Social Justice, Inner Work & Contemplative Practice

Lessons & Directions For Multiple Fields

CONTENTS

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July 2017

"With increased openness, bravery, receptivity, and courage, we have greater awareness and clarity. And with that increased clarity, we have the possibility of significantly changing our actions toward the liberation of all."
- Sheryl Petty

Introduction

Sheryl Petty
Movement Tapestries

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER: *THE INITIATIVE FOR CONTEMPLATION, EQUITY, & ACTION (ICEA)*

ICEA was born out of a keen sense of a separation between the social justice and contemplative practice fields in education. We see the fields of social change and deep inner work as two halves of the same coin needed to support the creation of healthy, sustainable, just communities around the world. For too long, these communities of practice have, with rare exceptions, been bifurcated, with those who use internal practices from sacred and secular healing and spiritual traditions to plumb the depths of our inner lives for well-being, centeredness, clarity, and presence moving alongside, but often not explicitly linked with, those who have devoted their lives and institutions to working in partnership with and being led by communities negatively impacted by economic, educational, environmental, health, and other social conditions.

We are dogged in our commitment to creating pathways, linkages, and conditions that reduce or eliminate the bifurcation between these communities of practice, because we are clear that our collective suffering—as a result of insufficient access to the *joint* technologies of *social justice systems change* coupled with *inner work, skills, and contemplative practice*—is leading to increased levels of community and societal devastation that are, in fact, preventable. From the individual and mass killings around the country and world, to a profound sense of alienation, loneliness, and loss, to stalemates among our public policy- and decision-makers, to levels of callous indifference that may be unprecedented, we are seeing needless global unrest, pain, and confusion. In addition to this, many are coming to a focus on "inner work" due to issues of burnout, self-care, and well-being, seeking resources for how to sustain themselves while doing exhausting social transformation work. We have found this to be prevalent across roles, geographies, institution types, social circles, and income levels, from community organizers and youth leaders to CEOs, funders, and school district superintendents.

Yet we have abundant tools and resources to support the development of thoughtful, reflective, kind, nurturing, thriving individuals and communities, from indigenous practices and traditions worldwide; to sacred traditions that are more prevalent in the world; to secularized approaches to healing such as social and emotional learning for youth and adults, restorative justice, somatic disci-

plines, and body-based systems; to mindfulness-based approaches—all of which promote greater degrees of presence, awareness, resilience, and capacity to process grief and trauma, recognize our historical programming and triggering, release tension, open our hearts more, and engage with others with more compassion, in addition to healing and loving ourselves. And yet these skills are often considered trivial, nonexistent, or suspect in relation to the prevalent focus on more traditional technical competencies.

In addition to this, skills in cultural responsiveness and understanding structural inequity, unconscious bias, institutional bias, and systemic change are underdeveloped in mainstream circles, yet these competencies are increasingly seen as critical for a healthy society. Equity and social justice communities of practice are prolific and well-developed, and have deep literature bases, institutions, networks, and resources in many parts of the U.S. and the world.

The resources to support learning and growth in "inner" skills and social justice are typically accessible in fragmented ways for disparate communities: racial/ethnic groups; sacred traditions (Buddhist, Christian, Native American, African-based, other Indigenous, Jewish, Yogic, etc.); secular traditions (somatic, socio-emotional, arts, mindfulness, restorative, etc.); locations in the field (e.g., higher ed, K-12, community, business, etc., from classroom-focused to system-wide approaches); level(s) of work (e.g., grassroots, grasstops, local, trans-local, regional, national, global); socioeconomics and access to resources, teachings, tools, retreats, professional learning, publishing, speaking, etc.; and divisions because of access to power and influence related to the preceding areas.

Mainstream, prevalent, highly visible approaches to contemplative practice are largely led by white communities (especially since the explosion of mindfulness training), while social justice approaches are typically engaged by multi-racial and multi-identity communities, and typically have less power and influence than mainstream approaches. These communities of practice are often not in dialogue or relationship with one another, and hence are not leveraging their collective wisdom for the well-being and health of youth, families, and communities. We seek to put these multiracial, multiethnic, multi-identity communities of practice in connection with one another, and to create and link forums and approaches to bring these communities of practice into closer contact and work with each other, thereby deepening our collective, positive impact on our communities and the world.

This journal and the work many have advanced over a number of years propose to deepen the intentional and systematic growth and development of these two fields in tandem—linking them together through publications, strategic gatherings, convenings, networks, and thought partnership forums for deeper sharing and learning, providing the resources and networks that would ensure a much larger proportion of the human race can develop *inner* reflective/contemplative skills combined with *outer* social-systems change skills with an equity lens. We envision challenging, rich, and transformational work together at this intersection, where we can learn from each other not only as thought partners but as healers.

Where all our work is as compassionate professionals who have come to this intersection on many roads, we feel compelled to act in response to the immediate and underlying suffering we recognize in our relationships, our classrooms, our institutions, our governments, our communities, and our world. We envision a rich, evolving field that builds in size and influence, and that moves us into contemplative, reflective, just, and equitable engagement in our world, in order to heal it and magnify the beauty already present.

The ICEA Committee

The ICEA Design Committee is made up of individuals from eight organizations, each of whom has participated in and led planning and design efforts over the years at this intersection between contemplative practice and social justice. We are cross-sector, realizing that the intersection of these inner and outer dimensions transcends the boundaries of any single discipline and that there is already much work happening across fields (which many of us touch or work in deeply) that need to be more intentionally and strategically connected—i.e., education (K-12 and higher ed), the contemplative fields, the funding world, business, community-based efforts, health, and policy. *(See the end of this introduction for a list of Committee members.*

ABOUT THE VOLUME

The authors in this volume have developed a collection of articles that challenge, push, deepen and humble our conceptions of what is possible in our lives together. They write from the perspectives of higher education, intermediaries, K-12 education, community, contemplative/sacred and secular traditions, policy, and other social change sectors. The volume begins with an explication of "inner work," social justice/equity, and systems change, to lay the groundwork for these intersecting fields of practice, their promise, and what they each call on us to do and be. It continues with Laura Rendón and Vijay Kanagala's discussion of contemplative pedagogy in diverse classrooms. We see in their writing that bringing contemplative practice and social justice methodologies into classroom settings need not be so esoteric or challenging as we might think. They provide concrete examples of the ways their own teaching weaves and knits these two strands of skill and awareness gracefully, showing us all that it is truly possible to be integrative and deep with all of our students. Their article answers a hunger that many in education feel for a description of the "how."

The journal continues with Gale Young's piece on her own 44-year journey as a leader in higher education and institutional change with a deep focus on inner work and social justice. She shares her pitfalls, lessons, and triumphs working in partnership with many. We are privileged to be able to take advantage of these instructions for our own growth. The Movement Strategy Center (MSC) shares deep lessons and practices from its own work supporting the transformation of organiza-

tions and networks around the country to advance "audacious" vision, embodiment, "radical connection," and strategic navigation.

Wendy Farley places two contemplatives and change agents, French mystic Marguerite Porete and African-American civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer, alongside each other so that we can learn from their lives of deep love, compassion, and commitment to justice. We see in the lives of these women examples of what it means to be devoted to *everyone's* freedom, come what may. Patricia St. Onge and Wilson Riles share part of the evolving journey of their multi-generational urban farm and retreat center in the heart of Oakland, California. They discuss their vision and partnership with the community and the land, to make nurturing and accessible retreat experiences for multiracial, multi-income urban communities, grounded in Native American and other indigenous practices.

We are very pleased to have an article on spiritual bypassing, the too-prevalent phenomenon in many secularized approaches to contemplative practice. Carla Sherrell and Judith Simmer-Brown's article helps to surface some of the most troubling dynamics in the current mindfulness movement. They point us to approaches and strategies to name these dynamics, including how power and privilege are wielded in at-times-harmful ways in mindfulness communities, and they provide guidance in pursuing "liberating" pathways to address these dynamics, toward our collective healing and deeper use of contemplative tools. They note that there are many "ways to be mindful."

Velma Cobb brings us to questions about the relationship between politics, educational policy, and contemplative practice. Through dialogues on policy, education, systems change, and inner work with Kevin Kumashiro, Linda Darling-Hammond, Yong Zhao, and others, she raises awareness and deepens our understanding of interiority and the work we "do" in the world, noting that *being* and *doing* are not separate. This article is particularly poignant and relevant for our current excruciating political climate. Rhonda Magee reminds us that there are multiple doors into the "room" of contemplative practice with social justice. These doors can include methodologies from the fields of contemplative higher education, transformative education, and education for social justice. These approaches honor struggle, draw on "fierce compassion," and require ongoing commitments to self-care and self-development, among other capacities.

Justice, dialogue, and mindfulness are three qualities focused on by Stephen Rowe in his article on liberal education and interdependence. He speaks about deep service, active compassion, caring, and taking collective responsibility for the world we share.

We feel humbled by the staggering beauty with which each of these authors has composed pieces to deepen our collective capacity. Through these articles, we can be better equipped to engage with openness, tenderness, clarity, love, and lucid conviction in advancing social justice and a world of mutual support and benefit. We have been awed by the authors' capacity for human feeling and centeredness; to return us to what it means to be *connected*, both to ourselves and to each other—a capacity that so very often seems lost in our too-often fast-paced cultures.

In these times, when we in the U.S. are faced with questions of who we really are and who we want to be together, it is important to name particular things; to call things on the table; to engage in rigorous and compassionate dialogue for all of our sakes. Approaches that mask or gloss over our differences and the places where we need to grow will not help us to really see and love one another or to heal. We need to see difference with clarity, just as we need to see sameness. Our history of erasure as a "color-blind" society will not serve us well now (if it ever did).

We need each other to be whole. We invite you to dive deeply into these articles that come from many different perspectives and experiences. They return us to ourselves and to (at least a taste of) freedom and the best of what we can be. May we deepen our capacity to practice inner work and contemplative skills and get deep training in social justice and equity, at both individual/interpersonal and institutional/systemic levels. With increased openness, bravery, receptivity, and courage, we have greater awareness and clarity. And with that increased clarity, we have the possibility of significantly changing our actions toward the liberation of all.

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Waking Up To All of Ourselves: Inner Work, Social Justice, & Systems Change

Sheryl Petty
Movement Tapestries

This article focuses on three pillars for advancing our individual and collective well-being: ***inner work*** (known in some circles as contemplative practice); ***social justice/equity***, focusing on the role of race, ethnicity, socioeconomics, gender identity, LGBTQ status, religion, and other forms of difference and similarity in creating healthy, joyful communities; and ***systems change***, focusing on social sectors such as healthcare, education, workforce, environment, housing, and other macro/large systems, and how to impact them en masse to create more positive structures for our individual and collective thriving.

Each of these domains[1] and communities of practice has profound tools, gifts, and methodologies to contribute to healthy societies, but in my experience working, practicing, teaching, consulting, and learning in each of these fields for over 20 years, they are rarely brought together in a cohesive whole to advance solutions for our fragmentation as a people and as a planet.[2] Each of these strands can be (and often is) pursued to the exclusion of one or both of the others, which can limit our ability to experience the full impact of their combined capacity to nurture our collective well-being. The integration of all three strands—*contemplation/inner work*, *social justice*, and *systemic, field-wide change*—can deepen our collective capacity for joy, healing, and thriving in the world.

CLARIFYING TERMS, DISPELLING MYTHOLOGY, & ADDRESSING POTENTIAL PITFALLS

There are a number of key aspects of these three domains for us to consider. This article will discuss these aspects, their interrelationship, and pathways forward:

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1   There are resources on each of these three domains in the footnotes throughout this article as well as at the end, for interested readers to learn more.

2   Notable exceptions to this include the work of john a. powell and the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society (http://haasinstitute.berkeley.edu/johnpowell), as well as the Movement Strategy Center (MSC; http://movementstrategy.org), some of whose work is represented in this journal volume, and others.

- the difference between *nascent and deeper* approaches to each of the three domains;

- the difference between *love-based and rage-fueled* approaches to social justice;

- deep, love-based approaches to *social justice already having inner work embedded* (though it may be labeled variously);

- the *danger of spiritual bypassing* and the importance of explicitly linking social justice and inner work;

- explicitly *addressing power and privilege in "progressive" approaches to social change* to avoid erasure in generic approaches; and

- the *non-dual relationship between individual and collective* liberation.

Nascent & Deeper Versions: Pathways for Growth

This section defines what is meant by these three domains of practice and competency in this article. The premise here is that, in order to yield their greatest benefit, these three domains of competency would be pursued in depth: *inner work*, *social justice/equity*, and *systemic, field-wide change*. As with any approach or system, there are nascent and deeper approaches to each of these areas. There must be some litmus test or sense of depth and "quality" in the field for each of these areas and our potential for continued development in each, combining, learning from and with, and leveraging the talents, experience, and wisdom of one another to benefit the world. "Everything is not everything." We can adjudicate depth together.

At the initial level of any significant endeavor or complex arena, we are novices. The more profound the field we are entering—whether it is holistic medicine, law, education, artistic pursuit and performance, organizational transformation, spiritual practice, or some other area—the further we plumb its depths the more clearly we see how far we have come and how far we still have to "go" to experience more fully the vastness and richness of its treasures and challenges. Below, I offer a schema for three continua of development, drawn from the work and practice of several over the years and centuries, to point us toward an integrated framework for our collective flourishing along these three domains.

1) Equity & Social Justice. Justice and equity as defined in this article include but go beyond a focus on "diversity" and "inclusion," which are often the first domains focused on by those seeking to learn about equity. Diversity and inclusion remain important in the work, but their true fruition is found in leveraging the wisdom, gifts, vision, leadership, strategy, and analyses of multi-identitied people in deep dialogue and joint efforts (that are some-

times tense and messy) toward our collective freedom. Without a well-developed equity muscle, deep work for systems change is not possible, and communities of practice will tend to shy away from the hard work necessary to get to more transformative levels. Furthermore, deep inner work (discussed below) provides the muscle for deep equity, which is a hallmark of truly deep inner work that builds our capacity to engage the full dimensions of our shared civic and planetary life (alongside other dimensions).

Social justice/equity work can focus on multiple levels: ***individual, interpersonal, institutional,*** and ***systemic/societal.*** Equity and social justice attend to the historical and current supporting structures, habits, policies, and conditions that lead to predictably differentiated opportunities, life circumstances, and outcomes for specific demographic groups. Equity and social justice are most concerned with the wielding and impact of power, privilege, and resources for individual and collective well-being, alleviating disenfranchisement, and healing the impacts of long-term (often multi-generational) systemic trauma.

A focus at **internal and interpersonal** levels is necessary but insufficient to achieve social justice, yet this is often where initial equity learning efforts lie. Individual dimensions related to inner work and contemplative practice include intercultural awareness; deepening capacity to have challenging conversations; recognizing unconscious bias, emotional triggers, power dynamics, and microaggressions; manifestations of inequity from an intersectional perspective (i.e., the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomics, language/dialect, LGBTQ identity, religion, etc.); and deepening capacity in physiological and emotional presence to remain open, curious, and engaged in emotionally-charged reflection and dialogue.

Additional areas at this level include: values and (conscious and unconscious) beliefs about the worth, intelligence, and capacity of dominant and marginalized communities; becoming more aware of our thoughts, perceptions, biases, stereotypes, etc. about people and groups; family/group history, dynamics, and patterns; exposure, relationships, and density of non-surface experience in cross-cultural contexts; and training, study, learning, and ongoing communities of practice where we live, work, play, and learn in order to deepen our capacity.

I have found the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)[3] to be a useful tool to orient those new to a particular domain of these individual skills, namely intercultural awareness. The IDI measures progress along a developmental continuum and assesses individual "capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities." "Culture" is a wide category including race, ethnicity, socioeconomics, gender identity, caste, nationality, language, religion, sexual orientation, and other de-

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3   https://idiinventory.com/products/the-intercultural-development-inventory-idi/

mographic groups. Intercultural competence (similar to other competency areas) provides a set of skills and capacities that can broaden an individual's capacity to engage with various cultures locally, regionally, and globally. Importantly, intercultural awareness is not an assessment of social justice lenses or capacity in understanding structural equity and inequity. Hence, intercultural awareness is part of, but not as comprehensive a skillset as, having a social justice/structural equity lens.

The IDI categories of development could be summarized in the following ways:

- *Denial*—lack of awareness; observing surface differences but lacking awareness of deeper dimensions; may avoid cultural difference.

- *Polarization*—"us"-vs.-"them" orientation which comes in two forms: *defense*, consisting of feelings of superiority regarding one's own cultures and the denigration of other cultures; or *reversal*, consisting of a tendency to exoticize or romanticize other cultures and denigrate one's own.

- *Minimization*—"we're all really the same"/color-blind/melting pot; "an orientation that highlights cultural commonality and universal values and principles, that may also mask deeper recognition and appreciation of cultural differences."[4]

- *Acceptance*—deep understanding of cultural commonalities/similarities as well as difference.

- *Adaptation*—skillful engagement with similarity and difference; ability to shift frames and behaviors in "culturally appropriate and authentic ways" while maintaining a clear locus of values (i.e., not relativistic).

All five IDI stages manifest at individual and interpersonal levels and also have institutional and systemic/societal manifestations, in my experience.

Institutional dimensions of equity and social justice include organizational climate, culture, structures, and processes such as: leadership, planning and policies; values and beliefs; programming and project foci; access and inclusion; collaboration, relationships and trust; communication systems; personal commitment and accountability; human resources; evaluation; fundraising approaches; field-building and partnership; and other areas. Each of these aspects of institutional functioning can be pursued with or without nascent or deep equity embedded.

Often institutions focus on the *structural* and *technical* dimensions of organizational functioning (i.e., those that are most amenable to quantitative measurement) and provide

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4   https://idiinventory.com/products/the-intercultural-development-continuum-idc/

insufficient attention to its *social, cultural,* and *political* dimensions, as they are more nuanced and require sophisticated qualitative means to assess and build capacity. From the perspective of this article, all five dimensions—structural, technical, social, cultural, and political[5]—must be addressed to pursue deep equity. Furthermore, some social justice-focused organizations have also begun to reflect on and build capacity for inner work at the institutional level.[6]

2) Approaches to Inner Work. There are multiple approaches to inner transformation and growth. We are introduced to aspects of paths to development as we are ready, as we are inspired, and as we can engage them. Many times, we may enter and pursue inner work/ spiritual practice and either not experience the depths of practice or mistakenly assume the depths we have experienced are all there are. There are different goals and methods to inner work or contemplative practice. Healing, presence, and compassion could be through-lines in all of them, though how these are pursued can look different based on system, tradition, lineage, etc.

Some approaches to inner work seek to cultivate positive qualities and conditions for oneself and one's loved ones and try to avoid harmful conditions, actions, thoughts, and emotions. This is important. Other approaches have the capacity to use the circumstances of any situation or occurrence as fuel for transformation, excavating and uncovering our deepest wisdom and gifts and using practices and methodologies to "wash" away and transform what seem like (or may be) harmful conditions, thoughts, and habits. Practice becomes a transformative elixir.

Still other approaches may have the capacity to support us to rest into the awareness, wisdom, peace, courage, and vivid, fierce presence that are innate for us all. Such approaches can allow us to fully engage any circumstance, thought, emotion, habit, encounter, social condition, or structure with infinite skill, grace, kindness (not "niceness"), and powerful efficacy, drawing from the inexhaustible wellspring of being to sustain and nurture us. Any and all of these approaches may be engaged via stillness and/or movement, silence and/ or sound, and solo and/or joint practice, using all manner of natural and/or human-made elements, substances, or objects, and many other methods for their fruitful application.

It is worth repeating here that **deep inner work can provide the capacity for deep equity** because the emotional, psychological, spiritual, energetic, and material intensity of equity work requires much more from us than non-equity-based approaches, in order to remain open, present, engaged, and non-reactionary without resorting to false "politeness"

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5   See for instance Petty, 2010.

6   See, for example, Movement Strategy Center's work in this journal volume on "The Practices of Transformative Movements," as well as their "Love With Power: Practicing Transformation for Social Justice" (http://movementstrategy. org/b/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/MSC-Love_With_Power.pdf) and the work of Hidden Leaf Foundation (http:// hiddenleaf.org).

or polarization/demonization of so-called "others."[7] We can find a deeper engagement, rigor, capacity, and joy, and truly hold each other (and ourselves) authentically accountable, in love.

3) Systems Change & Movement Building. For our purposes, systems change refers to a focus on *sectors* (education, healthcare, workforce, environment, etc.); the *patterns* (over time), *policies, structures, norms,* and *habits* in society that keep systems in place; and large-scale *processes of change* to impact those systems en masse. Such patterns, policies, and practices can be mapped using data, then viewed and disaggregated by demographic groups (e.g., women, youth, rural communities, etc.) to understand their impacts over time.

Such patterns also include the history of community relationships, migration patterns and shifts (forced and/or voluntary), assets, needs, and the impacts of systems of stratification of resources (economic, social, cultural, environmental, educational, medical, etc.) on specific groups of human beings as well as the natural world. Systems change efforts can include a focus on individuals, groups, institutions, communities, trans-local and regional communities/groups/institutions, and trans-national and global efforts. There are many, many people, organizations, and networks that work at these levels, some with attention to inner work and/or social justice and some without.

Three Interrelated Continua: *Inner Work, Social Justice, & Systems Transformation*

This schema is illustrative only. It is neither perfect nor are the categories illustrated in it mutually exclusive or correlated by type across the three domains of capacity and practice. The schema is offered to generate reflection and dialogue about the interrelationship between these three domains. There are a number of caveats to note.

- The inner work approaches are not a 1:1 correspondence between the equity and systems change approaches.

- The first row of skills and capacities across all three domains seem to be carried through to the subsequent rows (that is, the levels seem to be nested, in my experience).

- The subsequent/further levels are not "better" than the preceding ones. They can potentially have more breadth and depth and a greater repertoire for action, *so long as they incorporate depth from the preceding levels.* If preceding levels are lost, subsequent ones lose their depth (without seeds, there are no trees).

- We may also prefer to work in any column or row because of passion, interest, inspiration, skill, need, or any other set of factors. Our good work and intentions are precious and priceless gifts wherever we genuinely offer them.

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7   See, for example, the *"Othering and Belonging: Expanding the Circle of Human Concern"* forum (http://www.otheringandbelonging.org).

- Finally, the premise of this article is that each of the three domains is interrelated, so they are intertwined and essential to create a better world for all of us. Each domain requires the others working in concert for us to heal and to individually and collectively thrive.

This is our joint work: to find each other across these experience and expertise domains, value each other, and learn and grow together. In this process, **the first two domains are most important:** *inner work* and ***social justice/equity awareness, knowledge, and skills.***

	CONTEMPLATIVE / INNER PRACTICE[8]	EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE	SYSTEMS CHANGE & LARGE-SCALE PATTERNS
G R O W T H & D E P T H	**Path of Cultivation of Positive Qualities and Conditions** (& Renunciation of Negative Ones)	**Individual & Interpersonal** *(denial[9] polarization minimization of difference acceptance adaptation)*	**Micro[10] & Meso (Individual & Group)**
	Path of Transformation[11] *(turning poison into nectar)*	**Institutional** *(structural[12], technical, social, cultural, political)*	**Trans-Local[13]/Macro: Organizations, Networks, & Alliances** *(cross-geography)*
	Path of Spontaneous Liberation[14]	**Systemic[15]/Societal** *(history, power, privilege, context, sectors, community)*	**Mundo/Global, Fields, Sectors, & Movement Building** (healthcare, education, workforce, housing, environment, business, government, NGOs, etc.)

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8   See, for instance, Petty, 2016 for a version of some Buddhist approaches to these paths.

9   The Intercultural Development Continuum: *denial, polarization, minimization, acceptance, adaptation*: https://idiinventory.com/products/the-intercultural-development-continuum-idc/

10   Adapted from Otto Scharmer's model re: *micro, meso, macro and mundo*: https://www.presencing.com/ego-to-eco/social-evolution

11   See, e.g., Allione, 2008.

12   See, for instance, Petty, 2010 on *structural, technical, social, cultural and political.*

13   "Trans-local" was a term I heard in a planning meeting with Taj James (Co-Director, Movement Strategy Center) circa 2013, referring to linked/networked local communities who learn from, iterate, and cross-fertilize in organismic, ongoing, evolving ways.

14   See, for instance, Wangyal, 2000 and 2012.

15   See, for example, powell, Heller, and Bundalli, 2011.

For all of us, engaging in any of these three domains requires learning, consistent practice, on-going support, and scaffolding for deepening within oneself and in relation with others. Humility and raising awareness become key here in recognizing where we are in our own development—i.e., where we have depth and where we are more nascent in our learning and growth. For some, *because of the extremity of our footprint on the world, we have a greater responsibility for growth and appropriate action (particularly in inner work and equity) so that we can mitigate our harm and be of greatest benefit.* There are things to learn, reckoning to be had, awareness to develop, deeper textures of our shared social reality to be discerned, and allies to be engaged. No one has to know everything, but we do need to become more aware of the limitations of our knowledge and experience so that we can *partner effectively,* be continual *learners*, and collectively heal.

The challenge here comes with where we find depth in each of these three domains, as well as issues of power and privilege (which are the particular areas of expertise of the social justice/equity domain). Too often, those with depth in popular or mainstream versions of inner work and systems change lack depth in equity and social justice. This phenomenon is so prevalent that we felt the need to develop an entire journal about it in its relation to the inner dimensions of change and collective well-being.

Yet *mature versions of inner work and systems change have inherent depth in equity/social justice.* Let us be exceedingly clear on this point: approaches to inner work that do not engage the particularity of our incarnate lives and how oppression plays out in predictable, egregious ways for specific populations (privileging some, devastating others, and harming us all) are not deep according to the schema presented in this article. By the same token, approaches to systems change that do not thoroughly integrate a robust understanding of historical and current power and privilege and process their implications would be considered nascent or developing approaches to working in systems. *The absence of an equity and social justice lens in the fields of both inner work/contemplative practice and social systems change is devastating both communities of practice and profoundly hindering the full realization of the benefit of which both of these fields of practice are capable and which is desperately needed.* There is much more bravery, training, and humility necessary for both current and would-be practitioners in each of these fields.

Love-based, Not Rage-fueled, Approaches

There is a misconception of social justice communities I have heard voiced by some: namely, that (speaking bluntly) they are "anger-driven mobs that cannot be reasoned with." While some equity-focused communities of practice can certainly engage in change strategies from this stance, there are many that do not. I want to distinguish the kind of social justice and vision of equity this article speaks to, which is based in love, from approaches that have rage as their fuel. These are different strategies, requiring different means and leading toward different ends, though they may

(on the surface) have some things in common and use similar language to talk about their work. A love-based approach is based on the premise that the intersection of *inner work* and *social justice* can lead to the natural unfolding of joy, compassion, clarity, and all the positive qualities, and can also wake up fundamental parts of our humanity that have been deadened.

My experience is that without joy, purpose, passion, and a felt sense of the positive transformative potential of our efforts, social justice work can become debilitating and potentially lead to burnout (which often happens), because in the course of one lifetime the pathway to justice often seems daunting. Such a vision toward joy can be missing from some justice frames that have lost attention to inner dimensions of change and well-being, have become "battle-weary," and may be moving from a place of unhealed trauma and woundedness. (There are both dominant and marginalized and both individual and community manifestations of such wounds.)

There is a place for anger that leads to clarity that is directed not at people but at the damage we cause and the (sometimes purposefully, sometimes inadvertently) painful results of our efforts. We are many times causing injury to ourselves and to one another. The burial, denial, minimization, and erasure of this harm can compound pain and frustration—materially, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. Unacknowledged harm cannot be healed. We in the United States are living in a moment of great reckoning in the aftermath of our presidential election, where more of us are seeing (some for the first time) the deep ravine that lies between various communities around the country and what we each see and experience daily. The beginning of healing can be presence, receptivity/openness, and awareness. Awareness in this case refers to actual *sight*: seeing and reckoning with what *is*. Without this, it is often very difficult for many to move forward.

Deep Approaches to Social Justice/Equity Already Having Inner Work Embedded

Many (though not all) portions of the social justice field already have abundant inner work/contemplative skills and resources, and draw from multiple traditions and approaches.[16] The field of *transformative social change*[17] speaks eloquently to these areas. While there may be many in the social justice field drawing fuel from understandable pain and frustration as a result of decades or centuries of systemic oppression, there are arguably both a longer as well as a more recent history of social justice communities drawing from a deep wellspring of our innate goodness and our wish for the freedom and liberation of all beings. Another example is the work of Laura Rendón and Vijay Kanagala (in this volume), which speaks to embedded approaches of what might be called the inner dimensions of deep social justice/equity work.

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16   In addition to the Haas Institute and MSC, see, for example, the work of the Middle Project (http://www.middleproject.org), the Ignite Institute (http://psr.edu/about/centers-and-affiliates/ignite-institute/), Buddhists for Racial Justice (https://buddhistsforracialjustice.org), Zenju Earthlyn Manuel (http://zenju.org), the Center for Transformative Change (http://transformativechange.org), and of course the work of icons such as Gandhi, Jesus, and Nelson Mandela, who all advanced revolutionary visions for justice, inner and outer peace, and systems change.

17   See, for instance: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transformative_social_change

The Danger of Spiritual Bypassing

There is also a conception of contemplative communities or those focused on inner work as being "navel-gazers" who do not care about human conditions because they are focused on "spiritual" matters, beyond the "travails" of this world. Such an approach would be tantamount to the rampant *spiritual bypassing*[18] that has many in social justice communities struggling with, turning away from, or having serious questions about some forms of inner work or spiritual practice, in the belief that such communities and traditions cannot or do not speak to the concrete circumstances and challenges of our lives as contextual individuals and communities. This is certainly the way some in contemplative (sacred or secular) communities are engaging, but it is by no means the way all such communities are practicing.

When "healing," "presence," "openness," "awareness," "systems," "ecology," "mindfulness," or "enlightenment" are spoken about, it is important to not lose sight of the *particular* and *differences* alongside *similarities* and the *universal*. Some readers may have heard the term "engaged contemplation," those forms of contemplative practice or inner work which are intimately linked to advancing positive change in the world. Some may also have heard of the term "targeted universalism," noted by john powell. Both of these help us to maintain a focus on sameness and difference *at the same time,* without negating either. There are many sacred and secular communities of practice that move and have always moved from this place.

