PENUMBRA
An interdisciplinary journal of critical and creative inquiry

Special Issue: Exploring Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Studies
Volume 8, Issue 1
Summer 2021

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Penumbra is the official, refereed, scholarly journal of Union Institute & University's Ph.D. Program in Interdisciplinary Studies. The journal is published at regular intervals and dedicated to challenging traditional academic and creative disciplinary boundaries in the context of social change.

Penumbra's purpose is to promote theoretically informed engagements with concrete issues and problems. The journal publishes socially engaged, innovative, creative and critical scholarship with a focus on ethical and political issues in education, humanities, public policy, and leadership. *Penumbra* is a peer-edited and peer-reviewed journal committed to spanning the divide between scholarly and creative production, and to fostering work from graduate students, junior scholars and emerging artists, in addition to more established critical and creative voices.

On the Cover: "My view of the sun" by Jocelyn Rainey from *In My Genes Series*

Media: Demin, spray paint, acrylic paint, adhesive

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Submission Guidelines

Penumbra: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Critical and Creative Inquiry, a peer-reviewed, online journal of Union Institute & University's Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Studies program, is seeking submissions for its next issue. We have instituted a *rolling submission policy*; however, to be considered for the eight volume submissions are due by January 15, 2021.

Penumbra aims to promote social change through theoretically informed engagements with concrete issues and problems. We publish socially engaged, innovative, creative, and critical scholarship, with a focus on ethical, political, and aesthetic issues in education, humanities, public policy, and leadership.

Penumbra invites scholarship of all kinds, creative nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and visual works that address any aspect of the journal's mission and scope. We seek submissions from graduate students, junior scholars, and emerging artists, in addition to more established critical and creative voices. All submissions undergo double-blind peer review.

We do not accept previously published work. Simultaneous submissions are acceptable, but the editors should be notified immediately upon a work's acceptance for publication elsewhere.

Submit two Word attachments by email. In the first document, include the title of the work, author name(s), email(s), brief bio(s), and a 200-250 word article abstract in the first document. In a second document, submit the article for consideration. Author name(s) should not appear anywhere on the manuscript in compliance with our double-blind peer-review process.

Please email the submission package to penumbra.editor@myunion.edu.

Scholarly Submissions

Submit as Microsoft Word compatible documents (do not submit PDFs). Article manuscripts should be double-spaced and between 4,000 to 6,000 words in length. Please follow MLA guidelines for in-text citations and bibliography.

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Submissions may include a maximum of five poems or flash prose works; a single short story or novel chapter of no more than 6,000 words; or creative non-fiction prose of up to 6,000 words. Submit as Microsoft Word compatible documents (do not submit PDFs). Interdisciplinary text-based works in non-traditional formats are also acceptable. Please query the editors at penumbra.editor@myunion.edu regarding text-based projects that do not meet our submission requirements.

Images and Diagrams Included in Manuscripts

All line diagrams and photographs are termed "Figures" and should be referred to as such in the manuscript. They should be numbered consecutively and presented in a form suitable for immediate reproduction (i.e. not requiring redrawing). They should be saved at 300 dpi and should be no smaller than 5 inches (130mm) on the shortest side. Images should be submitted as .jpg or .eps files. All figures should have short descriptive captions typed on a separate sheet.

Visual Art/Interdisciplinary Arts Projects

All visual artwork and proposed artists' projects must be submitted electronically. A proposal for an artist's project or portfolio should comprise a one-page written description accompanied by ten or fewer uploaded sample images. Also acceptable are hyperlinks to an online gallery of up to ten images, or up to three videos/multimedia pieces. Projects that do not meet these requirements will also be considered. Please contact the co-editors regarding artists' projects that do not meet our submission requirements. If an original artwork for *Penumbra* is proposed, samples of comparable work should be submitted along with a one-page written proposal. All work must be submitted electronically. Please contact the co-editors if you have concerns about submission format.

Note from the Editor

Kristen N. McNutt

I want to welcome you to this inaugural special issue of Penumbra, "Exploring Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Studies." This is, I hope, a start to exploring the rich and diverse scholarship emerging from the Interdisciplinary Studies Ph.D. program at the Union Institute & University. Union's Ph.D. program brings together not only diverse scholars, but many scholar-practitioners dedicated to pursuing social justice, engaging difference, and/or the creative process. My goal was to create an opportunity to share the scholarship from the different concentrations, specializations, and certificates offered at Union. I am excited that my proposal was embraced with such zeal by the Ph.D. program and the Penumbra Editorial Team. This issue would not happen without the dedication of A.C. Panella, Associate Editor and Bryon Garner, Assistant Editor. I am very grateful to Dr. St Stewart Burns for agreeing to partner with Penumbra to showcase the scholarship emerging from the Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Studies.

In this Issue…

Special Issue: Introduction

Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Studies

Stewart Burns, Ph.D.

For a dozen years Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Studies has sparkled as a jewel in the crown of UIU's Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program—a beacon of our commitment to social justice, human rights, and the health of our "world house." So it is fitting that MLK Legacy Studies has produced this special issue of *Penumbra* to display scholarly work by two recent MLK Studies alums, three current students, and a faculty member. We want to express our appreciation to Panella, Kristen McNutt, and their co-editors for initiating this project and editing the articles.

Dr. Linda Kligman (UIU Ph.D. 2020) starts us out with "Engaging for Positive Peace." An experienced leader in the field of Restorative Practices, Dr. Kligman was largely responsible for bringing Restorative Practices (aka Restorative Justice) into the curriculum of our Ethical & Creative Leadership (ECL) concentration. Her article tells the tale of three notable civil rights leaders, Anna Arnold Hedgeman, Ella Baker, and Dorothy Cotton, and how they employed storytelling and participatory learning to empower African Americans, especially women, to engage in the Black freedom movement; and how their work prefigured Restorative Practices that first emerged in the 1970s.

Rev. Lester McCorn, longtime justice activist, AME Zion minister, and president of Clinton College in Rock Hill, South Carolina, sets the record straight about Dr. King's commitment to transforming racial capitalism into a democratic socialist society dedicated both to racial and economic justice. In "A Vision of the Promised Land: The Enduring Legacy of MLK's Grassroots Campaign for Economic Justice," he suggests that Black Lives Matter and other current movements do not fully understand MLK's legacy and have much to learn from the revolutionary MLK.

Terae Soumah practices social justice leadership as a Ph.D. student at UIU and in her adopted homeland of Congo, where she works as an educator and artist. In "Youth Movements Tackle 'Big Man' Leadership in the Democratic Republic of Congo" she

writes about Congolese youth movements that played a decisive role in achieving Congo's first free and fair presidential election in 2018, stressing the movements' success in forming alliances.

Rev. Dr. Antoni Sinkfield (UIU Ph.D. 2020), a prominent pastor in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), senior minister of Payne Chapel AME Church in Nashville, writes in "Nashville Organized for Action and Hope: A Representation of the Beloved Community" about an extraordinary citywide alliance for social justice that he co-founded and helps lead. Rev. Dr. Sinkfield ascribes NOAH's success to their broad civic alliance and their distinctive listening sessions (both intra- and inter-organizational) that prioritize one-to-one conversations at all levels.

Rev. Gerald Young, a seasoned Baptist preacher, prolific author, and university enrollment manager, has devoted his life to fostering "college behind bars," prison education for disadvantaged inmates, and has already helped implement several such programs, including at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). His article, "Leadership in Prison Educational Programs at HBCUs" aims at persuading higher education leaders to initiate "college behind bars" through their schools, specifying the reasons, rationales, and the required steps to make it happen.

Finally, in "Reimagining American Democracy: Community not Chaos," I offer a strategic vision of how grassroots democracy can be organized through movement alliances and federations into an alternative to our dominant system of electoral-representative democracy, aimed not at replacing but transforming and democratizing the dominant system. A longtime nonviolent activist and historian of the Black freedom movement, I chair the ECL concentration and teach in MLK Legacy Studies.

Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Studies is currently going through a process of rethinking, "reinventing," and long-term planning, with vital student involvement. We hope that Ph.D. students interested in joining us, or finding out more, will contact our distinguished Coordinator, Dr. Michael Simanga (Michael.Simanga@myunion.edu), who also teaches in Public Policy & Social Change.

Engaging for Positive Peace

Linda Kligman, Ph.D.

The leadership of Martin Luther King Jr. has been confabulated into sound bites etching his "I Have A Dream Speech" into history textbooks as if that persuaded a more just society (Theoharis 2018, 9). But in this day, like previous generations, it would be a mistake to think rhetoric builds inclusive coalitions. During that iconic March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, King and his fellow organizers refused to let women leaders march in front with their male contemporaries. Even Rosa Parks, who along with King won the dignity to sit at the front of the bus, was told to walk in back of the men (Scanlon 2016; Theoharis 2018). Anna Arnold Hedgeman, who recruited tens of thousands of White people for the March, intentionally reaching across embittered racial divides, recalls crying when King addressed the crowd. Hedgeman wished "he had said 'We Have A Dream' acknowledging the collective labor, the collective joy, and the collective sadness, the multitude of women and men whose dreams had drawn, led, and summoned so many to the nation's capital that day" (as cited by Scanlon 2016, 169). How leaders share their power and make connections is part of the fundamental inquiry of Restorative Practices. Anna Arnold Hedgeman, Ella Baker, and Dorothy Cotton — all Black women leaders modeling engagement — inculcate a more participatory social movement.

Scholarship around leadership has evolved from personal charisma to more inclusive and relational paradigms (Carsten and Uhl-Bien 2016; McManus and Perruci 2015; Pearce and Conger 2003). Margaret Wheatley reflects, "I have learned that in this exquisitely connected world, it's never a question of 'critical mass.' It's always about critical connections" (2006, 45). Our neurology primes humans to live in relation to others from dependent babies to empathetic adults; it is from social relationships we find our motivations (Lieberman 2013, 20). This paper relays stories of women whose herstories are often not included in King's legacy. Their skills of engagement were effective in creating a wider civil rights coalition engendering a sense of belonging. Engagement can activate participation. When one does it well, it folds invisibly into

authentic communication and goes unnoticed. When not done well, it creates alienation or resentment and fails to create an inclusive society.

Restorative Practices: Envisioning Positive Peace

Locked up in jail, King beseeches White moderates to join in a coalition creating a "positive peace which is the presence of justice" and not to settle for a "negative peace which is the absence of tension" (1992a, 91). Similarly, Restorative Practices sets a trajectory toward a positive peace using relationships to repair harm, build social capital, foster social connections, and achieve greater social discipline (Wachtel 2013, 1). John Braithwaite, a seminal scholar in Restorative Practices, frames "constructive conflict" (1989, 185) as an opportunity to re-establish relationships when people are harmed. Ella Baker, like King and Braithwaite, saw conflict as an opportunity to transform society. Referencing her work with the students' nonviolent sit-ins at lunch counters, she reflects that she was:

> Concerned with something much bigger than a hamburger… not limited to a drive for personal freedom, or even freedom for the Negro in the South… [but] the moral implications of racial discrimination for the "whole world." (Theoharis 2018, 125)

Nonviolent action makes tensions visible for the purpose of shining light on a path toward justice.

Restorative Practices relies on widening circles of participation to form a more cohesive sense of belonging (Bhandari 2018; DeWolf and Geddess 2019; Fellegi 2016). Leaders convene people in circle dialogues. Instead of defining conflict against stated policy – which King points out might be fundamentally unjust – they invite people to share their stories, welcoming both reason and emotion to express harm and impact. According to Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action, we need both reason and emotion to create shared understandings and achieve social order (Finlayson 2005, 40). This becomes possible when people voluntarily participate in dialogue circles and listen to one another.

