The sun lies low, sending the boys orange light through the swamp forest, more space than wood and leaf. The sky is rumbling, covered in clouds that seem shredded away from each other at cotton edges. The mass of gray flickers with light. The sun is suddenly gone, and the Earth becomes silent in the moonlit night.

"This is so beautiful," whispers one of the boys.

The other looks at him, annoyed. "No. This is just a walk. Get out of that cloud. Don't be an idiot. Let's hurry up and get home. It's getting dark!"

"It's not just a walk!" yells back the other. "Can't you see? This is beautiful! Stop and listen to how quiet it is!"

"You make no sense," says the twin brother. "You're going to get lost."

Mr. Adenwalla wakes from the dream, takes a journal from his nightstand, and begins writing an entry entitled "Poetry School." But, before he can really say what the words mean, he realizes he's going to be late for his first class, and starts reviewing what needs attention. Today, he realizes, he speaks with Ignacio Hurtado after class. How will he say it?

The conversation is less than 10 minutes long and almost totally one-sided. Ignacio stares at him throughout, slightly slack-jawed, offering no resistance. Obviously, no one is telling Ignacio he has to believe anything. Yes, the teacher chooses the topic, and maybe this is an unusual approach, but exploring spiritual matters can make the class more meaningful. And if the topic is triggering difficult emotions, maybe Ignacio should drop the class.