For many people in communities who experience daily and sometimes extreme forms of marginalization, approaches to inner work and contemplative practice must speak directly to their/our emotional, psychological, economic, social, and physical life conditions in order to be experienced as authentic, relevant, and grounded. Engaged practice cannot simply be transcendent; it must also be embodied and take into account our particularity, our specificity, and our differences.[19] Such practice is not engaged as a panacea; it is engaged to transform and transmute, as alchemy, to unleash our inherent wisdom and liberatory capacity.

Addressing Power and Privilege in "Progressive" Approaches to Social Change

There is something important to be said about the relationship between "liberal" or generically "progressive" approaches to systems change and those with a social justice lens and analysis of history, power, and privilege. When liberal approaches begin to address equity, they are often advanced with a focus on *individual and interpersonal* relationships and an anti-bias orientation. This is important and critical work, but it is insufficient. What liberal/progressive approaches (which are often espoused by those in positions of power and privilege) often lack is an *analysis of systems* of

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18   See, for example, the article in this journal volume by Carla Sherrell and Judith Simmer-Brown.
19   See, for example, Manuel, 2015.

oppression: the institutional and systemic structures that keep stratification in place. Such structures are intimately connected to the important work we need to do at individual and interpersonal levels, but these two lenses and approaches are not the same.

What often happens in progressive approaches to systems change is another form of "bypassing": bypassing the difficult work of reckoning with power, history, privilege, and systems that benefit us and harm others. There is a "skipping" that happens, and/or sometimes a paralysis in guilt. Neither of these is the end of the work, but they are often (but not always) phases of it for those in positions of power. This conflation of internal and interpersonal work for the totality of equity work, neglecting the institutional and systemic dimensions, often causes confusion and frustration in the field, both for those who are negatively impacted (especially in their physical well-being) by systems of oppression and for those who tend to benefit (materially) from such systems.

There is much confusion, and much communication gets lost in translation. People of color, women, low-income communities, and other marginalized groups are often striving to raise awareness and recognition on the part of those without a systems lens of the damage that such systems change approaches without an equity lens wreak. They are also often seeking to raise awareness of the role of allies, and a deep recognition of the fact that while, in an absolute sense, we are most certainly all the same, in this world of form and incarnation we are also not. This speaks to the need for would-be social justice activists and advocates to do the deep work of fully recognizing and engaging *both* the universal and the particular simultaneously. This is challenging work.

Individual & Collective Liberation: Non-Dual

Deep equity/social justice work is never solely focused on individual liberation. There is no notion of individual liberation divorced from the collective. This has significant implications for how the purpose of *inner work* is understood.

The dominant worldview in the West gives primacy to the individual. It has promulgated duality and the mind-body, male-female, self-other, and other hierarchies and splits with negative connotations. So, for some engaged in the mindfulness movement, "practice" has come to be viewed as individual practice on the cushion, divorced from relationality and immanent presence in the world and its beauty and messiness. Those in social justice/equity movements come from, draw from, and engage from indigenous paradigms and other approaches where immanence is transcendent and the transcendent is immanent. Hence, while this is not true for all communities of practice or practitioners, for many there is no notion of something that needs to be re-yoked, because there was no perception of a bifurcation ever having occurred. The profundity of these potential differences in worldview/ontology—i.e., the actual experience of life and the world—is significant, and must be fully appreciated in order to engage in dialogue about the nature of useful, powerful inner work practice for individuals and communities, and effective approaches to social systems change.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Inner work capacity seems to make more advanced equity as well as systems skills more possible (and perhaps more stable) but *not* inevitable. That is, inner skills can provide a fertile ground to engage in equity/social justice, *but intentional, deliberate, deep, and sustained learning and growth* are necessary in order to actually **build** *skills* in equity. These are each domains of competence that our world desperately needs more and more of us to wake up to and cultivate: *inner work* and *equity/social justice.* On the other hand, systems change skills are a specialty that some critical mass of broadly diverse and representative people, but not all people, need to have.

We need to create the **scaffolding and infrastructure in inner work *and* equity** for more of us to wake up and create a tipping point to manifest our goodness for the benefit of us all. Having more influence in the world requires more capacity in these three domains. If that capacity is not evident in our professed leadership, then we need to make room for and support those multi-identitied community members *as leaders* who do have it. Let us use our strengths and truly make room for each other *to lead* and *learn to better follow.*

Like medical practitioners who offer referrals when they know they are out of their depth, we need both humility *and* a sense of what's further down the path (i.e., the continua above) to know *when* to refer folks to others. We also need sufficiently broad, deep, and diverse **networks/relationships** to know *who* to refer folks to along these three domains of skills. This is often most difficult for dominant community members and those in positions of power: to trust in the leadership and inherent wisdom, as well as the growth potential, of marginalized individuals and communities who have not had access to power and influence. (This is a colossal understatement.)

I had a spiritual teacher who once said that compassion is "action appropriate to the needs of circumstances / the needs of the moment, that supports the liberation of all." Compassion skillfully engages with all of our fears and "demons," without cringing, without defense, and stands gently and courageously in the face of what we know and what we do not know or understand. Such compassion allows us to be truly *with* one another for the long haul, come what may. It leaves no one and nothing out.

Our wounds will only heal if we tend them. As we have seen glaringly in these last few months, untended wounds fester and become putrid. *What are we truly willing (and not willing) to do? How deep are we willing to go into our inner work practice* <u>and</u> *equity in order to change? How are we willing (and not willing) to grow, to mend and heal ourselves and this world?* Is it worth it? And do we believe that it's possible? (I do.)

RESOURCES

Sample Books and Articles: Inner Work, Social Justice, &/or Systems Change

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Individual & Interpersonal Awareness—Equity & Social Justice Tools & Videos

- Understanding Privilege: https://www.isr.umich.edu/home/diversity/resources/white-privilege.pdf
- White Awareness: http://www.racialequitytools.org/module/overview/transforming-white-privilege
- Intercultural Development Continuum (IDI): https://idiinventory.com/products/the-intercultural-development-continuum-idc/
- Videos: http://world-trust.org

Racial Equity & Systems Change Tools & Organizations

- Systems Thinking and Race: http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Powell_Systems_Thinking_Structural_Race_Overview.pdf
- White Allies: http://www.showingupforracialjustice.org
- Media, Leadership & Framing: https://www.raceforward.org
- Tools (vetted clearinghouse): http://www.racialequitytools.org/home

Social Justice, Systems Change, & Inner Work Organizations

- White Awake: http://whiteawake.org
- Hidden Leaf Foundation: http://hiddenleaf.org
- Haas Institute for a Fair & Inclusive Society: http://haasinstitute.berkeley.edu
- Movement Strategy Center: http://movementstrategy.org
- Center for Transformative Change: http://transformativechange.org/
- Interaction Institute for Social Change: http://interactioninstitute.org
- Rockwood Leadership Institute: http://rockwoodleadership.org/
- Social Transformation Project: http://www.stproject.org

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2

Embracing Contemplative Pedagogy in a Culturally Diverse Classroom

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With researchers (e.g., Shapiro, Brown, & Astin, 2011) substantiating the beneficial effects of meditation and other contemplative practices in educational settings, advocates and practitioners of contemplative pedagogy have proposed integrating these approaches into the curriculum to help learners reach the highest standards of what it means to be educated in a complex, ever-changing world. Through contemplative processes, a deep, holistic learning experience can be generated that activates and deepens an individual's outer learning outcomes, such as critical thinking, information processing, and academic achievement. Inner awareness can also be fostered, including a developing a sense of purpose, concentration, and presence; enhancing psychological well-being; becoming creative; developing self-compassion; and fostering positive interpersonal relationships (Rendón, 2009; Shapiro et al., 2011).

A key aspect of contemplative pedagogy is the notion that a cutting-edge and integrative, even revolutionary, education can be advanced when energies and resources are intentionally devoted to the education of the whole student. This happens when social, emotional, and spiritual development, together with academic achievement, are intertwined (indeed, become interdependent) to engage the full complexity of the learner's cognitive and intuitive skills. In short, both inner and outer engagement are critical to create the highest standards of educational excellence. This scholarship focuses on providing background information about contemplative pedagogy and provides examples of how to employ contemplative practices in culturally diverse classrooms while attending to contemporary social justice issues.

HISTORY OF CONTEMPLATIVE EDUCATION AND HOLISTIC APPROACHES

Traditional and contemporary Western models of education have largely focused on privileging certain forms of teaching and learning. For example, publishing, speaking engagements, and writing grants are typically acknowledged as the best scholarly practices while classroom pedagogy tends to favor teaching or lecturing, curriculum development, and working with students. These practices (or outer engagement) are most familiar to us because of the constant reinforcement and validation that we receive for them throughout our lives and educational journeys. They are usually associated with the mind and influence our intellectualism, rationality, and objectivity. On the other hand, inner engagement relates to one's own being and offers a deeper sense of purpose and meaning in the learning process. Unlike outer engagement, it embraces subjectivity, intuition, emotion, and personal experiences. Educators are often trained to remove or distance the inner engagement in our education systems. This imbalance between the outer and inner engagements, and privileging one way of knowing over the other, have often invalidated or dismissed the ways of knowing of Indigenous populations and people of color.

To illuminate this imbalance, Lorde (1984) stated, "The white fathers told us: I think, therefore I am. The Black mother within each of us—the poet—whispers in our dreams: I feel, therefore I can be free" (p. 38). What she is expressing goes beyond the stereotyped White rational male contrasted with the emotional Black female. Rather, Lorde is implying that both feeling and thinking are important and our inner and outer processes are there for a reason, giving us choices and combinations with which to express ourselves and engage in learning experiences. Everyone possesses the ability to be rational and emotional; however, dominant social forces can often focus on rationality as the highest and perhaps only way to develop as human beings.

The epistemological view that the world order and human processes should nurture both the inner and outer person is rooted in Indigenous wisdom. However, over time, the academy has moved away from the interconnected aspects of human development to separating and disconnecting alternative ways of engaging with the world (Rendón, 2009). Ancestral ways of knowing were based on wholeness and the unity of existence. Faith and reason, as well as science and the divine, were not separate but viewed as two parts of one whole (Palmer, 2007). Native people have their own notions of education. For example, Cajete (2000) pointed out there is no word for education in most Indigenous languages. Rather, education is best described as "coming to know" (p. 69), which entails a journey, a process, a questioning for knowledge and understanding. A visionary tradition adds understandings that among other things encompass harmony, compassion, hunting, planting, cycle, balance, death, and renewal.

In the United States, the role of the teacher has not changed significantly over the span of more than 300 years. Many of today's classrooms retain some of the features of the colonial model of education that existed between 1600 and 1800, which was designed for young men from elite social

backgrounds. The key features of the colonial model included defining the role of the instructor as an expert in charge of everything that took place in the classroom: course content, assignments, assessment methods, and instructional strategies. Students were passive recipients of information and memorized facts. By the 19th century, higher education began to serve a broader range of students, and intellectual development and scholarly endeavors (rather than memorization) were emphasized, with increased use of lectures, demonstrations, and laboratory methods. Later, as the space race ensued, greater attention was given to science and technology. The Vietnam War gave rise to an interest in a curriculum that had relevance, meaning, and preparation for the world of work as higher education became more concerned with responsibility to the community (Fuhrmann & Grasha, 1983).

During the latter part of the 20th century, critical educators such as Paulo Freire, Peter McLaren, bell hooks, Antonia Darder, Rodolofo Torres, Martha Baltodano, Henry Giroux, Zeus Leonardo, Ira Shor, Michael Apple, and Christine Sleeter, among others, worked with the philosophical underpinnings of critical pedagogy. This pedagogic camp advocated that individuals should be prepared to think critically about their educational experiences and be provided with tools to (a) engage in self-empowerment, (b) strengthen democracy, and (c) become involved in social transformation. A liberating education could be achieved as students became more aware of their lived experiences and social contexts, thus developing what Freire (1971) called a *critical consciousness*—the power and ability to recognize oppression and social inequalities and to take action to remediate them. Along these lines, some scholars also began to challenge epistemological frameworks focused exclusively on rational knowing; objectivity; the divide between theory and practice; and the exclusion of the contributions of women, Indigenous people, and scholars of color (Dei, Hall & Rosenberg, 2000; Gilligan, 1982; Grande, 2004; Lather, 1991; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Osei-Kofi, Richards, & Smith, 2004; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the concepts of *connected teaching* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), *engaged pedagogy* (hooks, 1994), and *holistic education* (Miller, 1997) began to emerge, with a focus on a pedagogy that emphasized the union of mind, body, and spirit; the inner life of students and teachers; the connection between learning in the classroom and life experiences; and the empowerment of both teachers and students. Organizations such as the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) advanced the benefits of social and emotional learning, associating it with promoting positive student behaviors while developing improvements in academic performance and attitudes toward school, as well as preparing young people for adulthood. The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society partnered with the American Council of Learned Societies in offering fellowships for courses that integrated contemplative practice into faculty teaching methods or content, resulting in more than 150 fellows in 100 colleges and universities throughout the nation (Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, n.d.-a).

During this same period of time, meditation, yoga, and other contemplative practices became the subject of hundreds of studies that demonstrated their physical and mental benefits, conducted by institutions such as the Brain Imaging Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin, MIT, Yale, and Harvard Medical School (Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, n.d.-b). In addition, the Center for Contemplative Mind created a Tree of Contemplative Practices (see figure) to illustrate the diverse array of stillness, generative, creative, activist, relational, movement, and ritual or cyclical practices that individuals might employ.
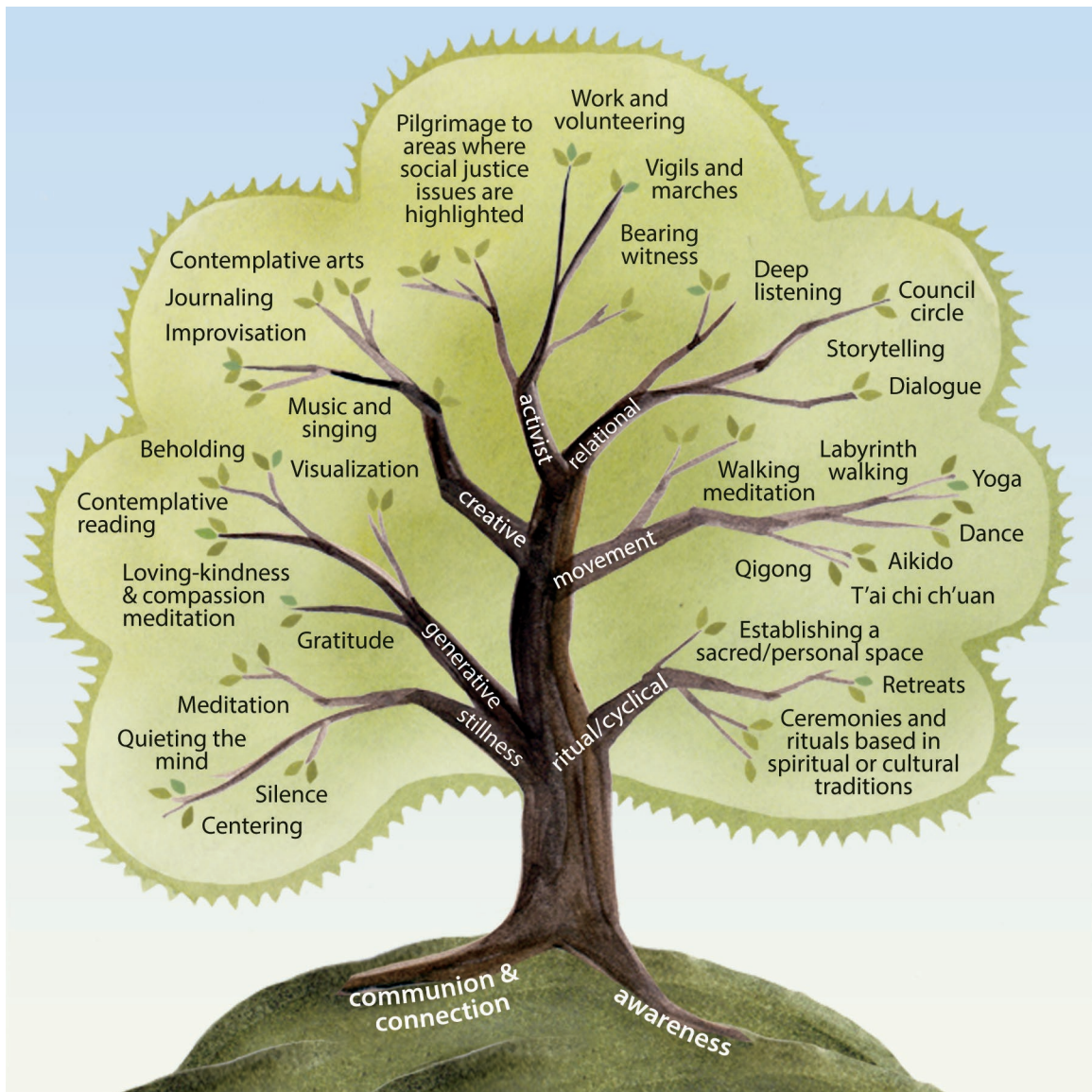
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These practices are represented by the branches in the contemplative tree. For example, by engaging in stillness pratices, one can practice quieting the mind and body to develop calmness and focus. Stillness practices may include meditation, silence, centering, and quieting the mind. Similarly, relational practices emerge as powerful sources of contemplation when a group of individuals relate to one another by engaging in respectful interactions that connect their hearts and minds. Deep listening, which entails being fully present and not controlling or judging what is happening in the moment, or creating a Council Circle, a Native American tradition of engaging in dialogue, are a few ways of engaging in relational practices.

Especially during the latter part of the 1990s and the early 2000s, models such as integrative learning and transdisciplinary education began to receive significant attention. Integrative learning was described in at least two ways. The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching issued a 2004 position statement (as cited in Huber & Hutchings, 2005) explaining that integrative learning reached "across courses, over time, and between campus and community life" (p. 13). Integrative learning was proposed as connecting skills and knowledge from multiple sources and experiences, applying theory to practice, using diverse and even contradictory points of view, and understanding issues and positions contextually. Knowledge came from diverse disciplines, and learning was stretched to go beyond academic boundaries. Another approach, put forward by organizations such as the Fetzer Institute, Naropa University, and the California Institute for Integral Studies, promoted integrative learning as a way of addressing the whole human being—mind, body, and spirit as well as integrating the outer life of vocation and professional responsibility and the inner life of personal development, meaning, and purpose.

Transdisciplinary studies build on interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and integrative models, yet emphasize a learning approach across, between, beyond, and outside all disciplines (McGregor, 2004). The key aspects of a transdisciplinary education include collaboration, problem solving, real-world engagement, openness to all disciplines, rigor, and tolerance (International Center for Transdisciplinary Research, 1994; McGregor, 2004).

Organizations and institutions such as the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, the Garrison Institute, CASEL, Naropa University, the California Institute of Integral Studies, the Mind and Life Institute, and AAC&U have advanced the working knowledge and importance of meditation, mindfulness, social and emotional learning skills, student competence in the area of personal and social responsibility, neuroscientific understandings of the mind, and the benefits of contemplative practice. K-16 teachers, as well as advocates of learning communities and service-learning, now often embrace the tenets of contemplative pedagogy. For example, Naropa University offers an undergraduate and graduate curriculum that blends ancient Eastern educational philosophies with rigorous liberal arts training and disciplined training of the heart. In doing so, it seeks to educate the whole person. Clearly, there are now enough developments to suggest that contemplative pedago-

gy is not a fad or add-on pedagogic tool. Rather, contemplative pedagogy is the essential method needed to advance the kind of teaching and learning that can ultimately transform higher education and the students it serves. It is important to remember that contemplative practice need not be disassociated from academic undertakings. Rendón (2009) posed that education should be concerned with both the *sentir* (sensing processes) of intuition and the inner life and the *pensar* (thinking processes) of intellectual pursuits. Accordingly, a *sentipensante* approach incorporates both contemplative and intellectual teaching and learning activities.

CONTEMPLATIVE PEDAGOGY IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE CLASSROOMS

The emerging field of contemplative education has, for the most part, not addressed pedagogic issues related to working with a culturally diverse student body, which is a reality in a large number of colleges and universities today. Neither do we know enough about how contemplative approaches can be employed to examine diversity and social justice issues. Consequently, there is a need to create a new *contemplative pedagogic imaginary* (i.e., an imagined vision) that embraces cultural diversity and social justice. A pedagogic imaginary is needed to engage in sensitive and reflective critical dialogues while creating spaces for students to enter conversations with a sense of openness and trust that is complemented with mutual respect, understanding, willingness to learn, care, and concern.

It is useful to note that contemplative education is not only for privileged students who attend elite, high-cost colleges and universities. The benefits of contemplative approaches should extend to first-generation students (first-gens) those whose parents did not receive education beyond a high school diploma and who now comprise roughly 50% of the college student population (Lynch, 2013). National Center for Education Statistics data from 2010 showed the demographic breakdown of first-gens was 48.5% Latinos, 45% Black or African-American, 35% Native American, 32% Asian, and 28% White (Lynch, 2013). Further, according to Ramsey and Peale (2010)

> Roughly 30% of entering freshmen in the USA are first-generation college students, and 24%—4.5 million—are both first-gens and low income. Nationally, 89% of low-income first-gens leave college within six years without a degree. More than a quarter leave after their first year four times the dropout rate of higher-income second-generation students. (para. 6)

Students leave for numerous reasons, including financial hardship, lack of sense of belonging, academic underpreparedness, and cultural shock, among others. Many of these students are concentrated in community colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). The education of these students has become an important unresolved social justice issue in higher education.

In institutions with large numbers of low-income first-gens, faculty struggle with how to design a teaching and learning experience for students who

- have been oppressed, victimized, and/or marginalized;
- do not have a stable home environment;
- were invalidated (e.g., told they were stupid, lazy, or not good enough for college; not supported in their goals);
- were treated as *the other* (e.g., exoticized, viewed as different or not worthwhile); and
- had difficulties engaging in a higher education context in stark contrast to their home realities.

Consequently, a new contemplative pedagogic imaginary must attend to educating students who lack social and economic privilege in American society. Research studies (Belenky, et al., 1986; Rendón, 2009; Weaver & Wilding, 2013) have substantiated that students value teaching and learning experiences where they

- find deeper meaning in what is being learned in and out of the classroom;
- gain insight;
- release pain;
- find voice;
- heal;
- come to terms with anger and the shadows of life (e.g., the experience of growing up poor, absent parents, violence in home, drug and alcohol use, and/or depression);
- connect with others and develop new relationships;
- express love, joy, passion, and compassion;
- develop resiliency;
- engage with culturally relevant practices; and
- cultivate civic awareness along with personal and social responsibility.

Contemplative Pedagogic Imaginary Embracing Cultural Diversity and Social Justice

To engage in a social-justice-focused model that interconnects intellectual development with contemplative practices is exciting yet challenging. This requires background preparation on the part of the instructor as well as careful and sensitive development of pedagogic activities that attend to both inner and outer student engagement while fostering high standards of educational excellence.

Background Preparation

Faculty should not engage in contemplative pedagogy without significant preparation. This involves:

- ***Strong philosophical orientation about teaching and learning connected to social justice issues.*** All faculty, whether they recognize it or not, are called to deal with epistemological issues, such as: What knowledge is valued in the classroom? Who can create knowledge? and What should be a part of the curriculum? Accordingly, faculty need to be critically conscious of their own belief system and understand the implications of what it means to teach with a social justice orientation. Background knowledge can include critical pedagogy, anti-oppressive education, holistic education, and Indigenous knowledge, among others.

- ***Keen awareness of issues related to culturally diverse students, especially those who are low income and first-generation.*** All too often, these students are perceived as risky college material with little to offer. This deficit-based paradigm must be replaced by an asset-based perspective that acknowledges and values these student's cultural backgrounds, and views their life experiences as important assests (Yosso, 2005).

- ***Personal contemplative practice.*** Kanagala and Rendón (2013) stressed that holistic classroom approaches require careful and sustained faculty development that includes background reading of the uses, potential, and challenges of employing contemplative approaches. They also emphasized the importance of faculty adopting some form of contemplative practice in their own personal lives, such as meditation, yoga, prayer, journaling, or poetry writing, among others. A personal practice allows faculty to enter the teaching and learning experience with authenticity, self-awareness, insight, and compassion. Overall, the use of contemplative approaches should be undertaken with great care and sensitivity. If poorly applied, reflective assignments can result in a less-than-positive classroom experience for instructors and students.

- ***Professional development in the uses of contemplative practice in the classroom.*** Strong preparation and professional development are needed to guide faculty in their own personal practice and in designing courses and a classroom context that invite reflective practices. This is deep, challenging work that can, at times, lead to unexpected classroom consequences. It is safe to say that in most instances students will respond quite positively, but in some cases they may exhibit negative reactions given their value system, socialization, and religious beliefs.

Preparation can assist faculty to attend to the following student outcomes:

- **inner-life competencies**, such as self-awareness, humility, authenticity, empathy, knowing one's shadow (i.e., negative aspects of ourselves we tend to ignore or downplay), building inner strength, and becoming compassionate;
- **critical consciousness**, including insight, empathy, compassion, and knowledge of the history of oppressed people and social inequities in the nation and the world;

- **awareness and appreciation of diverse ways of knowing** as demonstrated by an openness to multiple perspectives different from one's own; inclusivity; and knowledge of the intellectual contributions of diverse scholars and practitioners (e.g., women, people of color, Indigenous people, LGBT researchers); and
- **moving beyond self-awareness to social change** by using these insights to act justly and compassionately in service to the world and humanity's greater good.

CONCLUSION

A newly fashioned imaginary of teaching and learning for diversity and social justice requires that faculty rethink the ways they teach, select content material and classroom learning activities, engage with students, and foster reflective processes. This critical task has enormous potential and carries both risks and rewards. Rendón (2009) recognized those who were willing to engage in this challenge as *spiritual warriors* on a journey to transform education. Rendón's message remains appropriate today: "May our collective breath be the vision of a transformative dream of education that speaks the language of heart and mind and the truth of wholeness, harmony, social justice, and liberation" (p. 151). Her (our) dream lives on.

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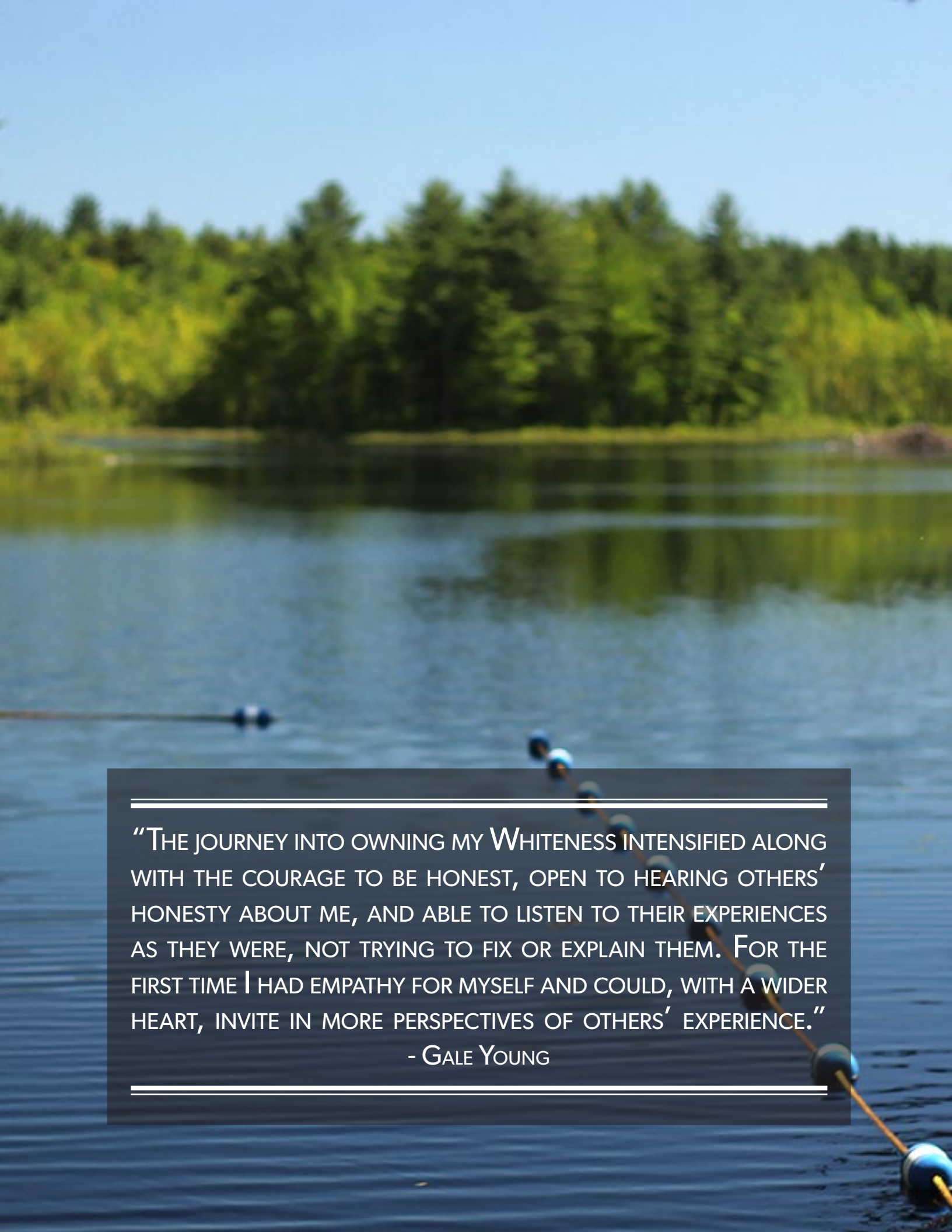
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"The journey into owning my Whiteness intensified along with the courage to be honest, open to hearing others' honesty about me, and able to listen to their experiences as they were, not trying to fix or explain them. For the first time I had empathy for myself and could, with a wider heart, invite in more perspectives of others' experience."
- Gale Young

Becoming a White Footsoldier ~ Evolving Into Humanity[1]: The Dangerous Intersection of the Personal, Professional, Political, and Spiritual

Gale Young
California State University East Bay, Professor Emeritus

GRATITUDE & DEDICATION

I am because of my fierce mentors, colleagues and students of color, and those in the LGBTQ community on campus. With deepest gratitude I bow to them. This essay is dedicated to the 12,000-plus students, the great diversity in my classes, who taught all the other students, including me, about their lived experiences, and who shared their insights and fearless honesty. May this be of benefit.