Importantly, King insists we separate the deed from the doer and proposes nonviolence — instead of retaliation — proposes nonviolence to develop new understandings:

> The nonviolent approach does not immediately change the heart of the oppressor. It first does something to the hearts and souls of those committed to it. It gives them self-respect; it calls up resources of strength and courage they

> did not know they had. Finally, it reaches the opponent and so stirs his conscience that reconciliation becomes a reality. (King, Jr. 1958, 215)

Likewise, Restorative Practices is not built on punishment, but instead values each person's potential and strives for reintegration through discourse (Braithwaite 1989; Zehr 2015; Wenzel, Okimoto, and Cameron 2012). Restorative Practices honors the fundamental human need for belonging, voice, and agency to respect human dignity (Bailie 2019, 5). Though King, Hedgeman, Baker, and Cotton shared some values and coordinated their efforts, the women modeled an alternative approach in how they invited engagement. This framework of dignity provides an analysis of leaders and can buttress a positive peace by nurturing an inclusive sense of belonging, encouraging all voices to be heard, and empowering others to discover their agency.

Anna Arnold Hedgeman: Creating A Sense of Belonging

Anna Arnold Hedgeman's life's work reflects a commitment to economic justice and a belief in nonviolent direct action. Having lived through the Great Depression and the New Deal spawned Social Security Act of 1935, she was familiar with the impact of government initiatives that served to disadvantage workers on the basis of race and gender (Scanlon 2016, 71). Hedgeman engaged diverse constituencies in support of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Scanlon 2016, 183). Her empathetic approach to organizing engendered a sense of belonging that proved effective when nonviolent protests failed to gain traction.

While working at the Brooklyn YWCA in the 1930s, Hedgeman was distraught seeing young Black women walking picket lines, demanding access to jobs in New York's five-and-ten cent stores (Scanlon 2016, 79). While visible protests were common, Hedgeman focused not on the demonstrators but on who was missing. Noticing the absence of men and White women, she recognized her own sense of womanhood could spur empathy with other women, even if they were not Black like herself. In a country founded on generations of racism, she recognized the benefit of an intersectional approach to organizing decades before the term was popularized. Hedgeman had overheard White women criticizing the protestors for being too militant, so she adopted a new tactic. Rather than suggest these women protest in public, Hedgeman invited them to a gathering in a church so she should could build upon their comfort and self-expressed interests. She also invited the protestors to attend. In the church, the Black women shared stories of how store management policies kept them from earning a living wage. As Hedgeman recalls, everyone was in tears. The older White women found themselves "thinking of my own children who are about their ages" (Scanlon 2016, 79). Because White women were able to empathize, their participation did not end at the

meeting. They were no longer bystanders who distanced themselves from the direct actors in the conflict. They joined the employees meeting face-to-face with the store managers and weaponized their charge accounts by writing notes on their bills, demanding managers halt their racist practices. This pressure eventually gave way to change.

King was certainly aware of the power of picket lines and boycotts as tactics that could create a positive peace. Reflecting on the Montgomery Bus Boycott, he wrote:

> The word "boycott" was really a misnomer for our proposed action. A boycott suggests an economic squeeze, leaving one bogged down in a negative. But we were concerned with the positive. Our concern would not be to put the bus company out of business but to put justice in business. (King, Jr. 1968, 39)

The year-long boycott may have had created less hardship in the community if King had embraced some of the tactics employed twenty years prior by Hedgeman. While King's nonviolent actions were orchestrated for the public eye, Hedgeman, perhaps because she was a woman unseen by the public, understood the power of the unseen spaces for power in politics and economics. Hedgeman did not chastise moderates or bystanders; she met people where they were comfortable and invited dialogue. Rather than defining success as the number of people at a protest, she allowed women to define their own nonviolent action. She understood how men might have dominating power in marriages and created safe spaces where women could act.

While the relationship of a clerk to an employer was alien to some of these older White women, storytelling appealed to their compassion for the mother/child relationship. Braithwaite asserts most people choose to do the right thing when they have a sense of belonging in a society that is "both strong on duties and strong on rights" (1989, 185). Moreover, Peter Block argues against mass appeals to stir emotion and posits the critical first step engendering a feeling of community is creating personal invitations prizing "the importance of choice, the necessary condition for accountability" (2008, 117). Hedgeman disaggregates the masses so that individuals were able to make personal connections and voluntarily identify their own recourse to injustice. The result exposed a new creative economic tactic that proved more effective than the public optics. As a leader, Hedgeman unifies women in the safety of the church by telling stories. Telling stories allows people to share what is important to them, author their own insights, and ultimately revise preconceived notions (Fluker, *Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community*).

Ella Baker: Ensuring All Voices Are Heard

Ella Baker was a committed activist and community leader who devoted decades of her life to creating a more participatory democracy (Ransby 2003; Polletta 2002). She advocated for group-centered leadership allowing communities to chart their own path forward. Baker favored strategies that empowered those who were customarily disadvantaged by having less education, status, or money. To focus on engagement tactics, we can look at Baker's role in the origin of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

In 1960, King and Baker recognized the courage and potential power of young people propagating localized nonviolent action (Ransby 2003, 240). Wishing to build on the success of spontaneous student sit-ins happening across the country, Baker conceived a five-day gathering — the Southwide Student Leadership Conference on Nonviolent Resistance — and immersed herself in learning about the different experiences of more than 200 students attending. Significantly, being inclusive did not mean people should be treated identically. Baker was keenly sensitive to power differentials and constructed her invitation to students in a way that would allow people with less prestige, political experience, and formal authority to have a voice in designing their organization. She was wary of well-meaning people from the North inadvertently usurping Southern students' voices. Nor did she want King's leadership to thwart the creativity, independence, and more rebellious spirit of the youth. Baker staged the event so that Black students would arrive first, meet separately, and have time to frame their need for a student coalition.

The fundamental premise of Restorative Practices is, "human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them" (Wachtel 2013, 3). Leaders need restraint and humility to check their authority and not dominate others. After the conference began, Baker invited herself to an informal gathering where she reprimanded King for being territorial and for dominating the proceedings. (Ransby 2003, 243). She was also critical of King's charismatic style, warning that "when ordinary people elevate their leaders above the crowd, they devalue the power within themselves" (Ransby 2003, 191). This inclusivity can also abate future harm:

> Treating others well and recognizing their humanity (both their worth and their vulnerability) have incalculable benefits everywhere that human beings cluster… Honoring people's dignity is the easiest and fastest way to bring out the best in

> them. The opposite is equally true. Treating people as if they don't matter creates destructive emotional upheavals. (Hicks 2011, 67)

Throughout the conference, participants struggled with identifying a purpose and agenda. As an experienced facilitator, Baker balanced "putting forward her own very strongly held views and values and being careful not to intimidate, overwhelm, or alienate her prospective allies" (Ransby 2003, 241). Akin to restorative dialogue circles, Baker used techniques taught by Myles Horton at the Highlander Center (Horton 1998, 186). His pedagogy relied on facilitating discourse with people sitting in circles to elevate the importance of listening to one another and showing the value of learning from one another (Horton 1998, 150). Colleagues noted Baker's patience and ability to listen to others (Clark 1990; Burns 2018; Cotton 2012; Ransby 2003). When they struggled to come up with a singular mission statement, Baker suggested a two-pronged approach that was more inclusive of the needs and aspirations of all participants. SNCC emerged as a participatory organization. SNCC structured its actions and meetings around group projects encouraging group problem solving, collective planning, and reflection (Polletta, 2002). They rejected parliamentary procedures. With a diverse membership, they prized listening to one another's voices, appreciating different perspectives, and making decisions based on group consensus.

Dorothy Cotton: Unharnessing People's Agency

In her autobiography, *If Your Back's Not Bent: The Role of the Citizenship Education Program in the Civil Rights Movement (2012)*, Dorothy Cotton shares her experiences as the only woman in the inner circle of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. She details how she navigated as a confidante for King despite his chauvinism (2012, 194). As the education director, she led the Citizenship Education Project (CEP), laying the foundation for nonviolent action. Cotton used Highlander's model of group learning to create pop-up schools in barbershops, around kitchen tables, and under shade trees in family yards. She understood when people recognize their power to learn, they find personal relevance and agency in the world.

Cotton's engagement skills made her an adept teacher who unharnessed people's potential, courage, and confidence. Cotton adopted a Socratic style. A CEP lesson would be begin with her asking adults, "Tell me, what does *habeas corpus* mean?" and when no one answered, she would define the Latin term (Cotton 2012, 138). Next, she posed, "What's a citizen?" Initially, adults would hesitate to venture an incorrect answer, whereupon she would encourage them to articulate their own experiences with complex concepts. People would throw out answers ranging from abiding by the law to voting. Like Hedgeman and Baker, Cotton would extract stories so people could listen to one

another express what it meant to be a citizen. At the end of class, Cotton would reintroduce the *habeas corpus* question and no one could recall the Latin term. However, when she asked them to definition citizenship, she received profound answers, spoken with confidence. She then explained her pedagogy:

> I emphasize now a teaching method that may serve you well. You see, I quickly told you the answer to the first question I asked – about *habeas corpus*; I didn't expect or want you to remember the answer in order to show you what happens if you throw out your answer to a question compared to what can happen when and if you want people to come to a new realization. To really internalize a new awareness, you should set up a "dialogue situation" in which they are forced to struggle with a concept until they truly get it. Real learning comes from inside a person. (Cotton 2012, 139)

These schools proved influential beyond learning literacy and numeracy. They fostered participants' sense of agency through intentional, structured group learning. For people dismissed due to lack of formal education, participatory learning is affirming. Donna Hicks notes when, "people suffer an injury to their sense of worth, the antidote is time with people who know how to treat them in a dignified way" (2011, 197). Group learning supports a collective sense of self-worth.

Cotton and King both recognized common people had tremendous influence. King preached about the reliance of a pilot on his ground crew and suggested that "CEP graduates were key members of the ground crew of the civil rights movement"(Cotton 2012, 115). As an analogy, a pilot has far more advantages than his ground crew; earning more, traveling more, and sitting in coveted seats. The pilot has the singular privilege to steer — an option not available to those laboring on the tarmac. King's flawed analogy brings us to one of the final challenges of his legacy: he refused to recognize the importance of developing a multitude of leaders.

When King delivered, "The Drum Major Instinct," from the pulpit at Ebenezer Baptist Church, he acknowledged innate yearning to lead and warned us of exclusivism and arrogance. He explains the "drum major instinct – a desire to be out front, a desire to lead the parade" (King, Jr. 1992b, 182) can be mediated with love and generosity. But then he substitutes the human instinct to lead with service: "everyone can be great. Because everyone can serve" (King, Jr. 1992b, 189). Because King's strategies were focused on *critical mass*, he appreciated the ground crew but saw them only in service — not leadership — to his vision. By contrast, Cotton — like Wheatley — focused on *critical connections,* making it safe for people to take risks, admit what they did not know, and find their agency to lead.

Engagement: Marrying Principles and Practices to Leadership

King's legacy and the study of Restorative Practices can both be minimized to a simplistic understanding of a response to conflict, something reactive. That would be incorrect. Hedgeman, Baker, and Cotton honed competencies that proactively built people's skills and social networks. While each story is singular, creating inclusive and participatory coalitions is critical for the achievement of positive peace. All three women favored personal expression, people speaking directly for themselves, and creating empathetic connections. They teach us how to mitigate the power that divides us while forging dialogue to unite us.

King cites Bayard Rustin's influence to adopt tenants of nonviolence. Yet he also assumed some of Rustin's bias toward a more bifurcated understanding of leadership. Rustin explained to King:

> The greatest masses of Indians who were followers of Gandhi did not believe in nonviolence. They believed in nonviolence as a tactic…leadership must be dedicated to it in principle, to keep those who believe in it as a tactic operating correctly. (Burns 2018, 92)

King seems to accept this lesson from Rustin. He delegated the teaching of nonviolent tactics to Cotton. Cotton, however, engaged people in group learning and proved uneducated people were able to grasp principles even when dressed up in Latin jargon. King believed all people shared a spiritual or divine love but he underestimated their capacity to appreciate principles. This is a deficit view of humanity. The corollary to underestimating people is prizing the few. The few who are deemed capable of comprehending the congruence of principles and tactics can still fail to realize just how difficult it is to employ tactics well. Tactics are even harder if one's self-bias leads one to think they are smarter, more insightful, more eloquent, and more suited to lead. King's experience led him to rely too heavily on elitism, metaphor, and his own moral imperative.

