PART 3

The spirit of agency

The spirit of agency is believing at the molecular, spiritual level that you can make a difference in the world, not by changing others, people and things, but by opening your spirit enough so that the light of others can shine through you.

—Real World Dialogue

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 to pass the torch of service to my children as it had been passed to my four sisters and me. Lead by example, I thought. In the cities where we have lived, Jackson, TN, Houston, TX, Boston, MA, Atlanta, GA, and Washington, DC, I have sought meaningful service in my diverse communities. Whether it was in my children's schools, church projects, education programs, or elderly care, I have tried to follow my parents' examples. For, my Dad, a huge admirer of Martin Luther King, Jr. in a segregated Atlanta, many a night at the dinner table quoted MLK's words: "Everybody can be great . . . because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. . . . You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love" (King, 1968). Love and grace and service seemed to be the lessons my parents lived. As my children have grown. I have watched them take up the torch of service over the years. Now, they are passing the torch to my grandchildren by their example.

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

And in his book about spiritual discipline, Foster, using a personal story, further explains this kind of serving. He describes an event from the most hectic and final week of finishing his doctoral dissertation, when a call from a friend who needed transportation for errands, brought him an unforeseen clarity. Worrying about the precious time he was losing by helping this friend, Foster reluctantly agreed to serve as driver. As Foster waited in the car, he pulled out Dietrich Bonhoeffer's little book, *Life Together.* We all know to have a book handy while waiting! Opening the book, Foster was struck by the words, "The . . . service one should perform for another in a Christian community is active helpfulness. This means, initially, simple assistance in trifling, external 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 experience, 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 whomever is in need, children, parents, teachers, or colleagues. My parents

delivered medicine and food to people pushed to the margins of a confederate society. My children serve in their neighborhoods, schools, and communities and sometimes global villages. Yes, service in small ways matters.

Whether you are Christian, of another religion or no religion, I do believe, you can find meaning in Beddingfield's homily, in others' modeling as well as in other people's words. But it is the small service that can fuel a grassroots movement, which can change laws, and, therefore, change lives. It does not happen in a year or even a decade, but if we keep taking those steps of service, we may, indeed, overcome.

Thank you, Mother and Daddy for teaching me at an early age that service to others matters.

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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 sit 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 over-anxious, 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.

She further explains that the work of YPP intends to capture the imagination of the youth in accepting their unique positions as change agents in solving the problems that they and their communities face, acts often resulting in personal and communal transformations. And, as importantly, through the YPP process, she discovers that youth often "grow new approaches to the old and seemingly intractable problems they face in their schools" (Profiles).

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

When I became diagnosed with general Anxiety Disorder (GAD), I felt like I had finally cracked the code as to why I began each day feeling anxious and nervous. I understood why I wasn't able to let a simple mistake go, or why I 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 my circumstances. If I felt anxious about something, I would ask myself, "Would 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 alleviate 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 worries, 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, depression, 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

Oakes, J. (2010). Schools that shock the conscience. In: Theresa Perry, Bob Moses, Joan Wynne, Ernesto Cortes, Jr. and Lisa Delpit (Eds). *Quality Education as a Civil Right: Creating a grassroots movement to transform public schools* (pp. 49–69). Boston: Beacon Press.

Freire, P. (2002). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum Press.

Shor, Ira. (2000). Education is politics: Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. In: C. Pari & Iran Shor (Eds). *Education is Politics: Critical teaching across differences.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishing.

TED talks:

http://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice

https://www.ted.com/talks/clint_smith_the_danger_of_silence

https://www.ted.com/talks/majora_carter_s_tale_of_urban_renewal

http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

Podcast

http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/538/is-this-working

Documentary:

Eve Ensler, Carol Jenkins, Judith Katz. (2003). *What I want my words to do to you*. PBS. http://www.pbs.org/pov/whatiwant/credits.php

References

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress*, NY: Routledge.

Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

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 don't bring anything, please come up, extend your hand, make the gesture of generosity."

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

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

Ignacio laughs loudly. He plods to the front of the room, quickly passes a hand over the crate like a vaudevillian magician, and smiles widely at Mr. 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 only himself. He slips out at the end of the period before Mr. Adenwalla or anyone else can ask him unwelcome questions or make unwelcome eye contact. He walks through the college campus, a converted office complex of nine boxy buildings connected by a web of walkways. He's looking at the thoughts in his head rising like the spume of acid on metal. "I can't believe this is the first essay. What an idiotic assignment. Why do we have to do this? What a pain. What a pain. Who does this guy think he is? He is soft, so I'm not doing it. What is he trying to do?"

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

Ignacio finds himself in middle of the campus. He is disoriented, trying to get out but, as it has turned out, pulled into the center. "All Your Dreams Start Here" reads a large placard with red lettering. Arrows point into the 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 in your office, loaning an office key to a student, or sneaking out during the designated office hours posted on his door for a Cuban coffee boost at the cafeteria across the street.

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

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

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

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

For the first time, for a split-second, Mr. Adenwalla has a close look at the tattoo on Ignacio's neck. A pink bubblegum heart with two daggers crossing it, blood dripping from the bottom, lake of fire licking upward. The imperiled heart crosses ever so slightly onto Ignacio's jaw and cheek. Such a sloppy autograph, thinks Mr. Adenwalla, on a canvas that can make such precise poetry through 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, paying attention to the contact of each step on the ground, sounding the words *I'll just take the consequences* in his arboreal mind over and over. The words rustle like leaves, float down through the canopy, and fall away into groundless 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 class are very controversial, well, it is one month into the semester, and I do not think we should be talking about god in class, we have been talking about god or ideas about god at least a few times a week at least and I think it is controversial, have you heard about the separation of church and state? I do believe in god but I do not wish to share my god with other people. I wrote the essay about Jesus. I used all my creativity for it. It was like I was not thinking when I wrote it. The essay almost wrote itself. To be honest I felt 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 a chance to keep working on the essay to get a real grade; but I do not feel comfortable doing it all over again. Yes I know, I have problems with my logical bridges but I am beginning to have my suspicions that you are a Muslim, therefore you have problems with my Christian faith that is the real problem! 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 of our grade or be shamed if we don't. That makes me very angry and frustrated as you know that me and my mom are struggling to get jobs right now. You see the situation is I decided from the first few days of this class that you try to understand your students; you treat them as people, but the thing is, now I want to do well not like before so as you notice I'm trying my best. I'm trying to follow the rules you have about open dialogue. I know I can agree to disagree, and I know all my emotions are ok; it's about expressing them. I hope you understand that I am just trying to do what I have to do in order to get a degree and start my business. Sir with all due respect your job is just to teach us to write. Your job is just to give us the work. I am willing to make

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.

Mr. Adenwalla will help him transfer to another section. But, he emphasizes, what if he finds another difficult or, worse, a boring topic in the new course? One teacher bases a large part of her class on Shakespeare's tragedies, for example. Others on crime fiction; food ethics and trips to a community garden; apocalyptic narratives; African-American women writers, sexism and racism. Would he prefer one of those classes? Maybe, the simple yet absurd reality is that Ignacio is stuck with him, Mr. Adenwalla proposes. Maybe, he is meant to be in this class.

Mr. Adenwalla has never been this close to Ignacio for this long, and can't help, but stare at swaths of faint pockmarks rising from the nape of his neck, over the tattooed flames, up both cheeks and into his temples. He notices the contours of his thin face, eyes set in bones protruding goggle-like, cheek bones high, tight skin tapering to a small full mouth. He notices the way Ignacio's shifty caramel eyes capture yellow streaks of light. He notices the faint spicy stench of his breath and sweet traces of expensive cologne.

"You can't satisfy all of the people all of the time, dear friend," concludes Mr. Adenwalla.