The university cafeteria is filled to capacity with staff from all ranks: carpenters, vice presidents, technologists, gardeners, supervisors, directors, accountants, counselors, coaches, cooks, cashiers, cleaners, painters, advisers, deans, police officers, assistants. All races, religions, ages, abilities, economic classes, gender identities, sexual orientations, and political beliefs are represented. No ethnic/racial majority, leaning Judeo-Christian middle-class, all standing huddled, crowded, quiet.

It is September 12, 2001. Each speaker calls on grace to lead us through the pain and confusion that the 9/11 attacks have wrought. I'm next. I will facilitate the Buddhist practice of *tonglen*,[2] not sure whether I'm breaking a Buddhist vow, a secular code for public education, or both. (I was an associate dean then.)[3]

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1   *Become:* undergo a change or development; come into existence. What becomes has duration.
Evolve: undergo development; gain through experience to unfold, open out, expand, to make clear, disclose, to produce, to develop by natural process to a higher state.
White: refers here to both my lived experience as a white person and the inevitable "estrangement" from one's own humanity that invades the souls of white folks. See Watson, 2013.
Footsoldier: working alongside others for civil rights.
Humanity: the quality of being human; ripeness.

2   Tonglen is a Tibetan Buddhist practice of working with habitual patterns of mind where one breathes in suffering and gives away joy with the outbreath. According to Chogyam Trungpa (1993), it "develops the psychological attitude of exchanging oneself for other" (p. 28).

3   Associate Dean for the College of Letters, Arts & Sciences at California State University, East Bay. I was in charge of curriculum, program reviews, and student learning outcome assessments for 19 departments and programs.

"Please, if able, hold the hands of the persons next to you. This circle will connect us, as colleagues, in kindness and care. I will lead you in a compassion practice. Engage, as you will. If you wish, close your eyes. Let your in-breath gently touch the place inside of you that feels pain, fear, confusion, overwhelm, anger, and/or sadness. And with your outbreath bathe these feelings in the comfort you need."

We expand out to those closest to the heart, such as children, partners, and family, then our friends, neighbors, each other in the room, all the students and faculty not yet on campus, everyone we know and love, those we just know. Then we move on, to breathe in the pain of the victims of 9/11, their families, their friends, and their coworkers and send them the comfort they need with the out-breath.

At this point my mind freezes on the impulse to continue tonglen for the perpetrators and their families. I decide: not yet. We end by contemplating what each person needs most: to care for themselves and others as they heal from this shock.

As we disperse, a participant says, "I was hoping you would lead us to feel compassion for the terrorists." The president and provost, both white[4] and both avid agnostics, thank me. My longtime colleague the vice president, a radiant Christian and African American, the one who called me at 5:00 a.m. to lead "one of your spiritual chants or prayers," says she is grateful. Whew.

This public statement of my spiritual tradition in a governmental institution happened only one more time: a few weeks later, during a gathering for all students. However, the journey to integrate secular contemplative practices into my professional life was seeded in 1971, out of panic.

IDENTITIES.

I am white, a cisgender woman of British, French, Ashkenazi Jew, and Roma descent, predominantly heterosexual, who grew up as a spiritual seeker with agnostic parents, in a blended family within the racially diverse East Bay. As kids, we (three boys and one girl) lived a lower-middle-economic-class reality while our mom/stepmom touted her upper-class values.[5]

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4   Watson (2013) states that "conventions governing the capitalization of racial identifiers are currently in flux. Some prefer a uniform approach of capitalizing terms referring to racial groups, such as African American, Black, Latino, or Asian American. Pseudoscientific classifications like Caucasian and Anglo-American are typically included in this practice, but more commonly used terms like 'white' or 'white American' are still generally not capitalized. Others adopt an all-or-nothing approach." I will use Watson's norm to "capitalize racial identifiers only when … seeking to call attention to the highly constructed, highly performative nature of 'race' … [and] not capitalize racial identifiers where they are used as adjectives or simply to refer to a group of people typically identified by that term" (p. ix).

5   My experience with socioeconomic class is raised in an essay (Young, 2000) written for a student-oriented anthology. My goal was to examine the inextricable binding of one's personal story to one's ethnic story.

OVERTURE.

This essay emanates from a 44-year career in the classroom and in a variety of administrative and faculty roles throughout the academy.[6] It notes my journey of becoming a white footsoldier for multicultural issues in higher education, in alliance with others whose racial identities were diverse, e.g., black, Latina/o, Asian, white, and multiracial. We worked to make our university less racist, less monolithically White, less White-male, and more multiculturally inclusive and equitable in curriculum, pedagogy, policies, and programs. As gender identities, socioeconomic status, sexual orientations, and religious affiliations came increasingly into focus, these intersectionalities were added to our understandings and advocacy. My primary emphasis has been on race.

Along the way I discovered that social justice work, no matter how small, happens at "the dangerous intersection" (Palmer, 1998)[7] of one's personal, professional, public, spiritual, political, and relational lives. The need is relentless. The work comes with challenges and consequences. The struggles matter even when the efforts fail. I was lucky to be invited into multi-identified partnerships; staying in them became choiceless. Psychological examinations and contemplative practices became necessities.

As a student of relationships with degrees in communication, living, learning, and teaching in a diverse family, community, and university, I remain riveted by the power of messages (words, tone, actions) to define relationships between individuals, groups, institutions, societies, and nations. Messages have the power to connect, disconnect, create, destroy, acknowledge, deny, tell the truth, lie, oppress, and liberate.

I knew the messages of family abuse, incest, and silence. I knew my half-Lakota-Sioux half-White stepbrother Stephan, an Elvis Presley lookalike, as a cruel tormentor and his full-blooded Brown brother as gentle, kind, a nurturer, and the one who got blamed by family, teachers, and police for Stephan's actions. As a child I didn't know why, knew it wasn't right, and wanted to know why others thought it was. Joining the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in high school and sociology classes in college offered a sense that what I saw happen to my brothers was a small example of the "why" of the civil rights movement.

This essay will unfold the personal experiences that led to three essential understandings, the points of progress and delays, the joys and despairs, the lessons for learning, and the questions that remain.

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6   E.g., Affirmative Action Liaison Officer, Fairness Officer, Special Assistant for Intercultural Relations, Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Center for the Study of Intercultural Relations, Faculty Coordinator of Regional Accreditation, Associate Dean, and facilitator and co-writer for both a presidential strategic plan and university diversity plan.

7   Parker Palmer (1998) uses the phrase to describe teaching: "Unlike many professions, teaching is always done at the dangerous intersection of personal and public life" (pp. 16-17).

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS ~ DAILY PRACTICES.

- *First*, to trust the collective intelligence that comes from thinking, talking, and working together for social justice issues.
- *Second*, to remember that personal work and contemplative practices cultivate the courage to engage the challenges and consequences of advocacy work.
- *Third*, to remember that a "progress" and "compromise" mentality can fuel burnout when one is inevitably betrayed. Loyalty to truth-telling, inquiry, and the struggle offers gratitude and joy.

I. TRUSTING COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE ~ BEING IN MULTI-IDENTIFIED COALITIONS.

In a small, shabby UCLA-rented classroom in an ignored neighborhood of downtown L.A. in 1971, I face a group of newly returned Vietnam veterans, all men, age 21-25, mostly men of color, in what is supposed to be a public speaking course, part of a college bridge program. Standing before them, in shock, in ignorance, I imagine W.E.B. Du Bois (1973) reproaching and reminding me:

> Education, to be relevant, must grow out of lives of those being educated. What do you, a white 23-year-old woman against the Vietnam War, know about the lives these men have lived? How will you find out? (p. 92)

In the next class, we arrange the desks in a circle. I ask what they want to learn about communication. Each, in his own way, says:

> "I want to learn how to make others listen to my experiences. I need to tell my family what happened to me but they don't want to know."

Of course, no one can teach them how to "make" their family members listen to them. But I can ask for help. The other faculty (all graduate students), the one on-site psychologist, and I work, talk, and think together to integrate "telling and listening to stories" into our different courses. In my class we study and practice "listening to ourselves" and then to each other. Along the way, they learn to give effective public speeches and I begin to learn about their experiences in Vietnam and how to teach "listening" across differences.

Coalitions to Teach Diversity-Related Courses ~ A Teaching Posse.[8]

When I was a doctoral student (1971-78), UCLA was majority-White with a significant minority of Blacks. A Black female grad student and I were teaching assistants (TAs) in the Interracial Communication course, and I was part of an interracial team of research assistants for the first text on inter-

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8   *Posse:* while the definition refers to it as a "temporary police force," I use it here to mean a small group of folks who have each other's back and keep each other honest.

racial communication in the discipline (Rich, 1974). This experience, plus my time with the veterans, taught me that if I was to learn about race issues, my Whiteness and others' Blackness/Brownness, and our different experiences in the world because of our color, I needed both to do my own work and to dwell in diverse study groups.

The decision that when I read for personal enrichment I would read authors of color, beginning with women of color, became choiceless. I needed to develop the ability to take others' perspectives to be a worthy "thinking partner." Being challenged and questioned, asking questions, trying out understandings, and crafting meaning with others in pursuit of a project or goal with colleagues of color were important to me. In fact they continue to evolve, motivate me to do my own work, and define me still.

When I arrived at Cal-State University, East Bay in 1978, the diversity of students was rapidly expanding beyond Black and White. Tasked with being the lone professor of the Intercultural Communication course, I couldn't teach a diverse student body about interracial communication without continuing to be a student. I wasn't on an interracial teaching team. I was White. The feeling of that first day with the veterans came back. But where was the posse of other teachers? I didn't know how to teach a liberation pedagogy (the book—Freire, 1987—hadn't been written yet) and I knew I needed help so I wouldn't replicate the pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 1970). I had to learn from those whose lived experiences were different from my own.

Seeking out faculty and student-affairs staff, mostly of color, with related expertise in varied disciplines and units, I introduced myself and asked them: "What do you think our students need to learn about communication, especially interracial communication? What resources would you suggest for me, and for the students?" And, in many cases, "Would you be willing to speak in the class? To be a resource for my students?" The conversations were rich, and the answers were "Yes." Thus began my "teaching posse," a multi-identified group of faculty and staff who were willing to assist me in assisting the students. Along the way they trusted that I too was there to assist them when asked. Over the years we helped each other, sometimes team-teaching courses even when not financed, speaking in each other's classes, advising each other's students, and releasing logjams in the bureaucracy.

COALITIONS TO MOVE THE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AGENDA.

Unknown to me at the time, many of these individuals were already part of enduring multi-identified associations on and off campus. They were coordinating actions to call out, thin out, and change out the racism in the White-privilege-infested university's policies, curricula, and practices whenever they showed up.

Folks encouraged me to meet Dr. Terry Jones (chair of Sociology, an African American, and the informal head of what was called the "Rainbow Coalition" of faculty and staff of color on campus) when he returned from a visiting professorship at the University of Pennsylvania. His background was in community organizing, and he organized people of color and allies on campus to be a force by standing together, supporting the populations of color on campus, objecting to discrimination and harassment wherever it was happening, proposing inclusivity and equity, and protesting lower retention and graduation rates for Latino and black students. These actions could happen anywhere, e.g., in the faculty senate, on promotion and tenure cases, on hiring committees, or in meetings to call out micro and macro racist behaviors. He would co-write publishable essays with junior faculty of color. He was, and is remembered as, an extraordinary campus community leader and moral conscience.

Dr. Jones had read about my volunteer activities with Black youth in Richmond, CA. The high school students were starting their first summer jobs and I was asked to coach them in "professional communication," including response options if/when faced with racist, disrespectful, or just-plain-confusing messages. Dr. Jones introduced himself to me by way of saying: "I've been looking for you. I want to work with whites who care, study, and are willing to be allies and speak out." He became my fiercest, wisest mentor, colleague, critic, and friend. He was my entrée into the multiracial partnerships on campus.[9]

SPEAKING UP MATTERS.

I am attending my first meeting as a faculty senator; the seats are filled with Whites and the walls lined with members of the "Rainbow Coalition." The issue is a music department course proposal for general education credit. "The History of Rock and Roll," according to the course description, begins with Elvis Presley. Herein lies the rub. The ensuing dialogue is enthralling, as Coalition members eviscerate the assumption while the Eurocentric chair of Music stuttered and stumbled in search of evidence and rationales that might silence his critics. I sit as an engrossed silent witness, deferring to the far more studied expertise of Coalition members. The course passes without changes and only a few of us vote against it. Dr. Jones will tell me later, in response to my naïve indignation, "We knew we'd lose, but it is important to speak up. Next time *you* speak up!"

And so I do, slowly gaining enough tender confidence to take on White colleagues in public, hoping to help and not embarrass or harm the cause, sometimes as the first to speak, other times as support to carry forward others' comments.

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9   Now there are many multi-identified coalitions on campus; back then, it was almost exclusively race-based.

"YOUR WHITENESS IS SUFFOCATING THIS DISCUSSION."

In the mid-'80s, as co-director of a project, it was my turn to lead the meeting. We, a highly diverse group of ten faculty and staff, were organizing a national conference. The program was way behind its schedule to go to press. Speakers had signed contracts, rental agreements had been confirmed, participants were paying registration fees, and now we had two hours to finalize the program: e.g., times for speakers, panelists, discussion groups, flow, format, etc. At the meeting, ideas for the program and challenges to the existence of the conference itself were rapid-fire and disparate. Feeling hyper-responsible, I kept trying to find themes, solidify decisions, and pass over the challenges. Time felt like an enemy. The neat agenda had been long forgotten by all except me. Dr. Jones stepped in and said, "Your Whiteness is suffocating this discussion. Get out of trying to control it. Trust what is happening and let the discussion play out. Quit being so White." Stinging and shamed, heart racing off-beat, I let go, gave up. And, sure enough, the group found its way to a creative, consensual view that guided the rest of our decisions. I learned that an agenda is a hypothesis, and that broad agreements often come out of the messy, nonlineal, confrontational, disparate ideas of people thinking together from myriad perspectives. As Maya Angelou (1994) punctuated a few years later in her book of poetry: "So, I'll believe in Liberals' aid for us / When I see a white man load a black man's gun."

Increasingly, I trusted that each disparate idea is a puzzle piece, and that collective intelligence emerges from uncontrolled conversations in pursuit of a goal. Practicing that trust became a pillar for my leadership, teaching, and advocacy strategy for multicultural inclusion and equity issues in the university. I saw myself as a white footsoldier among others, whether my title was as a lead, a co-lead, a member, or an ally. My entire resume[10] is made possible by the support of and collaborations with faculty, students, staff, and administrators of color; the LBGTQ communities on campus; and white allies. This happened organically.

II. PERSONAL WORK, CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES, AND THE PARADOX OF PROGRESS.

> The paradox of progress is that we grow each time we realize we can only be where we are. (Prather, 1990)

Wednesday, April 29, 1992, 6:00 p.m. My stomach hurts as I walk into the Intercultural Communication class. The room is completely silent, no chatter. Three hours ago, in South Central Los Angeles,

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10   Including the rank of Professor of Communication, Special Assistant for Intercultural Relations, Co-Director of the Center for the Study of Intercultural Relations, Affirmative Action Liaison Officer, Fairness Officer, Faculty Coordinator for Accreditation, Facilitator for Diversity Strategic Planning, Chair of Communication Dept., Faculty Diversity and Equity Committee, Co-Director, Time-to-Degree Project, Co-Director of several grants.

the insurrection protesting the "not guilty" verdict for the policemen who savagely beat Rodney King began. Even without social media, the scenes of righteous rage are broadcast and seared into the present moment. The racially-diverse students stare at me, awash in emotions, angry, crestfallen, overwhelmed, frightened, confused. One challenges me: *"How does this class help us help?"* I well up and stand without a word, feeling so liable and lost.

After too long a silence, with the chairs in a circle, I ask them to sit silently with their own inner voice, then to write or draw. Each student shares without comment from others. We sit with the feelings and statements in the room, trying not to fix or defend them. Then they write to the prompt: *What don't you know about this insurrection? What do you need to know to understand why the insurrection is happening? What do you know about other insurrections in history that are like this one? How might you find out?* The class ends. I drive home in tears and apply for a sabbatical.

THE SABBATICAL.

Yes, a basic contemplative practice had provided the students with a container for listening to their feelings, to practice listening without judgment to others, to be curious about what they didn't know. I had used this practice as a life preserver for my not knowing the answer. Yes, the students, in varying degrees, heard that injustices and responses to those injustices impacted everyone and did so differently. They left in dissonance and inquiry. But that one student's profound challenge had cut deep.

This incident occurred three years after I'd begun a formal meditation practice in the Shambhala Buddhist tradition (Trungpa, 1984)[11] as well as psychotherapy with a leader in transpersonal psychology who also introduced me to focusing (Gendlin, 1978).

While I was on sabbatical in 1992-93, critical race theorists and scholars on Whiteness were emerging. The critical race theorists, Derrick Bell among them[12], composed the criteria and the framework for analyzing systemic oppression, initially focusing on racism from a multidisciplinary lens that led to the multidimensionality of all major oppressions . Most of all, I grasped the enormity of the breadth and depth of systemic oppression and intergenerational continuity that affects everything.

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11   In 1986 I was drawn to the book *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* and its vision of being a warrior in the world, an emissary for basic goodness in society. It sounded to me like an engaged spirituality for social justice. The teachings and practices resonated with me. However, early on I realized that even though the Shambhala Center was located across the street from UC Berkeley, it was almost entirely White. I struggled with whether I should stay. What was I doing in an all-White spiritual organization that was hostile to even the question of diversity? I consulted with a few of my closest colleagues of color. They assured me, "Gale, Sunday is the most segregated day of the week. You like the teachings. Go have your White ethnic experience." I decided to continue testing the waters, let the teachings seep in, and not bring my work to church. Instead I found secular ways to infuse the contemplative practices into my work. 25 years later, I am devoted to the teachings, but I still live with an ambivalent attachment to the organization because of its Whiteness.

12   See the excellent summary *What is Critical Race Theory?* (https://spacrs.wordpress.com/what-is-critical-race-theory/).

We are all in the environment but we are in it in different ways and the nature of that difference affects everything. (inspired by Du Bois, pp. 92 & 95)[13]

I also co-wrote a primer for educators confronting diversity issues on campus (Bowser, Auletta[14], & Jones, 1993). Writing with two Black male sociologists while we brewed in critical race journal articles kept the conversations edgy as we read and edited each other's chapters.

Reading Derrick Bell's *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* (1992) was most potent, and it found its way into my daily meditation practice and therapy sessions. The combination rewired my teaching and social advocacy work.

> Few whites are able to identify with blacks as a group: the essential prerequisite for feeling empathy with, rather than aversion from blacks …. Unable or unwilling to perceive that 'there but for the grace of God, go I,' few whites are ready to actively promote civil rights for blacks. Because of an irrational but easily roused fear that any social reform will unjustly benefit blacks, whites fail to support the programs this country desperately needs to address the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor, both black and white. (Bell, 1992, p.4)

Prior to my sabbatical, my experience in the classroom had mirrored the emerging research showing that facts and scholarship about racial inequities contributed to increasing and hardening racism and stereotypes, not reducing them (Jackman, 1986; Elshtain, 1988). I was teaching primarily sociological and communication perspectives on prejudice, discrimination, and cultural perspectives on diverse ethnic/racial groups. Assignments included group work, simulations, journaling, and research papers. The course goals included knowledge about and ability to communicate effectively across cultural differences.

The students' journals often validated the research. Stereotypes appeared solidified, not softened. Group assignments brought about conflicts across race lines regardless of the issue. I mediated the overt issue of conflicts, getting the group on track with the task. In class I named racial dynamics; in office hours I empathized with and listened to students of color and pushed white students on their privilege. But I did not highlight and push the students on the "racial, relational, and emotional" forces at play in or out of the classroom.

Whether serving as an administrator or faculty, I spoke for equity and multicultural policies and practices. The voice I gave was "logical" and "reasoned" and would stress the harms to the students and reputation of the university if current situations continued and the benefits if they changed.

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13   This statement is an inspired restatement from DuBois that states, "You are teaching American Negroes in 1933, and they are subjects of a caste system in the Republic of the United States of American and their life problem is primarily of caste" (p.92). He believed in the importance of education "starting with present conditions and using the facts and the knowledge of the present situation of American Negroes and then expanding toward the procession and conquest of all knowledge" (p.95). My colleague Dr. Terry Jones has been quoting the line above for decades. For an earlier publication we re-read all of W.E.B. Du Bois's work and scoured the web, to no avail.

14   I published then under the name Gale Auletta.

Aware that the audience was 95% white faculty and upper administration, I would appeal to the principle of doing the right thing for others. There were times when my own disdain of them got in the way in such a way that I mirrored their arrogance back at them.

THE INNER WORK: PERSONAL IS POLITICAL. POLITICAL IS PERSONAL.

Derrick Bell was challenging me to teach empathy and to speak with the purpose of engendering empathy. But I didn't know how to teach someone to feel a particular way. How would I possibly grade "a feeling"? Persuade another to feel empathy? I was not a psychologist. But I could do my own psychological work.

With the extraordinary skill and wise guidance of my therapist, I began to glimpse, feel, and identify the intergenerational family and societal storylines that dominated and calcified beliefs about others and myself. With the Shambhalian view[15] that the sun of basic goodness is elemental in all beings, including myself, I could practice breathing and make space for remorse, guilt, shame, regret, and the tender heart of sadness. Most importantly, I could inquire into these feelings: What is intelligent and true? What do I have to learn from these feelings? What are they trying to tell me? What happens when I let go?

Slowly I connected with the atrocity that no one in my family had acknowledged or protected me from the sexual abuse perpetuated by my stepbrother, birth father, and neighbor, although the adults all knew. While I always knew the facts and could visually remember the times and places that the repeated incidences happened, I had buried the feelings (doctors call it "disassociation"). The feelings came back and felt so embarrassingly personal and intense.

In the '50s and '60s, family and child sexual abuse was institutionally accepted and silenced. My mother, grandmother, and stepfather paralleled this amnesia in their inability to respond to what they actually knew was happening in their home. Once the connection between my parents' personal and societal blindness dawned, I recognized the genesis of the pervasive cluster of feelings/beliefs that I had had since childhood: "I do not belong." "I am not a full member." "I am not seen." "I do not matter." "My body is not worth protecting."

These insights allowed me to extend the personal sense to the mass cruelty of institutionalized racism, heterosexism, and sexism—all the ways that a society supports centuries of cruelty that dominates, demeans, and destroys others just because it can. Thus my sense of being primordially flawed because of how I was treated by my family could be related, in seismically magnified proportions, to whole populations of people that society brutalizes, ignores, and refuses to take care of and protect: all those othered and terrorized by society.

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15   Shambhala Buddhism has its roots in Tibet: "Shambhala is based on trust in human dignity. We offer a path of meditation practice and contemplative arts oriented towards modern life. Our communities around the world cultivate kindness, bravery, and genuine dialogue. Our vision is to inspire compassionate, sustainable, and just human societies" (https://shambhala.org).

This led to the hardest, harshest, and most heartbreaking of connections: yes, I was a victim of societally-sanctioned child sexual abuse; yes, because I was white and heterosexual, I was also one of the societal perpetrators of unearned White heterosexual privilege; and yes, I was a co-conspirator in the continuing unearned oppression of societally-sanctioned racism and heterosexism, while also being an advocate calling others out on these very issues. Terrifying. Painful. True.

> For over three centuries, this country has promised democracy and delivered discrimination and delusions. Racial realism insists on both justice and truth. We are committed to truth and honesty with ourselves. We also insist on the possibility for justice, requiring that we shed reactionary attachments to myths that derive their destructive and legitimating power from our belief in them. (Bell, 1992; p.98-99)

The journey into owning my Whiteness intensified along with the courage to be honest, open to hearing others' honesty about me, and able to listen to their experiences as they were, not trying to fix or explain them. For the first time I had empathy for myself and could, with a wider heart, invite in more perspectives of others' experience. I let myself feel my fear and could begin to see and understand others' fear. I could practice the courage to witness the harm done to me by others and done to others by oppressive, unjust laws and practices. I could own the harm I unknowingly passed on to others. I was able to "sit with" these awful and powerful feelings time and time again, and still do. I needed the help of my therapist and meditation practice to do so.

Seeing the intelligence of shame, guilt, remorse, and regret, I saw the correlation of being a victim of sexual abuse with the fear of loss of control. My need to control things, including my children, projects, classroom dialogues, and conversations, meant I had not listened enough, was not open enough to see and honor what was happening for someone else. Humbling, yes; and, surprisingly, accompanied by a sense of belonging to a greater struggle to reclaim my humanity.

The need to be vigilant, to practice witnessing my own mind, to be more curious than in control, became a necessity. I began to experience deeper empathy for others (including whites[16]) and to explore ways to welcome students' emotions into the educational inquiry of ideas and theories.

POST-SABBATICAL CLASSROOM.

I learned:

- to hold the container for feelings to arise and be queried without denial or indulgence;
- that all feelings are part of the human experience and there are not "good or right" emotions versus "bad or wrong" emotions;

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16   I have spent much of my life being embarrassed or afraid I'd be embarrassed by what other Whites would say and do. There has been an undercurrent of disdain and distancing. Not until I was able to confront my own complicity in Whiteness was I to acknowledge with some kindness the struggle that we have in confronting the immense negative intergenerational karma and the pervasiveness of our unearned privilege.

- to give students the space to practice the skills to know and inquire into their feelings;
- that the principle of coemergence meant that every situation and every feeling comes with a poison and an antidote;[17]
- that "research findings," the "theories" about intercultural relations, conflict, and inter-personal communication, were necessary but not sufficient; and
- to trust the collective intelligence of the students to teach each other.

Mindfulness as "listening to the self" evolved into the pedagogy for every class and my teaching goals became three-fold:

1. ***To instill a culture of practice, listening, and inquiry*** with gentle curiosity, with the goal of understanding their own and others' meanings. To practice the skills of finding feelings in the body, acknowledging thoughts, writing about them, inquiring into them, and sharing them.

2. ***To encourage truth-telling*** by practicing cutting through the conventions of conversation that limit authentic connections. To practice speaking after deeply listening to self (via guided visualizations or writing/drawing) and then saying "what wants to be said" while others practice receiving/taking into themselves others' messages without commenting. Learning to ask questions that personally matter while others practice not answering. Practicing the courage to include emotions as part of conversations about readings, documentaries, dialogues, or others.

3. ***To strengthen the cognitive ability to perspective-take.*** I can't "grade" a feeling because I can't teach another how to feel a specific emotion. The cognitive prerequisite for empathy is perspective-taking: the ability to accurately demonstrate/explain how a person views a situation (Goleman, 2005). Yes, an effective perspective-taker can manipulate others, but perspective-taking can also crack open a hardened category, soften a stereotype, and increase curiosity and caring.

I chose texts more carefully and designed assignments using educational-theatre methods that prepared students to take on different perspectives and identities using accurate information from required history texts. In character enactments, students discussed their characters' sacrifices, successes, harms, and joys and what they wished others knew about their characters' experiences. All assignments became triangulated: perspective-taking enactments in class, developing research papers to support their enactments, a written analysis using the concepts/themes from the read-

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17   Coemergence is well illustrated by a quatrain by Rumi (1997): "We are the mirror as well as the face in it. We taste the taste this minute of eternity. We are pain and what cures pain, both. We are the sweet cold water and the jar that pours" (p.106).

ings, and a reflection on themselves and what they learned, as well as emerging questions. "Prepared difficult dialogues" as regular classroom experiences and assignments allowed students to practice telling their own truth and listening and responding to others' while working with the myriad of emotions (Young, 2003).

CLOSETED.

Mindfulness practice was done throughout every class I taught thereafter. This pedagogy held the container for high-vulnerability assignments. While syllabi are public documents, I didn't discuss the use of guided meditation with colleagues. Mindfulness was decades away from being on a *Time* magazine cover, and it was risky. Amazingly, students didn't complain, perhaps because I told them they couldn't do it wrong, it wasn't graded, and they could doze. But most likely, as they often expressed, it was an opportunity to rest from their busy minds and lives, and they could use it to prepare for truth-telling and make connections through listening and being in a community of conversations that were about their lives.

These experiments seeded a large three-year Annenberg/PBS grant to study difficult dialogues in multicultural classes. As co-investigator (with Terry Jones) and lead coordinator of the study from 1995 to 1998, I involved 10 faculty from six campuses who taught courses that included difficult dialogues. I invited Dr. Derald Sue to facilitate the closing dialogue among the faculty who participated in the grant. The recording of this final dialogue became the basis for the PBS film we produced (Lowe, 1998). Dr. Sue (2015) continues to deepen and develop the ideas we planted during the grant.

III. TRUTH-TELLING, THE PERILS OF PROGRESS, AND BEING IN THE STRUGGLE

> First, the historical point, that there has been no linear progress in civil rights.…a pattern of cyclical progress and cyclical regression…Both engagement and commitment connote service. And genuine service requires humility. We must first recognize and acknowledge (at least to ourselves) that our actions are not likely to lead to transcendent change and may indeed, despite our best efforts, be of more help to the system than to the victims of that system whom we are trying to help. Then and only then, can that realization and the dedication based on it lead to policy positions and campaigns that are less likely to worsen conditions for those we are trying to help …. it is not a matter of choosing between the pragmatic recognition that racism is permanent no matter what we do, or an idealism based on the long-held dream of attaining a society free of racism. Rather, it is a question of both, and. Both the recognition of the futility of action and the unalterable conviction that something must be done, that action must be taken. (Bell, 1992, pp. 198-199)

Bell's insight lifted a huge weight from me. It wasn't about "getting it right" or being able to "fix" racism. Rather, we had to keep on trying to make life better, more inclusive, less discriminatory, for the rest of our lives. The burn-out/weariness mentality gave way to a way of life where telling the truth was more important than being polite and more important than silence in the name of compromise. This was deepened by my studies of the Truth and Reconciliation process in South Africa as a leadership fellow at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (1999) and the Institute of Justice and Reconciliation in Cape Town (2008).