Engagement trumps elitism by creating opportunities for people to learn together. Rather than dispute facts, we engage directly with each other to leverage different perspectives and to explore the diversity of people's experiences, the social and emotional impacts of our past, and harness the group brain to spark creativity. Participatory learning bolsters human dignity by creating a sense of belonging. Horton explains this in a conversation with Paulo Freire:

> It was so enriching, you see, to have a person learn that they knew something. Secondly, to learn that their peers knew something, and learn that they didn't

> have to come to me, the expert, to tell them what the answers were. (Bell, Gaventa, and Peters 1990, 168)

Just as Baker warned: rather than devaluing our own power, we need to trust in ourselves as well as our peers.

Engagement also serves to overcome the limits of metaphor by encouraging people to share their lived stories. Metaphors, which provide conceptual shorthand when talking to a crowd, create rhetorical limits. If one were to ask a child if they would rather grow up and fly planes or scan bags for TSA, which would they choose? These are false choices. It presupposes a bifurcated response and a scarcity mindset. By contrast, everyone has stories. Engaging in storytelling can ignite new ideas. Storytelling, unlike metaphor, allows for moments of emotional intersections and creates empathetic connections. Honoring voice supports one's dignity and allows new understanding to emerge.

Broadcasting what is right to others is not as effective as assuming an invitational approach. Braithwaite's work shows punishment and fear of punishment have failed as deterrents (1989, 81). Coercive forces are just as demeaning when done for a righteous purpose. Leaders must balance authority with influence. Rather than acting as gatekeepers proclaiming what is right and wrong, practicing engagement allows leaders to clear a broader path. Declaring what is right does not change behaviors; if it did King's dream would have been realized. In order to successfully develop coalitions, we cannot afford to punish or alienate people who disagree with our religion, pronouns, or hashtags. Inviting people to voluntarily join together affirms their agency within a larger identity. Engagement must marry principle and practice, or we end up with inauthentic structures governed by a few charismatic leaders. Hedgeman, Baker, and Cotton's leadership resides in their reciprocal appreciation of dignity. They emphasize the restorative foundation of working *with* others to achieve positive benefit.

Critically, leadership — like dignity — is not a limited commodity. Walter Fluker cites an African American spiritual and argues that to see ourselves intimately connected requires us to recognize there is "plenty good room" for others (2019, 145). Fostering leaders — and developing new generations of leadership — is an easy way to share authority. Our inherent potential is what King calls a "rugged sense of somebodyness…to overcome this terrible feeling of being less than human" (King, Jr. 1992a, 130); what John Bailie refers to in Restorative Practices as the human need to have dignity comprised of voice, agency, and a sense of belonging. Fluker insists on the mutuality of dignity:

> Civility, however, does not refer simply to etiquette, manners, and social graces but it is inclusive of social capital and the inherent benefits accrued by these networks of reciprocity. Civility has to do with the individuals' social dignity with that system. (2009, 86)

Participatory leadership counters the scarcity mindset. Hedgeman, Baker, and Cotton are beacons catalyzing participation in the dream. By sharing their stories, we learn how to create a sense of belonging and solidarity. We can empower people to speak up, listen to one another, and energize our agency to herald in a more inclusive and positive peace.

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A Vision of the Promised Land:

The Enduring Legacy of MLK's Grassroots Campaign for Economic Justice

Rev. Lester A. McCorn

Introduction

The life and legacy of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. demonstrate that there is an inextricable link between civil rights and silver rights. The issue of economic justice has been both a political and spiritual concern. Discussions of poverty and economic exploitation have been synonymous with the demands of justice and righteousness for religious communities engaged in the public square. From the prophetic and priestly alike, the demands for social justice have been directed towards the halls of power. Religious platforms in public spaces have appealed to the moral conscience of an enormously wealthy nation. Since the founding of the United States, policies of social welfare have been undergirded by religious principles.

In comparison, capitalism has been the West's undisputed economic system, various competing claims about how the system's inequality can be buffered through policy and principle. One of the checks on the system has been the religious mandate of Christian benevolence. This pathos has gone beyond handouts to the poor. It has included combating systemic conditions that perpetuate poverty and misery. At the heart of the Christian gospel is the care and concern for the poor. Followers of Jesus Christ have looked to his teachings to understand civil society's ethical demands, from the Sermon on the Mount to his parables on stewardship. Chapter 25 of the Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God as a community of mutual responsibility for the "least of these." Christ himself identified with the poor and the disadvantaged. The social mandates of the gospel as it applied to public life were a recognition that there could not be collective health and corporate harmony without ensuring the maintenance of material needs.

Following the Great Depression, pursuing justice for all turned especially towards the material well-being of all citizens. Many New Deal programs were enacted during

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration to salvage capitalism and alleviate the financial collapse's ravaging effects on the middle and working-class alike. It was demonstrated that political imagination and goodwill could produce sweeping reforms and massive public programs such as Social Security, the Public Works Administration, and the minimum wage. Many of these programs created a new burgeoning white middle class rewarded with new jobs, economic stability, and homeownership. Unfortunately, many of these benefits were not equally extended to African Americans, who were excluded by racist policies and public opinion. The lethal combination of Jim Crow practices and denial of voting rights maintained a system of American apartheid. Strong alliances were built between the labor movement and religious leaders to advocate on behalf of the working poor and disenfranchised. The modern civil rights movement, armed with the tenets of equal opportunity preached by the social gospel and ensconced in American idealism, emerged to combat the deleterious, dual effects of racism and capitalism. The most prominent heir to this tradition was a Black Baptist preacher from the South, armed with a Ph.D. from Boston University and a booming, baritone voice as a trumpet for justice: the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.

Since King's assassination in 1968, his image and rhetoric have been appropriated by all manner of people. Although King was one of the most unpopular public figures at the time of his death, his persona has mysteriously become universally celebrated and usurped by many groups who have sought to advance their agendas. Conversely, some progressive groups have represented King as an unacceptable accommodationist or a defender of respectability politics. It is quite remarkable how such a revered figure can be so widely misinterpreted over 50 years after his demise. This article attempts to address how prescient King's radical political vision was about America's precipitous slide toward materialism at the expense of a truly democratic society. To halt the slide would require a revolution of values. The beloved community that King often preached about was the logical extension of the American Dream of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all the nation's diverse citizenry. For King, it was worth both fighting and dying for.

The Long March to Freedom

Reclaiming King's legacy is paramount in the face of a growing global economic crisis that a once-in-a-century pandemic has exacerbated. This crisis has placed in stark relief the persistence of systemic racism, highlighted by the brutal murders of African-American citizens George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at white police officers' hands. This is an important point to raise since a vast majority of Americans have misunderstood or misappropriated King's rhetoric and actions in advancing the oppressed. According to King scholars Lewis Baldwin and Rufus Burrow, there appears to be a "suffering from

amnesia when it comes to the question of King's legacy (Baldwin and Burrow 2013, xxi). As Vincent Harding has said, King has become a "convenient hero" for those who would rather maintain the status quo or embrace safe gradualism. Baldwin and Burrow further expand on this point:

> We are a part of a culture that has been and continues to be unwilling to come to grips with the radicality of King's ideas and social praxis and is, therefore, more comfortable with a domesticated King, or one who is harmless, gentle, and a symbol of our confused sense of what it means to be Americans" (Baldwin and Burrow 2013, xxi).

Efforts to interpret "King's Dream" as a watered-down, politically anemic, color-blind utopia entirely overlook his challenge to dismantle white supremacy, monopoly capitalism, and brazen militarism.

The title of King's last book before his death gives us two diametrically opposed options: *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* Implied in the question are only polar possibilities for the future: doom and gloom or peace and prosperity; hope or despair; concord or war; harmony or conflict; nonviolence or nonexistence. In the aftermath of uprisings in several American cities in the mid-1960s, King had concluded that civil rights and voting rights were not enough to solve our national dilemma. True justice could not occur without economic equality. The Johnson administration's Great Society programs were not sufficient, especially after the Vietnam War had siphoned resources--both human (thousands of dead soldiers) and financial (funds for social programs) --from the neediest communities.

The perpetual problems produced by poverty amounted to what King defined as violence. America's indifference to the poor was not only immoral but ultimately self-defeating for the entire society. He lodged his attacks first against the white power structure that controlled government and the means of production. It responded that the civil rights gains of the previous decade were sufficient. He then began to challenge white Americans who were complicit with the problem through apathy and benign neglect. King stated:

> The majority of white Americans consider themselves sincerely committed to justice for the Negro. They believe that American society is essentially hospitable to fair play and steady growth toward a middle-class Utopia embodying racial harmony. Unfortunately, this is a fantasy of self-deception and comfortable vanity. Overwhelmingly America is still struggling with irresolution and contradictions. It has been sincere and even ardent in welcoming some change. Too quickly, apathy and disinterest rise to the surface when the next logical steps

> are taken. Laws are passed in a crisis mood after a Birmingham or a Selma, but no substantial fervor survives the formal signing of legislation. The recording of the law itself is treated as the reality of the reform" (King 1967, 5).

The revolutionary and far-sighted significance of King's words and actions resonated soon after his death. As urban riots erupted across the nation, elected officials and community leaders scrambled frantically to quell the unrest by enacting measures through legislation and social programs. Further proving King's point, little was done to address the root causes of the problem: crass capitalism's racial and economic injustice. As a part of Johnson's Great Society, Model Cities and other urban renewal programs were expanded or established to address the conditions of large concentrations of poor urban dwellers. New housing projects were built, and desegregation initiatives were advanced through school busing. Virtually nothing was done, however, to affect structural economic change.

Most people have freeze-framed their image of King as a peaceful warrior for racial justice, a utopian dreamer of a nation where his "four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." They often forget that his "I Have a Dream" speech was the headliner for the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom." They overlook the opening lines of the 1963 speech which chastised America for not keeping her promise to her African American citizens:

> So, we have come here today to dramatize a shameful condition. In a sense, we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was the promise that all men, yes, black men and white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, American has given the Negro a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice" (King 1986, 19).

Included in the 1963 image of King is one of him as a modern-day Moses. It is one of King overlooking hundreds of thousands of the new Israelite nation of many tribes, arms outstretched as if he was holding up a rod to part the Red Sea, standing in the shadow

of the Lincoln Memorial. It seemed as if King described his dream by using the images of those persons as characters in his futuristic America, Black men and White men, Jews, and Gentiles, Protestants, and Catholics. He painted the picture of the promised land while he rehearsed his speech to Pharaoh to "Let my people go!" However, by the time King arrived at the 1968-mile marker, his scope of analysis had dramatically changed as it had become shaped by the unfilled promises of the many other characters and forces in that dream.

As King turned his attention to the pernicious effects of coarse capitalism buttressed by white supremacy, his gaze was directed to the distant promised land that he clairvoyantly preached about the last night of his life. The Poor People's Campaign (PPC) of 1968 represented a second phase of the civil rights movement. Indeed, King had by 1968 become more acutely aware of the inextricable ties between systemic racial justice and structural economic inequality and re-directed the focus of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) squarely upon this issue. His vision for the promised land was the antithesis of the chaos of inequality and injustice perpetrated by the triple evils of racism, capitalism, and militarism.

The indelible impression of the civil rights movement has been the picture of African American people marching. The resolute faces of the demonstrators point to a destination that is a distant reality. Staring at their long strides and deliberate gaits, you can perceive that they are determined to get to a place called "Freedom." In America, that destination has been elusive for its Black citizens.[1] To be sure, the journey began in this land where they were not citizens but chattel slaves with no rights: human, constitutional, or civil. As property who possessed no property, the prospect for a full humanity of modest prosperity was essentially null and void for America's inhabitants of African descent. It can be likened to a never-ending military campaign. The battle has been fought on the fields of the South, the outposts of the West, and the black tops of the North. The fight has been for justice and equality and dignity and equity. The trek of African Americans from 1619 to 2019 and beyond has been headed in the same direction: freedom. The various valiant leaders along the path have made clarion calls to the oppressed troops as expressed in a famous Negro Spiritual: "Walk together, Children, don't you get weary. Walk together children, don't you get weary. Walk

1 In this essay, the terms "African-American" and "Black" are used interchangeably. In most instances, it is used as a modifier of the historic religiopolitical aggregate known as the Black Church, made up of several denominations and expressions. Black is also a political referent prominently used to continue the Black Freedom Struggle, which spans eras (i.e., #BlackLivesMatter).

together, Children, don't you get weary. There's a great camp-meeting in the promised land."