"No dropping, no transfer," Ignacio says after a pause, as if trying to process a riddle. He wants to know what grade he's earned so far. Perhaps, a B, says Mr. Adenwalla, adding his customary line about grades being figments of the imagination.

"I'm going to finish what has been started," Ignacio says. He snaps his focus into Mr. Adenwalla's eyes. "Is that ok with you? Maybe this *is* meant to be."

"Ok with me, dear friend," Mr. Adenwalla says. "And by the way, I'm not a Muslim, or Hindu, or a Christian, or an atheist. Religion is a figment of the imagination too. This God the religious folks talk about might be real—not sure. I just want to learn about life."

Mr. Adenwalla is holding Ignacio's monotone and glazed look in his mind as he walks across campus to his office, deciding that truly knowing this young man is bound to his very purpose. A few students and professors are standing around his door chatting and pointing at a large sheet of paper that has been taped right under this name plate. It's a blown-up photo of a woman's curvaceous torso, cut off at the head. The bosom is wrapped in a tank top emblazoned with stars in the style of Van Gogh's famous painting. "This Is How I Want To Die?!?!" scrolls around the border, rewritten several times in thick red marker. "It seems someone wants to get our attention," he says, offering his honest assessment. He leaves the shock art on the door.

"I don't want this place to be my teaching anymore," Mr. Adenwalla says in the quiet of his office.

****

Why do I take your face and voice home with me every day?
How do I tell you what I feel as I lay under my white sheets at night?
Who are you behind these poems and lectures?
I am here
to be
with you.
You are the one.

***

Nathaniel holds the stage, reading the draft of his creation story essay to the class. His nail polish is black on one hand today, electric blue on the other. He has also taken over the white board, that canvas usually reserved for the dictums of the professor, drawing three square happy faces. Each has three eyes, the ones in the middle like breaking stitches. Mr. Adenwalla has taken his usual place during these readings in the back of the class.

"When the first consciousness came into being from the void, it suddenly realized it was all alone. I am the only I, it said, and looked at itself: It was a great fish with a hole in its head, swimming into itself, over and over again, an eternal knot, going inside of itself and coming out, looking for something although not sure what. It lived in fear until it thought, I need a friend. If I have a friend, I won't be afraid. So it cut itself in two. One side was called Fabulous, the mother energy. The other side was called Fierce, the father energy. When a bee takes pollen from one plant to another, it is Fabulous trying to reunite with Fierce. Peanut butter and jelly. Tom and Jerry. Fabulous and Fierce. *Blanco y negro.*"

Nathaniel holds his blue hand before him and presses his black one into it, palm to palm, as his words unite Fabulous and Fierce. "Every being contains both Fabulous and Fierce, in different proportions . . ."

Ignacio darts up from his desk, just a few over from where Mr. Adenwalla is sitting, and moves up two rows. He begins making kissing noises and an orgasmic moan. "What is this *mariconcito* trying to say?" he yells.

Nathaniel places his pages on the teacher's table and takes a few steps forward amid alarmed "Oh my god's!"

"What are you going to do, faggot?" Ignacio howls, crossing the classroom. "I'm not afraid of you!"

"You sure you can handle all this?" Nathaniel motions his hands up and down to display his powerful physique.

Ignacio rushes at Nathaniel, reaching him in the middle of the classroom, just as Mr. Adenwalla has made his way there too. Ignacio breaks through

his teacher's grasp and bear hugs Nathaniel. Unfazed, betraying no distress in the slightest twitch of face or body, Nathaniel expertly leans his cheek against Ignacio's for leverage, patiently wraps his much thicker arms around his attacker's upper torso, and interlaces his fingers at the shoulder blades. The polished tips make the supple lock beautiful. Nathaniel separates and adjusts the fingers for a moment, and they look like newly budded winglets stretching out. Ignacio lets out a plaintive moan, surrendering, head and arms falling back limply.

Nathaniel places Ignacio, who is sobbing, on the ground like a scared child. Ignacio soon catches his breath and runs out of the room.

When Mr. Adenwalla meets with his department chair later that day, they begin the logistics of expelling Ignacio Hurtado from the college. She spends an hour documenting each sign pointing to Ignacio's instability, probing what may have unhinged him and obsessing about whether Nathaniel was considering legal action. She scolds Mr. Adenwalla about not reporting the threat much earlier, and reminds him that last semester, a music professor at another campus was beaten unconscious by a masked assailant. Administrators had inside information that it was a hit, retribution for a bad grade.

"It's a dangerous world out there!" she says. "You know where we live here—open enrollment world. We're all people have, in many cases, but we have no idea where these people are coming from, what they're capable of, or how screwed up they are. We have a responsibility to keep trouble out."

"My goodness, you do like to stir things up, Mr. Adenwalla," she finally groans. "My guru! I've said it before and I'll say it again. I like some of this 'real world' stuff you do, but be careful. If you trigger people, you and I and *we* are responsible. This college is responsible."

"Why do I have the feeling you're going to get us both into big trouble one of these days? What are you doing to these people?" She is convinced that, yet again, she will need to pay special attention to Mr. Adenwalla's antics for a while.

Mr. Adenwalla is tempted for a moment, but during the conversation, he decides against sharing his vision for the coming year, the work that will, with luck, save him this time. Whatever it is, that work will happen nowhere near these nine buildings. He will do it all through his own means—no Golden Apple Innovative Teaching Grant, no collaboration with the Service-Learning and Sustainable Living Institute. Best of all, since it will not be a college-sanctioned project, he will not need anyone's permission to invite Ignacio as well as Nathaniel to participate. This is not the work of the college; it's the work of the poetry school.

"And by the way, Mr. Adenwalla," says the chair as he leaves the room. "I hope you're not forgetting to do the cognitive thing with these people. If they're not learning how to write a college essay, you're not doing your job, I'm not doing my job. *We're* not doing our job, Mr. Adenwalla. Teach the basic skills. I worry you're losing sight of that sometimes. Cognitive!"

***

I am here
to be
with people
What if they don't learn how to do language?
What if they don't practice how to solve formulas?
Where do you find the time to do this extra-curricular business?
Have you reviewed the contract recently
the manual of procedures
the student handbook?
What if they get hit by a car, or lightening, or you get hit with a lawsuit?
What if the shit hits the fan?
What will the union say then?
About getting so close to your students?

***

From: Ignacio Hurtado <belligerentwarrior2000@gmail.com>
To: Juan Adenwalla <adenwalla213@gmail.com>
Date: April 20, 2014

Subject: Mooshrooms

I'm sorry about what happened two weeks ago, I lost control of myself. I felt like hurting him, someone, anyone, and I lost control. I deserve to be expelled from school. I'm too tired anyway. I deserve the worst. I'm a danger to myself and other people, I hope this did not affect you or your class too much. I hope I didn't get anyone in trouble. Don't worry about me. I'll be fine. Thanks for everything you did. You're a good teacher. After all this happened, I noticed that I wanted to write about it. I have trouble with a lot of things, even simple things, but I see that writing is a kind of trouble that I kinda like. MY WRITING IS A MooshRoom. YES!!! Letters grow on the sad heavy world deep inside and deep outside. My writing eats what is dying, a poison that can put me outside of my own mind, I have been writing about this, and I see that my writing is smarter than me; my writing knows things I don't, and I can listen to it so I see things that broke from being in school; I feel like I came back to life in a way. I can do things, I'm not sure if

that's good or not. I feel terrible, teacher. I thank you and I blame you, Mr. Professor. I know we will meet again, I know it.

PS.

Hope you don't mind if I send you some of my writing.

***

"Hello teacher," Ignacio says, walking through his former professor's door, more than four months since his ban from the campus. "Can I come in?" He closes the door before Mr. Adenwalla, who has stopped chewing on a fig cookie in disbelief, can respond.