ACTIONS TAKEN: SO WHAT HAPPENED?

The linked diversity and social justice timeline prepared by Dr. Colleen Fong (2016) describes the diversity and social justice situations that transpired at California State University East Bay from its inception, as well as placing them in the historical context of what was happening in California and the U.S. at the time.

As you will see from Dr. Fong's linked timeline, sometimes a person is identified as a lead, and sometimes that lead includes me, but all of the actions and projects required many hearts, minds, and voices. The timeline evidences points of progress that arose and abided and then dissolved. What was seeded, rooted, and now blooms? What remains? An example:

The Center for the Study of Intercultural Relations that Dr. Jones and I co-founded and co-directed for 15 years was funded by many internal and external grants, including some release from teaching for our leadership. However, most our time was a contribution because "actions had to be taken" to educate our mostly white faculty to educate our diverse students. This became an umbrella organization for faculty and staff, mostly those of color, and a nexus for conversations, grants, and projects by and for faculty and staff. Eight to 12 of us were at any given time coordinating, writing, producing, presenting, and mentoring. Conversations and outputs abounded—e.g., an anthology, a special edition of a journal, two national conferences, faculty and staff development workshops, film series, round tables, educational delegates to Israel and Palestine, and lead speakers at conferences and on other campuses about our groundbreaking research on difficult dialogues.

The university used our successes and activities as a way to build its reputation as a multiculturally inclusive university. However, when Dr. Jones and I wanted to pass on the leadership to another intercultural team of faculty, the president and provost refused to line-item in the budget for the Center. They denied funding and even minimal course release time for the new co-directors, a Chinese-American woman and an African-American male. Without institutional support, the Center dissolved. However, the social activism in multi-identified coalitions continued. A formal faculty development center was founded. Diversity-related issues were addressed depending on the disposition and commitment of the director.

However, 15 years later the University has a large majority of students of color and is a Hispanic-serving institution with a Chief Diversity Officer and a Student Diversity Center, and what was

once a subcommittee on faculty diversity and equity is now a standing committee of the Academic Senate. (The senate passed each of the two committees by one vote; see timeline.) The university had a long-standing female president, as well as the first Afghan-American university president in the U.S., and now it has a Japanese-American president. Student, faculty and staff organizations with multi-identifications abound.

The University's Diversity and Social Justice web page (http://www.csueastbay.edu/programs/dsj/index.html) illustrates bountiful projects, teacher guides, and faculty resource persons, many of whom are white. This blossoming is relatively new (4-5 years old). The seeding and tending happened over five decades of persistent efforts by many people, mostly those of color. Still, far fewer African-American and Latino males graduate than any other ethnic/racial group. And while structures have been put in place to attract and retain faculty who reflect the lived experiences of the students being educated, still the majority is White. And the work goes on.

From one perspective, it is clear that progress, in terms of the institutional impact of the grants, projects, positions, committees' outputs, and coalition efforts (as reflected in the timeline) has been incremental and more and less steady, if slow; and also that progress has been thwarted and delayed. For me, one question still reverberates: what would it have taken for the university to manifest as a beloved educational learning community (King Center, n.d.)? What would have happened if a critical mass of the faculty, staff, and administrators, white, of color, straight, and LGBTQ, had decided that our small-medium-sized public university campus could be an incubator for *trying* to live into the beloved community?

So yes, as Dr. Bell (1992) reminded me so long ago, "We must first recognize and acknowledge (at least to ourselves) that our actions are not likely to lead to transcendent change and may indeed, despite our best efforts, be of more help to the system … than to the victims of that system whom we are trying to help" (pp. 198-199). And yes, "Both engagement and commitment connote service. And genuine service requires humility" (pp. 198-199).

Besides being humbled, engagement and commitment to social justice advocacy in the academy means *you will be targeted*. Let me speak for a moment as a white footsoldier to other whites who are or want to stay engaged.

There will be White colleagues who will covertly and overtly try to threaten, intimidate, and undermine you and the multi-identified coalitions to which you belong. Being white doesn't inoculate you from other Whites' threats. But remember, whatever happens to you is far, far less, in substance and quantity, than what people of color experience. Antidote: don't waste your energy on demonizing the messenger. Work with coalition members to figure out the message, its potency to cause damage to others in the coalition, or the issue at hand, and come up with ways, if needed, to address the threats. Some examples:

YOU ARE ONE-ISSUE.

The university received a major grant to "Mainstream Multicultural Curriculum," the first of several highly visible projects on multicultural curriculum I would co-direct, this time with the chair of Ethnic Studies. A White full professor of economics pulled me aside and said, "You are getting a reputation for being 'a one-issue.' This isn't good for your career." Befuddled, I blurted out, "I love working with others who love thinking through these issues together. Why wouldn't I do it?" Dr. Economics replied, "I'm just telling you."

He had waved the warning flag. And yes, my tenure and promotion were contested, because most of my "professional scholarship" was peer-reviewed grants, not journal publications, and all of my work was co-written and co-directed with a person outside my discipline and with a person of color. My scholarship, including peer-reviewed journal articles, was considered "political," not "scholarly." This is the same threat that faculty of color going up for tenure experience all the time.

Dr. Jones went behind the scenes to make sure there was an advocate for me (as he did for all faculty of color) at each level of the process. While the vote split, it was in my favor and so was the President. The same dynamic played out for promotion to full professor. The votes for colleagues of color with far better resumes than mine too often had to contest splits that were out of favor.

Once tenured and promoted, I became part of the team that volunteered to be on others' retention, promotion, and tenure committees, to co-write as second or third author with others in need of publications, and/or to serve as an informal reviewer/editor of dossiers before they were submitted. Coalition members made sure there was representation at all levels to present the best case for those who might not get a fair hearing.

NO GOOD DEED GOES UNPUNISHED.

Three faculty salary grievances based on gender discrimination charges were presented to me. The issue was between the three females vs. the one white male hired over three consecutive years. Wanting to resolve this without the new faculty going through a messy, visible process, I met with the lead administrator, who is white. We had worked together when I had administrator responsibilities. After presenting all of the documents, including letters of hire, showing differential correlated to salary, I said, "The salary differentials may well be due to a simple oversight somewhere in the system, and I hope to spare all of us the public exposure and pain of the grievance procedures." The lead admin, who had publicly claimed to be an ally for diversity, proceeded to scream, along with their associate: "You are accusing us of discrimination. How would we know the sexual identity of the people? If they sue us, they will sue you too." The lead administrator proceeded to withdraw support from a major project that would have benefited the over 450 majors in the department, and refused to speak to me for the rest of the year. The cases eventually were resolved in the faculty's favor, thanks to union action. For other reasons this person was removed from their position.

I'M JUST SAYING.

A different White male lead administrator called me into his office to tell me that my testimony at a grievance hearing regarding a racial/religious discrimination case against a Muslim American faculty member had made the university lose the case and had cost it "a lot of money." "I was obligated to tell the truth," I replied. He said: "I'm just saying."

YOU SHAME US.

Early on, members of an all-white department ostracized me for speaking out against their unanimous vote for a white female candidate with a thin resume who didn't meet the qualifications, when the Chinese-American male candidate had been highly qualified. Note that at the time the university was experiencing an influx of Asian-American students and the faculty was 95% White. Both candidates interviewed well, but the white female was a personal friend of, and was being hosted at the home of, one of the faculty on the search committee. A clear violation of hiring protocols! One faculty member called me a "race traitor" and said I was "shaming them." Another said he was "multiculturally weary" and another threw crumpled paper at me saying I should move on to "other issues." The administration at the time was "not concerned with the perceived protocol violation." Dr. Jones set me straight long ago when I started to feel sorry for myself: *"This is just the first notch on your belt. Be proud of it. You are here to comfort the troubled and trouble the comfortable. So get a grip and keep on keeping on."*

Warnings, threats, and bullying by other White, mostly heterosexual males were sometimes overt but mostly passive-aggressive and insistent. I knew that the total severity I received was miniscule compared to what people of color and LGBTQ advocates experience.

KEEP ON KEEPING ON ~ OFFERINGS.

For Whites who are or want to be footsoldiers for social justice advocacy in multi-identified coalitions:

1. It's personal; do your own work; get help.
   - Do psychological work, e.g., counseling, implicit biases, and unlearning trainings.
   - Practice perspective-taking.
   - Study, research, watch films, and read fiction and nonfiction by and about others.
   - Make social justice advocacy work your work: grants, research, writing, teaching.
   - Engage in your personal contemplative/spiritual practices.
   - Keep your heart open, your body strong, and your mind agile.
2. Be in diverse settings.
   - Physically, personally, professionally, creatively, in entertainment, on social media—make sure you are in multi-identified environments.

- Who's involved, on campus or in the community, with social justice issues? Meet them.
- Show up at events highlighting diversity and social justice issues.
- Practice being comfortable with being uncomfortable.
- Look out for and invite opportunities to co-write, co-present, co-teach, and co-research with others across races, genders, and orientations.

3. Don't be a one-time, one-cause ally.
    - You will earn trust by staying in the struggle, staying honest, and being connected to multi-identified coalitions.
    - If situations get messy and you want to withdraw: remember that being able to "withdraw" is part of unearned White privilege and causes harm. Reflect on what happened and your role in it, and then come back.
    - Trust the collective thinking that happens. Encourage it. Ask what you can do to be of benefit. Listen even if it challenges beliefs. Don't try to lead. Remember: "So, I'll believe in Liberals' aid for us / When I see a white man load a black man's gun" (Angelou, 1994).
    - Speak up and out often. Listen carefully to your colleagues.
    - Use your position, whatever it is, to be a gate opener and supporter of those who are "othered."

4. White colleagues not interested in social justice advocacy work may socially isolate you. That's okay.

NOT NOW.

In 2013, the Communication department had six tenured/tenure-track faculty and 450 majors, most of color, specializing in multimedia journalism, advertising, public relations, and communication studies, and responsible for the university newspaper, video productions, and an advertising agency. At a faculty retreat, I presented a proposal, informally discussed the year before, that we claim an identity: e.g. Communication for Social Justice, or Communication for the Common Good. The White faculty overwhelmingly dismissed the idea. The two faculty of color were willing to engage the idea. No theme was chosen. Disappointing. But glad I tried.

NEXT.

During my final year at the university, I was part of the multi-identified coalitions of faculty who were advocating for a general education core to move from one required course in "Cultural Groups and Women" to two required courses: Multicultural Knowledge and Social Justice Advocacy. The leaders kept us on point, working and dialoguing in person, over wine, and on email to write course descriptions and learning outcomes and to mount communication strategies. It was intense. We thought it

was a no-brainer; after all, the student body and our region were completely diverse in terms of races, genders, orientations, socioeconomic classes, and religions. Black Lives Matter, immigration, LBGTQ equality, and socioeconomic disparity were mounting as the biggest social justice advocacy movements in decades. Of course we knew that students needed the education to understand each other and be fully prepared to advocate for a more just society. However, many academic departments wanted the general education units and initially saw the proposal as zero-sum.

> We believe in fulfillment, some might call it salvation, through struggle. We reject any philosophy that insists on measuring life's success on the achieving of specific goals—overlooking the process of living. More affirmatively and as a matter of faith, we believe that, despite the lack of linear progress, there is satisfaction in the struggle itself. (Bell, 1992)

Professor Bell is right; the satisfaction is in the struggle. It is in giving yourself permission to speak what needs to be said, whether or not it leads to progress; to engage with projects, big or small, just because it feels like the right thing to do, because working with others we respect is a precious gift, because raging and being disappointed together is a balm, because we may be planting seeds, enriching new growth and each other, protecting something valuable from being diluted or destroyed for the moment, sowing one more policy, or just plain practicing to keep on keeping on.

EPILOGUE.

While on a silent meditation retreat in October, after having been unleashed (they call it "retired") the previous June, I received a text from one of the faculty leaders, saying the academic senate had approved the two required general education courses. Every student would take classes in both multicultural knowledge and social justice advocacy. Looking up at soaring red rocky mountains, I whispered, "I am no saint, but oh Lord it is good to be in this number as the struggle keeps marching on."[18]

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18   Writing this essay was both a balm for the *bardo*, that "crawl-out-of-your-skin-but-you-can't" transition place, and an attack of the "so-what-nows." So what if you are grateful that you got to spend your 44-year career doing what brought you alive? With the mass lynchings of people of color on the streets by the police, mass terror is finally coming to light for all to witness. What are you going to do? Every cell in me wants to be of benefit. I'm without the students and the posse of colleagues; where am I supposed to be? There is this sense of being lost again; not dissimilar to the time with the Veterans and Rodney King insurrections. "Certain twisted monsters always bar the path—but that's when you get going best, glad to be lost, learning how real it is here on the earth, again and again" (Stafford). I will study and live the question posed by so many right now: how can we contribute to the unraveling of "the massive entanglement that white supremacy is in every aspect of how we think, feel, dream, and act toward ourselves and others based on our perception of their place in the social order" (williams, Owens, & Syedullah, 2016)?

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Gale Young, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus in Communication (California State University, East Bay), continues to study, teach, write, coach, and mentor in intercultural, interracial, and interpersonal relationships. Young became a white foot solider over the course of 44 years teaching and co-leading system and university-wide projects, initiatives, and committees, and co-writing over two dozen peer-reviewed articles and 3 books. Young privileges collaboration and being part of multi-identified coalitions committed to higher education, becoming less racist, sexist, homophobic, binary, and more multicultural, diverse, equitable and inclusive in curriculum, pedagogy, policy and procedures. Her focus is race and difficult dialogues across differences that divide. Young credits any merit she accumulates to her fierce mentors, colleagues of color, the LGBTQ community, and most of all to the over 12,000 students representing great diversity in her classes, who taught each other and her about their lived experiences, by sharing their insights and fearless honesty. Young is also a teacher in the Shambhala Buddhist tradition.

"TRANSFORMATIVE MOVEMENTS RECOGNIZE THAT WE ARE CONNECTED AS WHOLE PEOPLE AND WHOLE COMMUNITIES. BECAUSE OUR ISSUES AND PROBLEMS ARE SYSTEMIC AND INTERCONNECTED, OUR SOLUTIONS AND MOVEMENTS MUST BE AS WELL."
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The Practices of Transformative Movements

Movement Strategy Center
Oakland, CA

May 2016[1]

THE PRACTICES OF TRANSFORMATIVE MOVEMENTS

Now is a time of great transition and change. Around the globe we see unprecedented climate disruption and upheaval across economic, political, and cultural systems. We see people — entire populations — facing this great, unknowable landscape and seeking paths to a future they can believe in.

In this time we also feel a calling, an invitation, a possibility, beyond what we can presently see, and we see this calling reflected across the powerful movements emerging now.

Now is a time of risk and danger, but also a time of opportunity: a chance to transform our local and global communities. We have the capacity to answer this call. We have the capacity to bring forth a future that is kicking to be born. We have the capacity to be the future we long for, to be the power and strength of our vision, our purpose, and our relationships.

Our movements are calling on us to make a courageous commitment to love. Our movements are demanding that we recognize the ways in which we've become numb, silent, complacent, or complicit in accepting the unacceptable. Our movements are calling on us to our mutual vulnerability and undeniable interdependence. Our movements want more than access to the powers that be, they want to generate new forms of power.

This is the calling Movement Strategy Center seeks to nurture and amplify. Movement Strategy Center cultivates changemakers: people who dare to rise to the challenges facing humanity. People who see the potential for transformation and are working to make it real. People who understand the present moment and are poised to make change as leaders of powerful movements. This lies at the core of MSC's purpose: to nurture whole people and whole communities to transition from a world of domination and extraction to a world of regeneration, resilience, and interdependence.

Leading with bold vision and purpose, movement builders are moving beyond the question of "What do we need to do?" to ask, "Who do we need to be and what do we need to embody together to bring forth the transformation we seek?"

In this way, our movements are learning the art of time travel: starting by visioning the future we want, we are accelerating change by embodying and manifesting the values we seek in the world, right here and right now. We are not just asking people to believe another world is possible, we are inviting all of us to to generate and experience a new world through transformative practice and strategy.

Transformative movements recognize that we are connected as whole people and whole communities. Because our issues and problems are systemic and interconnected, our solutions and movements must be as well. The challenges we face swell from a deep reservoir of historical and social forces. Our approach must match the depth of the challenge with a depth of practice and strategy. We must meet depth with depth.

A NEW WAY: FOUR ELEMENTS OF TRANSFORMATIVE MOVEMENTS

A vibrant network of leaders is rising up to embrace the unknown with courage, love and innovation. The emergence of these leaders represents a new theory and practice of social transformation.

Like many kindred movement makers, Movement Strategy Center believes incremental change strategies are increasingly inadequate in the face of rapidly accelerating climate disruption and growing inequality. Incremental change strategies cannot keep pace. Because the scale and nature of the problems we face are exponential, our change strategies need to be exponential as well. We need transformative strategies to generate exponential change.

But how do we accomplish this? How do we achieve transformation – the exponential shift of reality? Movement Strategy Center defines four elements at the core of transformative movement building: leading with audacious vision and bold purpose; deeply embodying the values at the heart of the vision; building radical and deep community around the vision; and using all of that – vision, embodiment, and connection – to strategically navigate toward the future.

1. LEADING WITH AUDACIOUS VISION & BOLD PURPOSE.

When the Movement Strategy Center started our work, we encountered change efforts that were isolated, fragmented, and often unaligned. We learned to ask questions to help develop a broader vision. What are we fighting for? How are our various efforts related? What are the deeper structures underlying the problems we're working on? Who else shares our affinity and purpose? What visions and purposes do we share?

Transformative movement builders are guided by a vision that is audacious and bold enough to unite diverse movements in building the world we actually need. This vision is not utopic, not a blind yearning for the impossible. Nor is it nostalgic, harkening back to something that never existed. Transformative movement builders imagine the path forward to possible futures we cannot yet see. We lead others to share in this vision and contribute to a larger purpose. Our dreams are rooted in the wisdom of the past, with awareness of the present, and hope for the future.

2. DEEP EMBODIMENT.

Believing another world is possible is different from *practicing* another world in our daily lives. Transformative movement builders step into the future, *generating and experiencing* a new world here and now by practicing and embodying a new set of values. Transformative movement builders recognize that patterns of injustice are maintained through repeated day-to-day actions. Taking on injustice requires conscious practices that create new forms of culture and new modes of relating to ourselves and each other. These practices emphasize mutual interdependence and care between individuals and groups, communities, and the planet. Beyond working *against* injustice, transformative movement builders work *for* liberation. We must do this by developing creative, innovative practices of liberation, from the micro to the macro levels. We must commit to cultivating new ways of being, defined by joy, humor, and humility; we must step into the fullness of our responsibility to ourselves and each other, with love. We must recognize that the secret is to *be the future now.*

3. RADICAL CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY.

Transformative movements recognize that everything gets done through relationships and nothing gets done without them. This fundamental truth reflects an ecosystem approach that is based in interdependence and interconnectedness. Movements are about people and cultures, our relationships to each other and to the planet. Bringing movements into alignment with each other is not about making others fall into line, or replacing one vision with another. It is about cultivating a bigger sense of "movement," recognizing and acting on connections that already exist. It is about

co-creating a story of the future and inviting others to engage in advancing it. It is about resonating and connecting with one another. It is about healing and generating new life-affirming possibilities together. Through deep listening, breakthrough conversations, and the cultivation of radical connections, movements can make leaps that were previously unthinkable.

4. STRATEGIC NAVIGATION.

With audacious vision, deep embodiment, and radical connection, transformative movement builders can strategically adapt to and navigate rapidly changing environments. Strategic navigation requires new forms of leadership that transcend traditional modes of domination. From whatever position we hold, transformative movement builders must be leaders for the whole, bringing people together with a bigger purpose in mind. We must cultivate a thorough understanding of systems and forces in motion – the general operating conditions of our movements – and forge paths that get us where we need to go. Transformative movement builders foster collaborative action that is nonlinear, synergistic, and highly networked, finding multiple paths that are strategically differentiated but headed to the same mountain top. They have an understanding of the physics of movement building – kinetic and potential energy, resonance, critical mass, exponential scaling. They align different approaches into collective strategies that leverage everyone's strengths. This is what allows transformative movements to make big leaps towards a new society, even as they dismantle old systems that no longer serve us. From a position of collective power, strategic navigation guides us toward an emergent future.

CONCLUSION: PRACTICING THE FUTURE NOW

Transformational movements connect us with ourselves, each other, and with the whole – the whole of our communities, the whole of humanity. Transformational movements affect all levels of our experience: the way we think, our structures and systems, the way we live, and even who we are.

Through the practices of leading with vision, deep embodiment, radical connection, and strategic navigation, movement makers transform ourselves, our movements, our strategies, our relationships and our world. We can identify the unconscious habits and patterns of behavior that limit our communities' ability to recognize our full power and potential. And, we can develop new practices and strategies to do what was previously impossible. Together we can transition from a world where the few live at the expense of the many, to a world where the many govern for the benefit of all. As many movements are saying, we need all of us to change everything.

THE PRACTICE OF TRANSFORMATIVE MOVEMENTS – MAY 2016

ABOUT MOVEMENT STRATEGY CENTER

MSC is dedicated to transformative movement building: helping individuals, organizations, and alliances build their capacity to be strategic, collaborative, and sustainable. MSC works with over 300 partner grassroots organizations, alliances, and networks that operate at local, regional, and national levels. MSC works across sectors and within sectors. MSC supports local alliances that bring people in one place together across issues and constituencies, and supports national alliances that unite groups working on common issues.

THE TRANSITIONS COMMUNITY & INITIATIVE

The purpose of MSC's Transitions Initiative is: to nurture whole people and whole communities to transition from a world of domination and extraction to a world of regeneration, resilience, and interdependence.

The Transitions Community is a growing network of people deepening the practices of love, care and community that will bring about the great transition from a world of domination and extraction to a world organized around resilience, regeneration and interdependence.

The Transitions Initiative deepens the practices of community through sharpening individual and collective shared purpose and vision, building and deepening relationships, identifying and embodying the qualities we need to cultivate transition, and generating the pivots, leaps, and strategies needed to transform our world.

MSC's Transitions Labs are spaces where the Transitions Community brings forth transformative capacities, relationships, and strategies for exponential impact. The Transitions Labs till the fertile

soil that, if cared for with love, will nurture the seeds and sprouts of a hopeful future to take root, grow, evolve, and spread. MSC's Transitions Labs ground people in their purpose, inspire them to believe in their vision, and offer them space to practice navigating toward an achievable horizon of Transformation.

A SHORT VIDEO ON THE 4 PRACTICES

For another glimpse of the ideas and practices outlined here you can see a short video from a dialogue at the Ford Foundation on Movement Building: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ye00U-GYF5QI.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Movement Strategy Center (MSC; Oakland, CA) is dedicated to transformative movement building: helping individuals, organizations, and alliances build their capacity to be strategic, collaborative, and sustainable. MSC works with over 300 partner grassroots organizations, alliances, and networks that operate at local, regional, and national levels. MSC works across sectors and within sectors. MSC supports local alliances that bring people in one place together across issues and constituencies, and supports national alliances that unite groups working on common issues. MSC's *Transitions Community* is a growing network of people deepening the practices of love, care and community that will bring about the great transition from a world of domination and extraction to a world organized around resilience, regeneration and interdependence. The Transitions Initiative deepens the practices of community through sharpening individual and collective shared purpose and vision, building and deepening relationships, identifying and embodying the qualities we need to cultivate transition, and generating the pivots, leaps, and strategies needed to transform our world. http://movementstrategy.org

What Are the Practices of Transformative Movements That Generate Connection, Community, & Transformational Resilience?

Strategic Navigation is the capacity to generate collective direction and action in complexity and uncertainty. Strategic Navigation becomes possible when we have audacious vision & commitment, deep embodiment, and radical connection.

Audacious Vision & Commitment	Embodiment: Whole Person / Proactive Stance	Radical Connection	Strategic Navigation
Transition practice recognizes that the future can guide us and that we are not constrained to the present or the past. Q: *What do we want and how deeply do we want it?*	**Transition practice recognizes that *embodiment* is crucial to ensure that we have access to all the capacities we need.** Q: *Who do we need to be to bring about the world we want and need? What do we need to consciously practice to be the people who reflect the vision?*	**Transition practice recognizes that everything gets done through relationships and nothing gets done without them.** Q: *How are we connected? How do we honor our connections? What is the "We"?*	**Commitment to practice & action! The three foundational transition practices make strategic navigation possible.** Q: *How do we make choices that bring our whole selves, whole communities forward within changing and unpredictable conditions?*
Vision & Commitment Practices: • Core purpose • Wholeness • Courageous responsibility • Possibility • Future narrative • The long view	**Embodiment Practices:** • Broad awareness • Proactive stance • Generate and move energy • Agility • Rhythm • Relational Power • Creativity and play • Interrupting habits and redirecting towards a path forward	**Relationship Practices:** • Margins to Center: Recognizing and reversing exclusion, isolation, and marginalization. • Radical connection and Love • Build the "Bigger We" and move with those who are ready (small teams) • Recognition of interdependence • Recognition of / making space to heal from harm	**Navigation Practices:** • Many Paths up the Mountain • Big Leaps • Networked Action • Setting & re-setting; learning as we go and adapting as we learn • Decisiveness • Stories of navigation • Leadership for the whole • Translating values into technical implementation

"It is difficult to continually expand the landscape of the heart so that tenderness to all sufferers begins to suffuse it. In the face of harmful or humiliating treatment, the heart wants to assert its anger and perhaps even its hatred. Marguerite Porete and Fannie Lou Hamer show us the fuller range of which the heart is capable."
- Wendy Farley

"Serving the Spirit of Goodness": Contemplation, Gender, and Race

Wendy Farley
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The recent more public and secular rediscovery of contemplative practices has tended to associate them with private, interior practices directed toward personal transformations for a sense of tranquility and pain relief. Increasing impatience with mainstream religious traditions also makes meditation a more available form of spirituality for some people. The interest scientists have begun to take in contemplative practice opens exploration beyond the bounds of monastic or generally religious symbolism, contributing to their wider availability. Medical settings increasingly recognize the power of meditation techniques to relieve stress and pain. Schools have discovered the power of simple mindfulness techniques to improve both academic achievement and social emotional intelligence. This expansion of contemplative practices into secular domains can only be applauded. But through this secularization, meditation and contemplation can be somewhat artificially removed from their relationship to compassion and justice, a removal that also tends to concentrate their analysis in the direction of monastic or white experience.

Focus on individual and individualistic practices occludes the organic integration between contemplation and ethics (especially love and compassion) that emerges within religious traditions, not least the practices of Christian women. The emphasis on techniques for pacifying negative emotions, especially stress, also obscures the spiritual practices that emerge from the black church tradition and the passion for justice that can be found there. Many forces contribute to the effective erasure of issues of race and justice from the study of contemplative and spiritual practices. But restoring attention to ethical and justice-oriented elements of spiritual practice will expand their significance in contemporary society and allow us to honor a wider range of contributions to the human adventure.

This paper highlights two figures, Marguerite Porete and Fannie Lou Hamer, to bring to our attention practices in which contemplation, pacifying fear and hostility, and a radical and courageous commitment to compassion and justice inflected the very heart of spirituality. I will conclude with a reflection on how these models might enrich our contemporary understanding of spiritual practice.

PATTERNS OF OCCLUSION

In the modern period, meditation and contemplation tend to be viewed as individualistic or even "navel gazing." Both Catholic and Protestant traditions have been deeply influenced by modern epistemologies and anthropologies which focus on cognition and thus belief, which further marginalizes contemplation from mainstream religious practice.

Scientists who study contemplative practices may inadvertently advance this view as they naturally focus on those elements that are most suited to the laboratory: the changes in the brain, measured levels of stress, and so on that occur as individuals engage particular meditation practices. Scientists have tended to find the study of forms of meditation rooted in Buddhism more congenial, but primarily when these have been isolated from their religious context. Particular study of the meditation of Buddhist monks can surface distinctive ways the brain works ("the brain on meditation") but the broader context of Buddhist worldview and complementary practices must be ignored in a laboratory, dismissed as irrelevant.

A number of Buddhists have translated meditation practices into secular forms so that their benefits can be experienced by a broader population.[1] The investigations of scientists have gone far to reintroduce meditation into the popular imagination and support ancient claims of its benefits. By emphasizing secularized forms of meditation, they also, at least implicitly, contribute to a more general awareness of meditation practices beyond religious settings. But this broadening of awareness, made possible by isolating particular meditation practices from their larger symbolic context, contributes to a sense that meditation has little organic relationship to ethical postures, though the more recent attention to compassion meditation may provide a partial corrective.

The study of meditation privileges those techniques that were developed in monastic settings. These settings in both Buddhism and Christianity are an inexhaustible source of wisdom and insight. For both Christianity and Buddhism, love and compassion are central to the ideals of liberation, but meditation practices have often remained the purview of religious experts, often male, in enclosed monasteries. This focus virtually eliminates attention to the spiritual practices of women and people of color and the intimate relationship between spirituality and social justice that can arise in these communities.

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1   Mindfulness, developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, may be the initial example of this secularized meditation. Cognitively Based Compassion Training (CBCT) was developed by Emory professor and former Tibetan monk Dr. Lobsang Negi (https://tibet.emory.edu/cognitively-based-compassion-training/index.html). Lama and Boston College professor Dr. John Makransky developed another form of compassion meditation based on Tibetan practices, and with Dr. Brooke Lavelle he has developed a broad array of teachings and online support to develop these practices (http://foundationforactivecompassion.com).

THEOLOGY OF CONTEMPLATION

A population struggling with the vital concerns of chronic and often extreme stress, experiences of unworthiness and self-blame, and an ever-receding horizon of urgent obligations craves psychic relief. Meditation promises to provide this relief, especially as a method of stress and pain reduction. This more individually-focused impulse is entirely legitimate but tends to obscure the synergy in traditional contemplative practice that unites interiority and compassionate action. Without suggesting that the beliefs of cultic communities are appropriate for secular settings, I will highlight the relationship of contemplative practices to a worldview in which compassion, love, and justice are central to spiritual and contemplative attainments.