King's ominous last words sound like a self-proclaimed eulogy, presciently preached the night before he was killed on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis: "I've been to the Mountaintop and I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But we as a people will get to the promised land!" The contours and features of the metaphorical promised land had evolved over the four centuries that African descendants had been in America. In his speeches, King had mapped the march's progression from abolition to emancipation to reconstruction to integration. He had realized that their progress had been impeded by a massive structural impediment – capitalism – that was buttressed by racism and militarism. By the time he bellowed his last marching orders, he had fixed his eyes on the target and had dubbed this final crusade the "Poor People's Campaign."

There are many reasons PPC has waned in the collective narrative of civil rights history, not the least of which is the perception that King was out of his league as a black civil rights leader. While many in 1968 saw Resurrection City, the temporary poor people's village set up in D.C., as an embarrassing failure and demonstration of the movement's inefficacy, PPC's legacy had an immediate and lasting impact on both policy and politics. In the last two decades, several scholars have sought to recapture the major significance of that campaign in history, position its mission in our understanding of King's legacy, and explain its implications for our current American society.[2] This is especially poignant considering the persistent economic inequality that King so valiantly and vigorously fought to fix. Though King died before realizing the campaign, his shadow looms large over the long march to a promised land of economic justice. To understand King's last major campaign is to appreciate his maturing grasp of the persistent problem of inequality in America.

The Turn toward Economic Justice

It is important to understand PPC in the context of the civil rights movement and its complementary paths of racial and economic justice. While the movement from 1955 to 1965 was primarily focused on racial integration of public accommodations and

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2 Several volumes focus on King's turn toward economic justice. See, for instance, Thomas F. Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Struggle for Economic Justice*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Michael Honey, *To the Promised Land: Martin Luther King and the Fight for Economic Justice* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2018); and Sylvie Laurent, *King, and the Other America: The Poor People's Campaign and the Quest for Economic Equality* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

securing voting rights, King was never oblivious or uninformed on the deleterious effects' capitalism had on society's most vulnerable and marginalized citizens since reconstruction. Several scholars identify the various streams of liberal American thought and action that imbued the surge for justice, including the influence of the social gospel and the Black church upon King and other civil rights leaders.[3] There are various dimensions of political, philosophical, and theological influences that had energized the civil rights movement leading up to and beyond the Montgomery bus boycott, the Birmingham campaign, the March on Washington, and the passage of the Voting Rights and Civil Rights Acts. Even in the movement's earliest days, it became clear to King that individual opportunity did not amount to racial equality. He long held a fundamental belief in democratic socialism as a corrective for capitalism's debilitating effects upon poor and working-class people. King believed that the "insurgent democracy" (Laurent 2018, 1) of the dispossessed and the disinherited was the only way to redistribute power in what had become a "flawed liberal democracy" (Laurent 2018, 2). As such, PPC was a call for America and its leaders to manifest a revolution of values that would enable human dignity and economic equality.

A Rainbow Coalition for Economic Justice

PPC was destined to be a new experiment in interracial, multi-class cooperation, and direct action. As the general of this newly formed army, King began to employ his lieutenants Bayard Rustin and Stanley Levison to draft a road map to victory for the dispossessed. Entitled "The Crisis in America's Cities, an Analysis of Social Disorder and Plan of Action against Poverty, Discrimination and Racism in Urban America," the plan set its target on Washington, D.C. However, the coalition of the SCLC and the broader civil rights movement began to break ranks. Rustin had become more accommodationist and disagreed with King's demand for a sweeping economic transformation. King was determined to expose the unholy alliance of racism, capitalism, and militarism. Simultaneously, he was resolute in building a new radical and egalitarian coalition. As Sylvie Laurent observes: "For the first time, a true multiracial gathering was taking place, propelling the struggle for freedom and equality to an unprecedented dimension and scope. In revolutionary fashion, poor whites were, along with groups of color, considered an exploited minority whose grievances had to be voiced" (Laurent 2018, 149).

King's last campaign symbolized PPC's thrust for sanitation workers in Memphis. Here, King demonstrated that the civil rights movement was fully aligned with the labor

3 See the work of Gary Dorrien, Lewis Baldwin, Rufus Burrow, and Stewart Burns.

movement. He continued to expose the hypocrisy of capitalism, with poor people working for starvation wages in a nation of massive wealth. As King stated:

My friends, we are living as a people in a literal depression…Now the problem is not only unemployment. Do you know that most of the poor people in our country are working every day? And they are making wages so low that they cannot begin to function in the mainstream of the economic life of our nation. These are the facts which must be seen, and it is criminal to have people working on a full-time basis and a full-time job getting part-time income (Laurent 2018, 149).

PPC proved the power of forging race, class, and gender alliances. By focusing on the deep indignities of poverty, King had built a bridge for the Black freedom struggle leading into the promised land of economic equality and social justice. He had drawn a straight line from the plot of civil rights to the territory of human rights. As a servant of the people, King was willing to fight for all people's dignity and equality while challenging the assumptions of an economic system that kept residents in poverty while living in a house of prosperity. The refrain of King's last couple of years was a clarion call to society to undergo a "revolution of values." Like a 20th-century prophet peeking into the next century, King theorized the relationship between the desperation of the ghetto and the corporate class's excesses. Published posthumously, *The Trumpet of Conscience* identified five factors that explained the urban riots: "a 'white backlash' that took the form of resistance to racial equality and hostility toward blacks who demand justice; discrimination across several social domains (housing, education, employment); high unemployment, especially among black youth; blacks' disproportionate conscription into an unjust war in Vietnam; and inadequate public services in black neighborhoods" (Shelby 2019, 190).

A New Vanguard of the Vision for Economic Justice

A PPC renaissance is evident today in several streams of the ongoing Black freedom movement that has reemerged amid a grassroots and wholesale repudiation of the capitalist system's values. Central to the movement's philosophy is a recognition of the devaluing of African American lives and poor people. Eddie Glaude underscores this feature:

> The crisis currently engulfing black America and the country's indifference to the devastation it has wrought illustrate what I call the *value gap*. We talk about the achievement gap in education or the wealth gap between white Americans and other groups. However, the value gap reflects something more fundamental: that no matter our stated principles or how much progress we think we have made,

> white people are valued more than others in this country, and the fact continues to shape the life chances of millions of Americans. The value gap is in our national DNA (Glaude 2016, 31).

More than 50 years after King's death, there are two prominent political manifestations of PPC's vision: The Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) and The New Poor People's Campaign (NPPC). There are more examples. Attention will be paid to these two as prime examples of how PPC's legacy has found resonance in a contemporary socio-economic context. Both have exposed the growing schism between the wealthy and the poor and how America's addiction exacerbates the relationship between racism and capitalism to free-market capitalism.

Arguably, M4BL is the most prominent expression of the civil rights movement this century. It takes King's call for economic justice to the next phase, demanding rights and reparations. King hinted at a call for reparations but instead couched it in his call for a Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged. As early as 1963, King discussed in *Why We Can't Wait* how America could repay African Americans:

No amount of gold could provide an adequate compensation for the exploitation and humiliation of the Negro in America through the centuries. Not all the wealth of this affluent society could meet the bill. Yet a price can be placed on unpaid wages. The ancient common law has always provided a remedy for the appropriation of the labor of one human being by another. The payment should be in the form of a massive program by the government of special, compensatory measures which could be regarded as a settlement in accordance with the accepted practice of common law. … I am proposing, therefore, that just as we granted a GI Bill of Rights to war veterans, America launches a broad-based and gigantic Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged, our veterans of the long siege of denial (King 2000, 68).

Ta-Nehisi Coates, meanwhile, has made a persuasive case for reparations in his much-heralded 2014 essay in *The Atlantic*:

> … we may find that the country can never fully repay African Americans. But we stand to discover much about ourselves in such a discussion—and that is perhaps what scares us. The idea of reparations is frightening not simply because we might lack the ability to pay. The idea of reparations threatens something much deeper—America's heritage, history, and standing in the world. What I'm talking about is more than recompense for past injustices—more than a handout, a payoff, hush money, or a reluctant bribe (Coates 2014).

The Occupy Wall Street movement previewed M4BL and NPPC following the 2008 economic collapse. Many people lost their homes, jobs, and savings while bankers and financiers received big bonuses. They became the "99%" in stark contrast to the one percent who controlled most of the wealth. It has become clear that the current economic system is not working for most citizens. In 2001, Joseph Stiglitz was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics for his brilliant analysis of this phenomenon that he described in *The Price of Inequality*:

> The underlying thesis is that we are paying a high price for our inequality – an economic system that is less stable and less efficient, with less growth, and a democracy that has been put into peril. But even more is at stake: as our economic system is seen to fail for most citizens, and as our political system seems to be captured by moneyed interests, confidence in our democracy and in our market economy will erode along with our global influence (Stiglitz 2012, xxii).

King had predicted that without a revolution of values, our nation would experience a moral crisis. We were becoming more obsessed with technology and the accumulation of wealth than the flourishing of human potential: "One of the great problems of mankind is that we suffer from a poverty of the spirit which stands in glaring contrast to our scientific and technological abundance. The richer we have become materially, the poorer we have become morally and spiritually" (King 2000, 181). Stiglitz picks up where King left off in his analysis of our market system:

> Much of what has gone on can only be described by the words "moral deprivation." Something wrong happened to the moral compass of so many people working in the financial sector and elsewhere. When the norms of a society change in a way that so many have lost their moral compass, it says something significant about the society (King 2000, xvii).

M4BL emerged after the highly publicized murders of Trayvon Martin and Mike Brown in 2013. M4BL, however, had been precipitated by an escalating barrage of assaults on black humanity in many dimensions: increased racial animus and hostility, directly and indirectly, related to the first African American president of the United States; the proliferation of the prison industrial complex and racially unjust laws; escalating police violence toward African American citizens; and the revocation and suppression of African Americans' voting rights. Rather than an organization, M4BL characterizes itself as an "ecosystem" consisting of "individuals and organizations creating a shared vision and policy agenda to win rights, recognition, and resources for Black people" (M4BL 2021).

#BlackLivesMatter, launched as a social media hashtag in July 2013, encapsulated the centuries-long struggle for African American affirmation and self-determination. In this instance, it began as a valentine to African Americans that turned into a rallying cry against injustice in the wake of the Martin and Brown murders. A groundswell of protest was activated around the country, as thousands of African Americans and allies began to protest in various cities, culminating in the Ferguson demonstrations. Two aspects of this protest movement were markedly different from the civil rights movement. First, it was led primarily by women, and second, it was intentionally not centered on a singular, charismatic leader. Instead, its focus was on the method and the message: Black Lives Matter.

The intellectual and spiritual masterminds of the Black Lives Matter Network (which is part of a larger M4BL coalition) are Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi. Garza describes the origins of #BlackLivesMatter:

> I created #BlackLivesMatter with Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, two of my sisters, as a call to action for Black people after 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was posthumously placed on trial for his murder and the killer, George Zimmerman, was not held accountable for the crime he committed. It was a response to the anti-Black racism that permeates our society and, unfortunately, our movements.

Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks' contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression (Black Lives Matter 2021).

M4BL has picked up where King left off in his strident critique of America's "triple evils": racism, materialism, and militarism. Like King and PPC's Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged, M4BL has a platform that includes a demand for economic justice. M4BL has also called for reparations: "We demand reparations for past and continuing harms. The government, responsible corporations and other institutions that have profited off of the harm they have inflicted on Black people — from colonialism to slavery through food and housing redlining, mass incarceration, and surveillance — must repair the harm done" (M4BL n.d.).