"Of course, come in."

Mr. Adenwalla has tried to contact Ignacio several times, spoke to his mother three times, but hasn't communicated with his former student since he watched Nathaniel Greenfield-Baptiste embrace him into a sobbing heap. Ignacio has been sending Mr. Adenwalla a poem every week or two.

Ignacio takes a seat on a couch in Mr. Adenwalla's office, which he's entered for the first time. Mr. Adenwalla's desk sits before a mural on the wall recently finished by several students including Nathaniel: a red, orange and black image of an old man with long gray whiskers. He sits on a rock, dipping one toe into a lake of flowering water lilies. Calligraphic text forms the lower border of the mural: "The smallest sprout shows there is really no death." Against another wall is a stack of cans 20 deep rising halfway to the ceiling.

Ignacio has been sitting, looking for a few seconds, but stands back up to start talking. "Ok, so I heard you talked to my mom about giving me a scholarship for your poetry school thing you're trying to do. Is that true?"

"Yes, that's true."

"Why would you want me?"

"Because I see you're a poet," Mr. Adenwalla says.

Ignacio doesn't seem to register the words. They evaporate in midair. His own words are busy being born from the cooking cocoons in his brain, and they require all his attention.

Ignacio sits, leaning forward, his eyes widening. He throws a fist into a palm, quietly, with great care, with a small pop. A smile and a nod, a rare bubble of delight rising out of the hot and cold roil behind his eyes and bursting between him and his teacher.

"First of all, understand that I can't give you anything for what you're trying to give me. To hell with your invitation."

Mr. Adenwalla sits quietly.

"You hear me? You don't want to be around me. If you are, I'm going to give you a scare like you've never had before. Do you understand me? Let me know if you understand me or not."

"Yes," he says softly.

"I don't care about what you say! I don't care what anybody says. I don't think you're any good. All these idiots think you're cool, but you're not cool. I think you're just a fuck-ing do-gooder. Do you understand that? I want nothing more than to punch you in the face right now. You know why? Because you are an Arab faggot."

"Yes."

"Never call my house again, or I will come here to give you the scare of your life. I will come to this school to do something you will never ever forget." He cocks his head, eyes sparking. "God bless you, faggot."

"Really?" Mr. Adenwalla says blankly. Then with a faint glint of enthusiasm, "God bless you too! It really pains me . . ."

Before he can finish, Ignacio walks away, ignoring Mr. Adenwalla's extended hand.

***

ragin soul by ih
when i sit quiet
i can know the blown up bones
slowed up
one face at a time one eye at a time
what is inside me in billions of seconds
did i waste my billions
one breath at a time and one molecule
inside that breath one at a time so that the rage
squeezes my heavy heart like a small hand does a metal can
a rock or an iron sword
Red Rage Roars
comes up like fire!
you askin me to give something away teacher
whats the price of this real love your teachin
whats left of me
nothing but the ashes of what i learned
rainin down on the world thats makin
one last turn

just my shadow stays
burned on you so nothin is wasted

***

At dusk Mr. Adenwalla and five students sit in a circle in a great glade of saw grass. A dome of cypress trees hunches beside them. It is Saturday evening during Christmas break. Nathaniel walks into the middle of the circle and places a brown apple snail shell on a mat of hard-veined palm fronds.

"I mourn for the absence of those who can't be here," he says. "I mourn for my father who passed away last month, who never looked me in the eyes as a human being. I'm afraid for what my life will be without ever having a father, but I live it. I will live it. For all the lost family members, I mourn."

"We hear you," responds the group. After each student has spoken and left a shell, one of them, one of the most gifted writers Mr. Adenwalla has ever found in one of his courses—a dyslexic polyglot—offers the teaching. He explains that he will lead them in a song and dance. "I read about something like this in a book that the church banned," he says slyly. "It's a simple and beautiful mystery." After they learn the words to the song, the members of this gathering of the poetry school come to their feet and start whirling in the night.

"I am wounded!" cries the leader.
"And I am the one who wounds," responds the group.
"I am born," he says.
"And I give birth," responds the group.
"I am understood!"
"And I am the one who understands!"
"I am saved!"
"And I am the one who saves."

Mr. Adenwalla's offering comes at the end of class, before the students retire to their sleeping bags. He turns his head to the dome of trees behind the class and begins talking.

"This is a place where death dances with life. A long time ago, some cypress trees started growing at what is now the center of this dome. As their leaves fell, over many years, they dissolved the limestone bedrock under us. This is called a solution hole, made by the action of acid, by the process of decay. Other trees started growing around the hole. The water is deeper in the middle, so the trees grew higher, the roots broke deeper into the rock."

"The middle of this one is so deep, it couldn't hold the trees anymore, so it's avoid there, a nice water hole for the alligators to come drink in the dry season. The hole will keep eating the leaves."

Mr. Adenwalla looks deeply into the dome, opening to words for a moment. With startling clarity, he sees a figure blink into being, a fleeting spangle of white gold, a few hundred feet behind the leaves and mossy tendrils of the airplants. Something rustles, stills into Mr. Adenwalla's gaze, arresting him for a moment there, and melts away. The faceless silhouette is probably a deer, but moves with a slinking fear that reminds Mr. Adenwalla of a human being, of Ignacio Hurtado. Did he, or someone, follow them here, he wonders for a flash. Or, is this a projection beamed into the night by the lamp of his own heart.

"The trees are called the overstory," he continues. "Great name! Think about how the overstory is a mirror for the dome floor." Mr. Adenwalla keeps looking, peers through the speckled spaces of shadow between trees where consciousness flickered, looks past the space to the bruised orange-yellow of the horizon.

So many students, so many to come, thinks Mr. Adenwalla. He is with Ignacio Hurtado this night. Mr. Adenwalla reflects on his efforts to learn what became of Ignacio after the poems stopped. He found disconnected phone numbers, lapsed emails, and a series of rumors, none of which could be confirmed. He joined some family in Central America. He committed suicide in his bedroom. He's imprisoned in a different state. He's hitchhiking across the country to Alaska where a long-lost uncle lives. Or he roams the streets of the city of his birth without a home.

Debra, the essence of love in the midst of struggle

by Alyssa Hernandez

"Alyssa Hernandez . . . Your partner is Debra!" This was the moment it all began for Debbie and me. The WOW Center individuals and the Miami Dade College students sat together in the cafeteria anxiously awaiting to hear their names called. This was the day our journeys were about to kick off! After hearing Barbara, one of the staff members, call my name, I happily hurried to the front where I met Debbie. Debbie looked at me with a big old smile, and I smiled back. Full of excitement, I went straight in for a hug. Luckily she hugged me right back!

Debbie is a 36-year-old woman who has Down syndrome. She is around 5 feet tall and has straight brown hair that just barely reaches her ears, and wears red glasses with tiny green beads attached to them. You can almost always catch her with a water bottle in hand and her white vintage looking fanny pack around her waist. She lives with her boyfriend Josh in their very own apartment! She has lived in Miami all of her life. The two of them share their home with a cat named Cheeto.

While close to her mother, Debbie only sees her father occasionally on holidays or special events, like her birthday. This is something Debbie and I have in common. When she shared this information with me, I felt even more connected to her. At times, Debbie may not be easy to understand, as she often gets stuck pronouncing her words, but she is most certainly easy to talk to. She is open to conversations about almost anything. Kind and loving, she is quick to hug me when I least expect it. A genuine sweet heart she is. But Debbie can also be a little bit of a trouble maker! Luckily she has her pal Harry to keep her in check.