Within European contemplative as well as African-American activist spirituality, there tends to be a strong focus on the radical goodness of divine reality, which has the quality of unconditional love for creation. Spirituality represents a desire to connect more deeply and intimately with this goodness and to radiate it to the human world in ever-widening acts of compassion and justice. Religious practices enable individuals and communities to participate in this goodness through meditation and prayer and to experience the transformation of egocentrism into universal love.

These forms of Christian spirituality reveal the heart of the world to be one of tender mercy and a yearning for the justice that will protect the more vulnerable from the predations of the powerful. This commitment to love, compassion, and justice takes different forms in varying historical and cultural contexts: a resistance to patriarchal church authority, a reimagining of the nature of divine goodness and thus the social hierarchies that embody oppression, drawing liberation into the brutalities of slavery and American racism.

As we will see, the focus on divine love and justice has deep historical roots, beginning with the liberation of Hebrew slaves and exodus from Egypt which became the decisive story that revealed the character of divine reality. The Hebrew prophets continued this theme with their strong criticism of religious rites that ignored the poor or socially vulnerable ("the widow, orphan, and stranger"). Radical compassion for the oppressed and poor remains the leitmotif of the gospels and epistles of the New Testament.

THE BEGUINES: SPIRITUALITY OF LADY LOVE

This biblical emphasis on love and justice as the signs of divine reality is not always evident in the institutional church, but movements throughout Christian history turn back to this biblical root. One example is the life and teaching of a medieval beguine, Marguerite Porete, a great teacher and Christian contemplative. The beguines were a movement of laywomen who sought to combine active compassion and profound contemplation. They used a variety of images for divine reality including the metaphor of a divine Beloved or, perhaps more often, a divine Lady Love. Beguines

often acted as informal social workers in their towns, as well as teachers and experts in the arts of contemplation. For Marguerite, the perfection of the love commandment was necessary to begin a contemplative path. This commandment was interpreted by her to mean that one could no longer imagine or wish harm to another being. One must "neither do, nor think, nor speak toward our neighbors anything we would not wish they do toward us. These commandments are necessary for the salvation of everyone: a lesser life cannot have grace" (Porete, 1993, ch. 3). But this radical love required an "annihilation" of the fears and desires that tyrannize the psyche. "Such a soul neither desires nor despises poverty or tribulation, neither mass nor sermon, neither fasting nor prayer and gives to nature all that is necessary without remorse of conscience, but such a soul is so well ordered by transformation in unity with Love to which the will of this Soul is conjoined, that nature demands nothing which would be forbidden" (ch. 9).

Only when these fears and desires are overcome does the soul rest in perfect intimacy with the divine love and act out of that love rather than out of egocentric concerns. Porete (1993) counseled her followers to "obey no created thing except [Lady] Love" (p. 4). But this obedience can be deadly. Marguerite felt compelled to teach this way of love and freedom: "I certainly cannot be silent in order to save the whole world" (p. 31). To teach, preach, write, and practice a divine love that is not entirely dependent upon human institutions and not propelled by the threat of hell is to invite Christians into a world quite different from one of patriarchal power and the casual injustices of church and state. Far from being a private, interior peacefulness, it is a call to act in the world with courage because it challenges the fundamentals of both religious and secular authority. Contemplative theology is political theology. An insistence on universal love and compassion is an assault on power. These challenges were not ignored. Marguerite was burned at the stake as a relapsed heretic on June 1, 1310.

PRAYER, MUSIC, AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM: FANNIE LOU HAMER

Fannie Lou Hamer is another woman of great courage and vision whose life wove prayer and song into a relentless commitment to justice for African Americans. For her, the civil rights movement was a direct response to the call of a justice-loving divine reality.

Ms. Hamer is one of the great lights of the civil rights movement. A sharecropper and daughter of sharecroppers in Mississippi, she was one of the early advocates for the right to vote. The conditions of her life—poverty, lack of formal education (black children had only four months of schooling a year, and she was permitted to go for only six years), white terrorism, beatings, and jail—might seem a scant environment for spiritual vision. Like many other black women, she was deeply formed by her own mother, whose ferocious courage on behalf of her children was filtered through a life of fervent prayer. This prayer was not that of secluded monasticism, but one that occurred in the con-

text of relentless toil and racist harassment. Neither was it prayer directed toward the perfectibility of the soul or personal union with the divine. She prayed that she and her children would live. This prayer reflected Lou Ella Townsend's vision of her own and her children's identity as beloved children of God, which allowed her to face down the brutalities of white overseers: "People would say she was crazy because she didn't allow no white man to beat her kids" (as quoted in Ross, 2003, p. 94).

The dignity conveyed to her by her mother's teaching and example, prepared Ms. Hamer to be receptive to the sermon at the Williams Chapel Missionary Baptist Church promoting participation in the voter registration drive. For those who identify the Bible primarily as a tool of oppression or ignorance, it should be emphasized that in the hands of many black Christians, it was and is a book of liberation. The Hebrew prophets recognized justice as the primary expression of devotion to divine reality: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). In the New Testament, the appearance of the Messiah (Jesus) is identified with this power and desire for justice. A pregnant Mary sings of God as one who has regard for her low estate and "has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away" (Luke 1:52-53). Jesus inaugurates his ministry by reading from the prophet Isaiah: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18). White Southern Christianity may have focused on the obedience of slaves to their masters, but the civil rights movement was inspired in part by the magnificent vision of liberation that runs through the Jewish and Christian scriptures.

A mother's deep piety and courage and a biblical vision of dignity for the poor and oppressed conspired to call Ms. Hamer into the civil rights movement. Her inauguration into this movement almost immediately coincided with her inauguration into the brutality with which it was resisted. After attempting to register to vote, she was arrested and here, too, her religious formation came to the fore. In the face of police terror, she began singing: "Have a Little Talk with Jesus," "This Little Light of Mine," "Down by the Riverside" (Ross, 2003, p. 100). Song proved a powerful spiritual practice throughout her work, but it did not spare her from violence. In jail cells, after crippling beatings, she again led prisoners in song—"When Paul and Silas Were Bound in Jail"—as well as repeating Bible verses "to help keep others and herself calm." (ibid. 106).[2]

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2   James H. Cone (2011) is another author who emphasizes the role of song in the spirituality and justice-seeking of African American Christians. See, for example, the chapter "Nobody Knows the Trouble I Seen" (pp. 1-29).

The depth of Ms. Hamer's spiritual vision is evident not only in her ability to recognize the civil rights movement as one of the "signs of the times" (Ross, 2003, p. 99) but also in the universality of her vision for justice:

> My whole fight is for the liberation of all people because no man is an island to himself; when a white child is dying, is being shot, there's a little bit of America being destroyed. When it's a Black child shot in America, it's a little bit of America being destroyed …We have to try to see to it that not only the lives of you and adult Blacks are saved in this country but also the whites. (as quoted in Ross, 2003, p. 117)

Throughout her life she continued to focus on issues of hunger and economic development, identifying her work as rooted in "her identity as a Christian, which was formed, as she said, by being 'brought up in the church from an early age' and being 'taught to love'" (Ross, 2003, p. 117).

CONTEMPLATION, RACE, AND JUSTICE

These two figures and the movements they represent were formed by a wide set of practices: song, biblical study, prayer, response to dangerous situations, teaching, and participation in community. Beyond the more discrete techniques of meditation, this synergy contributed to the pacification of what might have been overwhelming emotions of fear, anger, and hostility in the face of bodily harm and even death. These practices also gave birth to an ability to transmute experiences of persecution into a love for all humanity, including those who committed violence.

We might think of contemplative practices as a way of working with negative emotions, helping to create a spaciousness in which fear, anger, overwhelming yearning, or grief are denied their tyrannous hold. Children can be empowered by relatively simple techniques to identify emotions and gain distance before responding inappropriately. Those in pain can diminish the hold of the body's anguish on their physical and psychological self. The emotionally paralyzed can wake up to the beauty and wonder of the world. But it is difficult to continually expand the landscape of the heart so that tenderness to all sufferers begins to suffuse it. In the face of harmful or humiliating treatment, the heart wants to assert its anger and perhaps even its hatred. Marguerite Porete and Fannie Lou Hamer show us the fuller range of which the heart is capable.

Both women remind us of the ever-expanding power of the heart to remain peaceful in difficulty and to wish well to every being. The depth of courage and goodness that these women embodied did not arise only from isolated meditation techniques but from a comprehensive orientation to the spirit of goodness. This spirit was made available to them in part through the symbols and communities of particular religious traditions. Secular students of contemplative practices might become more curious about the wisdom these traditions sometimes possess. Without participating in a religious community, they might discover more about contemplation by making friends with some of

the great mothers, sisters, and brothers whose compassion and courageous justice were nourished by their trust in a sense of ultimate goodness as well as by their spiritual practices.

Louise Erdrich (2009) describes her fictional incognito saint, Agnes deWitt/Father Damien, as a priest who ministers to the Ojibwe people without any expectation that they convert to Christianity. His/her mission is simply to serve "the spirit of goodness wherever it might evidence itself" (p. 276). Perhaps, like Father Damien, those interested in studying and teaching contemplative practices in a variety of settings might learn something from the wisdom of African-American and other spiritual traditions. In imitation of them, may we learn not to hate enemies or despise the vulnerable. May we refuse despair and burn with ever more radiant, compassionate, justice-loving joy.

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Wendy Farley is a Professor of Christian Spirituality and Director of the Program in Christian Spirituality at San Francisco Theological Seminary. She is considered a leading theologian and has written extensively on women theologians and mystics, religious dialogue, classical texts, contemporary ethical issues, and contemplative practices. Her first book, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy* (Westminster John Knox, 1990) considers the problem of evil by focusing on suffering rather than sin and abandons the forensic model of God in favor of one emphasizing compassion as a dominant metaphor for the divine. One of her most recent books, *Gathering Those Driven Away: a Theology of Incarnation* (Westminster John Knox, 2011), reflects on the meaning of Christian faith and tradition for women, queers, and others that the church has had difficulty recognizing as part of the body of Christ. Professor Farley received her Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University and was an Emory University faculty member since 1988.

"WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE WHEN WE BUILD A LIFE THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH OUR BELIEFS, VALUES, AND WORLDVIEW?"
- PATRICIA ST. ONGE & WILSON RILES

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NAFSI YA JAMII:
An Urban Retreat Center Story

Patricia St. Onge & Wilson Riles
Seven Generations Consulting

BACKGROUND

Nafsi ya Jamii is a creation of Wilson Riles, Patricia St. Onge, and their family and colleagues. The concept emerged in 2011 out of more than 60 collective years of study and practice of personal relationship development, movement organizing, political involvement, nonprofit management, spiritual growth, and love of community. Using the Highlander Research and Education Center[1] (http://highlandercenter.org) in Tennessee as a blueprint, we created an urban retreat center in Oakland, California, that provides physical space where individuals, neighborhood organizations, nonprofits, and socially-conscious for-profits can more easily learn, share, and practice community healing and building. Partakers of the space may simply experience it in their own way, or they may contract with Seven Generations Consulting (http://www.seven-generations.org), our family consulting practice, for a more planned experience.

Nafsi ya Jamii concretizes the recognition that healthy communities, families, and individuals arise best out of a social matrix that positively harmonizes and unifies the physical, spiritual, and relational nature of human beings and fosters a deeper awareness of our location within the ecosystem of all Creation. Cultures are containers for learned collective wisdom and survival strategies. At their most rooted, they foster positive individual identity, collaboration, mutual concern and respect, and a sense of belonging. Modern and particularly urban cultural mixes have shown an additional capacity to destabilize and to cause conflict. Whether the negative aspects of urban culture derive from truncated, forgotten traditional values and lifeways, or the undue influences of rapacious capitalism and hyper-individualism, their impact is impossible to deny. Understanding deep culture[2] and the ability to look at social psychological problem-solving from a perspective of cultural location makes a huge difference in achieving urban harmony. Too few urban dwellers recognize their own cultural identities, and too many misread that of others.

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1 1959 Highlander Way, New Market, TN 37820

2 Here we use the St. Onge et al. (2009) definition of deep culture: those elements of culture that are often held "below the surface" of our conscious awareness.

We recognize the need for active learning, sharing, and practicing of ancient principles and cultural formations in a 21st-century context and in a manner that is open to the teachings of the present environment. Nafsi ya Jamii is a place where we do just this. It has its own natural powers and transcendental connections to land, plants, and animals, including the human variety. Seven Generations Consulting is held and nurtured by Nafsi ya Jamii, and it also functions as a focused set of cultural practices that may directly engage individuals and groups in a more structured and verbal manner.

In Oakland, there are over 500 nonprofits, many with small budgets, that are doing really amazing work. Oakland has a long history of seeding movements and providing care for our neighbors who are suffering. From direct service to advocacy to being at the forefront of movements for social change, Oakland communities have long been engaged in peacemaking, racial justice, economic justice, environmental justice, educational justice, and the abolition of the prison-industrial complex. Oakland is also blessed with hundreds of neighborhood organizations struggling to make a difference in a community with one of the most diverse cultural mixes in not only California but the United States. In many of these organizations, we have found:

- high rates of staff and volunteer burnout;
- conflicts between mission and practices;
- frequent misreading of emotional cues and inability to accommodate different work and leadership styles; and
- organizational resistance to adapting to new constituencies, new workers, and changed circumstances.

Already, limited resources—in both real capital and social capital—are squandered, and positive intent goes by the wayside. Most organizations do not have the resources to afford workshops and renewal time at retreat centers that are hundreds of miles away from the urban core. And learning from these distant retreats is quickly lost and seldom reinforced when retreaters return to the day-to-day working world.

What we provide is a vibrant, environmentally sustainable, multiculturally celebratory local space where community groups and nonprofits can come for a meeting, conduct a workshop or retreat, or get some well-needed rest and revitalization. Restorative tools; physically invigorating movement opportunities; healing activities such as arts, crafts, and gardening; culturally sensitive ceremonies; and ongoing learning circles and networks are available to boost community harmonization. Nafsi ya Jamii means "soul community" in Swahili; we are building the Soul Community in Oakland.

Our mission is to shift perspectives and change how things are done through restoring and practicing successful, traditional, indigenous ways in a 21st-century urban context that respects place and avoids misappropriation.

We have a vision for rapid community evolution! Nafsi ya Jamii is a place where all can reimagine themselves, their community, and the world and actuate change. It is an urban retreat center that is self-contained, sustainable, and a lot of fun.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

Systems researchers of all persuasions (scientific, philosophical, and religious) are finding that many of the most powerful changes in nature result from the actions of *networks*. Human change is sustained and grows through our engagement with the multi-level networks of cultures. Culture expands from the past into the present and into the future. It also expands through adoption in the present as it is shared with others. Nafsi ya Jamii is a place where organizations and individuals can find "space" for engaging deeply with culture. It is a place for respite, reflection, collective analysis, and healing. What is gathered, learned, and practiced at Nafsi ya Jamii is shared through the uncountably many contacts and networks with which participants are linked. Our strategy is to thoughtfully and carefully tap into the dynamic, powerful "butterfly" energy of cultural transmission to grow and bring about a rapid evolutionary "storm" and heal our now broken, conflicting cultural circumstances—locally and beyond.

KEY STRATEGIES

1. Honor the importance of place and culture in personal, organizational, and community development.

Our first strategy is based on a recognition of the imbalance that has arisen in modern urban culture between the status of a specific place—its natural environment, its history, its character, and the people and families that have put down roots—and the rootless and homogenized nature of an urban culture that takes little account of "place." What has been characterized as "normal" (Western, middle-class, individually-focused, and "market-driven") no longer "fits" or helps very many people at all. This first strategy assists participants in better understanding and appreciating their cultural identity and celebrates cultural diversity. We believe that through this strategy the deepest levels of human and planetary unity will be achieved, without denying the beauty and lessons of place-based practices.

2. Practice a holistic approach, through a healing lens.

Our second strategy recognizes that organizations and individuals function on multiple levels—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and relational. We work from an understanding that the harmonizing of these levels provides the most likely opportunity for profound understanding, deep healing, and sustainable change. Our Center provides diverse and multimodal opportunities for engagement and reimagination based on successful traditional processes and well-tested modern social psychological processes that are sensitive to cultural differences.

3. Honor the power of story and learning in community.

Network power derives from open information flow and exchanges. The harmonization of those exchanges as they sweep in waves across a network is what creates momentum for change. Our third strategy involves the maintenance and evolution of existing connections, the reengagement with and reconsideration of traditional practices, and the building and development of new contacts and new links with new networks. Broad, deep, diverse communication is a critical aspect of Nafsi ya Jamii. Our third strategy concentrates on improving all of our capacities to fully participate in such "conversations" through the use of storytelling and learning circles.

OUR PROCESS

Through a series of serendipitous events,[3] we were able to put three properties together, creating a one-acre space that is hidden behind three neighboring houses in a very typical neighborhood in East Oakland where we live. The properties are contiguous and are owned by members of our family. The rear portions of all three (which are not visible from the street) are being developed to achieve maximal environmental resiliency and sustainability. Later phases of the project will entail the creation of a trust to own and unify the three properties, erasing the internal property boundaries.

Using our Native and African-American spiritual heritage, values, and practices; certified permaculture knowledge; and successful modern techniques and technologies, the dynamic path to the resiliency and sustainability of this project takes into account the well-being of the land, the water, the animals, and the people. The design's primary goal is not the creation of a commercial enterprise. Sustainability, almost by definition, questions any reliance on exchanges with unreliable "outside" sources, but the concept fully encompasses local tendencies including neighborhood dynamics and municipal laws. Almost all management and administrative activities take place within the nonprofit corporate structure of Nafsi ya Jamii.

"Offering bowls" are placed on the property in the tradition of Franciscan and Buddhist monks. They represent, more than anything else, the well-articulated Buddhist concepts of nonattachment, impermanence, and emptiness. These are concepts intimately entwined with the modern understanding of resiliency and sustainability. They also mirror the deep "sharing" value system of the Ohlone people (the First People on this specific land). Invited users and visitors are asked to give what they can in a spirit of mutual aid, not exchange. In our view, this is the proper orientation to the extraterritorial context in which all is embedded, particularly for a spiritual, values-oriented community. The writing of renowned urban planner Jane Jacobs (1961) speaks brilliantly to the fact that the health of urban

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3   The story of how we got the three properties is long, but if a reader is interested, they can reach us at stonge.patricia@gmail.com to hear more.

communities is enhanced by the related concepts of recognizing and respecting community history, orientation to ecological economics, and opportunities to engage with the natural world.

At Nafsi ya Jamii, there are regularly scheduled events, programs, ceremonies, and celebrations, as well as some irregularly scheduled ones. The capacity of the site and the capacity of the individuals who voluntarily care for and maintain it are central to decisions about what activities are invited and allowed to take place on the properties.

At one time, this area was the site for many orchards and much natural agricultural production. There was also an Ohlone village nearby, most likely on the nearby Mills College campus property. The Ohlone are the group of people who lived here for the longest time, thereby developing a sustainable, harmonious relationship with the land, plants, and animals of that time (Margolin, 1978). As with many Native American tribes, resiliency and sustainability are core to Chechenyo Ohlone beliefs.

CEREMONY AND HEALING

A Native American sweat lodge, within which ceremonies celebrating the family nature of all things are practiced, is centrally placed on the property. The sweat lodge is a religious purification ceremony. It is free to all who participate. As members of the urban Indian community, we partner with other indigenous-led organizations to identify families and community members who consider the sweat lodge a traditional ceremony and need it for their health and well-being. Often this includes support for those struggling with mental, physical, and emotional illnesses. It is also a space for ceremonial thanksgiving and honoring significant life passages, ancestors, and elders. The importance of the sweat lodge and prayer cannot be overstated.

The Nafsi ya Jamii sweat lodge was built according to Arapaho protocols. Our water pourer[4] is a highly experienced leader trained in both the Haudenosaunee (Mohawk) and Arapaho traditions.

Placed near the sweat lodge are four yurts. The first two are Patricia and Wilson's primary residences, the third is for meditation, and the fourth is for visiting elders who come from various reservations to facilitate ceremonies here at Nafsi and around the Bay Area. Once it is finished, it will also be a sabbatical space for activists.

Anyone who has spent time in a mostly-natural round structure becomes aware of the comfort and healing nature of such spaces. They are ideal for meditation and regeneration. The largest yurt (under construction) will also serve as an educational space and a breakout space for gatherings. There is a honeybee hive in the rear of this yurt. The land also contains an array of solar panels that powers the minimal electrical needs of the yurts.

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4   The person who facilitates the sweat ceremony is often called the water pourer. In our lodge, pouring the water is a shared responsibility, in keeping with its lineage teachings. We refer to the person in our community who holds primary responsibility for the care of the lodge and leading of the ceremony as "water pourer."

The open space surrounding the yurts is available for practices such as tai chi. Such bodily practices "speak to" and shape the limbic or reptilian portion of the human brain, out of which arises much contemporary confusion and conflict. The bowing done when entering the yurts, with eyes to the ground and necks exposed, and the kneeling necessary to enter the sacred space of the lodge have a similar effect on the brain and the spirit. The spiritual powers of these humbling movements are recognized by most religions and are part of the design of these structures.

COMMUNITY GATHERINGS

The primary space for gatherings is in a converted garage on the property. There are three vegetable and healing herb gardens and an outdoor sitting space. An early use of the space was as a dispersed orchard. Presently, there are lemon, lime, orange, peach, pineapple, guava, persimmon, apple, and plum trees in the space. There are blackberries and sunflowers as well as edible flowers. The indigenous practice of planting the "three sisters" (corn, beans, and squash) and other companion plants is followed here. These plants, when planted together, act in a symbiotic way to enhance each other. This is the indigenous root of what we now call permaculture. Our swimming machine will be converted to an aquaponics system.

THE FARM

The third element of the retreat center is Full Harvest Farm. Spiritually, this aspect is a recognition of the family relations between all humans, animals, and plants. The project works to maximize not only compatibility but also the integrated biological relations between all beings. It is *together* that maximum sustainability and resiliency are achieved. There is careful harmonizing of the needs and products of the animals, humans, and plants. Animals provide the opportunity for humans to recognize how to live humbly and passionately with our small sparks of consciousness; emotions of fear, anger, and love; and the limited time all beings have in this plane of existence.

There are free-ranging chickens on the farm, nesting in coops and trees. There are also rabbits, dogs, and occasionally a small number of other animal species. We work the farm in ways that do not exceed the capacity of the land to regenerate itself or the capacity of its human caretakers.

CONCLUSION

Nafsi ya Jamii is our attempt to answer a question and address a quote that inspires us. The question, which arises from our many years of work individually and collectively to seek justice and equity, is: "*What does it look like when we build a life that is consistent with our beliefs, values, and worldview?*" The inspiring quote is from Howard Thurman, who said: "Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do that; because the world needs people who have come alive." Nafsi is our shared response to the question of what makes us come alive. Each member of the community can point to the things we're doing here as their response.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Wilson Riles has been an activist, public servant and consultant for over thirty years. A former Oakland City Council (CA) member, Wilson serves as an advisor to leading political figures, governmental agencies, and non-profit organizations developing policy ideas that become part of effective strategic messaging. For ten years, Wilson was also Regional Director of the American Friends Service Committee, an eighty-three year old international non-profit based in the United States which gives contemporary meaning to Quaker principles. He is a regular course lecturer on "The History of Race" at universities in the San Francisco Bay Area. Regarded as an authority on local currency, Wilson is known for developing community-driven campaigns to engage local city and county governments, even in the most challenging circumstances, who partner with their local nonprofit sector to create sustainable community development alternatives. He is active in many civic and community organizations including the San Francisco Zen Center, the Northern California Coalition for Immigrant Rights, and FONKOZE (a Haitian micro-loan program). He is a graduate of Stanford University with a BA in Psychology and a minor in Mathematics, and engaged in graduate work at the University of California at Berkeley in Educational Psychology and Child Development.

Patricia St. Onge is the founder of Seven Generations Consulting and brings over twenty years of experience leading and working with nonprofit and public sector agencies. She provides training, consulting and technical assistance in the areas of community organizing, social justice advocacy, organizational development, cross-cultural effectiveness, consensus building, spiritual & personal coaching. Patricia serves on the board of directors for Common Counsel Foundation in Oakland. Prior to launching Seven Generations Consulting, Patricia was Executive Director of several nonprofit organizations including Habitat for Humanity, where she also served as Western Regional Director. She also served as Director of Education and Training at National Community Development Institute (NCDI). Patricia writes and speaks on an array of issues including executive coaching, executive

transitions, board development and engagement, and cultural competency. She is the lead writer for *Embracing Cultural Competency: A Roadmap for Nonprofit Capacity Builders.* She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Human Services from Southern NH University and Master of Divinity from Pacific School of Religion. Between them, she and her life partner have six daughters and seven grandchildren. Patricia is of Six Nations (Mohawk) and Quebecois descent.

"Letting go means engaging in interruption of those patterns again and again, personally, interpersonally, and systemically or institutionally. It is a journey, but one that brings ongoing moments of liberation, openness, and clarity as the luxury of obliviousness has hiatuses and fissures."
- Carla Sherrell & Judith Simmer-Brown

Spiritual Bypassing in the Contemporary Mindfulness Movement

Carla Sherrell & Judith Simmer-Brown
Naropa University

Within the popular mindfulness movement, it is now a common phenomenon to pick up a mindfulness book or click a meditation app on our phones when we are experiencing anxiety or having a bad day. It has become habitual for some of us to turn to Jon Kabat-Zinn, Sharon Salzberg, or Jack Kornfield and their words of wisdom in order to feel more peaceful, more in control of our emotions, more centered. Sometimes we turn to sitting practice, placing attention on the breathing and shedding thoughts and emotions. Perhaps we are put off by so-called spiritual people who aren't always peaceful or blissful. When bad things happen, perhaps we are quick to say it was "supposed to be" that way, dismissing the pain and hurt we might otherwise feel. These might be a few of the symptoms of what is called "spiritual bypassing."

Spiritual bypassing is a term coined by Buddhist psychologist John Welwood in 1984 to describe "a widespread tendency to use spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep or avoid facing unresolved emotional issues, psychological wounds, and unfinished developmental tasks" (Fossella, 2011).[1] Welwood was an early student of the Tibetan meditation master Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1939-1987), who warned early on of Western tendencies to commodify spirituality, using it to insulate and reinforce ego-clinging, blissful states of mind, and avoidance of pain. Robert Augustus Masters (2010) has systematically described spiritual bypassing with its symptoms, causes, and remedies, identifying pitfalls of contemporary American spirituality. Recently, notions of spiritual bypassing have influenced genres of psychological research, diverse spiritual community curricula, and addiction literature (Cashwell, Bentley, & Yardbrough, 2007; Mathieu, 2011; Petronelli, 2013).

To date, the nomenclature of spiritual bypassing refers to the individual psychological journey and is characterized in specific ways. Spiritual pursuits are often initially motivated by psychological pain, such as a breakup, crisis, loss, or disappointment. We have a problem and we want to solve it.

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[1] The uncut version of this interview can be found at http://www.johnwelwood.com/articles/TRIC_interview_uncut.pdf. Welwood originally wrote about spiritual bypassing in his book *Toward a Psychology of Awakening* (2002).

We take up meditation as a way to avoid or dull the pain, and only feel it "works" if we feel better. This approach is an expression of a prevailing culture that quickly takes a pharmaceutical to alleviate pain or pours a drink to numb anxiety. When we use it on a spiritual path, we are simply finding another way to turn away from what is painful, and can come to value spirituality only as a pill to take away our pain.

This kind of response to pain favors meditation practices that feature detachment, peace, bliss, and absolutist thinking as defense mechanisms against anxiety, fear, and anguish. The underlying verb in spiritual bypassing is "fixing," with less emphasis on "feeling," "knowing" and/or "accepting." Spiritual bypassing can show up anywhere as an insidious sabotage of true spiritual motivation. When mindfulness has been employed in the corporate and nonprofit sectors, promising results of longer attention span, greater emotional regulation, improved physical and mental health, and prosocial behaviors,[2] it has sold itself to the most skeptical of CEOs and school principals. Workers can labor longer hours without needed breaks; employees are more productive; students will have fewer behavioral issues. Emotions will be cooler and more manageable, and classrooms and workplaces will be more harmonious and manageable. Insofar as mindfulness is instrumental, the result may be spiritual bypassing.

Spiritual bypassing has long been found in many spiritual traditions and practices, pervading embodied practices like yoga, martial arts, and focused breathing as well as more intellectual practices like analytic meditation (che-gom), koan study, and contemplation practices. Whenever the practice is engaged in order to distance oneself from pain, anxiety, or dysfunction, there is a danger of spiritual bypassing. When it is taught solely to prevent suicide or drug and alcohol abuse, or to control emotions, mindfulness is subject to spiritual bypassing attitudes and motivations. These can truncate the spiritual journey, and may make it impossible for the meditations to blossom to their full potential.[3]

In other words, spiritual bypassing is not so much a specific kind of practice as a motivation that can pervade any practice when that practice is used as a defense against personal pain. It is also important to recognize that spiritual bypassing may be a common initial developmental stage for anyone on a spiritual journey. Damage can come when it becomes a pattern of avoidance that cuts the practitioner off from emotional depth and feeds narcissistic inflation, intellectual pompousness, pious seriousness, and insulation from genuine relationships with others (Fosella, 2011, pp. 2-3; Masters, 2010, pp. 29-50). Recognizing these symptoms, the practitioner can awaken to the

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2   For a survey of the voluminous scientific literature on the effects of mindfulness, see *Mindfulness Research Monthly*, the bulletin of the American Mindfulness Research Association (https://goamra.org/publications/mindfulness-research-monthly/).

3   Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche wrote about what he called "spiritual materialism," the tendency to commodify spirituality itself in service of our own ego-clinging: "No matter what the practice or teaching, ego loves to wait in ambush to appropriate spirituality for its own survival and gain."

attempt to use spirituality in service of ego, and continue to grow personally into a more mature, nuanced relationship with negativity in personal experience. For many practitioners, it is the embrace of the wisdom of emotions that signals the way to truly grow spiritually.

At Naropa University, we have found that educating our students about spiritual bypassing has been a helpful aid to the development of a mature mindfulness practice. It has also helped us prepare them for a life of personal growth, openness to suffering, and social engagement. It is from the crucible of teaching at our pioneering mindfulness university, founded in 1974, that this article was born.