NPPC, led by Bishop William Barber and Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, has issued a "National Call for a Moral Revival." Barber is a pastor and civil rights activist who is the former president of the North Carolina NAACP and the Moral Monday's movement organizer. Theoharis, a biblical scholar, is the director of the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice at Union Theological Seminary and an ordained minister in the Presbyterian church. NPPC, in contrast to M4BL and its largely secular leadership, is

spearheaded by clergy and is decidedly religious and ecumenical, drawing on King's theological and philosophical foundations for moral and political activism. The organization has drawn a direct connection to King and the original PPC, calling for a "revolution of values" and a federal intervention on behalf of the poor. NPPC's platform is much broader and more far-reaching than the original movement. However, the case has been made upon the intersectionality of economic injustice and how it has proliferated in the past 50 years.[4] The NPPC platform begins with the question of poverty of inequality: “Did you know that while the U.S. economy has grown 18-fold in the past 50 years, wealth inequality has expanded, the costs of living have increased, and social programs have been restructured and cut dramatically?” (PPC n.d.). NPPC has led many protests and issued pronouncements calling for a more fair, just, and equitable society rooted in a litany of demands in several categories but with a particular focus on economic justice.

Some of the M4BL's adherents have openly shunned the civil rights movement's ideas and tactics, dismissing King's "accommodationist" and "respectability politics" as no longer applicable to victims of 21st-century systemic racism and classism. They indeed were not interested in acceptance from the white establishment nor the imprimatur of the African American establishment. It thus appeared early on that M4BL's architects had chosen very different models, mantras, and mentors. This would inevitably create tensions between the old and new guards. For many of M4Bl's activists, the old guard had sought personal aggrandizement and attainment at the expense of the masses. When it came to police profiling and brutality, the new generation had become increasingly impatient while developing a keen analysis of the problem. As activist and author Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor points out, "[Y]oung activists were beginning to politically generalize from the multiple cases of police brutality and develop a systemic analysis of policing. Many began to articulate a much broader critique that situated policing within a matrix of racism and inequality in the United States and beyond” (Keeanga-Yamahatta 2016, 162). Unfortunately, and in my opinion, many M4BL activists lack a proper understanding and appreciation of the radical and comprehensive analysis of racism that King had developed and used to advocate for overhauling American capitalism.

NPPC’s principles could be perceived as directly adopted from Kingian philosophy and the goals of the original PPC, especially the first five:

4 See the work of Joseph Stiglitz, Thomas Piketty, and Robert Reich.

1. We are rooted in a moral analysis based on our deepest religious and constitutional values that demand justice for all. Moral revival is necessary to save the heart and soul of our democracy.
2. We are committed to lifting up and deepening the leadership of those most affected by systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation and building unity across division lines.
3. We believe in the dismantling of unjust criminalization systems that exploit poor communities and communities of color and the transformation of the "War Economy" into a "Peace Economy" that values all humanity.
4. We believe that equal protection under the law is non-negotiable.
5. We believe that people should not live in or die from poverty in the richest nation ever to exist. Blaming the poor and claiming that the United States does not have an abundance of resources to overcome poverty are false narratives used to perpetuate economic exploitation, exclusion, and deep inequality (PPC n.d.).

America has dealt with competing visions of democracy throughout its history. The defense of the American Dream has been infused with myths of equal opportunity. The millions of poor and working-class people have encountered a veritable nightmare of disappointment in the face of concentrated wealth. One of the countervailing forces in opposition to oligarchy and the ruling class has been the social gospel movement in which King was both an heir and champion. This movement has been in solidarity with other movements, including the labor and socialist movements. Many of the persons and groups associated with these movements were deliberately labeled radical and dangerous. They were deemed politically and socially antithetical to American democracy, which had become synonymous with capitalism. Capitalism remained barely checked by political forces. The consequences of this negligence were widening gulfs in wealth disparity, especially for people of color. King presaged a continuing dilemma for the United States and the global community. His call for a revolution of values was also a call for a return, at least in principle, to the Christian ideals of love, concern, and sharing with our neighbors. To have liberty and justice for all, America would need to begin to show preferential care for "the least of these" that Jesus preached about in the Gospel of Matthew.

Conclusion

NPPC signals a reclamation of the Black social gospel and its theological commitment to economic, racial, and social justice. It has been enlarged and ennobled by a commitment to gender and environmental justice. This points to a return to a central mission of the Black Church and liberal evangelical Christianity. King's beloved community, shaped by the philosophies of great theologians like Walter Rauschenbusch, Howard Thurman, and

Benjamin Mays, is always expanding, first by his explicit advocacy for "the least of these," and then by the contemporary generation of prophet-activists. It seems as if King, in his last sermons and writings, was asking the nation if it was willing to work for the beloved community or accept the "chaos" of inequality and injustice. Are we ready to move into the promised land of milk and honey for all people, or are we prepared to settle for the ruins created by selfishness, greed, corruption, and competition? The same question is asked of us today. This is an opportunity for America to forge a new path of prosperity, paved not with silver and gold but with the values of love, inclusion, liberty, justice, and power for all.

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Youth Movements Tackle “Big Man” Leadership in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Terae Soumah

In the overnight hours of January 9, 2019, Felix Tshisekedi was proclaimed the fifth president of the Democratic Republic of Congo. While there remain unofficial doubts about the results' accuracy, the December 30 election marks the first time since independence in 1960 that the government has transferred power through a democratic process (Reid 2018). When longtime president Joseph Kabila announced he would not be presenting himself as a candidate but would, in fact, finally hold elections and step down from office, many were not convinced. His declaration came a full two years after his final third term had officially ended. No one believed he would transfer power peacefully, if at all.

Kabila first stepped into office in 2001 following the assassination of his father. He was then elected in 2006 and again in 2011. After the last election, youth movements across the country began to build en masse and focus on civic engagement for change. By 2011, the government was attempting to gain more control over its internal processes. In contrast to the 2006 election, which was funded mostly by international donors, the majority of the 2011 election was financed by the Congolese government. An internal election oversight committee, the Independent National Election Committee (CENI), was also established. Despite this, or perhaps as a result of diminished international presence, the campaign period was fraught with intimidation tactics and suppression of political organization, which included, in some places, a complete ban on public gatherings (UNHROHC 2011). The electoral law was changed to a one-round system, and the campaign window was limited to just one month before voters went to the polls. It seemed a given that Kabila would emerge victorious amidst post-election chaos.

The major opposition leader, Etienne Tshisekedi, declared himself president well before the official results were tabulated, leading to his house arrest and subsequent protests around the country. Reports released by both the Carter Center and the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (UNHROC) cited brutal police responses to the protests, resulting in hundreds of arrests, injuries, and deaths. Up to and during

that time, most of the targets were affiliated with political parties. Protests were organized based on party affiliation and allegiance to one 'Big Man' serving as the representative personality. As it became apparent that the military might remain on the side of incumbent power, a new type of organization began to emerge. These organizations were linked together through networks that circumvented the Big Man of Congolese politics.

The Big Man phenomenon occurs when unstable political or economic structures create gaps in services that are unable to fulfill society's needs, whether due to war, deteriorating systems, or corruption. The previous presidents of Congo, known for plundering the state and adding millions to their personal wealth, fall into the category of Big Men.

The Congo Research Group (CRG) conducted a report in 2017 analyzing the holdings of the Kabila family since taking office. The report describes a complex network of land holdings, business shares, and state-issued contracts in mining, transportation, and documentation services. While the report concludes that some of the ventures conflicts with Congolese law, in other cases, that cannot be determined. What is clear is that the networks of Kabila-owned businesses traverse nearly all sectors and include a vast array of beneficiaries profiting from the associated wealth.

Mats Utas (2012) suggests a complex relationship that surpasses merely a patron-client relationship and describes it as a complex social relationship with shifting power dynamics that is continually changing and needs to be nurtured. The followers of Big Men can easily leave to support others if their patron is no longer able to provide the finance, wealth, or power required to keep followers loyal and obedient. The most important characteristic of the Big Man is the ability to gather masses attracted to the protection, status, and economic trickle-down afforded by their inclusion in the network (Utas 2012, 9).

Utas (2012) examines the networks of Big Men in Africa, which he sees as "as nodes in networks, combining efforts in projects of joint action" (p. 1)**.** He notes that "networks…are social creations, guided by common cultural codes" (p.18) and that Big Men enter into these exchanges with a primary goal of personal gain or self-protection (19). There is very little altruism or overall concern for the greater good. This is in stark contrast to the youth movements that began to spring up in the early 2000s.

One of the first movements, La Jeunesse Pour Une Nouvelle Société (JNS), officially signed their organizing documents in 2008. In researching this paper, their lack of online presence quickly became apparent. While many of the subsequent youth groups have

evolved their various missions or continue to host websites and social media accounts, the absence of JNS is unfortunate. As one of the initial youth organizations in Kinshasa, its work was a foundational part of the country's intricate network of grassroots activism. JNS continues to have a social media website that is marginally active and runs a youth community center that hosts leadership training and other civic education programs in Kinshasa (Studio Hirondelle).

In 2008, their primary goal was to create virtual pathways to enable youth groups across the country to easily maintain communication and unite online. To do this, they worked with their parent organization, Friends of the Congo (FOTC), based in New York. FOTC collected donations of mobile phones and laptops while members of JNS distributed the materials to youth organizations in the major cities of Kisangani and Goma. Initially, the group called for global donations and members to join from around the world. Over the years, they have focused more specifically on engaging youth in local and national election processes and funding primarily through Congolese membership (Studio Hirondelle 2019). However, their initial efforts to create a nationwide network of youth organizations were an important catalyst for the collaboration and support that developed over the next decade.

After the November 2011 elections, another group of activists emerged, formed primarily through connections with Congolese in the African diaspora. The Ingeta movement, an apolitical organization, was launched in Kinshasa on January 4, 2012, to bypass the media and directly address the public to present information and analyze current affairs. The movement was inspired by Jean-Pierre Mbelu, working in collaboration with political activist Etienne Ngandu, who had been publishing video analyses of the various political, economic, and social issues of DRC. Ingeta became a way to reimagine and rebuild these systems by restoring the Congolese identity with honesty and integrity (Ifonge 2017). The website hosts a wealth of information that includes several off-shoot programs such as leadership institutes, historical resources, current publications, and idea exchanges. It is a comprehensive collection of initiatives to raise awareness and inspire engagement. Ingeta has a formidable online presence with a mission focused on educating the masses, encouraging civil engagement, and "presenting information, ideas and resources for reinventing the Congo."

The Ingeta manifesto describes resistance as sit-ins, boycotts, and blocking access to places of business to gain the attention of decision-makers and international actors. In this way, alliances can be created to work for change. Members denounce the corruption and pillage of resources that prevent the construction of a positive future for Congo. At its base, their approach to leadership may be the most appealing aspect of this new type of organization. Rather than a frontman or big personality, Ingeta

recognizes everyone as a leader, with members choosing tasks that fit their skill set, whether it be web-design, journalism, or mobilizing people.

If Ingeta is the ultimate in intellectual engagement, Lutte pour le changement (Lucha) has become the embodiment of present activism. Lucha began in May of 2012 due to the "shock, outrage and revulsion at the general chaos of the country" (luchacongo.org). A group of youth in the eastern town of Goma were dismayed by the lack of fundamental services, inadequate responses of aid groups who refused to address underlying causes of issues, and a population that seemed content to wait for the other person to take action. Like the Ingeta movement, Lucha imagines a new Congo, one that is unified, liberated, and prosperous. Through civic, nonviolent engagement, Lucha encourages activism that works towards social justice and human dignity. They describe three pillars of association: an unwavering commitment to Congo, understanding that the responsibility for change in Congo rests primarily with the Congolese, and the will and determination to follow through on this commitment despite all costs (ibid.). Lucha draws inspiration from Patrice Lumumba and Nelson Mandela, iconic African leaders engaged in the struggle for independence and committed to nonviolence. Lucha describes their leadership model as horizontal, allowing all members to engage equally and individually take responsibility for their role in the community**.** This philosophy mirrors that of Ingeta and is, again, in stark contrast to the modeled leadership of the nation, which functions as a Big Man dictatorship.

Lucha has grown to become a highly visible organization whose members play a prominent role in some of the major protests and resistance movements leading up to the historic election of 2018. They continue to have branches that focus on local issues and support each other in working tirelessly for improved living conditions and opportunities. Their membership has expanded to include branches in most major cities with activist populations that are gender balanced, educated, and employed in the formal sector (Bantariza et al. 2001).