Harry is what she has named her right index finger, after the one and only, Harry Potter! The first time I found out about Harry was during our first group activity at the WOW Center. The MDC students were asking each of

the WOW Center participants a series of simple "get-to-know" questions. On that very loud day in the cafeteria when it was my turn to interview Debbie, the first thing I did say my name. She smiled and said, "M-M-M-My name is Debbie!" As she shook my hand, I noticed she had her right index finger pointed up, slightly bent. She was smiling at me and then looking at the finger. I did not think much of it at first and went on asking the questions listed on the paper. When I asked Debbie what was her favorite movie, her face lit up as she said "Harry Potter!" and sure enough her right index finger popped out of her clutched fist. I smiled and told her how much I loved Harry Potter! I remember how excited we both were. She then looked up at me and said "his name is Harry, too!" as she then looked down at her right index finger. I said, "No way? Just like Harry Potter. Is he special like Harry Potter?" She smiled and giggled as she said, "Yes." Barbara shouted "Switch!!!" and my time was up for interviewing Debbie. After that short moment we spent together, I knew we hit it off really well and that Harry was a big part of her, but I had no idea how much so.

At first, I thought Harry was simply just an imaginary friend to Debbie, but I later learned that he is so much more than that. Intrigued to know more about Debbie's relationship with Harry, I asked again about him during one of our recent visits to the WOW Center. It was a hot sunny day as we walked to the field to play some kickball. I could tell Debbie did not like the heat, but she was still excited to be spending time together. When it was our turn to kick, Wilson, a staff member at the WOW Center, called us over from outfield.

I looked at Debbie and said, "Come on Debbie, it's our turn to make a home run!"

She looked up at me, grabbed on to my hand firmly and began to jog over to home plate. As we were making our way over, she began to speak from Harry's perspective. In a slightly deeper voice, holding her right finger in the air, she said, "Come on Debbie, h-h-hurry up! You're holding up the game!"

Once we made it to home plate, Wilson pitched the kickball over to Debbie, and she kicked it hard enough to get us safely to first. I was proud of my buddy and apparently so was Harry! Once at first base, Debbie again spoke from Harry's perspective, "Good job Debbie."

I then asked her, "Debbie what is Harry to you?"

She looked up at me with a bit of a confused face as she looked back down at Harry. She then said, "Harry makes sure Debbie behave."

I then asked her, "So is Harry like a parent?" Before she could answer, we were running again to the next base. When we caught our breath, I brought up the same question again. She then told me, "Harry is like a Dad." It then all clicked for me.

Debbie is truly a kid at heart as she is full of innocence. And maybe, she feels like she has to have someone to still keep her in check since she lives on her own. So much, so that, I believe she created Harry to be her parent, when she's not with her actual parents. It seems clear that she doesn't view herself as a complete "adult." I believe, she is aware she is still very much so a kid at heart. I also feel, there may be a relation between Harry and the fact that her Dad is in infrequent part of her life. Almost all of her comments through Harry are those that she might receive from some sort of authority. Yet through Harry, she is hard on herself. This became even more evident down the road.

A little more than half way through the semester, our journey together took a sharp turn. One afternoon at the WOW Center, I noticed Debbie was acting strange. I remember this day almost perfectly because of its magnitude. As I sat next to her in the cafeteria, I noticed she was not as cheerful. Her high spirits seemed absent that afternoon. It was as if the life had been sucked right out of her. This was a side of Debbie I previously had never witnessed. Worried about her, I quickly asked how her day was going. She raised her chin up, looked at me and then looked back down at Harry. She did not answer my question, but, oh, Harry sure did.

"Debbie's been real b-b-bad" she said, using Harry's voice.
"Why? What happened?"
"Debbie said a bad word," continuing in Harry's voice.

Debbie then suddenly smacked her own hand, the hand she uses to bring Harry to life. As I glanced down at her hand, I noticed she had tiny scratch marks along the top of her hand, specifically right near her index finger or Harry. To me, it was almost as if she was getting back at Harry for ratting her out. Before I could comment on what I had just seen and heard, Barbara was standing right in front of our table. Barbara looked at Debbie with a face of disappointment as she asked Debbie, "What are you doing here? You know you are not supposed to participate today!"

Confused with what Barbara had just said, I looked right at Debbie searching for some sort of explanation as to what was going on, but she was just as shocked as I was. Barbara then told Debbie and me to stay behind, as the rest of the group went for a walk through the park nearby. Everyone looked at us. A million thoughts raced through my head. I thought to myself, did I do or say something wrong to my buddy? Had I offended her in some way? I was so worried. As soon as the room cleared out, Barbara called the two of us over. Barbara also called Jessica over, another one of Debbie's supervisors. This made me even more worried! As the four of us stood in the cafeteria, only inches away from one another, Jessica began to speak.

She said, "Debbie why don't you tell your buddy how you have been behaving lately?" As I turned to Debbie, I noticed her face was almost pale. Debbie was so nervous and afraid. I remember feeling like a parent who had just found out her child was misbehaving in school.

Debbie did not want to answer from her perspective but instead from Harry's. Jessica and Barbara both told her how they wanted to hear from Debbie and not from Harry. Debbie took a long pause after hearing this. I could tell she was really struggling with coming to terms with what she had done. I grasped her hand and just nodded, as I looked my buddy in the eyes.

She then finally said what had happened: "I didn't want to leave computers."

Jessica elaborated on what had happened. "It was time to switch from computer class to music therapy and Debbie did not want to go. After telling her several times that it was time to leave, I said if she chose to stay, she would be choosing not to be part of the MDC program anymore. I even told her that once I leave this computer room, there was no going back. Her decision would be final. I gave her many chances, but she still chose to stay in the computer room and she cursed."

Out of the program?! I thought to myself. No they cannot do that. Can they? The semester was almost over. But, more importantly, I love Debbie. I did not want to lose the privilege of spending time with her.

I then commented, "Debbie had told me, well Harry told me, that she said a bad word, but I never heard about all of this." Barbara and Jessica then made Debbie promise me that she would behave better. Debbie squeezed my hand, looked me in the eyes, and told me, "I-I-I promise, I'll behave better because I really li-i-ike you." Her hands were sweaty and her face was full of sorrow.

I then explained to her, "Debbie, I love being your buddy, and I want us to be able to keep spending time together but you have to behave better. If not, you're going to be removed from the program." She just nodded, and said, "Yeah."

Barbara then told Debbie to go to class, and that she would not be participating in the program that afternoon. They would have to think about letting her comeback at all. Surprised and in a rage, Debbie hollered, "I don't want to go to class. I want to be in the program!" As she stomped her right foot, her head hung low. Her eyes were fixated on the ground.

I told Debbie she had to go to class.

Her response, "I'll see you next week!" as she smirked.

Puzzled, I told her, "Debbie, there may not be a next week for us if you don't start behaving better. I hope there will be, but you need to behave better."

She said, "Okay, I pr-r-omise." We said our goodbyes and she made her way to class.

I followed Barbara out of the cafeteria and into the park, where everyone else was gathered. Barbara and I began to talk. She said, "This isn't the sweet Debbie that I've known and taught for years. She is behaving very oddly, and this is not the first instance. I think she may need to be put on medication. I don't know how we're finally going to handle this situation; you might need to be assigned a new buddy."

"MEDICATION?" I thought to myself. She is just having a bad day? Are the disabled not allowed to have those? I told Barbara how I would hate to lose Debbie as a buddy, that I was already so connected to her. As I walked through the park, buddy-less, I began to reflect on everything that had just taken place. If anyone of us "abled" people did not want to leave an area for whatever reason, no one would seriously consider putting us on medication? How many times do we "abled" people curse when another cuts us off in traffic? No one tries to put us on medication for that. Why do people turn to medication as a solution for any kind of rising issue involving a disabled individual? I knew that I did not have the whole story, but my mind was racing.