A word on the "we" voice in this article: We authors explicitly bring to our joint work our different sociocultural locations, each of which is relevant to the article—its breadth, its discoveries, and its conclusions. One of us is an African-American somatic counseling professor, nearing ordination in the Christian tradition, with decades of experience as a social justice educator and consultant, with her own nonprofit as well as a burgeoning intentional community founded on social justice; her doctorate is in educational leadership and change. The other is a white religious-studies scholar and longtime mindfulness teacher, empowered in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of our university's founder and imbued with the power and privilege that accompany that location, which she is gradually understanding; she has a doctorate in Buddhist studies and has been engaged in interreligious dialogue for decades. As Naropa University faculty colleagues, we serve together on the Center for the Advancement of Contemplative Education Faculty Council, and have found a "we" voice on many issues as we have worked to deeply integrate contemplative education and social justice. Acknowledging our expertise across disciplines and our different experiences of privilege and marginalization has empowered us to do this work. It is also important to us to frame our work together as truth-telling grounded in love and compassion, central to our respective spiritual disciplines. We have found our mutual voices in deep examination of many issues of privilege and oppression, with the intention to bring greater clarity, openness, humanity, and heart to our commitment to a more just, peaceful, and enlightened society. In order to do this work with integrity, disruption and interruption is necessary.

STRUCTURAL SPIRITUAL BYPASSING

As we have seen above, to date the discussion of spiritual bypassing has been focused on its purposes, symptoms, and impacts—intrapsychically and interpersonally—on the individual. But individual spiritual bypassing also occurs against a larger backdrop that determines and controls power dynamics based on sociocultural locations (often called identities). Here we examine the existence, functions, and impacts of what we call *Structural Spiritual Bypassing*, especially within the current "mindfulness revolution." Building on the contemporary psychological, spiritual literature on individual spiritual bypassing, we will articulate a more pervasive systemic, structural bypassing that has grown as a cultural force with the potential to sabotage both spirituality and social justice work.

In late January of 2014, the cover story in *Time* magazine was about the "mindful revolution," the name coined for the growing popularity of mindfulness meditation sweeping the United States in recent years (Pickett, 2014). This powerful, laudatory story featured the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn from the University of Massachusetts and the proliferation of mindfulness in corporate, educational, medical, and nonprofit sectors. Even as the article highlighted the many benefits of mindfulness, controversy arose about the cover, which depicted a young, slim white woman meditating with an upraised, blissful face. A previous *Time* cover on the science of meditation had also featured a young white model.[4]

As Joanna Piacenza (2014), web manager of *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, wrote, "It's one thing to feature a young, fertile white girl on the cover of Time and promote it as 'mindfulness.' It's another to do it twice over the course of a decade." The controversy raises issues of gender, age, beauty, race, class—in short, issues of sociocultural location and privilege. These two *Time* covers are classic artifacts of what we are calling Structural Spiritual Bypassing.

The discussion of these photos touches on the complexity of power across multiple sociocultural locations in media "representations" of mindfulness. It is of value to examine the implicit power, privilege, and marginalization–based on gender, gender expression, ability, age, nationality, sexual orientation, language,

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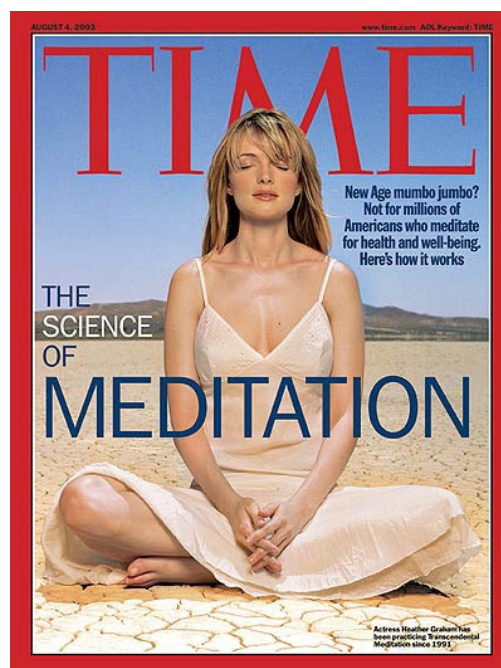
4   This cover model was actress Heather Graham, "meditating with her eyes closed and her neckline plunging to her heart chakra" (Goldberg, 2014).

size, religion/spirituality and socioeconomic class–that is embedded in these images. (See appendix A for a series of questions that invite further reflection on these dynamics.) For the purposes of this article, we focus specifically on racial oppression as the access point for the intersectional nature of the structural power and privilege present and at work in the movement.[5]

Our human sociocultural locations (race, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender and gender expression, religion and spirituality, nationality, ability, age, and size) are salient parts of our lives and societies, whether or not we are conscious of them and how they are at work. Areas that these dimensions of power and identity are structured to determine include: who gets to be on the top, how to get there, how to stay there, who is championed/sanctioned or dismissed/discarded, and who gets to make these rules (Sherrell & Cisneros, 2016). Throughout our lives, we all are continually exposed to and impacted by these rules of power based on sociocultural locations. The rules manifest intrapersonally and interpersonally. They are enacted and perpetuated institutionally through policies, practices, and procedures that advantage some and discriminate against others.

The mindfulness movement is not immune to these power rules. Indeed, as the movement grows in influence, prestige, and money, heightened awareness of how these rules are at work is crucial. As power rules are enacted by scientific research centers, academic institutions, CEOs of corporations, and principals and boards of public and private schools, waking up to privilege dynamics and the appropriation of mindfulness is imperative to the interruption of these dynamics. Waking up and remaining alert requires intentionality, because these power rules are not embedded only in the mindfulness movement. They are structural (Gee & Ro, 2009; Powell, 2007; Gee & Ford, 2011)—infused throughout all institutions in the society, implicitly and explicitly normalizing and legitimizing the granting of power, privilege, and supremacy to some, while others are systematically, cumulatively marginalized and oppressed based on sociocultural location. We posit that Structural Spiritual Bypassing cloaks the existence and impacts of these dynamics in the mindfulness movement, just as it does elsewhere in our society, impeding and/or preventing their interrogation and interruption.

This article focuses on two specific contemporary concerns related to Structural Spiritual Bypassing in the mindfulness movement. The first is racism, the unacknowledged white privilege that suffuses the image and the culture, suggesting that mindfulness is the practice of privilege that promotes its associated lifestyles, values, and norms. Could mindfulness have been appropriated by whiteness, denying the Asian roots from which it came and marginalizing many of the communities of color who now practice it?

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5   *Intersectionality*, the study of overlapping sociocultural locations and accompanying systems of discrimination and oppression, was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). In Bim Adewunmi's 2014 *New Statesman* interview, Crenshaw powerfully articulates the continued salience and usefulness of the theory.

A second, related concern is that this *Time* cover image can be seen to subvert the genuine spirituality embedded in an ancient, Asian religious tradition from which the mindfulness movement grew. When mindfulness is taught in a way that is divorced from its Asian roots, it can be represented as an ethically neutral concentration state, free of any thought, that serves as an end in itself. This is inconsistent with the authentic teachings of Buddhist mindfulness, which consider calming practices foundational to insight practices that include discernment, critical inquiry, and value judgments essential to ethical activity (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013, pp. 1-18, 281-306).

This article identifies and describes the damaging influence of both of these converging trends—mindfulness being primarily identified with white practitioners, and the frequent lack of explicit acknowledgement of mindfulness's Asian roots—addressing them together through the lens of Structural Spiritual Bypassing. It continues with a plan for how the inherent power of mindfulness practice may be restored through clear understanding of the foundations of mindfulness, its power to recognize privilege, and its inherent ability to interrupt habitual patterns of privilege.

Our work is based on appreciation of the benefits of mindfulness as a practice and an intervention to alleviate suffering. We see its power and promise, and recognize that at this stage in the development of the movement there are opportunities to address the structures that exclude and stigmatize many current and potential practitioners.

ANALYSIS OF STRUCTURAL SPIRITUAL BYPASSING

An exploration of Structural Spiritual Bypassing, which cloaks white privilege, is framed by two underlying assumptions we believe are found in the mindfulness movement. In these scenarios, which are neither hypothetical nor uncommon, it is possible to see how *individual* spiritual bypassing informs *Structural* Spiritual Bypassing assumptions and responds to interrogation and interruption of white privilege and supremacy.

a. If we are mindful, power differentials disappear

A core assumption of Structural Spiritual Bypassing in the mindfulness movement is that sociocultural power differentials are irrelevant, or even an illusion. This silences any acknowledgement of privilege, which becomes veiled in spirituality, denying the often obvious but sometimes subtle dynamics of power and privilege in our world. This is an expression of the power of Structural Spiritual Bypassing as a form of what Allan G. Johnson (2006) has called the "luxury of obliviousness" (p. 22). Johnson describes how "not being aware of privilege is an aspect of privilege itself," which creates the illusion of "invisibility of whiteness" that makes many in the mindfulness movement wonder what the problem may be (pp. 119-120). This invisibility adds credence to the assumptions of white privilege that differences do not matter and power dynamics are irrelevant.

The teachings of emptiness, oneness, and connection to all things (which are highly valuable when not divorced from the particular) are utilized to disengage from structural power, which in-

cludes both the unearned benefits that accompany white privilege and the resulting oppression of people of color. When people of color interrupt and name power differentials (e.g., microaggressions,[6] inequitable institutional policies and practices) they are given the message that on the marginalization, exclusion, separateness, and aggression that they are experiencing is not real, but is merely a function of their perceptions. This is reinforced in the mindfulness literature by the notions that suffering comes solely from the mind and the single way to address suffering is to work with the mind.[7] This admonition to work with the mind was traditionally intended to address only the personal, not the societal, dimension of suffering; when misused as a way to silence people of color, it is used as a weapon of oppression.

Those who name the privilege being enacted are offered encouragement in the form of assurance that continued practice will provide more clarity and allow a greater awareness of the community that surrounds them. If this encouragement is not accepted graciously, people of color are labeled, through the lens of Structural Spiritual Bypassing, as activated and disruptive, and are questioned about how their practice is progressing. They may be reminded to not "take things personally." They may be invited to remember and initiate mindfulness techniques to support emotional regulation. With continued interrogation of power differentials, they may be accused of being disrespectful, threatening, and violent.

In this scenario, symptoms of personal spiritual bypassing are salient in the instructor, teacher, or leader. The person of color interrogating structural marginalization is "breaking the rules" of spiritual bypassing by *not* avoiding conflict and by approaching, rather than practicing what is perceived as detachment, when emotionally charged content and processes arise. Interrogating and disrupting structural racism is another way that rules are broken in this scenario. White privilege and supremacy afford white people the power to name, define, and interpret the experiences of people of color; this "right" to dismiss "the other's" lived experience of oppression, rationalizing it or calling it something else, is a pervasive practice that is older than the U.S. itself. This assumption of Structural Spiritual Bypassing is a recapitulation of the practice of white privilege and supremacy that is cloaked and protected by the focus on the virtues of mindfulness. In the process, the person of color is at best marginalized and at worst in danger of being pathologized and criminalized, while white power and privilege continue and escalate.

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6   Sue et al. (2007) defined racial microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color."

7   *Dhammapada* I.1. This seminal Buddhist text has often been interpreted to mean that meditation is the only way to address suffering. With a more comprehensive understanding of the sources and practices of mindfulness, this is seen to be a vast oversimplification, a misunderstanding of the text. In the case of this article, it is a classic example of Structural Spiritual Bypassing.

b. The more quiet and still we are, the more mindful

Another assumption of Structural Spiritual Bypassing is that still, quiet bodies are reflective of equa-nimity, nonviolence, and mindfulness. When this is held as the only valid spiritual practice or path, there is an implicit assumption that the more still and quiet, the more mindful the person. There are a number of reasons that this assumption could be unreflectively held. With a core function of personal spiritual bypassing being avoidance of pain through detachment, stillness and quiet may be utilized to keep unexamined, challenging feelings and relationships at a distance. Contributing to and supporting this process are misguided perceptions about what actually constitutes mindful-ness. This is not surprising, especially in locations where mindfulness has been separated from an understanding of its spiritual and cultural contexts and is taught and learned as a discrete body of techniques. Appropriated and stripped of its contexts, what actually constitutes mindfulness be-comes distorted, filtered through the lens of white privilege.

In his blog response to the *Time* cover and article, Goldberg discussed the lumping together of a variety of very different practices, all placed under an umbrella called mindfulness. Interestingly, in that exploration he touched on a variety of bodily states and experiences that may constitute prac-tices taken, and secularized, from Hinduism and Buddhism in their Asian settings.

> Some practices properly labeled mindfulness are done while the practitioner is actively moving about; some are done sitting or lying down quietly; some are done with eyes open; some are done with eyes closed. The objects of attention employed also vary: inanimate objects; human beings; sounds, sights, and tastes; breath; thoughts and feelings; mantras, etc. Some demand disciplined focus on the object of attention, while others call for a gentler kind of concentration. The spectrum of effort reflected in the instructions is wider than might be imagined. (Goldberg, 2014)

Discussions of reasons for limiting the ways that bodies engage in mindfulness practice can raise complex ideological, spiritual, and pedagogical considerations. And, the issue may be minimized by those who are particularly impressed by, and focused on leveraging, the immediate outcomes of secularized mindfulness techniques that have previously been discussed in this article. Whatev-er the case, it is important to explore how the exclusive focus on quiet, still bodies as the path to mindfulness may contribute to mindfulness settings becoming narrow, exclusionary, environments of white privilege.

The unexamined privileging of quietness and stillness in practice can, explicitly and implicitly, result in these becoming the standard for behavior off the cushion throughout mindfulness settings, exemplifying Structural Spiritual Bypassing. Some ways that this standard may be expressed and de-manded follow.

1. The language of speaking "gently and softly" may appear in formal and informal community agreements and codes of conduct. Whether in the context of joy or distress, the perceived raised volume of voices, in both spoken and non-word sounds, is routinely quieted. For the most part, groups become present through shared silent experiences.

2. To be acceptable, movement throughout the environment must be perceived as intentional and contained; it must take up little space or resemble white European movement practices. For the most part, groups become present through stillness or experientials that limit movement.

3. In communication with others, one-to-one or in groups, movement of the body must be perceived as contained, with limited, small gestures of hands, heads, and facial expressions. Volume of voices must be perceived as low. Broader movements and higher volume of voice may be considered out of control, distressing, and/or violent to others. In conflict, bodies must be perceived as even more contained and voices as even more quiet.

    Some may assume that these expectations are simply and clearly essential to creation of peaceful, nonviolent, mindful environments in which all are welcome. Actually, they may guarantee the creation of environments in which the bandwidth of welcome is very limited. In these settings there are very few acceptable ways to communicate (verbally and nonverbally), to be in one's body, and to have voice. There are very few acceptable ways to be, not only personally but culturally. These are all implicit in aspects of Structural Spiritual Bypassing in the contemporary mindfulness movement.

4. In communities of color, there are a variety of settings in which norms include quietness and stillness. And white settings may include physically animated, vocally high-volume experiences. Still, culturally-informed communication patterns do exist and are transmitted to each human over generations through ethnicity. These patterns include range of stillness and movement of the body; volume, pitch, pauses, and silences in speech; and when, how, and with whom we may express emotions (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012; Sue & Sue, 2013). Because of the highly racialized nature of U.S. society, these cultural and ethnic patterns are filtered through the construct of race, placing the dynamics of white privilege and supremacy and the marginalization of people of color at the center of intercultural communication styles and patterns. In the 21st century, negatively interpreting and judging culture-bound patterns of communication and embodiment that do not match the patterns of whiteness can result in exclusion, dismissal, and/or criminalization of people of color—from not being hired or promoted (Le, 2017), to suspension or expulsion as early as preschool (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014; Turner, 2016). Descriptions of this violence

are coded personally: "He is just not a good fit for us." "That child is loud and aggressive with the other children." In the mindfulness movement, the narrow definition of mindful bodies can become yet another weapon to be utilized to control, exclude, and criminalize bodies of color within institutions, even as those in power in the movement tout the benefits of mindfulness practices to individuals, institutions, and society. This aspect of Structural Spiritual Bypassing warrants close scrutiny and analysis, especially as the mindfulness movement expands its presence in more institutions throughout the society.

In unexamined assumptions about quiet, still bodies, critical questions go unformed and unanswered in mindfulness settings. What is the range of expressions of stillness and movement of bodies present within and across cultures in this environment? Of volume of speech and non-word communication? When bodies and voices are evaluated as reflecting mindful practice, what cultural lenses/perspectives/bodies are doing the evaluating? Who is, implicitly and explicitly, granted the power to name, evaluate, and sanction what is mindful behavior? Are intercultural communication and the dynamics of structural privilege and supremacy of whiteness present in the teaching, learning, and practice of mindfulness in our communities? Without these considerations, mindless demands for stillness and quietness go unchecked and can become violent institutional and structural enactments of oppression.

The dynamics of systemic marginalization of people of color through demanding conformity to practices appropriated from the spirituality of Asian people is very complex.[8] This speaks to the power to appropriate that is granted to white privilege and supremacy as enacted through Structural Spiritual Bypassing in the mindfulness movement. Sherrell and Cisneros (2016) describe appropriation as an appreciation of another's sociocultural location that overfocuses on and objectifies it through the belief that one can embody the other's sociocultural difference. While mindfulness techniques may be appropriated and utilized, and the spirituality of Hinduism and Buddhism may be rigorously studied and practiced, mindfulness cannot be lifted from its cultural contexts and placed into the U.S. context of white privilege and supremacy and remain the same. Acknowledging this reality may be an important part of the process of interrogating the singular focus on stillness and quietness as mindful. Does the prescribed standard of quiet, still bodies reflect a caricature of Asian bodies in practice as experienced and imagined by quiet, still white bodies? If so, greater awareness and interruption of these dynamics could open a path to a more mature, mindful, socially just practice for all bodies and voices in the mindfulness movement.

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8   The term "people of color" is here used consciously, without narrow definition.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION, RETRIEVAL, AND INTERRUPTION

Does Structural Spiritual Bypassing render the mindfulness movement hopelessly embedded in white privilege? Is mindfulness practice ineffectual for waking society up to the dehumanizing violence of racism? If there is societal benefit in mindfulness, where does it lie?

When we look deeply at the sources, we can see that contextualized mindfulness, as it was originally taught, has the potential to wake society up to the obscenity of racism, but only if certain discarded elements are restored to its practice and the wisdom and skillful-means aspects are developed further. When Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990) initiated Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) as a way to help hospital patients with chronic pain, he inaugurated a major cultural movement that has powerfully and positively influenced mainstream U.S. culture in ways that cannot be measured. In order to gain access and earn prestige in medical settings, he appropriately employed a scientific rationale, presenting mindfulness without its normative and wisdom dimensions and removing it from its Asian spiritual and religious roots. His critics say he misrepresented, even culturally appropriated, the practice (Ng & Purser, 2015; Bodhi, 2013). In the hands of later proponents less trained and sophisticated than Kabat-Zinn, a subculture of banal spirituality arose in MBSR, such that the Buddha is often casually and selectively quoted in sessions and science is more piously respected than the sources of the practices themselves.

This was the perfect storm for enacting Structural Spiritual Bypassing. An ancient Asian Buddhist practice was introduced to white U.S. students without its Asian teachers of color, and students understood and practiced it through the lens of unacknowledged white privilege and supremacy.[9] These white practitioners often have not self-identified as Buddhist and have felt free to appropriate mindfulness for their own privileged purposes. The U.S. *vipassana* movement in particular has organized itself "according to Western values, worldviews, and institutional preferences" (Fronsdal, 1998, p. 169), enacting individualistic and "spiritual but not religious" values cloaked in popular psychology language.

These dynamics point to ways of liberating the American mindfulness movement from white privilege and supremacy. We suggest **four liberating ways**, based on the traditions of original mindfulness as well as the veiled structural privilege in the current movement. (Several of these are already observable in U.S. mindfulness settings.) These four liberating ways are: 1) **restoring body awareness** to mindfulness practice as an essential gateway to sociocultural location and difference; 2) **emphasizing interdependence** as a way of rebalancing the relative truth as a corrective for excessive

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9   Japanese-American Buddhist scholar Ken Tanaka (1998), speaking for Asian American critics, notes that often "Buddhism becomes truly American only when white Americans become seriously involved" (p. 288).

emphasis on the absolute; 3) **employing awareness practices** (originally part of mindfulness) that identify patterns of privilege and power as an expression of waking up to unacknowledged privilege; and 4) **interrupting the systems that suggest that there is only one way to be mindful.**

1. Body Awareness

The original mindfulness teachings of the Buddha, as found in the *Satipatthana-sutta* (sutra) of the Pali tradition, were based on the body and feelings. This means that the Buddha recognized that truth is found within our specific embodied experience, the touchstone of our sociocultural location. The practice is to honor the sensations and feelings of the body as direct perception, "both internally and externally," and "worldly and unworldly" (Nyanamoli & Bodhi, 1995). He did not suggest changing our sensation or feelings, choosing some over others, or "fixing" body and feelings. These two foundations of mindfulness served as a basis for awareness and wisdom.

While the sutra does not speak of sociocultural location, it is important to understand that awareness of the socially-constructed nature of our experience of body is very much part of mindfulness of body and feelings. When Structural Spiritual Bypassing environments of white privilege demand that practitioners manifest stillness and conformity, the wisdom-body of the oppressed practitioner feels the violence. The sensations and feelings of the body hold the violation of oppression, and it is through the body that this pain may be released. This may be observed in feminist critiques of western Buddhism as well, as women have often felt marginalized by overemphasis on the mind to the exclusion of the body (Friedman & Moon, 1997). Awareness understands the history of oppression, the subjugation of the body, and the violence embedded in the cloaking of Structural Spiritual Bypassing. Mindful awareness of body sensations has the power to address this suffering and eventually liberate it through recognition, expression, and letting go.

This means that trusting feelings and the body can become a platform to "speak truth to power" in the mindfulness movement. This truth-telling is most often left to those who recognize and experience the racism being enacted through Structural Spiritual Bypassing: people of color. As previously mentioned, the consequences of engaging in this naming can include being minimized, isolated, pathologized, and criminalized in mindfulness settings. Leaving the naming of racism to people of color is a marker of white privilege (DiAngelo, 2015). Whether consciously or unconsciously, white practitioners, educators, and leaders of the mindfulness movement inadvertently witness, collude with, and enact violence through white privilege. Indeed, white privilege and supremacy are present and cloaked by Structural Spiritual Bypassing when no people of color are present in mindfulness communities. Mindful awareness of sensations and feelings can provide a gateway for white privilege to uncloak itself by recognizing the racial arrogance (DiAngelo, 2015) and fear intrinsic to oppressive patterns and demands. White practitioners can then learn to recognize these dynamics, and in sur-

facing and interrupting them they can proactively contribute to the creation of mindfulness settings that are continually engaged in the practice of releasing Structural Spiritual Bypassing, whether or not people of color are present.

2. Interdependence

One of the most important discoveries of original mindfulness is **interdependence**, the network of causes and conditions that underlie all occurrences in the world. This core teaching, *pratityasamut-pada*, is the foundation of mindfulness practice and its discovery of wisdom. That is, everything that occurs in our lives happens because of factors seen and unseen, personal, communal, societal, and cosmological. This is called "relative truth" that is a necessary corollary of "absolute truth" which is beyond all causes and conditions. Buddhist practice acknowledges these patterns as inexorable, while taking responsibility for how an individual or society can disrupt patterns and be liberated from suffering and confusion (relative truth) (Simmer-Brown, 1987). At the same time, all of these factors are seen from within a vast perspective of unconditional mind that pervades everything, a liberative perspective that is foundational to Buddhism. Separating the absolute and the relative, as is common in the mindfulness movement, is a violation of the truth of each of them.

When white privilege minimizes sociocultural difference and refuses to acknowledge the violence of generational and present-day racism and oppression through the luxury of obliviousness, it is caught in what is called samsara, the repeating pattern of pain and avoidance that has continued in human society from beginningless time. In short, white privilege and supremacy are ways that we can cloak ourselves in pervasive ignorance, refusing to acknowledge the responsibility and agency so necessary in bringing an end to suffering. Mindfulness-awareness practice is considered primarily a way to recognize these patterns, take responsibility for complicity in them, and to strategically disrupt them in a way that can bring suffering to an end. All of this is to say that this practice is an excellent platform for retrieving lost elements of original mindfulness, reclaiming the liberative elements of realizing interdependence and waking up to the dynamics of power and privilege caught in Structural Spiritual Bypassing.

3. Employing Awareness Practices

How do awareness practices serve the dismantling of white privilege? Awareness practices begin with mindfulness, and in this case we bring mindfulness to our bodies and feelings. An example of such a practice, led by a white facilitator working with a group of white educators, follows. [10]

When we hear the word "White," how do we feel? Do we feel pain or anxiety? Do we feel denial, aversion, fear? Do we feel relief, clarity, or confirmation? Or obliviousness, confusion, or bewilderment? With somatic mindfulness practices, as we are ready, we stay with the feeling without changing

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10   This exercise was created by Tommy Woon and implemented at a core faculty retreat during his tenure as Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Naropa University, 2014-2015.

it in any way, noticing where the feeling resides and whether it moves as we bring awareness to it. Then, repeating "I am White," we visualize that we are saying this in the presence of individuals from a range of racial sociocultural locations different from our own. Now, how does this feel, where do we feel it, and how does the feeling change when we are aware of the feeling? We are also sure to engage this practice visualizing voicing "I am White" in the presence of other white people.

From a privileged location, tuning in mindfully to sensations and feelings of whiteness begins the process of uncloaking the luxury of obliviousness. This is the gateway to undoing Structural Spiritual Bypassing, but it is only the beginning. The next step is engaging the on-going work of recognizing and interrupting the white privilege and supremacy embedded in one's own body, perspectives, and actions. In this process, attention is turned outward to recognize and interrupt the racism present in the policies, practices, and procedures enacted day-to-day in our mindfulness settings. Then, one returns inward to the wisdom of the body that may, through practice, continue to provide awareness of the moment-to-moment violence enacted through Structural Spiritual Bypassing, and access to the courage to interrupt, disrupt, and transform it within ourselves and our institutions. When mindfulness settings commit to, sanction, teach, and nurture this process of awakening as an assumed aspect of practice, the movement may be on the path of disrupting the appropriation of mindfulness by white privilege and supremacy in the U.S. Such a path may change the course of the current mindfulness movement to one of justice and authentic spiritual opening based on social justice awareness.

4. Interrupting Structural Spiritual Bypassing

The original mindful traditions of Buddhism have not been known for disruptive activism in the sense of the prophetic voice common to Abrahamic traditions. Within the context of Western prophetic traditions, activism has developed a particular style and dynamic that have historically been complemented by Asian Buddhist traditions (Strain, 2014). Yet when we examine the practices of original mindfulness, interrupting habitual patterns is core to meditation practice. Interruption is not a violent movement, but it is a direct, effective one. When one becomes aware of painful patterns, the practice is to remain present, attending to them, feeling their pain. Then the pain makes it possible to radically let go.

Letting go, however, cannot be done artificially or prematurely. It is a process of awakening and discernment that involves individual insight into the painful personal patterns that hold suffering in place unnecessarily. But when members of the mindfulness movement deeply understand interdependence and the way that Structural Spiritual Bypassing works, they cannot separate themselves from the unacknowledged pain in themselves, the pain of others, or the pain of the systems that white privilege and supremacy hold in place. In environments of Structural Spiritual Bypassing, they apply the same strategies to interrupting painful habitual patterns. This is especially important in the

atmosphere of denial that pervades the dynamics of white privilege. It is important that the mindfulness movement compassionately "break the rules" by calling attention to the exercise of privilege.

In the institutions of the mindfulness movement—the training programs, foundations, consortia, institutes, and universities—the interruption can take the form of close scrutiny of decision-making, policies, hiring and recruitment practices, curricula, assessment and evaluation criteria, and measures of success. Through this scrutiny, mindful leaders can awaken to the "luxury of obliviousness" inherent in privilege and consciously redesign training, practices, staffing, and criteria of success to accommodate and invite diverse participation. This also requires the challenging work of deeply listening to the people of color in our midst—colleagues, students, consultants, staff—who are the greatest detectors of unacknowledged privilege. It is important to acknowledge their commitment and courage. Indeed, it is crucial to do this work in order to create the most humane, inclusive, compassionate, and accessible mindfulness institutions possible.

Letting go means engaging in interruption of those patterns again and again, personally, interpersonally, and systemically or institutionally. It is a journey, but one that brings ongoing moments of liberation, openness, and clarity as the luxury of obliviousness has hiatuses and fissures. Then it is possible to momentarily taste the fruit of interrupting the system of Structural Spiritual Bypassing.

APPENDIX

Utilizing intersectionality to examine privilege and marginalization across these sociocultural locations can be quite revealing. For example, consider questions and responses that emerge when one explores the intersectionality of gender and age.

Gender and Gender Expression: In these images (from the *Time* magazine issues), how might patriarchy be appropriating the bodies of these people who may identify as female? What genders and embodiments of gender are sanctioned in the mindfulness movement?

Socioeconomic Class: Who might have access to the clothing, manicure, haircut, and time to be in the state being displayed in these images? What messages about socioeconomic class are salient in the mindfulness movement?

Religion/Spirituality: What might these images be communicating about the spiritual/religious/secular contexts being named/alluded to/caricatured?

Ability: What might these images be communicating about bodies and ability? What bodies, intellects, and emotions are sanctioned in the mindfulness movement?

Nationality: What might these images be communicating about these persons' nationalities and/or national status? What messages does the mindfulness movement communicate regarding immigration, documentation status, and appropriation of culture(s) within and across nations?

Language: What might these images be communicating regarding the language of mindfulness? What languages are sanctioned in the mindfulness movement?

Age: How might considerations of age have impacted the decision to utilize both of these images? What messages about mindfulness across the lifespan are salient in the mindfulness movement?

Sexual Orientation: How might these images be communicating heteronormativity? What messages about sexual orientation are embedded in the mindfulness movement?

Size: What assumptions about the relationship between body sizes/shapes and mindfulness are expressed in these images? What body sizes/shapes are sanctioned in the mindfulness movement?