The efforts of these youth groups led to several collaborative movements, often initiated through viral hashtag campaigns**.** Social media serves as a place to spread the message, and in January of 2015, #Telema was circulating through the virtual Congolese community and diaspora. Telema is a Lingala word meaning ‘stand up .' It became the rallying cry to resist efforts by then-President Kabila to extend his term in office (Musavuli 2017). The parliament attempted to pass legislation requiring that a census be completed before elections could be held. This was estimated to take at least another four years, potentially ten or more. The possibility of an extended-term set off days of protest across the country resulted in mass arrests, more than 40 people fatally shot, and numerous injuries (Human Rights Watch 2015a). Opposition leaders were arrested

from their homes and offices, and a human rights activist was kidnapped during a meeting with colleagues at an outside bar. Some of the injured included witnesses who were shot because they were taking photos or filming police brutality (ibid.).

From its website, Telema states its mission is to "support, develop and sustain an organized popular movement in the Congo for peace, justice and human dignity." The supporters are listed as Ingeta, FOTC, Save the Congo, and Filimbi with a vision "to create a politically conscious and economically empowered citizenry." The coordination between the youth groups has had a profound impact. In Sarah Kazadi's (Kazadi 2016) short documentary "Telema: a Mayanda Film," activist Bienvenu Matumo discusses the youth's resilience and the unprecedented results. During the week of protests from January 19-23, 2015, the government shut down the internet and cut off electricity in many parts. These conditions did not deter the activists who were ultimately successful in preventing the change in electoral law. Matumo recounts, "For the first time in my life I heard an official plenary session in Lingala. Why? So the whole population could understand. Kengo took the floor to say, 'Ladies and gentlemen we heard what the street had to say.'" (Kazadi 2016, 8:27). An amended version of the election process proposal was passed, which did not require a census.

The activists did not stop there. They continued to organize and develop an interdependent web of support and communication. Their collective action allowed for increased mobilization power, both within the country and from the Congolese diaspora. Telema organizers have included on their website this quote from *Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon (Fanon 2004, 138), who wrote:

> To educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean, making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man who will take the responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people.

It is an excellent representation of what each of these youth groups have stated as their foundational beliefs. They resist the urge to create or follow personalities but give value and credence to each member's importance. They do not support a singular political candidate or party but work to achieve the population's functioning systems and serve the communal need. They recognize that together, their generation's collective power can effect change locally, nationally, and internationally.

One example of international cooperation can be found when examining Filimbi, an organization made up of members from JNS, Lucha, Telema, and others. Youth activists from these groups had been following youth movements in Senegal and Burkina Faso that were staging similar resistance campaigns. On March 15, 2015, Filimbi representatives in Kinshasa met in solidarity with artists from the Senegalese movement Y'En A Marre and the Burkinabe group Balai Citoyen to present a pro-democracy workshop. The conference was broken up by Congo's National Intelligence Agency (ANR), who arrested over 30 activists and participants, including a United States diplomat and foreign and Congolese journalists. The ANR continued to arrest activists in the days following the conference, and several Filimbi members were forced into exile (Human Rights Watch 2015b).

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine each arrest or even the high-profile cases that caught the eye of international actors such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and numerous other human rights organizations, the government response suggests that the March 2015 Filimbi youth leadership collaboration marked a pivotal moment in the struggle. Leaders of Filimbi were labeled terrorists and charged with inciting the public to take up arms against the state. Many of those arrested were beaten, tortured, and refused access to a lawyer (ibid., 2015). Those still committed to the cause understood the gravity of their actions as well as the enormous potential. The state felt threatened, and the depth of brutality they employed to quash the resistance was a clear sign that the youth groups could shake up the Big Men of Congolese politics.

Over the next three years, activists from Lucha, Filimbi, Telema, and Quatrieme Voie, as well as other youth organizations, banded together, communicating, supporting, and protesting the unconstitutional occupation of Joseph Kabila in the office of president. On December 30, 2018, the Congolese people went to the polls and raised their voices in unity.

There is much more to be said about the events between 2015-2018, the Catholic Church's role, the independent voters that citizens of Beni organized and symbolically participated in after being banned from the national election due to an Ebola outbreak the dubious final election results. This paper has merely introduced the youth organizations and their belief in the possibility of realizing social justice through sustained, collective action.

With relentless energy focused on a common mission, these groups achieved a monumental impact on Congolese history. The fight for change occurred over ten years and cost hundreds of lives. Activists influenced citizens in their communities to engage

in action and raise their voices. They committed to a national vision for rebuilding their country and their future at the risk of sacrificing their lives and livelihoods. Communities lost sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives to the fight for democracy and freedom. In January of 2019, citizens achieved their goal of officially ousting Kabila from presidential power. There can be little doubt that youth groups' persistent and coordinated actions across the country played a major role in achieving this political milestone. And they continue the fight.

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Nashville Organized for Action and Hope: A Representation of the Beloved Community

Rev. W. Antoni Sinkfield, Ph.D.

Introduction

In one of my many sermonic discourses, I urgently and adamantly proclaimed:

> We are called to be one people, but despite our calling, there has always been one wall or another separating and dividing us. For we are separated and divided by walls of doctrinal dissent and denominational decisions; economic class and educational background; and unrighteousness racism and satanic sexism! We are separated and divided by walls of ignorance and arrogance; ecclesiastical associations and hierarchical oppression; and too much hateful spirit brought in as too much human spirit goes out! For there are too many walls of separation and division!
>
> And walls keep us from understanding and appreciating one another! Walls stop us from being merciful to one another! Walls prevent us from loving, being patient or gracious to one another! But God is fracturing the walls against our fellowship; the divide against our unity; and the stuff that separates us!
>
> For walls are not what God wants! Donald Trump wants walls—BUT GOD WANTS UNITY! Skinheads, Neo Nazis and the KKK want division—BUT GOD WANTS ONENESS!
>
> There must be no more difference between Jew or Gentile; men or women; rich or poor! For all stand on equal footing, with equal access to all of God's Blessings! For we share a common love and a common purpose! AND GOD HAS FIXED IT SO THAT "EVERY DIVISIVE WALL COMES TUMBLING DOWN (Sinkfield, 2017)!

Nashville Organized for Action and Hope (NOAH) is a faith-led coalition that is multi-racial and interfaith, comprised of congregations, community organizations, and labor unions, engaging ordinary people in political and economic decisions affecting their

lives. NOAH's three key issue areas, determined by its members, are affordable housing, economic equity and jobs, and educational reform.

NOAH is a community of people who have owned the assignment to come TOGETHER intentionally and relationally to do exactly what Dr. King and his ministry were all about—that is, modelling and offering persons an opportunity to engage in efforts to become the Beloved Community, giving a voice to the voiceless, advocating for the under and unrepresented, and granting a hand up to those who are culturally and functionally pushed to the margins of our city and our society.

NOAH began in Nashville when certain faith leaders and a number concerned citizens assessed the social, racial, political, educational, and economic disparities and incongruencies in our city, got angry, and decided to do something about it. This problem was further exacerbated by the fact that there were several organizations in the city seeking to address these issues—but they seldom worked collaboratively because of their differences in approach and points-of-view concerning the issues. Each organization sought to do its part to address the city's disparities, but their effectiveness was often limited and unsustainable. We realized that there were natural, untapped resources available to us that could be accessed to address these concerns, and we could act upon more from a united front than we could ever accomplish separately. There were many resources within our congregations (for instance: human, financial, professional, and other) that simply needed to be brought together with a singleness of mind and a unified agenda. Gill Hickman stated, "In the community change context, change agents turn to their own resources. . .This is one small manifestation of an asset-based approach, which concentrates on the resources a group has. . ." (Hickman, 2009, Kindle Location 2943- 2946).

We then concluded that there were also other "like-minded" resource pockets of persons outside of the Christian Faith community (in our broader faith community) to whom we could appeal. There were other faith groups, community organizations, unions, and other untapped and unapproached interested parties who shared with us a desire to bring balance where there was imbalance, and equity to unequal and unjust life situations and circumstances in our city. And so, we appealed to other leaders to see if they would join our efforts to bring positive changes to Nashville. Here again, Hickman wrote: "leadership in the community context generally emerges when a threat to a group with some cohesive identity surfaces. In an effort to thwart this threat and preserve community, community leadership conducts adaptive work that differs from that conducted by leadership in all other contexts in its lack of formal authority of position." (Hickman, 2009, Kindle Location 2964-2966).

I am proposing in this article that one of the better efforts I have ever experienced at seeking to actualize this concept of the Beloved Community (particularly towards the aim of social change, equity, and a just society) is being pursued in Nashville, TN. For this is indeed the effort that is being put forth in REAL TIME by the social change and community empowerment organization known as Nashville Organized for Action and Hope (NOAH). Without specifically articulating it in its by-laws, creeds, or precepts, I contend that NOAH aspires to be a walking, talking, and living manifestation of King's Beloved Community for Social Change in its operational approach and its actions towards a just and equitable life for all Nashvillians.

The Beloved Community: The Dreamer

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was born on January 15, 1929 in Atlanta, GA, and died on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, TN. At the young age of 26, he began his public ministry for the dignity of all of humanity—and by the age of 39, his life was snuffed out by the violent imposition of a racist assassin's bullet.

And so, considering his youth at the outset of his work and the relative brevity of the time that he lived, it is nearly impossible to give any serious consideration to the King Legacy without being magnetically and undeniably drawn to the urgency and immediacy of the concept of selflessness and the notion of NOW! Even Dr. King himself said, "We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there "is" such a thing as being too late" (King Jr., Beyond Vietnam, 1967).

And so, to speak or write concerning Dr. King's Legacy requires an answer certain challenging and probing questions such as: How are we utilizing and maximizing the limited time we have to evoke and promote a common good within our country and among all people? What are we intentionally doing for others as we pass along the way of this life? How are we honoring King's Legacy by standing for what is right in our communities and taking steps to make a positive impact on the world?

For one of the most pervasive philosophical concepts that remained a constant and consistent part of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s theological and ideological operative ministry and social change motif was the notion of the Beloved Community. Rufus Burrow and Dwayne Tunstall stated, "It is indisputable that the keystone of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s theological and social ethic was his beloved community ideal" (Burrow & Tunstall, 2015, p. 17). And because this governing ideal was so pervasive in King's approach to social change ministry, one cannot help but ask: What is Martin Luther King's coveted Beloved Community? And where is it located?

King, himself, appeared to be describing this utopian communal reality in his "I Have A Dream" speech as a place where "little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and little white girls as sisters and brothers" (King Jr., I Have A Dream, 1963). He called it a community where we "transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. . ." and ". . . we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together" (King Jr., I Have A Dream, 1963). King said this "Beloved Community" is that blessed place where ". . . all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last'" (King Jr., I Have A Dream, 1963).

Is this place (this Beloved Community) a real place? Is this a community that can ever actually exist? Is there any manifestation of—or even an attempt at this "Beloved Community" idea at work in our times—in our world—as a living testament to the King Legacy?

The Beloved Community: A Dream Defined

Before presenting NOAH as a community change representation of the Beloved Community, it is in order to give some definition and understanding of the Beloved Community. As stated earlier, King (in many ways) preached and presented many wonderful word pictures of his idea of the Beloved Community. When he used language to envision a place where ". . . all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing" (King Jr., I Have A Dream, 1963), he was envisioning the Beloved Community. When King wrote. . .

> In a real sense all life is inter-related. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. . .This is the inter-related structure of reality (King Jr., Strength to Love, 1963, p. 54)

. . .he was describing the interconnected nature and relationally binding reality of the Beloved Community.

The King Memorial Center states the following concerning Dr. King's dream of the Beloved Community, "Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human

decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood" (King, 1968). Burrows and Turnstall captured King's dream of the Beloved Community writing:

> For America and the world, Martin Luther King dreamed of a thoroughly integrated society wherein power, privilege, and the world's material goods will be shared equitably by all people. In such a society, the humanity and dignity of every person will be acknowledged and respected in the most concrete sense. . .King acknowledged this society as the beloved community; a community that acknowledges, affirms, and celebrates the values and contributions of both individuals and the community. It is a community in which every person is valued and respected just because they are persons (Burrow & Tunstall, 2015, p. 139).