Although Debbie's behavior did not improve instantly, with great effort, she did complete the program with me. It was a trying time for both of us, as our visits from there on out were chaperoned by her social worker. I saw and still see Debbie progressing remarkably. I am so proud of her. Witnessing someone you care about struggle and somehow overcome through great effort is a powerful experience.

The Friday after our last WOW visit, I received a phone call from Debbie. She was calling to let me know that she had broken our promise. A couple weeks ago, I couldn't even get her to confess to me when she was misbehaving. In the past, the only way I would ever find out was through Harry or one of her supervisors; and here she was, calling me to tell me she did something wrong. This was a courageous act of trust. I told Debbie that as long as she learned from mistakes and made efforts to improve, that it was okay.

I asked her what she was up to. She told me how she was picking up the house and going to cook later with her man. She also told me, how she really loved the stuffed animal I gave her on our last visit. When Debbie asked me what I was doing, I told her about working on some homework. Coincidentally, that homework was this essay.

Grassroots leadership for the 21st Century: Leading by not leading[1]

by Joan T. Wynne

What kind of leadership does the 21st century demand? Many of us in education today realize that top-down hierarchal thinking and behaving is stultifying students' and teachers' imaginations, disenfranchising student voices, failing marginalized populations, and foiling national school reform. Asa G. Hilliard, III (1997), a decade ago, suggested that with a broken system, "revolution, not reform is needed." That revolutionary vision can be seen in a model of leadership, fully operationalized during the sixties in the Southern Freedom Movement (SFM) in the U.S.A., but honed in education during this new century by Bob Moses, founder and president of the Algebra Project, Inc. Grounded in a philosophy of empowering grassroots, bottom-up brilliance to find an equal voice alongside those in the power structure, the Movement's history did not start in the sixties. Rather, as Moses explains, it "came into existence when the first African walked off the first slave ship in chains" (Moses 2001, p 174). And though the grassroots component of the SFM model may be as old as the leadership philosophy of Lao Tsu in 700 B.C.[2], its impact on educational circles is only now being examined.

Research, sponsored by the National Science Foundation, Florida International University (FIU), and some grassroots organizations is beginning to investigate SFM's educational offspring, the Algebra Project, as a possibility

[1] "Grassroots Leadership for the 21st Century: Leading by Not Leading" by Joan T. Wynne from *Transformative Leadership and Educational Excellence: Learning Organizations in the Information Age* by Myint Swe Khine and Issa M. Saleh, © 2015 Sense Publishers. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

[2] Quotation by Lao Tsu from the *Tao Te Ching* suggests the general philosophy of Movement leadership style "Go to the people. Live with them. Learn from them. Love them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. But with the best leaders, when the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say 'We have done this ourselves." While at Harvard, Moses studied the writings of Lao Tzu.

to revolutionize school reform, especially in the instruction of mathematics. Within the context of public schools, the Movement practice that seems unique in reform is its insistence on bringing together the disenfranchised into small circles to discuss, understand, and, then, demand what people say they don't want—a quality education (Moses 2001, p.16).

In this chapter, I will discuss some of the components of this transformative leadership model as I witnessed them unfold during Moses' negotiation of the leviathan obstacles that stand in his path of delivering black, brown, and poor white children from the dismal dungeons of impoverished schools. His attributes as a leader reflect not only the grassroots experiences and wisdom learned through the Southern Freedom Movement (SFM) and from his mentor Ella Baker, but also from his disciplined intention of denying any attachment to charismatic leadership. Rather, he seems committed to fostering the leadership capacity of others. Moses suggests in *Radical Equations* this distinction between the two leadership styles, charismatic versus grassroots: "My basic sense of it has always been to get people to understand that in the long run they themselves are the only protection they have against violence or injustice . . . People have to be made to understand that they cannot look for salvation anywhere but to themselves" (p. 33).

The Story

This chapter is more a narrative or portraiture than it is a research report explained through traditional reporting protocol. The story begins in 2004, when FIU invited Moses, Civil Rights legend and MacArthur Genius Fellow, to come to its campus as an Eminent Scholar in its Center for Urban Education & Innovation. He had been invited because of his 25 years of stewarding accelerated mathematics programs to disenfranchised communities across the country and because of his "focus on creative methods of teaching and learning as a strategy for empowerment and social change" (Ransby p. 252). From the first time Moses came to Miami, I have followed him into a myriad of settings from classrooms and parent meetings and academic halls of various universities to foundation board meetings and superintendent offices in Miami and other cities. As a researcher, my observing and being in those arenas alongside Moses have been both humbling and transformative. So to write this chapter as an objective eye-witness is a challenge because I was observing not just a different mode of leadership, but also witnessing what I believe to be a different way of "being" in the world. My internal question has always been how do I wrap academic words around this multi-layered, innovative yet ancient, quasi "spiritual" leadership experience?

When Cornel West wrote in 2001 that Moses is the towering activist/intellectual of his generation, he captured two of the many facets of this leadership style manifested by SMF luminaries like Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Vincent Harding and practiced by Moses in the field of education. One of those facets is his commitment to excavate the intellectual life of students scoring at the bottom quartile of academic measures. A second is the social activism, the intention to radically change an oppressive system (Moses p.3). Moses suggests that "embedded in this work" of education and the concurrent building of a demand for positive change by people at the bottom "is the idea that if you can really bring about any kind of change at the bottom it is going to change everything" (Moses 2001, p.188). Both of these commitments are integrated into the philosophy and practice of the Algebra Project and addressed whenever Moses is in a room with other people.

While exploring the intellectual life of students or their communities, what always seems to set Moses apart from others in a room is his stillness, a quality manifested also in many SFM leaders like Baker and Harding. Such deep quiet lives in stark contrast to the monologues and directives that one often hears in classrooms, schools, or meetings with many leaders in the U.S.A. Indeed, that silence permeates Moses' teaching style and his persona in every group that he draws into a circle. It's a strategy that he often credits to the mentoring of Baker (Moses 2001, chapter 3). Though, I find Moses' profound calm so integrated into his personality, that calling it a strategy seems a misnomer, like trying to separate the dancer from the dance. Yet, at the same time, I know that this "stillness" is a quality of leadership that is more powerful than any of the others I will write about, and one I believe necessary to emulate in the hyper-sensory-stimulated twenty-first century. Though other cultures may manifest this quality more widely, the fast-paced, efficiency driven American culture is not known for it.

You must enter into the small silences (Moffitt 1961)

Several incidences of this disciplined quiet stand out in my research notes as strong demonstrations not only of its unique nature amidst hierarchal institutions in America, but also of the positive outcomes resulting from its practice. The first example is a meeting with Moses and a group of faculty who had been invited by the Executive Director of the Center, Lisa Delpit, to dialogue with the newly recruited Eminent Scholar. The dean's conference room was filled with about 26 faculty members. All seemed eager to meet and hear from this highly respected and reputed urban leader. After Delpit

introduced Moses and asked the faculty to introduce themselves, Moses quietly asked "What is it that you would like to accomplish in these next two hours?" After the question, silence filled the room. Moses didn't speak. The professors didn't speak. People began to shift in their seats, either looking down or looking around for someone to speak. Approximately four or five minutes passed, which at the time seemed longer, and Moses remained still, looking straight at his audience, and seemed the only one in the room comfortable with the absence of words.

Professors are often wedded to fixed agendas, expectations of leader-dominated lectures, or pre-determined formats for discussions. Thus, being in the room with a leader, who believed that the wisdom needed for any effort lived within the people in the room and had to unfold with "leaderless" dialogue, seemed to bring this set of professors to palpable discomfort. They had come to hear his wisdom, not to be participants in the excavation of their own. Eventually, a professor broke the silence with a question which later gave way to a group decision of an open conversation about the challenges of being a college of education in the midst of the fourth largest school district in the nation. Later, after the meeting, one of my colleagues asked me, "Is that silence a strategy of Moses? I've never experienced that in an academic setting."