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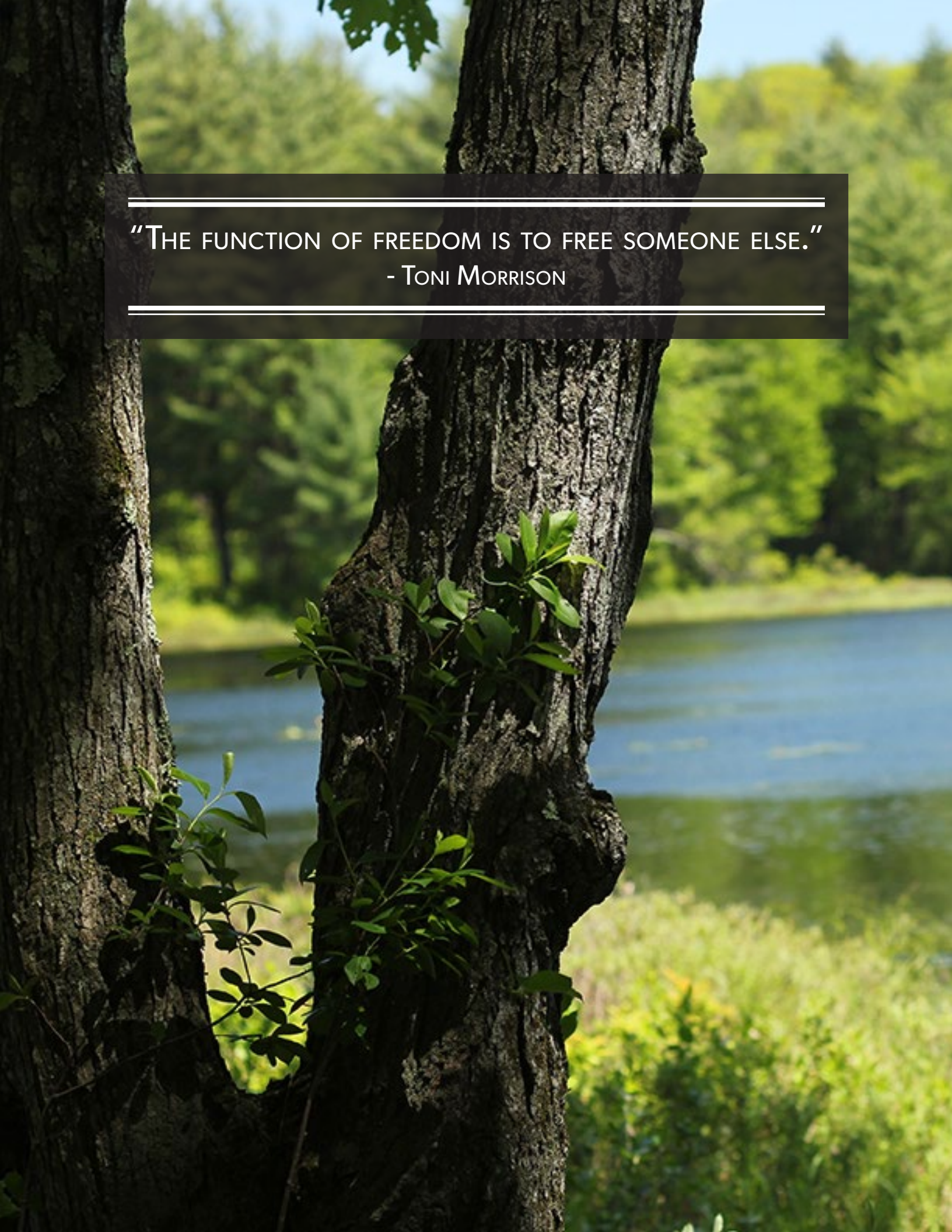Welwood, J. (2002). *Toward a psychology of awakening.* Boston: Shambhala Publications.

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"The function of freedom is to free someone else."
- Toni Morrison

The Question About the Question: Transforming Educational Policy from the Inside Out

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> Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (Freire, 1993)

I've had an ongoing discussion with Dr. Marcella Bullmaster-Day[1], a longtime professional colleague and friend, on the issue of education policy. Her eyes glaze over when the topic comes up. She blames policy for the intractable nature of education reform in public schools. Policies restrict what is possible, curtail rich and highly effective teaching and learning, and do not keep children as the focus in the schooling enterprise. Policy, in her view, keeps the machine of schooling going, one that strips education of meaning. Education is not the intent of the schooling machine; rather, it perpetuates the inequities of society.

I know all too well and support her notion that schooling perpetuates the inequities of society, but I maintain that people make policy, people interpret policy, people implement policy, and the problem with policy is that we abdicate our responsibility. Policy has become this entity unto itself, as if policy creates itself. Policy is the "they." Every industry has its "they." My concern is that the "they" is us. We see policy as something outside ourselves, and many times the educators deemed successful are those who can "work the system" or operate "in spite of" policies. We see policy as a necessary evil, something to "get around." Whether policy is developed to rectify a negative effect or to foster a positive outcome, we quickly push it to an unknown place, separate from practice, separate from context, a place that abdicates ownership and overrides any responsibility for the education context in which policy exists.

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1   Interim Associate Dean, Graduate School of Education, Touro College and University System

I continue to be curious about the possibilities of policy. I am a child of the '50s. I am also African-American, born in the South at time when there were white schools and "colored" schools. Legislation and policies paved the way for greater equality. Yes, I was very much aware that what actually happens on the ground in schools and in communities everyday too frequently offers poor examples of policy possibilities. I, like many other educators, have been forced to "work around" policies to do what we know is best for children. However, I've always been convinced that there is a clear need for legislation and policies that at best give a vision of what is possible and at worst give those that strived for change a leg to stand on in the fight against the inequities that persist. Policies provide the foundation to actively pursue litigation and remedies when those whose positions are to ensure educational equity fall short.

When I reflect on the many conversations with my colleague and friend regarding policy, I believe she does not trust policies to guide and ensure good teaching and learning for all students. And, quite frankly, based on my life experiences, I've come to realize that not all people in positions of power and authority can be trusted to guide and ensure good teaching and learning for all students. So herein lies our impasse. This paper reflects my optimism that *the emerging and intersecting fields of contemplative practices, social justice, and equity provide the space to open a conversation regarding policy writ large and educational policy in particular*. I want people to see themselves in how they see education in the sociopolitical context of our current moment and how that plays out in the design, construction, and implementation of policy.

I was the director of the former Equity Assistance Center for Region II located at Touro College in New York for eight years. My center was one of 10 (currently 4) equity assistance centers (EACs) funded by the United States Department of Education Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. These centers are part of a USDE-funded technical assistance network and are the only technical assistance providers that have their origin in the Civil Rights Act (CRA) of 1964. The EACs are uniquely focused on ensuring the civil rights of students by providing technical assistance to state departments of education, school districts, and schools in the implementation of the requirements of Title VI of the CRA, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin, and Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex (Scott, 2016).

My professional experiences as described above have also rested on a personal foundation of contemplative practice extending over more than a decade. What I have discovered is that as I evolved my personal practice, it helped cultivate the greater clarity for me to perceive the gap that is present between what we provide to students within our school systems and what they actually need. Over the years, as I gained deeper clarity and insight into this disconnection, my curiosity also began to grow, curiosity that took the form of fuller presence in conversations and investigations into the reasons this noted gap exists and persists. For me, a contemplative practice grew the seeds

that continue to motivate me to initiate, participate in, and move through difficult conversations around this topic; to better listen to what is said and unsaid; and to openly engage and respond in discourse and analysis without judgment. I came to understand that the connection between contemplative practice and education is one way I can begin building the bridge between policy and practice in a way that meets the needs of students and serves as the impetus for structural and systemic transformation.

So, as you can see, my personal life and professional career have been intertwined with education policy. For the last eight years, I have provided training and technical assistance to educational stakeholders to ensure that state and local educational agencies safeguard under the law, for all children regardless of race, gender, or national origin, non-discrimination in access, inclusion, treatment, and opportunity to learn. I have seen the structures, procedures, and practices which limit educational opportunity for all students; and I have watched individuals across the educational spectrum struggle to recognize and connect how their own assumptions, mindsets, and beliefs are complicit in the persistent and pervasive inequities in education. My insistence on connecting people to policy is instrumental in moving forward with educational excellence, equity, and social justice. The connection that I am referring to is not just for those whom policy is intended to impact, but the broader question of what the policies being put forth say about us as a collective, as a society.

CONTEMPLATION, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND EQUITY

> The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.
>
> —Marcel Proust

Public education continues to struggle with educating the masses of children to high academic performance. Efforts such as College- and Career-Ready Standards (the Common Core), new teaching and leadership assessments, and new student assessments have attempted to transform education via changes in organizational structures, policies, procedures, and other external regulatory frames. Another avenue for change has been through efforts that address the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of those who affect teaching and learning directly: namely, teachers, educational leaders, parents, and even the students themselves. Still, educational inequities persist. These system-reform efforts are external and allow us to think that somehow if we change the system then we will yield a different result. "The system," as it were, is an entity that is outside any one person. The system is such a well-oiled bureaucracy that we fail to acknowledge that the system is us. Scheetz and Senge (2016) write: "Something in the very word 'system' or 'systemic' consistently leads us astray—seeking some magical change 'out there' when the most intransigent aspects of the 'out there' are inseparable from our habits of thought and action 'in here'." The internal habits of mind

that shape how we define the problem of reform and how we shape policies to address those problems are central to seeking another way to transform education.

The emerging work in mindfulness and other conscious or contemplative practices in education and other fields has begun to unfold the internal work required for true, sustained, transformational change. Mindfulness and other conscious practices have the ability to address what Scheetz and Senge (2016) call the "inner nature of inequity." This does not mean that structural and organizational reforms or technical, cognitive, and behavioral changes are not needed, but that internal work and an intentional social justice lens are also critical systems that must be addressed for true transformational change in the policies that govern how we see and shape what's possible.

I feel that the intersectionality of social justice and contemplative practice fields in education offers a unique and greatly needed entry into transforming education. The relational and political nature of education requires the inclusion of consciousness and social justice if authentic transformation in the education of the masses of children is to occur. This article reflects my thinking to date and invites a continued conversation on the juxtaposition of educational policy, social justice, and contemplative practice. I use the terms *mindfulness*, *conscious[2] practice*, and *contemplative practice* in this paper. I co-founded the Initiative for Contemplation, Equity & Action (ICEA) with Sheryl Petty and became a Core Design Team member after attending the Garrison Institute's spring 2015 conversation "Healing Ourselves, Our Schools, and Our Communities: Equity, Contemplative Education, and Transformation" and co-facilitating a breakout group that formed at the University of Virginia Contemplative Science Center's summer 2015 Contemplative Institute for PreK-12 Education. To push my thinking on contemplation, equity, and action within the educational policy arena further, I also talked with Kevin Kumashiro, dean of the School of Education at the University of San Francisco; Yong Zhao, foundation distinguished professor of the School of Education at the University of Kansas; and Linda Darling-Hammond, president of the Learning Policy Institute, faculty director of the Stanford University Center for Opportunity Policy Education, and my doctoral program mentor and chair while at Teachers College, Columbia University.[3] I worked with Darling-Hammond and Ann Lieberman at the National Center on Restructuring Education Schools and Teaching (NCREST) as a senior research associate, then became Darling-Hammond's deputy director at the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), both housed at Columbia University's Teachers College.

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2   A term used in a conversation I had with Yael Shy, ESQ, Director of the New York University Office of Global Spiritual Life March 4th, 2016.

3   Thank you to Sheryl Petty, Movement Tapestries, Mind & Life Institute Fellow, ICEA Core Design Team Lead, and editor of this publication; and Alan Young, Project Manager, Educator Growth System, Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY and ICEA Core Design Team member, for assistance in brokering these conversations and input in helping me frame them.

EDUCATION POLICY AND MINDFULNESS

> Relationships change us, reveal us, evoke from us. Only when we join with others do our gifts become visible, even to ourselves. (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998, p. 67)

> We cannot solely be concerned with our own well-being without recognizing the interconnectedness with all different communities, and we cannot see the issues of marginalization and oppression in a variety of communities as separate and apart from individual issues of trauma and well-being. (Hala Khouri and Tessa Hicks Peterson, quoted in Berila, 2015, p. 172)

Education is typically defined as what we know or what we should know. Traditional rational or sensory ways of knowing appeal to the brain's constructive and dispositional tendencies. Hart (2004) states: "The rational involves calculation, explanation, and analysis; the sensory lives off of observation and measurement. Together these form the rational-empirical approach that has set the standard for knowledge across most disciplines" (p. 28). The brain's natural constructive or patternmaking tendency is primed for efficiency. What we experience shapes our mind, and our mind shapes how we see and experience the world, thereby developing dispositions or patterns of thinking, namely "habits of mind" (Dickmann & Stanford-Blair, 2009; Siegel, 2011; Marturano, 2014).

Contemplation is a third way of knowing that complements rational and sensory knowing. Rather than addressing what we know or should know, contemplative knowing addresses *how* we know. This third way of knowing develops interpersonal awareness, intentional actions, and authentic connections to others. Education is only just now beginning to embrace this way of knowing, largely for students, through the social and emotional learning (SEL) movement. I contend that we, as scholars, educators, policymakers, etc., must also begin to acknowledge and value this way of knowing if we are to truly embark on transforming education.

While this paper will not focus on the brain or neuroplasticity, mindful, conscious, or contemplative practices that enhance focus, attention and awareness can assist us in how we "see" the problems facing education today and therefore how we shape policy. The emerging research and literature on neuroplasticity (e.g., Bradford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Dickmann & Stanford-Blair, 2009; Goleman, 2011; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Jackson, 2011; Ratey, 2008; Restak, 2006) provides an important framework for connecting behavior to how we naturally think, learn, and achieve. Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994), considered to be the guru of mindfulness, defines it as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally." His pioneering work offers mindfulness as a practical, systematic process of self-observation, self-inquiry, and action.

A 1946 quote often attributed to Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist who spent years as a prisoner in Auschwitz, comes to mind: "Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." Conscious practices can create that space. Darling-Hammond (2016) started our conversation around policy and mindfulness with an image of concentric circles that captured Scheetz and Senge's (2016) premise of "out there" and "in here." She talked about "beginning with the inner work you do with yourself … understanding yourself and managing your thinking and emotions," followed by interactions with others and the ability to grow capacity to be mindful and empathetic, "trying to see people as who they are in a deeper way and appreciating them in a deeper way as well as delving into that interpersonal connection." She likened the next level to "a pebble going into a stream and then rippling out—next is taking social responsibility, taking action to improve the context of your family, community, and the broader world." Zhao (2016) characterized the "whole policy domain" as rampant with the failure to recognize "the imposition of one's view." The notion that policy is "objective" obscures the viewpoints from which policy is designed, written, and implemented.

Conscious practice opens the space for us to listen more deeply and guide actions through clear intention rather than responding to internal and external stimuli with existing patterns of thought or habits of mind. For me, action is a critical element of contemplative practice. Contemplative practices enable us to hold the binary tensions of the known and unknown—"both-and"—rather than our tendency to characterize what's before us as "either-or." Mindfulness practices cultivate awareness of selfand of our relationships with others, and a way of knowing that asks us to constantly "problematize" (a word I borrow from Kumashiro). These practices allow for curiosity and open the space for questioning patterns of thinking, perspectives, and ways seeing the world. Kumashiro (2016) says, "Mindfulness, in other words, situates individual and collective wellness as one of the central themes of anything—of individual practices, of institutional practices, of cultural practices." His point about the individual and the collective is at the heart of policy. Surfacing the wellbeing of the collective is more than the sum total of "mindful" individuals; it is an intentional attention to and understanding of how what happens with the collective impacts us as individuals.

As Tobin Hart (2014) recognized, understanding the South African greeting "I see you through me" provides the space for greater curiosity, compassion, courageous leadership, and meaningful connections. Self-awareness and -management, relationship management, and social awareness (context) allow for a greater choice of responses to what's happening. Regardless of whether we refer to this "how" of knowing as contemplation, emotional intelligence, or mindfulness, the practice is "designed to quiet and shift the habitual chatter of the mind to cultivate a capacity for deepened awareness, concentration, and insight" (Hart, 2004, p.28) and can help to disrupt a false sense of knowing or judgment, when existing patterns of knowing or "habits of mind" are confronted with new sensory information, emotions, and other experiences, thereby opening the space for choice in responses and possibilities. Mind-based emotional wisdom is at the core of knowing oneself

(Mackey & Sisodia, 2014; Tan, 2012). Siegel (2010) states: "Being mindful, having mindful aware-ness, is often defined as a way of intentionally paying attention to the present moment without be-ing swept up by judgments" (p. 83). Marturano (2014) describes the cultivation of this way of know-ing as "training the mind."

POLICY STORIES AND HABITS OF MIND

> Without inner change, there can be no outer change,
> without collective change, no change matters.
>
> —Rev. angel Kyodo williams, Sensei (2016)

Policies are deliberate systems of thought that guide decision making and regulate and organize behavior. Stein (2004) states: "When policies define a problem, they construct a way of seeing those affecting or affected by the problem. Policies impart lenses for viewing the people they aim to address. The language of policy reveals who is dominant, who is subordinate, and what controls, those dominant should exercise on the subordinate in order to effect desired change" (p.5). Policies are statements of intent, reflective of the lens or mindsets governing the contextual landscape at a moment in time. Katz (2016) highlights the interlocking nature of mindset and culture which holds policy intractable for the most part: "Culture is the building block or filter through which we view the world...This is not quite the same as mindset; the cultural lens is a more fundamental aspect of think-ing and perceiving; the basic resource programming from which mindsets are, in part, drawn and with which they tend to be consistent." Cultural conditioning reflects our view of the world, and that view of the world shapes policy formation and implementation. The ability to step out of "habits of mind" can assist in problematizing the stories underlying the policy narratives we are perpetuating.

Zhao (2016) named the "achievement gap mindset" as an example of shaping "who (students) should be from a societal and bureaucratic definition. … Not only do we not recognize or encour-age students to explore and become who they can be and who they are, but also I think they really have no voice. They are not part of the educational system, other than being a product. …We talk a lot about how we want each child to reach their own potential, but then we prescribe the standards and testing and say, 'You can reach your own potential, but it's really what I'm telling you it is and what I want to equip you with.'"[4]

Story and *compassion* were themes that surfaced in my conversations with both Kumashiro and Darling-Hammond. While awareness of self is one internal practice of mindfulness, Kumashiro (2016) characterizes mindfulness in policy as the ability to "recognize and step outside for a mo-

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4   Interview with Yong Zhao, August 29th, 2016

ment the stories that often go unnoticed, but that we are buying into." This goes hand in hand with "the processes of policy construction and policy implementation … [that we need to be] constantly reflecting on, [i.e.,] What is the story that we're buying into? What are the common senses? What are the taken-for-granted knowledge (and common) senses that go unquestioned that need to be rattled and need to be troubled and need to be intervened?"[5] The word he kept coming back to was "problematize." In much the same way as we have to notice the internal chatter and mindsets that frame our internal view of the world, there is a need to do this on a policy systems level.

Schooling has long been the vehicle to sustain and perpetuate existing cultural, economic, political, and institutional systems (Popkewitz, 1991). Kumashiro (2016) reminded me that when we talk about policy design or implementation, conversations on effectiveness, efficiency, or cost-benefit analysis are usually the central focus. Kumashiro framed his policy analysis by questioning what story is going unnoticed or what story we are buying into via the policies that are shaping direction, purpose, and the cognitive and motivational narrative. "The form of knowledge in schools frames and classifies the world and the nature of work, which, in turn, has the potential to organize and shape individual identity" (Popkewitz, 1991, p. 14).

Darling-Hammond (2016) framed the educational process as one that constantly asks us to see our work from the perspective of someone who is very different from us. She invoked Paulo Freire's frame of "I see you."

> It's like you have to take everything that we think of at the micro level and then we have to say, "How does that play out all the way through?" So if you're sitting in a superintendent's seat or a principal's chair, you're thinking about when you do any policy, not only how is the person advocating for this going to be happy when I do it, but how is this child or this family going to experience this? What's this going to do for this one or that one? Where I have inequalities, what am I going to do to remedy and stop those, rather than just allocating the good stuff to the privileged people and leaving others to just fend for themselves?

Kumashiro (2016) called this process "problematizing." Darling-Hammond called on us to ask the question "How can I not *other-ize*?" and to recognize and be cognizant of "institutional other-iz-ing." I immediately thought about newly appointed USDE Secretary John King's (2016) supplemental priority of socioeconomic diversity and the proposed Stronger Together Act. In this sociocultural, political context of continued educational inequities, growing gaps between the "haves" and "have-nots," and global unrest, what stories are going unnoticed and what stories are we buying into? If we apply Kumashiro's example of conceptualizing teacher education more systemically, we

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5   Interview with Kevin Kumashiro, May 30, 2016

can easily discern that measuring programs by teacher candidates based on test scores alone will not produce highly effective teachers. Similarly, the persistent and pervasive gaps in educational achievement, the growing disparities in discipline, college-going, and dropout rates cannot be measured only by the growing resegregation of schools. The schooling process works in concert with many other partners to help children grow and develop cognitively, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. How are the partners in education, housing, labor, transportation, healthcare, legal, etc., contributing to the well-being of children and their families?

What stories were told and not told in Race to the Top (RTTT), the economic stimulus funding for education, and the Blueprint for Reform, the plan that guided the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), now ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act)? Market-oriented approaches—like school choice, data systems that link teacher performance and student performance, privately operated teacher education programs, and education as labor or economic security—frame these polices. Zhao (2016) asked the questions "What is education?" and "Where do you place the individual" (especially when the meaning of success is reduced to measurements)? Each of them—Kumashiro, Darling-Hammond, and Zhao—offered dialogue to create spaces for conversations around possibilities. Zhao asked, "Every time people say they're using this data or that data, we have to come back and ask, 'What's behind this data?'" Without asking this question, we tend to use the data to define the gap and justify actions that ultimately support the persistence of the very gap we are intending to eliminate. Kumashiro summarized so elegantly (and I agree): "To me, mindfulness is all about recognizing that being trapped in the commonsensical stories [is] exactly the cause of inequities at a systemic level and suffering at an individual level."

THE NEXT STAGE OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

> Seeing is not believing; believing is seeing! You see things, not as they are, but as you are.
>
> —Eric Butterworth,[6] *Spiritual Economics,* 1983

As a leadership coach, my interest in conscious practices in the policy arena goes beyond the use of mindfulness in the structural and technical design, construction, and implementation of policy. As mentioned earlier, I am curious about *us*, the people behind policy, as individuals and as a collective. I am interested in what scholars like Richard Chait, Professor of Higher Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education, calls *generative thinking*: "The way in which we first make sense of circumstances is in fact what triggers or spawns strategies, policies, decisions, and actions … Generative thinking is getting to the question before the question" (interviewed in Salls, 2005). He describes *generative* work as the questions behind values, beliefs, assumptions, and culture.

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6   Eric Butterworth (1916-2003) was a theologian, philosopher, lecturer, and bestseller author.

Both Darling-Hammond (2016) and Kumashiro talked about the adversarial, win-lose, and partisan environment of policy development. The tone, rhetoric, language, and narrative of the recent national Presidential race are illustrative of our policy leaders. Darling-Hammond's hope as President of the new Learning Policy Institute is to approach policy and political work "from a different place of human consciousness. … As people, we have these forces in us and we can bring our best selves into any organization … and we can also let our worst selves manifest." She talked about people attending to shared interests: "Policy has to be informed more by that deep appreciation and mindfulness of who each of us is as a consciousness, as a spiritual force, and how we are interdependent and connected together."

Zhao (2016) simply stated, "We have to talk about education in a different way." He meant beyond the language of measurement. Kumashiro and Darling-Hammond both talked about how our leaders work together as a collective, and the potential of mindfulness to create another way for how we function at the micro-level as a collective:

> So much of education policy work is not thinking about the microdynamics of those involved in policy construction and policy implementation. So often, it's seen as individualistic or combative, and I think it would be really interesting to think about the sum, to think about the institutions, and to think about the collectives that are guided by principles of mindfulness. In other words, what would institutions look like if our everyday interactions were guided by mindfulness practices? What would systems look like if that also characterized the ways that we interact with one another? You see, there's no question in my mind that the kind of policies we come up with would look very differently if … those of us who are creating those policies interacted with one another differently. So, even at the micro-level I think that mindfulness can so greatly change how we do our work, and I would love to see that conversation be expanded much more. (Kumashiro, 2016)

The notion of compassion is what surfaced for me from all three conversations. Though often *compassion*, *altruism*, and *empathy* are used interchangeably, compassion is defined as not only being able to take the perspective of and feel the emotions of others (empathy), but also having the desire to help (Greater Good Science Center, n.d.). It is that desire to help that makes for our strong engagement with others. Clearly mindfulness is about awareness of self, in the present moment, without judgment, but it is also about how we live in the world. It goes beyond engagement with self and one's own ideas, to engagement with others. As Kumashiro pointed out, the outcome and impact of healing relationships is relating to, interacting with, and engaging with people, community, and the world.

There is a movement within organizational development that speaks to creating organizations that are inspired by this notion of human consciousness. Across industries there are organizations that are changing the adversarial tone of leadership, governance, and policymaking, and redefining success to include doing good while doing well. Brian J. Robertson (2015) and Frederic Laloux (2014) have both captured the stories of organizations across the globe that are shaping a "both-and" culture and framework of operation different than that of "either-or." Relationships, wholeness (inner wellness that brings many forms of contemplative practice), and purpose or meaning are the assumptions and norms that drive this movement. For educational transformation that is truly equitable for all children, we have to ask, *What is the question before the question?*

SO WHAT? NOW WHAT?

> We have developed speed but we have shut ourselves in. Machinery that gives abundance has left us in want. Our knowledge has made us cynical, our cleverness hard and unkind. We think too much and feel too little. More than machinery we need humanity; more than cleverness we need kindness and gentleness. Without these qualities, life will be violent and all will be lost.
>
> —Charles Chaplin (speech from the Jewish barber in *The Great Dictator*)

> The function of freedom is to free someone else.
>
> —Toni Morrison

> You don't build relationships in the middle of the fight— you create deliberate space to understand each other's interests.
>
> —Amy Dean, Founder, Working Partnership

The intersection of the contemplative, social justice, and equity is what birthed the ICEA. When the ICEA was forming I had an early conversation with Barry Boyce (2015), editor-in-chief of *Mindful* magazine, who I met at the University of Virginia meeting and who shared my interest in and hope for the convergence of the contemplative, social justice, and equity in education. When I described what we were trying to do, starting with education, he commented that education writ large (K-12; undergraduate; professional education) was a good place to start because it has a unique role in

socialization and the ability to touch so many lives. He thought that education also had the ability of balancing a broader range of disciplines and fields with depth and focus. Education at its truest potential enables critical thinking, problem-posing and -solving, creativity, purpose and meaning for self and our relationship with others, the community, and the world. The very nature of education is co-active: that is, the interplay of being and doing that creates the space for multiple tensions to coexist.

The publication in which this article appears is just one vehicle for fostering a conversation on the intersection of the contemplative, social justice, and equity, specifically in education. My interest lies with the policy educational arena, but of course this sits within a larger system space. ICEA's Core Design members come with different perspectives and orientations to this work. We are scholars, activists, educators, and practitioners of wisdom traditions and conscious practices across the spectrum. My conversations with Kumashiro, Darling-Hammond, and Zhao further supported the many ideas that surfaced in our early conference-call meetings.

First, ICEA members and both Kumashiro and Darling-Hammond addressed the need for multiple conversations with an array of people from different perspectives, traditions, and backgrounds to grapple with these ideas and ask "relevant" questions. Darling-Hammond likened the idea to the global conversations of the Aspen Institute or the Bellagio Center at Rockefeller. Kumashiro (2016), too, spoke of this kind of gathering, but also proposed the possibility of many smaller, intentional conversations. Much like the ICEA, he offered three possible buckets for this work. He talked about a more ***academic or scholarly initiative*** for exploration via research and policy. He suggested also an ***initiative aimed at social consciousness*** for a broader audience.

> I'm very swayed by the idea that societies change in large part by social movements and not by simply changing policies. What defines social movements are not simply changes in policy and laws. They're actually shifts in the public consciousness, and sometimes they're very intentional shifts. The conservative movement is incredibly successful. Why? Because [they] captured public consciousness and not just public policy.

I think the one thing ICEA Core Design members agree on is that what we are proposing is a social movement. The social movement that ICEA is trying to bud goes across fields and industries, because everything is interconnected and interdependent.

Finally, Kumashiro (2016) proposed a ***professional development initiative*** that would offer different kinds of workshops, conferences, and forums to prepare a much larger number of people to be engaged in the conversation. He put forth the idea of a hub or "incubator" of sorts that could be a "synergistic" force that could bring together multiple initiatives that are "smartly interconnected and intra-connected."

All three conversations touched on the current moment we are presently in. Clearly it is time we step back and ask a different set of questions. We need to problematize, or inquire of ourselves

and those around us: how are we other-izing? More to the point, we need to be mindful of the *institutional-othering*, as Darling-Hammond (2016) named it. I close with some poignant comments from Kumashiro (2016):

> When we try to name the moment we're in, we impoverish our viewpoint and therefore limit ourselves to a problematic partial strategy if the way we name the moment isn't really connecting the dots between multiple things going on. … I think we need to be much more mindful of the dots that need to be connected to accommodate the multitude and diverse factors that make up the tapestry of our present dynamic and integrated landscapes. We need to be able to connect these dots in a much more sophisticated way; otherwise, we won't really be able to come up with strategies that respond to the moment.

Conversations on the intersection of educational policy and contemplative practice are clearly ongoing. Through further conversations, we will not only reshape, redefine, and reimagine how educational systems are designed and implemented, but also find common synergies across other professional communities to create just policies with equity and greater well-being for all.

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"Justice cannot be justice unless it is built on full and mature relationship and anchored in the contemplative dimension; dialogue cannot be dialogue without an active love of the world and a rich spiritual life (however one might label it); and mindfulness cannot be mindfulness unless it is moving toward justice though the medium of dialogue with others who are simultaneously the same and different."
- Stephen Rowe

Liberal Education as Vital Interdependence

Stephen Rowe

Grand Valley State University

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it. (Arendt, 1963, p.196)

I

Ours is an era of tension and violence, as the Modern Worldview, which came to dominate much of the planet in the past three hundred years, is found to be unjust, inhumane even to those who are its beneficiaries, and unsustainable—to the extent that it now elicits nihilism and even terrorism (among those local and abroad, from all kinds of communities). At the same time, a new worldview—sometimes referred to as a Relational Worldview—is struggling to emerge (Rowe, 2012). The Relational Worldview is challenging because it requires human beings to grow into a lifeway oriented to continuous growth within a pluralistic environment of mutual thriving. Challenge is accentuated by the fact that so many people are swept up in an almost automatic defensive-aggressive retreat from a public life which has become fearful and dangerous, into fundamentalism, nativism, and terrorism.