And so, King's dream of the Beloved Community was a state where equity, justice, and rightness would always be applied without impunity to all people. The Beloved Community is a place where every person is valued in the fullness of who they are. It is a place where all perspectives are important, and each persons' point of view matters to the whole. It is a place of total human reconciliation one to another; total redemption of strained and broken relationships; and total restoration of brotherhood and sisterhood. In King's own words,

> The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends. It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men (Golden & Rieke, 1971, p. 253).

Burrow and Tunstall state, "Simply put, the beloved community is a community, even more intimately a family of insiders, which is another way of saying: Everybody belongs, because every person belongs to--and is loved and revered by God" (Burrow & Tunstall, 2015, p. 139).

The Beloved Community: A Dream Desired

What is a dream? If one relies on dictionary definitions, a dream is a series of images, thoughts, or emotions passing through our minds while sleeping. A dream is an involuntary vision that enters our mental and/or emotional being while we are awake. But even more poignant and profound, a dream is an awesome aspiration, a grand goal, or an enormous aim for our individual and/or collective lives.

I would further offer that to dream is to grow, but to not dream is to diminish. To dream is to live, but to not dream is to die. To dream is to move progressively forward, but to not dream is to stagnate, settle for status quo, and stay in the same state that we have always been. I would even advance this thought on dreaming by saying that inspired and actualized dreams move us upward, activate us outward, inspire us onward, and press us forward!

Concerning the reality, relevance, and power of dreams, former 1st Lady of the United States and statesperson, Eleanor Roosevelt said: "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams" (Zhang, 2014, p. xv). Harlem Renaissance Poet Laureate Langston Hughes wrote: "Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die—life is a broken-winged bird, that cannot fly" (Hughes, 2001, p. 409). World-renowned 19th century essayist, poet, and lecturer Ralph Waldo Emerson penned the words: "Dare to live the life you have dreamed for yourself. Go forward and make your dreams come true" (Graham, Adams, & Giraffe Project, 1999, p. 33).

Even in one of America's darkest hours, the dehumanizing and degrading period of slavery, God elevated an underground railroad conducting dreamer named Harriet Tubman who said, "Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars and change the world" (Every Great Dream Begins with A Dreamer. Always Remember. . ., 2012). And in one of America's brightest moments, the administration of this nation's first African-American president, that sun-kissed executive administrative dreamer named Barack Obama said, "the true genius of America (is) a faith in the simple dreams of its people, and the insistence on small miracles. That we can say what we think and write what we think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door. That we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe or hiring somebody's son" (Dupuis & Boeckelman, 2008, pp. 150 - 151).

And on January 29, 1929, the world was blessed by the birth of a drum major for justice dreamer named Martin Luther King, who believed a dream deferred is not a dream denied. He said, "America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked 'insufficient funds.' But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt…and that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity…So we've come to cash this check...that will give us on demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice" (Clayton, 1964, p. 112). This dreamer dared to say: "I have a dream that (one day) my four little children will live in a nation where they won't be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character" (Clayton, 1964, p. 115). And when this dreamer considered the time when his dream would come to pass, he said: ". . .however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be

long, for "truth crushed to earth will rise again. . . How long? Not long, for the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice" (Sundquist, 2009, p. 91).

Martin Luther King, Jr. dreamed of a communal reality being worked out within the human arena where people of every ethnicity, socio-economic status, religious background, culture, creed, walk or persuasion could come together on equal footing; respect the uniqueness and personhood of the other; and work together for the common good of all. The actualization of such a dream carried within it the potential to be transformative to the human mind and spirit, to bring healing and wholeness to the world, and to challenge humanity to intentionally pursue a higher way of being in their relationships with one another and the world at large.

The Beloved Community: The Driver of the Dream

NOAH is an organization with no centralized, hierarchical model of leadership. We decided to utilize a leadership model that was not charismatically fronted by pastors, rabbis, mosque leaders, or union/organizational presidents in traditional leadership roles. The only authority that exists in this conglomerate, collaborative, collective group was those position(s) held by the elected or appointed persons in their "individual" organizations. It is an organization governed by intentional relationality and collaboration. There are key point persons in varying responsibilities in NOAH, but there is no charismatic, authoritative figure dictating the movement of this group. It is a community, and Hickman writes, "The community context also best illustrates leadership without authority or at least without positional authority." (Hickman, 2009, Kindle Location 3171-3172).

The driving force and cohesion of NOAH is in its member organizations exercising an intentional willingness to surrender authority and control—while binding our collective efforts and resources towards an agreed upon common good. There is, quite simply, a collective and agreed upon desire to provide advocacy for the underserved and unheard of our city. For "advocacy plays a role in community change not seen in other change contexts." (Hickman, 2009, Kindle Location 2946)

The interesting outcome of this work is that both individual persons and individual organizations have acquired a sense of empowerment for change within their individual spheres of operation and influence. Not only does NOAH enable its people and organizations to feel and be enfranchised through the work that we are doing collectively, but this empowerment is having a carry-over effect into the work that the persons and organizations engage outside of the purview of NOAH. Hickman writes, "A true sense of empowerment does not take the form of power over other group

members but is much more aligned with a sense of power to bring about change by developing a sense of power within one's self and then seeking to direct that power in collaboration with others." (Hickman, 2009, Kindle Location 3255-3258).

As a result of this very intentionally relational, communal, and empowering approach that is the hallmark of NOAH's structure, this organization has accrued what Robert Putnam calls "social capital" (Hickman, 2009, Kindle Location 3187). That is to say that NOAH has acquired the recognition, respectability, and positive reputation and response from a wide circle of both the people whom we serve, and those who we often challenge correctively towards equity and justice in our city. The existence of this social capital is evident in NOAH because we are committed to consistently recruiting, training, and empowering ordinary persons in our communities to embrace this opportunity to be included in our "beloved community," and to engage the body politic of our city as a unified voice—speaking for justice in the areas of affordable housing, economic equity and jobs, and education reform. Hickman writes, "The lens of citizen leadership provides another look at social capital, especially when citizen leaders are considered social capital entrepreneurs. Citizen leadership suggests that social capital is not so much a characteristic of a group or an individual as it is an investment in people as members of a community" (Hickman, 2009, Kindle Location 3197-3199).

The Beloved Community: A Dream Delivered (My Ministry and NOAH)

My entire career as a pastor and community activist has been spent studying the contextual spheres of influence in which I work and reside to inspire individuals and congregations to actively engage in social and community change for the betterment of the lives of both the community and constituencies we serve. The denomination in which I pastor, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, is missionally driven to be at the forefront of the fight for spiritual, social, political, and relational liberty. Our denomination (and my personal ministry) stand in the gap for individual and communal liberty and justice for ALL people from spiritual, economic, mental, social, institutional, and systemic oppression. Our denominational mission statement says:

> The Mission of the AME Church is to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ's liberating Gospel through word and deed. At every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall engage in carrying out the spirit of the original Free African Society. . .that is, to seek out and save the lost, and serve the needy through a continuing program of preaching the Gospel, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, housing the homeless, cheering the fallen, providing jobs for the jobless, administering to the needs of those in prisons, hospitals,

> nursing homes, asylums, mental institutions, and senior citizen's homes; caring for the sick, the shut-ins, the mentally and socially disturbed, and encouraging thrift and economic advancement (The African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2016, p. 23).

And so, I have sought to enact the challenges of this mission through my work within this organization in which I have engaged in a pivotal and pillar role in the formulation and founding called Nashville Organized for Action and Hope (NOAH).

The Beloved Community: The Dream Making A Difference

As a direct result of the intra-organizational listening campaigns that take place in each of NOAH's member organizations, an inter-organizational listening campaign is also carried out among all NOAH member organizations. At this point, each member organization (through its own listening campaign) will have discussed and decided on (1) the issues that they will pursue and address within their organization, and (2) the issues that they are interested in NOAH pursuing for the greater good of ALL in the city of Nashville. The bringing together of all NOAH member organizations for this collective and collaborative listening campaign is called our Issues Convention.

Leading up to the Issues Convention, there is a series of inter-organizational listening campaigns—where people who have engaged in one-on-one meeting sessions with one another throughout the year can begin to discuss among themselves and other groups the issues in the city that were highlighted as concerns within their own organizations. Petra Kuenkel affirms our approach here writing, "Creating an innovative organization requires a people-centered approach; after all, it is people who come up with ideas and transform them into innovations. . .It is impossible to command innovation, you have to inspire people to want to contribute.' It is the emotional connectedness between people around the issue to address that brings about new ideas" (Kuenkel, 2016, Kindle Location 3900-3903).

At the conclusion of this series of inter-organizational listening campaigns, the Issues Convention is planned; and the Beloved Community of NOAH decides the issues that it will emphasize and confront towards justice, rightness, and equity in our city. Task forces are formed to serve as the chief researchers, informers, teachers, and strategists on the decided upon issues—and they also are tasked with inspiring and inciting organizational mobilization around actions needed to be taken to bring and speak truth to power related to the issues that NOAH deems pertinent for liberty and justice for our members and the persons in the communities we serve. Kuenkel contends, "Collaborative efforts are most robust in such a web of relationships when diverse actors come together

around a common cause. Networks. . .draw together individuals with a passion for change through a compelling purpose" (Kuenkel, 2016, Kindle Location 3813).

The Beloved Community: Dealing with Dream Destroyers

One of the greatest fascinations and frustrations of my career has been both watching and likely participating in the creation and maintenance of the chasms and divides within the faith community. The inescapable questions that arise concerning this division are: Why is there such a wide (and seemingly unbridgeable) gap between our varying faith perspectives? Why is there such a great divide between Christians and Jews; Jews and Buddhists; Buddhists and Muslims; Christians and Muslims; and black, white, and other nationalities even among Christians? Why do these divides exist among the faithful when there are already so many divisions in other segments of our world?

Our culture seems to thrive on division and separating people from one another. We have attitudes, politics, media arms, and institutions that are all fueled by a doctrine of separating people from people. James Wilson suggested that these divisions have been impacted, further expanded, and exalted by "ideology, on the one hand, and congressional polarization, media influence, interest-groups demands, and education"—and the divisions within these entities. He further stated, in "How Divided Are We" that our divisions are a type of cultural war writing,

> To a degree that we cannot precisely measure, and over issues that we cannot exactly list, polarization has seeped down into the public, where it has assumed the form of a culture war. The sociologist James Davison Hunter, who has written about this phenomenon in a mainly religious context, defines culture war as 'political and social hostility rooted in different systems of moral understanding. Such conflicts, he writes, which can involve 'fundamental ideas about who we are as Americans,' are waged both across the religious/secular divide and within religions themselves, where those with an 'orthodox' view of moral authority square off against those with a 'progressive' view (Wilson, 2006, p. 20).

And so, NOAH seeks to bridge these varying divisions and move its people past cultural discord towards communal accord. This is done by challenging and training those persons within NOAH to engage each week in one-on-one relationship-building sessions with other members of the organization who are not a part of their own race, faith persuasion, socio-economic status and/or professional peer group. The task, here, is for each NOAH member to personally know a significant number of persons outside of their normal sphere of influence or circle of interaction within one year.

These one-on-one sessions have proven to be a crucial building block in establishing a spirit of collaboration, cohesion, and community in the operation of NOAH. These sessions challenge persons to become vulnerable by forcing us to acknowledge how we have contributed to the divisions in our world, and by exposing us to accessibility to people and groups with whom we have not historically nor intentionally been willing to be in relationship. To this end, Harold Vogelaar rightly stated, "Vulnerability is the one thing we try to avoid at all costs in this country. Yet. . .it is the only way that will make us open to one another" (Vogelaar, 2004, p, 399). But it also presses us to clearly know who we are personally, what we bring to the table of the organization, and how we are not lessened by being more communal and embracing of a wider range of other people from other worlds.

This exercise in intentional relationality builds community towards the Beloved Community even when people are not in total agreement on all issues. They learn how to appreciate each other's perspective(s) even in disagreement because a real relationship has been established between them. Abe Ata wrote, "Significant differences in lifestyle and attitudes. . . are not to be sidestepped. Differences of interpretation towards social values and ways of life should be acknowledged, respected, and addressed without aiming at a fine compromise. Not because we don't need a dialogue, but because these different approaches have concrete implications to both communities living together in a shared place." He continued, "At the end of the day, each community should ask: what are we doing to portray a better image of the other community" (Ata, 2005, p. 59)?