In the classroom with a cohort of 9th grade Algebra Project students and at a church basement where Moses led adult mathematics literacy workshops, I experienced that same quality as a means of allowing learners the space and time to answer their own questions about solving mathematical concepts, permitting them to dig deeper into their own reasoning for solving a problem. His pedagogy, a framework designed to develop conceptual knowledge, not rote formulaic answers, intends to build student confidence so that they and their small groups can probe within themselves for answers.

However, it was at our first parent-student meeting where Moses was beginning to organize the parents to support their students' new foray into the world of higher level mathematical thinking, that his stillness was again palpable and resourceful. Four professors, some from FIU and some from Miami Dade College, accompanied me to that meeting to become a part of this effort to sustain an AP site in Miami, where students performing in the bottom-quartile of academic measures were being offered an accelerated mathematics program. Moses and this team plan to shepherd these students from the 9th grade through the 12th grade, preparing them for access to and success in college.

At this parent meeting, where also some brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles came, Moses formed us into a circle, explained to the parents the scope of the project and then asked the question, "What steps do you want

to take next to support your students on this four year journey?" Again, like the meeting with the college professors, an uncomfortable hush crept in. Moses sat quite still and never took his eyes away from the circle. Many, if not most, of these parents had never been asked what they thought or wanted to do about their children's education. The room remained quiet for what seemed again like a very long time. Even the professors wiggled a bit in their chairs, wondering if anything could be ushered in from this silence. Finally, one parent spoke, then another, then another and before the end of the night, the participants had planned the dates, the agenda, and a cross-cultural menu for subsequent meetings, as well as a commitment letter of support drafted by the parents to pledge their family's support for the work of the Algebra Project. After the meeting, in the parking lot, the professors and I confessed to each other our own discomfort with Moses' long silences while marveling at its brilliance, admitting that this had allowed the participants to find their way into shaping their own dialogue, strategies, and interventions to push their students toward college.

At another parent/student meeting, we watched as Moses sat quietly allowing students fifteen to twenty minutes to debate what time they wanted their classes to begin each morning at an upcoming summer institute. Later each of us professors, who had sat in the same circle, admitted that we would, heretofore, have impatiently intervened and made the decision for the students, unwittingly squashing their initiative and their ownership of the process. We, too, were learning from Moses' leadership.

Possibly, the most memorable example, though, of this quality unfolded the first day of a six-week residential summer academic institute that AP and FIU operated for this newly formed ninth grade cohort and for twenty-two students from another high school in the city. None of these students had ever been away from their parents for this length of time. Some had never been away from home. The students came from two rival schools where fear of one another surfaced at the parent/student information meetings held separately at both schools prior to this first day. Suddenly forty, fourteen-year old rivals arrived at the front door of a residence hall meeting space, disembarked from two separate buses, carrying their belongings and entered into a large meeting room in the hall. Some were driven there by their parents who also came into the meeting.

I welcomed the group who sat noisily in chairs and sofas, telling them how excited we were to have them at FIU, how long and with what enthusiasm the staff had planned for making their stay on campus a good experience, and, then, introduced their instructors, their college chaperones, and the other staff who would be working with them for the six weeks. The students listened yet chattered and sometimes giggled during introductions and

comments from professors and staff. When everyone else had been presented, I, then, introduced Moses whom the 22 non-cohort students never before had met. After the introduction, Moses stood before them and said nothing. He stood looking at the students and their parents. Some of the students continued to chatter. Moses stood silent. Students began to hush other students. Moses stood silent. Some students then began to nervously giggle at the ensuing quiet. Professors shifted from foot to foot. The discomfort swelled.

For several minutes, Moses stood silent, looking at everyone there. I had never before experienced this kind of patient waiting for a room full of anxious strangers and giggling teenagers, staring back, to settle into a respectful calm. The room became motionless and soundless, and, then, his quiet, calm voice began to tell the history and purpose behind the effort to bring them all together in this place at this time. He spoke of their obligation to bring the best they had to offer to the summer experience, not just for their own success, but to help build a movement to secure the rights of all students to a quality education. He, then, asked them to immediately decide if they were ready to make a serious commitment to the goals of the institute. If they were not ready, he indicated, there was no shame attached to leaving. He again insisted that if not eager then for rigorous academic pursuit, they might consider coming to a subsequent institute. He continued, saying that no one was forced to be there; that it was their choice, and they should not make that choice lightly. He paused and gave students the opportunity to leave. No one left. The rest of the day proceeded. I still remember standing there in awe of the courage and confidence to hold oneself silent and present to each moment and person for such a long time. The incident also reminded me of a description of Moses in *Parting the Waters* when Taylor Branch cites the first meeting between Martin Luther King, Jr. and Moses, who was then only twenty-five: "Moses carried about him the strong presence of an Eastern mystic. There was something odd about him, yet he also managed to communicate a soothing, spiritual depth" (Branch, 1988, p. 325).

Slow the Bus Down

Moses used similar acts of patience with me. Often before or after sessions at workshops with adults or young people, I would proffer an idea about some content or pedagogy or activity that we might bring the next time we met with the group; and Moses, each time I asked, would suggest to me that we should wait for the group to decide what they needed or wanted. But on later occasions, because I was on such a steep learning curve about grassroots organizing and leadership, I would forget and ask the same question. Moses, as though it were the first time he had heard me ask the question, patiently

gave the same answer. After one of these moments, I realized again the depth of the generosity that Moses, and people in the Movement trained by Baker, bring to any dialogue, and the huge philosophical shift this kind of leadership reveals. I had grown up in an Anglo-American world where a typical metaphor for describing most processes, especially in education, was "Hurry up and get on the train; it is leaving the station, and you will be left behind." But Moses kept gently reminding me to, "Slow the bus down so the people can get on." His patient stillness in all of these instances made possible the gift of slowing the bus down so that everyone's talents and wisdom had time to emerge and to join the ride toward creative revolution.

In addition, this quality, the use of "small silences," demonstrates a profound faith in the wisdom of those living on the margins, "Black, Latino, and poor white students who are trapped at the bottom with prisons as their plantations" (Moses, p. 12). The silence, patience, and calm create a luxury of space and time for people to find their authentic voices in the midst of chaos, of confusion, of struggle, of discomfort; time to dig for their words, their ideas, their insights; space to piece them together so they can own and use them to invent their own solutions to the sometimes daunting realities they face and the educational monstrosities they suffer.

Baker, too, believed that the people at the bottom of society's hierarchal ladder often offered the most ingenious ideas (Ransby 2007). In an unwelcoming culture, as academe typically is for disenfranchised people, creating a safe container for them to let their ideas percolate is mutually beneficial for the institution and the people it serves. Indeed, such mutuality demands and shapes institutional change. As Moses explains it, "A network, a tradition like this, involving teachers, students, schools, and community, is not established in one fell swoop. You go around it and around it, and you keep going around it and deepening it. You keep returning to it until all the implications of what you are doing become clear and sink in." (Moses p. 188)

Helping to Create the Demand

Leading by not leading might be another way to describe the qualities that surfaced as I followed Moses into diverse arenas. That component, in fact, is what first drew me to Moses and his Algebra Project work. I had been immersed in urban school reform since the 1970's and had become discouraged, always working for sweeping reform, but in three decades witnessing "so much reform, so little change" (Payne, 2007) in schools. Yet I know, as educators, most of us have desperately wanted to be co-creators of a democratic, quality educational experience for all of America's children, not just

for the elite—as Moses puts it, "to recognize that all of the children *in* the nation are children *of* the nation." (Center 2004). In hopes of accomplishing this, we educators have changed our curriculum, our pedagogy, our leadership styles, our textbooks, and our management systems. We have made large schools into groupings of small academies. We have promoted teacher leadership, shared governance, collaboration, rigorous professional development, reflective practice, and learning communities—yet still the majority of urban schools in every city continue to deliver inferior education to black, brown, and poor white children (Dropout factories 2007).