The underlying tension between these two worldviews—for all of the confusion which surrounds it—is frequently visible in education, where it is expressed as conflict between managerialism, the desperate attempt of the Modern to assert order, control, and accountability (Rowe, 2014), and a revived vision of liberal education centered not on information (or training) but on *transformation*, developed capacities, and global citizenship.

Three capacities which can bring us to the vitality at the center of the new vision are: Justice, Dialogue, and Mindfulness. In an ideal education they emerge, not though a traditional linear progression, but together, in an *interdependent co-arising*, something like that which is indicated by the essential Buddhist term *Pratiyasamutpada*. However, with particular people and particular contexts, one capacity or another might be the initial opening through which it becomes possible to enter and cultivate the vital interdependence.

In the U.S., we must begin with justice, because of its unique and ambitious claims about "liberty and justice for all" *and also* because of the history of our association with the imperialism of Modernity. But, again, it is all about the interdependence as locus of vitality, not adding components to what we are already doing but rebuilding from the ground up. For justice cannot be justice unless it is built on full and mature relationship and anchored in the contemplative dimension; dialogue cannot be dialogue without an active love of the world and a rich spiritual life (however one might label it); and mindfulness cannot be mindfulness unless it is moving toward justice though the medium of dialogue with others who are simultaneously the same and different.

Liberal education, then, becomes a multidimensional art, practice, and global ideal. As an *art*, it requires close attention to the particularity of those with whom we are working, and determination as to what focus is most conducive to their/our development. As a *practice*, it is not reducible to any one intellectual formulation or technique, hence requiring *phronesis* (Greek, practical judgment) or *upaya* (Sanskrit, skillful means), and an approach which is both pluralistic and pragmatic (Rowe, 2015a). As an ideal across the world, it becomes associated with a method through which human beings address the commonly shared challenge of gaining greater access to our strength and creativity.

So my aim in this short article is simply to describe these three capacities as bearers of a worldview and a new vision of liberal education from an American perspective, a vision that can be described as the space in which we have access to that deepest vitality on which our lives depend—call it love (King, 1967, pp. 190-193), Dao, God, Allah, or many other terms; access to that which is usually clouded and deflected by our fears, ignorance, grasping desire, and the injustice we either inflict or endure; access to the locus of our thriving in what Hannah Arendt describes as "the paradoxical plurality of unique beings … living as unique beings among equals" (Arendt, 1958, pp. 176, 178; Allen, 2016). My hope is that description of the three capacities might be helpful as we try to identify and support that which is truly promising in the frequently cluttered and confused discourse of higher education in our time.

II

Back, then, to Justice, Dialogue, Mindfulness—both simultaneously and in the order appropriate to their circumstances.[1]

Again, because of the aspirations of the U.S. as well as the injustices committed in its name, justice must come first. If we do not start with justice there is an elephant of inequality in the room which prevents direct and sincere communication. Moving beyond the Modern dichotomy between self-interest and self-sacrifice, genuine "service"—sometimes called community-based learning, so-

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1   See the traditional Japanese Zen "Six Oxherding Pictures," depicting stages in the relationship between the person and their "mind ox," where "the six are one and the one are six."

cial action, or even global learning—can extend regard for the other to justice, that quality of life which transcends equality of sameness to thriving in the paradox of "unique beings among equals." This is to point to a broader ecology that is synonymous with affirmation of life itself as a normative principle of unity in diversity. It is also to say that *justice embraces both dialogue and mindfulness*, as the inclusive and integrating virtue of a Relational Worldview.

It is centered on a point that is well understood by the great traditions: that the end of meditation is to stop "meditating" as an extraordinary activity separated and protected from the messiness of ordinary life. In other words, the ideal end of meditation is that it becomes our ordinary way of being. The end is to be meditating all the time, to "return" to caring or compassionate relationships with both other and self. Martin Luther King was eloquent on this utterly crucial point, one that came to be excluded from the Modern mindset:

> From time immemorial men [*sic*] have lived by the principle that 'self-preservation is the first law of life.' But this is a false assumption. I would say that other-preservation is the first law of life. It is the first law of life precisely because we cannot preserve self without being concerned about preserving other selves. The universe is so structured that things go awry if men [*sic*] are not diligent in their cultivation of the other-regarding dimension. (King, 1967, p. 80).

It is this same quality of life-giving relationship that is indicated by the classical Western love of the world (*amour mundi,* per the Hannah Arendt quote at the beginning of this essay) or the Confucian idea that "human-hearted persons establish others if they want to establish themselves" (Confucius, 1998, p. 110). Active caring and creative citizenship become both marks of true enlightenment and its most sophisticated forms of practice. Justice comes to be associated with the wholeness of the person, and hence the "integrative" and "transformational" dimensions of education, through which everything we have studied and become is brought to the essential moment of our authentic being in the world—our *presence*—and its ongoing refinement.

As is clear in the great traditions, genuine meditative practices issue not only in a calm and alert state of mindfulness, but also in an *actively compassionate* way of being in the world. Indeed, the great traditions provide perhaps the best explanation for the ultimate identity between mature mysticism and social action, engagement, or civic involvement—to use the language of contemporary higher education. To cite an old Zen saying: easy to meditate in the monastery, more difficult in the home, most difficult in the world. In other words, the fullness of meditation or enlightenment is not detached purity but the developed capacity to sustain that way of being in the midst of creative presence in ordinary life, exemplified by figures such as Gandhi, Mother Teresa, MLK, Thich Nhat Hanh, and the Dalai Lama. Enlightenment is found not only in the life of the monk doing mundane chores such as cleaning the toilet, but even more so in his effort to liberate others from suffering in its many forms. In Mahayana Buddhism, for example, the high religious figure, the Bodhisattva, is

not the one who drifts off in mystical detachment, but rather the one who *returns* to help others, the one whose embodiment is that of *Karuna* (compassion) rather than *Karma* (the accumulated consequence of past action driven by fear, ignorance, desire). *Prajna* (wisdom) **is** *Karuna!* Note the parallel, for example, with Christianity and its "commandment" (a confusing term, because this seems also to be our best advice as to how to live well) that we "love thy neighbor as thy self" (Mark 12:31).

The paradox of social justice or true service learning and its prominence in higher education today is that in teaching students the value of pursuing justice and serving others, we ultimately help them discover where life is rich, redemptive, and energizing, exhibiting the qualities of "thriving" or "flourishing" (two other key words in our time). When we approach justice with awareness of its full significance, reclaiming the relational vitality of life in human form, we help students and ourselves discover and adjust ourselves to embody the identity between justice, dialogue, and mindfulness/meditation, in a way of being that is constituted by a complex and endlessly unique pulsing of nonetheless identifiable, interdependent aspects.

The second capacity/practice is *Dialogue*. Moving beyond the dichotomy of rote learning and propositional logic versus assertions of unexamined, unrefined personal preference (the latter being the typical liability of what used to be called progressive, alternative, or experimental education), dialogue entails opening up the capacity for understanding and "reflection" on a variety of positions—including one's own—on any given issue, as well as the ability to be responsive to emergent truth as an essential quality of full and healthy relationship, democracy, and mature thinking. It indicates the ability to thrive in a pluralistic environment where encounter with the "other" is welcomed as opportunity rather than suffered as threat; where "diversity," "inclusiveness," and "multiculturalism" are not mere concessions to the fragile interdependence of the 21st century, but positive values to be nurtured and celebrated. Is this not precisely what Socrates, for example, had in mind when he advocated "the examined life," the life of examining both self and others on the most important questions in life, as "the very best thing a person can do" (Plato, 1985, p. 23)? The life he advocated is associated with contemporary references to "reflexivity" and "critical thinking" as something much greater than the ability to recognize bad logic and/or psychological manipulation, something more like the exercise of a kind of *discernment* indicated by those traditional terms referred to above: *phronesis* and *upaya*.

However, Daniel Yankelovich (1999) and others note that the expanded capacity for dialogue and a new adulthood, one which is more alert, more deeply responsive, and less ego-driven by aggressive/defensive impulses, is not one that most Americans are capable of at this time, though it is one that is being pushed more or less effectively by many efforts at educational reform (p. 17).

The third capacity/practice is *Mindfulness.* Moving beyond the dichotomies between theoretical and applied (or "productive") knowledge or liberal versus professional education, here we are talking about engagement of a practice that allows us to have access to deeper sources of knowing and action, and to cultivate a way of being we have come to associate with "mindfulness" or the full

presence of "attentiveness" (Zajonc, 2013). The world and its varied traditions contain many such contemplative practices, with remarkable similarities and differences. Essentially, they often involve the paradox of clearing and calming one's mind and thinking nothing or not attaching to thoughts, sometimes with the aid of a very specific object of mental focus (such as a "mantra" or one's breath). The resulting state of calm focus leads to the Socratic "not knowing" (*aporia*) which becomes an opening to a more profound level of awareness—more like the *source* of knowing, rather than the objects of knowledge which flow from that source.

These practices are often simple, though never easy. And while there can be many arguments about the true nature of such practices, no practice can be fruitful apart from the (often overlooked) actual experience of entering into it and then introducing refinements as they are discovered along the path of engagement. On that path—and from the perspective of others who witness the transformation of those who are walking it—meditation is extremely persuasive in terms of stress reduction, emotional stability, concentration, compassion, and effective relationships at all levels. There develops a very significant change in the overall quality of presence following directly from its practice. The persuasiveness of meditation is aided by the recent findings of neuroscience, as well as the continuing reappropriation of those mystical traditions that had been dismissed in the tempest of modernity (Barbezat & Bush, 2014).

III

All this—these three practices and capacities—are simple enough to understand intellectually, and perhaps even enjoyable to think about, though they are by no means easy to grapple with existentially because of the *developmental* aspect, which means that we are stretched beyond our ordinary and inherited ways of thinking, speaking, and acting. For this same reason, this way of being is also vulnerable, as reflected in Alfred North Whitehead's (1933) statement that "great ideas [like contemplative knowing] enter history with disgusting alliances, but the greatness remains, nerving the race in its slow ascent" (p. 19). Contemporary programs in U.S. higher education that link meditation and mindfulness to service learning and the justice dimension through authentic civic engagement and social activism, often by way of vague "interdisciplinarity," are therefore especially vulnerable to confusion, incomplete understanding, cliché, surface application, and those "disgusting alliances" to which Whitehead refers.

We come back to the issue of cultivation of the critical linkage being dependent on at least two things: 1) irreducibly particular circumstances and relationships, and 2) teacher selection and training that was rare in the past (or unacknowledged, or even at odds with the process of acquiring a Ph.D., let alone becoming an administrator/manager). These, of course, run parallel with the uncomfortable fact that authentic fostering of the values of inclusion, diversity, equity, and otherness requires sensibilities and awareness—and maturity—that were also rare among faculty in the past, and certainly no more deliverable in quick faculty training programs (which too often offend rather

than inspire) than they are reducible to managerial protocol. This is not at all to imply that these relationships and dynamics cannot be *evaluated,* but that finding the faculty, support staff, and students we need in order to embody and evaluate this vision of culture and education that is struggling to emerge in our time may be our most profound challenge. How, in the environment of contemporary higher education, can we identify and then support those who are developed or developing in the ways the world needs, and then place and support them in positions where they can do real good? Maybe a Ph.D. from an elite institution is no longer a sufficient answer (and perhaps never was one).

Fortunately, there have emerged educational leaders, such as the feminist and philosopher of education Elizabeth Minnich (2014), who are able to "make a case for an overlap of thoughtfulness and mindfulness as arts and ways of being for which we can purposefully educate, not as in some traditions to win release from the world but, entirely on the contrary, to accept our responsibilities as conscious beings affected by and affecting the worlds around us with every breath, action, and word" (p. 162). The work of Parker Palmer and his Center for Courage and Renewal (http://www.couragerenewal.org) should be noted in this regard as well (Palmer, 1998; Palmer, Zajonc, & Scribner, 2010).

On this same question as to whom we can look to for resources and support, there are two other sources I would point to as especially reliable in terms of insight and practice. The first is the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (http://www.acmhe.org), whose parent organization is the host of this publication. Arising from the emergence of the new interdisciplinary field of cognitive science and a rapidly emerging complementarity between modern scientific rationality and the practical wisdom of the contemplative traditions, the mission of ACMHE is "to educate active citizens who will support a more just and compassionate society." This is accomplished through "recovery and development of the contemplative dimension of teaching, learning and knowing," leading to "an ethics of genuine compassion" (Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, 2016).

A second agency that exemplifies the crucial interdependence between meditation, dialogue, and justice is the YESplus program and its "Art of Living" course (http://www.YESplus.org). Arising out of the Hindu tradition and also drawing on the resources of contemporary cognitive science, YES stands for "Yoga, Empowerment, and Service." It is distinctly responsive to the linkage between meditation/mindfulness and justice/service—working to a point of merging the two activities into a fully transformed and integrated way of being. Examples of how YESplus has been joined with the particularities of local circumstances and initiatives can be seen at Cornell, Stanford, and Brown.

So I am proposing a simple clarification of some of the more sensitive terminology of our time, and some examples as to how they might be embodied in an emerging, post-postmodern Relational Worldview and a vision of the fully formed youth and adults we so urgently need. And, as an essential quality of that worldview, I am seeking to illuminate some of the developmental pathways our more exemplary students travel in the direction of becoming these more fully developed human beings.

However, clarification must be followed immediately by a caution, especially when developmental movement is involved: as we practice the teaching art through which we guide students, we must be careful not to let "pathways" fall into yet another simple linearity, a risk that runs high in an era that is also characterized by the urge to quantify and standardize. As distinct from these late, more or less desperate assertions of the Modern Worldview against the chaos of our times, we need to insist, with all the creativity and persuasiveness we can muster, that, again, the practice of cultivating the new adulthood is *an art.* It is one that can benefit greatly from science and technique in many forms, especially today through the discoveries of neuroscience. But, insofar as it is humans and not machines we are cultivating, art must be the overarching quality of education.

In what might be the most profound challenge to the technological era, we can only reclaim and develop our humanity through the inherently unpredictable yet ultimately trustworthy dynamics of relationality. This point seems improbable, even naïve, in the world as we receive it today. And yet we have the advantage of ever greater sophistication as to what it means to find ourselves alive ethically, aesthetically, and religiously, as well as politically, in the midst of others with whom we share our planet's magnificent paradox[2] of similarity and difference.

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2   Note the theme of paradox in this article. I want to suggest that learning to live with paradox as a gateway to that which is vital in life is essential to the development which is integral to the Relational Worldview, and that this, though ambitious, does not imply or lead to anti-intellectualism. On the contrary, it points to the appropriate function of the intellect as a powerful but limited capacity, and to an idolatry of the intellect which came to dominate and finally paralyze modern life.

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Stephen Rowe's interests are post-traditional Western philosophy, Comparative/Chinese Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of Education, Pragmatism, Ethics, and Socrates/Introduction to Philosophy. An award-winning teacher, he is currently working on the question of liberal education in China, in conjunction with consultations at Jiao Tong and other Chinese universities. He has lectured in Japan and China, and is author of many books, most recently *Overcoming America / America Overcoming: Can We Survive Modernity?* Previous books include *Leaving and Returning* (Bucknell, 1989), *Rediscovering the West* (SUNY Press, 1994, also in Chinese), *The Vision of James* (Element Books, 1996, also in Japanese), Living Philosophy (Paragon House, 2002), and *Wandering*, with Peimin Ni (Dong Fang in China and Art Media Resources in U.S.). Dr. Rowe earned an M.Th., an M.A., and a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago, and holds a B.A. from Colgate University.

One Field, Different Doors In: Contemplative Higher Education, Transformative Education, and Education for Social Justice

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INTRODUCTION.

Like every other dimension of American life, higher education is facing a full spectrum of challenges. As neoliberal values replace the traditional values of academia, all of the old rules are being rewritten, placing less emphasis on learning for the sake of learning and civic development, and more emphasis on such short-term deliverables as job placement statistics. At the same time, increasing demographic diversity has met changing consciousness regarding equity in education, leading to increased calls for changes to make learning communities more effective, and just, for all.

In the following pages, I will discuss some of the ways that three new approaches to higher education—transformative education, contemplative education, and education for social justice—may be seen as different dimensions of a single effort to bring about fundamental change. Together, these approaches invite and encourage work by faculty and facilitators grounded in foundational practices and commitments that rely on and derive from a profound degree of self-awareness. I call upon educators drawn to one or more of these areas to see and experience the ways in which each may complement and inform the other.

In my experience, in addition to being more effective for a broader swath of our students, classroom-based learning communities that have the strength to deal with crisis and controversy—learning communities that are inclusive, identity-safe, and empowered to address social injustice as it arises—are *just* learning communities. And because they are also more *resilient* classrooms, they expand on the possibilities for justice that persists over time.

CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES AND PEDAGOGY AS DEEPLY TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

If education is the very practice of freedom, as Paulo Freire wrote, then professional educators need much more than knowledge and skill to educate others well. We need self-awareness. We need ongoing means of exercising reflexivity: the capacity to see more clearly our own conditioning and socialization, and to act in ways that transform them.

Most of us need at least some help developing the necessary degrees of self-awareness and reflexivity. We must become more conscious of our own positionality, our own blind spots, our own biases. We must sense all of this alongside a heightened sense of awareness of our inherent inter-connectedness, the nature of being that exists beyond what may be reduced to grades, resumes, and CVs.

The development of these capacities and awareness in each of us requires ongoing commitment to self-care and self-development. Developing in these areas is supported by engagement with our own contemplative practices—personally, interpersonally, and systemically.

I came to contemplative pedagogy in an attempt to develop greater capacities to connect with my students, and to do so in ways that would deepen the sense of meaning and values-alignment I experienced in my work. Indeed, in over 17 years of teaching law, I've come to see the following as essential to developing the capacities necessary to teach diverse classrooms with effectiveness:

- a "fierce compassion";
- an "inclusive definition of 'merit'";
- a "Pedagogy of Vulnerability"—ongoing self-reinvention in the classroom;
- honoring "struggling (suffering) together"; and
- personal commitments to practice ongoing self-care and self-development.

In the following few pages, I discuss some of the ways that contemplative education helps develop these capacities, encompassing education for social justice and the goals of transformative education.

CONTEMPLATIVE EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AS TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

Teaching in the classrooms of the 21st century can be thrilling, but it can be (and often is) fraught with new kinds of challenges as well. Among these is the ethical imperative that we make our classrooms safe for students from all backgrounds. This foundational orientation is enhanced by contemplative pedagogy.

What is contemplative pedagogy? There is no hard consensus on this new field, but some common themes include teaching and learning practices that

- link "inner" experience with "outer" subject of inquiry;
- expand notions of how we know and of what knowledge matters to include 1st-, 2nd- & 3rd- person epistemologies from a range of experiential bases;
- cultivate capacity to hold tension and uncertainty, not rushing to fill space with words or analysis;
- cultivate capacity for working with ambiguity and complexity, including "both/and" thinking (resisting false dichotomies);
- foster awareness of inherent interconnectedness and that "we're all in this together";
- support working with bias, stereotyping, and the tendency to discount so-called "Others"; and
- cultivate learning communities as spaces for continuously "waking up" (Barbezat and Bush, 2012).

> A GREAT NEED
>
> Out
> Of a great need
> We are all holding hands
> And climbing.
> Not loving is a letting go.
> Listen,
> The terrain is Far too
> Dangerous
> For
> That.
>
> ~ Hafiz
> (translated by Daniel Ladinsky)

THE ROLE OF MINDFULNESS.

Although they are only one form of contemplative practice, the practices we call "mindfulness" invite bringing nonjudgmental awareness to the present moment. Derived primarily from Asian traditions and translated by various scholars and practitioners for secular application, the particular practices associated with this term in the West vary in depth and groundedness in the ethics and compassion of the traditional sources.

That said, these practices have repeatedly been shown to increase focus and concentration as well as emotion-regulation, all of which can assist us in developing the all-important capacity to "bring back a wandering mind." Moreover, research shows that openmindedness to others and resilience improve as a result. For example:

- In 2010, a team of researchers (Jha et al.) from the University of Pennsylvania and Georgetown University found that mindfulness improves the capacity to rebound from stressful incidents.

- In 2014, a team of researchers (Lueke & Gibson) out of Central Michigan University found evidence that mindfulness reduces implicit bias.

- In 2015, a team from the U.K. (Weger et al.) found that mindfulness decreases the derogatory impacts of stereotyping and stereotype threats.

What is engaged mindfulness? What are engaged mindfulness practices?
Mindfulness practices have been further refined by those who practice *engaged mindfulness*. By heightening the focus on mindfulness in and for communities and populations in distress, engaged mindfulness practices further assist in building resources among teachers that support the development of resilient and just classrooms and broader learning communities.

I use the term *engaged mindfulness* to refer to the work of taking mindfulness into the world and adapting it to serve the needs of marginalized communities within and across a variety of settings—including classrooms. As it relates to our work in academia, some themes include: teaching with compassion; redefining merit; developing the capacity to be vulnerable; seeing the value in struggle; and personal practice, public love, and altruism.

A. TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH FIERCE LOVE AND COMPASSION: THE ROLE OF CARING IN OUR CLASSROOMS.

It may surprise you that I'll begin with compassion and not some comparatively "hard" capacity or knowledge base like multicultural competency or a background in cultural studies. We will come back to these in a moment.

It is essential to highlight within ourselves, and perhaps even develop further, a sense of what my friend Walter Link of the Global Leadership Academy calls "fierce compassion." Fierce compassion is the will to act on behalf of others based on a sense that everyone matters. Some describe the compassion at the heart of such systems of accountability as the Truth and Reconciliation process, most famously applied in post-apartheid South Africa in similar terms.

B. MERIT REDEFINED.

Narrow definitions of merit have held sway for a long time in our culture broadly, not merely in academic culture. Highly if not hyper-individualistic, these definitions focus on evidence that individual students are capable of demonstrating proficiency in areas most readily demonstrated by individual assessment measures. They may lead us to decide too soon who among our students are more worthy and which ones deserve more of our time. They may lead us to undervalue traits that are critically important for effective leadership in a crisis-laden, diverse world: traits such as wisdom, judgment, empathy, and ethical rigor (Hayes, 2013).

But even worse, such narrow definitions can make us complicit in a system which rewards systemic privilege and supports the kind of traditional, hyper-individualistic ways of being in the classroom and in the broader world that have played an important role in leading us to the global crises we're facing in the first place. Traditional notions of merit may further "the desire to differentiate and dominate"—traits that themselves arise out of a lack of compassion for self and others.

Enhancing "Critical Thinking" with "Constructive Thinking"

In *constructivist* approaches to learning, the learning process is tailored to assist students in constructing new knowledge based on what they already know and understand. Transformative learning is an approach grounded in the belief that major shifts in students' perspectives are possible and critical. Inclusive and identity-safe classrooms are classrooms in which everyone matters, and in which the capacity to collaborate is seen as a high value. They are classrooms where we spend time not merely *thinking the world apart* (i.e., analyzing its discrete phenomena in an effort to understand each more effectively), but also *thinking the world together* (i.e., deepening our understanding by working toward ways of "seeing" that reflect the insights of everyone).

C. PEDAGOGIES OF VULNERABILITY, INTERIORITY, AND IDENTITY-SAFETY

The Pedagogy of Vulnerability challenges teachers to render their frames of knowing, feeling, and doing more vulnerable. The approach encourages those of us who teach to

> open [yourself], contextualize yourself in social constructs and systems, be a co-learner, admit to not knowing and be human. A pedagogy of vulnerability is about taking risks to deepen knowing together. As teachers, we explore how and when to share our stories and personal experience to deepen learning and to model self-examination … The approach helps build a climate of trust and self-reflection … (Brantmeier, 2013)

Inclusive, identity-safe classrooms are caring classrooms: caring about what students are learning, and caring about students as human beings. Caring made visible is a new norm, as is the explicit

TWO KINDS OF INTELLIGENCE

There are two kinds of intelligence: one acquired, as a child in school memorizes facts and concepts from books and from what the teacher says, collecting information from the traditional sciences as well as from the new sciences.

With such intelligence you rise in the world. You get ranked ahead or behind others in regard to your competence in retaining information. You stroll with this intelligence in and out of fields of knowledge, getting always more marks on your preserving tablets.

There is another kind of tablet, one already completed and preserved inside you. A spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness in the center of the chest. This other intelligence does not turn yellow or stagnate. It's fluid, and it doesn't move from outside to inside through conduits of plumbing-learning.

This second knowing is a fountainhead from within you, moving out.

~ Rumi (translated by Coleman Barks)

willingness to co-learn with students. Each of these postures requires the capacity to be vulnerable. Moreover, this approach supports teachers in their efforts to model calculated "risk-taking." These efforts may include

- sharing relevant aspects of our own experience;
- asking genuine questions;
- being willing to "not know";
- building trust within learning communities; and
- both "chutzpah (courage) and humility" (Palmer, 2011): each student's voice matters, so all must speak; and no student's voice should weigh too heavily, so all need to start with respect for others.

Identity-safe classrooms assert critical diversity of perspectives as a value. Diversity of backgrounds, and particularly the presence of students from traditionally-marginalized groups, is valued. These classrooms recognize the reality that structural inequality and institutional discrimination are features of our own schools and classrooms too, and must be actively countered.

To that end, we want to work to make privileges—white privilege and other privileges—visible in the context of our specifically-situated learning communities, and where appropriate and possible, do the difficult work of dismantling them. For example, consider the recent controversy faced by Princeton University, whose affiliation with Woodrow Wilson and his genocidal policies toward Native Americans led to recent and well-publicized criticism. The effort, not welcomed by everyone, seeks to reconstitute Princeton in the image of those who have contributed to its greatness, whose values include inclusivity and equity.

In addition, in identity-safe classrooms, relationships among students are important to student learning and well-being, and learning is student-centered. Learning explicitly connects the "big story" of the course to the "little story" of each students' own life (Palmer, 2011). Finally, teachers engaged in this work seek curiosity, responsibility, and agency in the classroom as models for what is possible beyond.

These approaches go against the grain of the traditional model in which the role of the teacher is "sage on the stage," the cult of expertise holds that teachers know all and students always learn from the teacher, and no relationships (other than student-to-teacher) in the classroom really matter. Teachers need patience and true self-confidence to hold spaces in which students can develop the trust in themselves and one another necessary for transformative learning to take place. And we must realize that whether and to what extent anyone learns anything in particular is not necessarily completely up to us. Development and transformation take place according to timelines that do not fall neatly into the shape of a semester. Thus, we should resist an over-mechanistic notion of assessing some of the more subtle dimensions of what we seek to develop in these spaces.

D. VALUING THE STRUGGLE (SUFFERING) TOGETHER.

Pain, difficulty, challenge and discomfort are inevitably part of our lives. They are particularly likely to arise when we turn toward issues of social justice in our classrooms and on our broader campuses (DiAngelo, 2007). After all, we have each suffered or experienced privileges in different measure and to different degrees. Raising awareness of these issues can lead to a range of painful emotions and reactivities. Infusing our work with compassion and mindfulness can be particularly important as we struggle with these unpleasant dimensions of our experience.

Working more effectively through our suffering together in the mixed settings of our classrooms builds resiliency, trust, and a sense of our capacity to do so in mixed settings beyond the classroom. Contemplative pedagogy can assist in developing the capacity to create spaces where our suffering may be honored and held with compassion, and where all of our particular challenges may be met with capacity and with heart. Indeed, simply recognizing that suffering is a part of the work of addressing injustice and growth is essential; and transformation and even joy may nevertheless result. A contemplative approach to this work enables the holding of hard challenges with a suppleness that permits staying engaged over time—a capacity for perseverance necessary to true and lasting change.

E. PUBLIC LOVE, ALTRUISM, AND JUSTICE

Care and concern for the wellbeing of others is as essential to social justice pedagogy as it is to contemplative pedagogy. Underrated virtues and values in our society, such affective dimensions are important foundations for well-being, as research has shown. This is not to say that we don't make room for anger or outrage! As we look upon injustice in the world, the full range of emotions will no doubt arise. Helping our students to deal with all of them more effectively—to transform them, to manage them as we continue to work for good—is an important dimension of contemplative social justice pedagogy. It is a foundation for building the capacity for caring more effectively for others.

The good news is this: studies have shown over the last two decades that each of these—compassion and altruism—can be increased in us by meditation practices. In addition, mindfulness assists with self-regulation and letting go of reactivity, two practices essential to working effectively with stress caused by circumstances and interactions with others. Engaged mindfulness practice in our classrooms promotes inquiry into underlying concepts and assumptions, such as the concept of "merit." It encourages an inclusive definition of merit and rethinking the notion that "some of us are smarter" and more deserving than others, creating more openness and capacity to work with all of our students and colleagues more effectively.

CONCLUSION

Inclusive classrooms—learning communities in which every voice truly matters—are resilient classrooms. *They are identity-safe: not always comfortable, but spaces where risk-taking is valued, love is visible, and bravery can grow through this sort of learning and collaborating together.* And they are more effective classrooms, providing at least one means of addressing performance gaps and making classrooms themselves sites of just and beloved community. Thus, educators must consider ways of developing the capacity to offer such classrooms.

Consider the ethical dimensions of this call to engage with our students differently. This project underscores that diverse students—white students, students of color, LGBTQ students, differently abled students, students from adverse backgrounds, etc.—all deserve more than desegregation or token representation among students, faculty, and staff. Inclusive, identity-safe learning is what the "more" looks like.

Contemplative education is key to developing socially just classrooms capable of delivering transformative education that works for all. Engaged mindfulness practices are one key to making our classrooms safer, braver and more effective for all of our students while at the same time supporting both teachers and students in transformative growth. Contemplative education, transformative education, and education for social justice must be seen as three different doors into the same room, one in which being there together marks the changes in the world so many seek.

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