After reading in 2001, *Radical Equations: Civil Rights from Mississippi to the Algebra Project*, however, I began to understand the missing piece of all of these reform efforts. That piece is the "demand side" of the work, or what Moses also calls "earned insurgency." Helping to develop that component within any group is the transformative leadership piece that too many of us don't' quite understand, or don't value, or don't feel we have the time or skill to cultivate. It's the knowledge that Moses learned in the sixties with the sharecroppers. While then the group was sacrificing for the constitutional right to vote, and in the present century, we struggle for the constitutional right of a quality education for *all* children, that same quality of leading without leading is vital. Moses often reminds us that now, as then, there is a place for advocates of all kinds—educators, lawyers, foundations, civic leaders, churches, businesses, community agencies—to push for democratic rights. But "the only ones who can really demand the kind of education they need and the kind of changes needed to get it are the students, their parents, and their community, which largely remain silent on issues like this." (Moses, p.151)

For, in the absence of the community's demand, the country insists and teachers believe that black, Latino, poor white students and their parents do not value education and/or don't have the capacity to achieve academic excellence. Thus, they become the scapegoats for low performance, a belief system that allows the nation to resist holding itself accountable for delivering "first class" instruction to all. The Algebra Project's insistence on building a base of student and parent demand for superior curriculum and pedagogy is a commitment and skill vital for all educational leaders, whether serving in colleges, universities, or public schools. But "leading without leading," an integral part of building a grassroots' demand is a painstakingly disciplined, back and forth process, that many leaders have little patience for.

Moses' shifting lately of the language from "demand" to "earned insurgency" (PBS) indicates his insight that students must make sacrifices for their education as did "sharecroppers" who made sacrifices (risking their jobs, homes, and often their lives) to demand their right to vote. If today's students are to demand a quality education from the nation, they, Moses often

explains, must be willing to take mathematics for 90 minutes every day for four years; sacrifice time at home to study; and devote time in their communities as math literacy workers. Moses' and the Algebra Project's demand on the students to pursue academic excellence, not mediocrity, is as deliberate as its demand on the nation to deliver quality education.

Leadership Lessons Learned

When I think about my journey of being like an intern, shadowing a leader, gathering data, attempting to see the patterns of leadership, the nuances and the directions, I'm reminded of Harding's, *Hope and History*. In the book, Harding, while explaining "the transformative uses of biography," describes his encounter with a youngster caught up in a drug and gang world, a young man who speaks with "unconventional wisdom." Harding relates that after his lengthy exchange of dialogues with this young man, he began to recognize the need for young people to have "human signposts" who can help point them toward healthy visions and transformation (Harding, 1990). "They need to see and know the lives of women and men who provide intimations of our human grandeur, who open doors beyond darkness and invite us all toward the magnificent light of our own best possibilities, as mature, compassionate, evolving human beings" (p. 16).

In these dark times in urban education where the statistics of failure can overwhelm us, in a nation where all the old paradigms of social and economic polices have recently collapsed, I believe that knowing the success story of leadership demonstrated by Moses is especially valuable. Knowing that his qualities evolved through a crucible of darker times, fashioned by men and women like Amzie Moore, E. W. Steptoe and Fannie Lou Hamer, people pushed to the very bottom of society's rung deep in the Mississippi delta, yet who drew upon a vast, historic, and collective Movement wisdom to mount the struggle against racism, power, and privilege—and won, then, maybe we can unearth those qualities within ourselves to transform not only education, but also the nation.

So what are those qualities that I witnessed that seem the most relevant to a transformational leadership that might dig us out of the quagmire of inadequate public education, out of the vast inequities in urban and rural schools, and out of elite education that keeps the children of the wealthy lost in a sea of moral morass?

The practice of silence: Harding suggests that Bob Moses calls it "the work of 'internal organizing' for anyone who seeks to work at serious reorganization of the world around us" (Harding p. 24). It might unfold from a

practice in yoga, or meditation, or simply developing a comfort with stillness. When witnessed, it is a potent force.

The discipline of patience: A sense that the task is never complete so the need to rush becomes irrelevant and often counterproductive. If as Hamer suggested, "Freedom is a constant struggle; make a joyful noise," (Roberts, 2004) then there is always time to sink into the silences and wait for "the people" to lead their own struggle toward intellectual engagement and restorative justice. Moses, like Hamer, sees his work as a lifelong journey. Once when I was attempting to persuade him to accept a tenured position at the university, he asked what that would mean. I told him that for one thing, it would mean a retirement pension and benefits. He quickly informed me that neither would be necessary as he had every intention of "dying with his boots on." Moreover, with Moses the destination of the struggle seems integral to the careful attention to each moment in the journey, and the moment is met with complete integrity, like a doctor listening for the rhythms of a heartbeat.

The belief in the small and the intimate in life: Mother Theresa said, "We can do no great things, only small things with great love." Moses consistently manifests a belief that creating small groups with intimate connection to each other around a shared vision builds strong and bold movements. He did this kind of work in Mississippi; and, though, he has become what Dave Lawrence, a civic leader in Miami, calls a national treasure, Moses continues to spend time in the classroom working with one cohort at a time for four years at a time, teaching mathematics to keep the movement alive in the young while testing out theories of accelerated curriculum and pedagogy. His belief in the intimate of life seems counter to the typical national demand for grandiose schemes; its rush to "scale up" reform; its lust for big numbers to guide and shape us; its demand for answers without being willing to live the question; and its distaste for the prolonged struggle toward radical change. There is an organic nature to the leadership and work of Moses and the Algebra Project. He insists that AP "is a process, not an event" (p. 18). And he never seems to rush the process to grow it big—to force feed its success—his product is never a hot-house plant. Like a small farmer he knows the seasons of change. He knows that when rushed, when grown too fast or too big, ideas and practices like plants can become toxic or void of any nutrient or meaningful content. For over thirty years, Moses has taken the Algebra Project step by step toward success. He's watched as young people grabbed hold of AP in Mississippi and spun it off into a different direction into a Young People's Project (YPP), managed by young people for young people, learning mathematics as they serve their communities as math literacy workers in after-school programs. Like Baker, though, Moses resists manipulating YPP to resemble his vision, but has stepped aside for it to

organically grow its own leadership, directions, and intellectual base. After ten years of growth, YPP, too, now has a large National Science Foundation award and is developing new sites around the country.

The personal connection: Moses consistently in Miami demonstrates a belief in personally connecting with whomever he works. When he was first forming the 9th grade cohort, he visited the homes of each student. Often the school had incorrect addresses for students; Moses kept at it until he found the home of every student. He visited those homes on multiple occasions as well as met parents and relatives at the school several times a year for brainstorming sessions. He visits sick students when they are stuck at home; he takes students to the doctor; he brings them groceries. This is the man who, President Barrack Obama, in an interview with a journalist, called his "role model" (Lizza 2007, p. 3).

In his book, Moses says that connecting is an essential part of the work of the Algebra Project: "The first thing you have to do is make a personal connection. You have to find out who it is you are working with. All across the South you could see that in grassroots rural people. That was their style. Miss Baker took this style to a sophisticated level of political work" (Moses p. 32).

Giving voice to the voiceless: Moses reminds us that "Young people finding their voice instead of being spoken for is a crucial part of the process" (Moses p.19). Consequently, he creates opportunities at conferences, university classrooms, and diverse meeting halls where his high school students can tell their stories and share their mathematical knowledge across the country. Learning from Baker and his experiences in the SFM, he also insists that leadership "should emerge from the community and be helped in its growth by grassroots organizers" (Moses, p. 34).

With Moses, leadership itself seems a co-creative process, always moving, never culminating, a procession of people and ideas changing places in a circle, not a triangle. Resisting any attempts at making the national Algebra Project a center of power, Moses continuously pushes power into the hands of the local sites. He seeks, and sometimes helps to create, local grassroots cadres to develop a consciousness that nothing will be sustained without their owning personal leadership, without constantly re-evaluating successes and failures to keep their efforts fluid and responsive to the environment in which they live and the people with whom they work. Like a jazz musician who "modifies a musical rhythm by shifting the accent to a weak beat of the bar," Moses places his attention on the weakest voices in society and helps them find their song—and, like Hamer, together, they make a "joyful noise."

He orchestrated that "jazz" again in August of 2008 when a newly assigned principal at the local high school was considering closing the Algebra Project

site. To counter her attempt, I suggested that Bob, I, and others might meet with the principal and extol the virtues of the project. Bob quietly said, "No." The students and parents, he suggested, should write a letter about their experiences in the project and then meet with the principal to share the letter. They did, and they alone persuaded the principal to maintain the project at their school. Moses' two years of work with these students, building them as a cohort and a community, produced a desire and a confidence in them to demand what they needed. They had earned their insurgency.

A profound capacity to listen deeply and well: I have yet to find anyone who has not felt deeply heard after walking away from a meeting with Moses. Whether he agrees or not, he listens intently to whomever is speaking. He asks penetrating questions and waits patiently for others to digest the words and respond from their own experiences. Without taking the first note in most meetings, months later he can repeat who said what when. His capacity, though, to listen, really listen, to the young is remarkable to experience. His proclivity for prolonged silence with them and his honest curiosity to know their thinking allow them to push that thinking in new directions. Whether in the classroom or in sessions with students planning events, Moses consistently models this profound respect for what young people are saying. He explains that, "It is the voices of the young people I hear every day, more than anything, that gives me hope" (Moses p. 191).

Historian, Charles Payne, suggests this quality of careful listening as one that Moses early in his life projected: "The broad outlines of the Mississippi movement of the sixties had been laid out, primarily between an older warrior [Amzie Moore] with little formal education but years of experience fighting Mississippi and a younger man [Bob Moses] with sense enough to listen, Harvard notwithstanding" (Payne p. 106-107). In most arenas, leaders who listen well are treasured.

Building the network of relationships in communities and across the nation

Moses since the sixties, as a field secretary for the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), has learned the necessity of always widening the web of the network both locally and nationally to support his work. In Mississippi, he, along with local insurgent leaders, organized the sharecroppers, young people in the towns, thousands of white students from Northern universities, federal prosecutors, doctors, teachers, preachers, politicians and other social justice groups beyond SNCC around the issue of voting rights. This network proved invaluable, for as Moses puts it: "When Mississippi locked us up, the Feds could set us free" (Moses 2009).

In the Algebra Project, he started in a classroom with his children, teaching them algebra, then other people's children in that same classroom, then organized other parents, former SFM activists, teachers across the country, elite mathematics researchers from Cornell, Kent State, the Mathematics and Science Research Institute (MSRI), foundations like MacArthur, Lilly, Open Society, the National Science Foundation, the Children's Trust, universities, professors and graduate students, lawyers, school board members, unions like the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), politicians, journalists and thousands of young people around the issue of delivering accelerated academic education to the nation's bottom quartile and creating a movement for Quality Education as a Constitutional Right. His circle spreads across the nation from Los Angeles to Miami: "The question of how we all learn to work across several arenas is unsolved. Those arenas are large and complicated . . . . Really working in all these arenas will require that many people adopt a more holistic outlook than they have ever done before" (Moses 2001, p. 16). Moses nurtures this complex network while at the same time spending 3 days a week teaching mathematics to his local AP cohort. And always, living the words of Baker to bring the family along, Moses' circle includes his family, his wife, his two sons and two daughters in the work.

Reaching for strategies to move forward, instead of getting stuck in a search for blame. Moses' rapid movement from problem to strategies for addressing thorny issues is often demonstrated with staff, circles of supporters, parents, and students. I have often observed and silently approved his response to students who might misbehave. At those times, like most "good" teachers, he moves immediately to discovering the reason behind the behavior instead of locking into ideas of punishment; he elicits student engagement in finding the root and the solution, not only in mathematics but also in their lives.

Recently, though, his propensity to move instantly from problem toward strategy stood in stark contrast to my own. He walked into my office immediately after a meeting where expected support was suddenly withdrawn. After he reported to me the outcome of the meeting, I instantly protested, "Why would they do that? How can they do that? How short-sighted." Without entertaining my outburst, Moses asked "What do you think are some strategies to now keep our work going in Miami?" My brain had shut down with the shock of the bad news, while Moses had already begun sharing ideas for garnering other support. Wallowing in blame is just not part of Moses' psyche. His intellect and imagination seem always in gear for moving creatively toward the next step. Yet, at the same time, he can surrender to the ideas of any group at hand, especially the young, if those ideas are congruent with the gestalt of the vision.

Work within and against various structures: Within most public school systems there are structures in place which might seem to enhance the system, yet often damage the humans within that system. Wise leaders recognize those structures and understand the need to work against them when they stifle the creativity and relationship building of the system's participants. While working in urban and rural systems, Moses, like many of us, has suffered arcane public school protocols and processes. The bigger the system, the more rigid and unimaginative the rules—and the more unconscious the intimidation of the people it is supposed to serve. Against these monolithic systems, Moses' organic sense of life, learning, and leadership stands in stark and elegant relief. His refusal to replicate yet one more hierarchal, one-size-fits-all instructional and organizational model, though, is often misunderstood as unrealistic or somehow incomplete.

Nevertheless, during strategy sessions, Moses has often explained that we must continue to go up and down the hierarchy of the system, the chain of command, to keep the support alive for the students' intellectual development, and that we should maneuver around those structures we cannot change and create our own system for who contacts whom on each level of authority:

> It is a little bit like guerrilla warfare. You're striking. You're pulling back. You're looking at where you are. You're striking again. You're looking for an opening. You're looking for a soft spot, trying to find out where you can penetrate. And you are working with and against various structures. You're in them, but you're working against them at various levels. (p. 17)

Yet always Moses reminds us that the students and parents must be the driving force behind the survival of the project's vision of "facing a system that does not lend itself to your needs and devising means by which you change that system" (p. 19). Though Moses continually attempts to build consensus and networks among diverse advocacy groups, the radical change needed, he insists, will result ultimately from disenfranchised communities pushing against the system, not from the well-meaning advocacy of outside agents.

When I get disheartened by the harsh realities and inequities in the public school system (Orfield, 2004) and the dearth of leaders with a vision, I think about Moses' almost fifty years of quiet revolution. I think of his front-line participation in the Southern Freedom Movement; of the times he was beaten and shot at; of the times he spent in jail when Civil Rights Attorney, John Doar came from D. C. to get Moses out of those southern jails and prisons. I think also about Ella Baker and Fannie Lou Hamer and Amzie Moore and the thousands of Harding's "human signposts" who changed the south forever and who changed the nation's political system so that a Barrack Obama could become President of the United States of America. And, then,

I go and sit with Moses' Algebra Project students and listen to them talk. That's when I sense that the system is not impenetrable, and that if I have the patience and the stillness, I will hear the strong shifting musical rhythm that comes from the "accent on a weak beat of the bar." Then I know we're closer to public schools making freedom's "joyful noise."

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