These one-on-one sessions open the door of opportunity for persons in management to engage with union persons—persons of the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and other faith groups to interact and come to know each other better—persons of different races, classes, educational attainments, and persons of other cultural nuances to intentionally get to know what moves one another to action—and no one is threatened nor do they lose the value of who they are by participating in these intentional engagement opportunities, Again Vogelaar wrote, "the more secure I am. . . the more open and hospitable I can be to all people." He continued, "this issue of being more inclusive, of being open to those who are different, in particular, who have different. . . perspectives, is epitomized in trying to avoid the terrible distinction so prevalent today of 'us' versus 'them;' (and) the 'good' versus the 'bad'" (Vogelaar, 2004, p. 398).

Along with these intentional and planned regular one-on-one sessions within our broader organization, NOAH also engages in bi-annual intra- and inter-organizational listening campaigns. These sessions begin as one-on-one sessions within one's own organization led by persons within the organization who commit to having these one-

on-one interactions with each person in the organization/church/union/synagogue. The purpose for these listening campaigns is to do exactly what the name implies—listen intently to the concerns, hurts, fears, aspirations, desires, and needs both individually and communally of each of the members of our organizations to begin to develop strategies for change in both our organizations and city based on the felt-needs of our constituencies.

What these sessions do is assure that each of our members know that they have been heard (that is: listened to with intent) as it relates to their concerns for their organization and the city at large. They also produce a sense of ownership for the work and the people (human and financial) resources that will be needed to pursue the issues that arise from the listening campaigns and that are formulated as the focus issues for NOAH to address. This is because those very issues will have arisen from the one-on-one sessions and the listening campaigns that would have been taking place in all the member organizations of NOAH. Petra Kuenkel correctly stated that, "dialogue becomes a bridge between the individual's capacity to tune in to sustainable action and the collective's negotiated solutions for the future. Dialogue complements and improves democracy. . .dialogues are used as a first step to ensure collective input into road maps for the future" (Kuenkel, 2016, Kindle Locations 3364-3366).

The Beloved Community, The King Legacy, and NOAH

In consideration of exactly how the work of NOAH relates to the King Legacy and his notion of the Beloved Community, I am drawn to the words Dr. King shared during a Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) training session. These word address (for me) the relationship between the work of NOAH and Dr. King's legacy. He said,

> The great tragedy is that Christianity failed to see that it had the revolutionary edge. You don't have to go to Karl Marx to learn how to be a revolutionary. I didn't get my inspiration from Karl Marx; I got it from a man named Jesus, a Galilean saint who said he was anointed to heal the broken-hearted. He was anointed to deal with the problems of the poor. And that is where we get our inspiration.

We have the power to change America and give a kind of new vitality to the religion of Jesus Christ. And we can get those young men and women who've lost faith in the church to see that Jesus was a serious man precisely because he was concerned about their problems. The greatest revolutionary that history has ever known (King Jr., "To Chart Our Course for the Future," Address at SCLC Ministers Leadership Training Program, Miami, February 23, 1968, recording in King Library and Archive, King Center, Atlanta, 2014).

Because of my vocation in ministry, I love the fact that my work with Nashville Organized for Action and Hope (NOAH) gives me the opportunity to put arms and legs to my faith as a Christian—and my calling to pastor God's people into becoming a community that values the worth and importance of every individual. I love the idea that Jesus' great concern for the problems of the people whom he served is taken seriously in this work. For this is why I want my ministry to be taken seriously as well. My concern is for the real problems of the people I serve. And taking action to address this concern is indeed revolutionary, and in fact, it revolutionizes the world.

This work also places me in a space to move from my denomination's hierarchical and positional leadership role to what John Maxwell calls Permissive Leadership. This is the leadership space where a person leads people if the people "allow" them to lead, and this leadership reality is allowed based on the prevalence and potency of building relationships, which is essential to becoming the Beloved Community. Maxwell wrote, ". . .when a leader learns to function on the Permission level...the leader begins to influence people with relationship, not just position. Building relationships develops a foundation for effectively leading others. It also starts to break down organizational silos as people connect across the lines between their job descriptions or departments" (Maxwell, 2013, Kindle Locations 1109-1113).

NOAH's governing ethic of relationship building and people valuing through one-on-one sessions and listening campaigns are pragmatically approaches used to actual King's Dream of the Beloved Community. NOAH equips and empowers its constituency to make one another feel appreciated, valued, and needed for this organization to survive and thrive. Karenga captures this spirit of the Beloved Community using the African term Ubuntu writing,

> Again, at the heart of the concept and practice of ubuntu is the principle of reciprocity in our relationships and our actions. Indeed, it is this mutual responsiveness that informs and undergirds the process and practice of our coming into the fullness of ourselves as human beings. Mutual respect is an ancient African ethical value as expressed in the Maatian teachings of ancient Egypt which defines humans as possessors of dignity and divinity, sacred and deserving of the highest respect. This respect is also a rightful recognition and appreciation of our similarity and diversity, and our embeddedness in and responsibility to community and the natural world. (Karenga, 2015, p.2)

Maxwell added, "When people feel liked, cared for, included, valued, and trusted, they begin to work together. . .And that can change the entire . . .environment" (Maxwell, 2013, Kindle Locations 1113-1115).

It is in this way that NOAH is aligned with the King Legacy of the Beloved Community. NOAH is an intentional representation that demonstrates how people of divergent cultures, occupations, social economic statuses, races, and other distinctive characteristics can be brought together to bridge their varying differences towards a place of a singleness of heart and mind for the purpose of promoting and providing a social change response for justice in the Greater Nashville community. This is a representation aligning with King's idea of Black, White, Jew, Gentile, Protestant, and Catholics coming together, joining hands, and working for good together. It proves the truth of the idea that each of us being a separate thread in a huge garment of destiny must come together to accomplish this destiny.

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Leadership in Prison Educational Programs at HBCUs

Rev. Gerald Young

Now is the time for all Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to offer degrees to persons behind the New Jim Crow era wall. I read with great anticipation the article "Correctional education: 'America's balm of Gilead,' by Dr. Tracy Andrus. He is a Ph.D. who currently serves as Director of the Lee P. Brown Criminal Justice Institute at Wiley College, an HBCU. Wiley College is one of the first Black schools to offer degrees to persons who are incarcerated. Like so many other persons in the quest to have the Second Chance Pell Grant program, Dr. Andrus's story is offered to incarcerated men and women who desire to pursue their college educational goals. Andrus, who is formerly incarcerated, says, "Correctional education is a Godsend for the thousands of men and women locked up behind bars in federal and state penitentiaries throughout America. Hats off to the lawmakers and politicians on both sides of the aisle that recognize how critically important education is to those who wish to make a better life for themselves and their families." Dr. Andrus's words and testimony offer a glimmer of hope to the potential students behind bars who can benefit from obtaining a college degree behind bars and its positive effect on the recidivism rates.

As a formerly incarcerated individual, Andrew tells a personal story and provides firsthand knowledge of education's value. In short, he writes, education is the great equalizer, as quoted by Horace Mann in the 18th century. As Dr. Andrus tells of his experience, not only does correctional education motivate offenders to stay on the straight and narrow, but correctional education also allows offenders to reimagine themselves. Earning a quality education plays an important role in the successful reentry of men and women into their communities. Nationally, more than 95 % of people who are incarcerated will eventually be released, but more than a third will return to prison within three years (Hughes & Wilson, 2021). Prison educational programs cultivate hope and rekindle the thought that change is possible in a tough spot. Correctional education, the college behind bars phenomena, gives persons who are incarcerated another shot at normalcy. When HBCUs empower incarcerated persons to start down a

meaningful road leading to clear paths upon returning to their communities, the endless cycle of poverty and retiring to criminal behavior is positively disrupted. Prison Educational programs allow offenders the opportunity to right their wrongs. Correctional education will enable children, spouses, and relatives to speak in the affirmative of their loved ones behind bars and gives them hope that they will learn their lesson and utilize their newly acquired skills and credentials to remain free, employed, and taxpaying citizens.

The reimagining, reemergence, and resurgence of correctional education opportunities through the Second Chance Pell Initiative has given hope to incarcerated persons who were not fully engaged in the reduction tool of prison education programs initiatives. What is Second Chance Pell? In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education created the Second Chance Pell (SCP) Experimental Sites Initiative to provide need-based Pell grants to those in state and federal prisons. This initiative examines the impact expanded access to financial aid has on incarcerated adults' participation in educational opportunities.

Dwan J. Warmack, President of Claflin University, and Kent J. Smith, Jr., President of Langston University, wrote in a Washington Post Op-Ed in November 2020 about the need to give an incarcerated person access to Pell Grants. These two HBCU presidents are leading the way to give men and women an educational pathway to being empowered to change the course of their lives. In his statement on leadership, Ralph M. Stogdill (1974) asserts, "There are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it" (p. 7).

One way to define this term is to examine the four parts of leadership as noted by Northouse (2007): "(a) leadership is a process, (b) leadership involves influence, (c) leadership occurs in groups, and (d) leadership involves common goals" (p. 5). Another definition of leadership from Northouse (2007) is that "leadership is the process whereby an individual influences groups of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 5). However, it is defined, one thing is constant, outstanding leadership is a highly sought out commodity.

This is especially true in the enrollment management leadership pursuits of recruiting traditional and non-traditional students. A decrease in HBCUs enrollment numbers can be attributed to leadership challenges. With the competition of more affluent white institutions giving free tuition to the brightest of black and brown people, HBCUs need to expand their reach to stay in business. It is time for these 110 Black schools in 26 states to pursue offering degrees to incarcerated persons and do so with the aid of the Second Chance Pell Grant.

This can be done by following Wiley College's example in Marshall, Texas, Langston University in Langston, Oklahoma, and Shorter College of North Little Rock, Arkansas, who created a Director of Prison Education Initiatives (PEI) position and an administrator for this program. They also have faculty, staff, and groups of committed volunteers from the school of Social Work. As a result of these developments, incarcerated men and women can begin the journey of changing their futures by obtaining a college degree; when this is done, the inmates' recidivism rate is greatly reduced. Without a college degree, their chances of going back to prison are significantly higher. The Director of Prison Education can use transformational, service role-taking, and removal of Path-Goal obstacles to facilitate change. The problem is that leadership efforts to increase enrollment efforts have failed at HBCUs and new innovative initiatives such as Prison Education Programs may be the tool needed to solve fiscal and administrative issues on these campuses.

The purpose of the HBCUs Prison Education Program is to inform administrators of the importance of effectively allowing incarcerated men and women to re-enter society with college degrees that will change the course of their lives and strengthen a positive impact on the community to which they will return. This article's focus is to inform HBCU leaders about the importance of utilizing the Second Chance Pell Grant to educate incarcerated individuals and reduce recidivism rates in the American prison system. To achieve enduring significant and life-changing transformation through Prison Education Programs (PEPs), HBCUs can prepare prisoners for reentry by equipping them with the skills and education necessary to attain exemplary citizenship, successful quality of life, and prevent recidivism.

Prison Education Programs in HBCUs using Transformational Leadership Approach

According to Garmon (2002), President of Vista Community College in Berkeley, California, there is an alarming number of incarcerated adults who could benefit from gaining an education that could rehabilitate them and lower the number of repeat offenders in America. Garmon (2002) writes:

> It is estimated that there are 1.6 million potential students that Colleges and Universities across the country could serve. Throughout the United States, without much fanfare, some community colleges are already going about the rewarding business of serving students in prisons. Helping these inmates gain an education and start a new life has helped reduce recidivism rates (a tendency to slip back into previous criminal behavior patterns), thus saving a huge amount of money for local and state governments (p. 3).

Hall (2015) agrees that recidivism can be reduced in prisons by initiation Prison Education Programs (PEPs) so that inmates can complete degree programs and feel a sense of pride about their accomplishments. Hall writes: "The relationship between participation and completion of correctional education programs is important to the role of education as a tool for reduction of recidivism. Specifically, the importance of degree completion while incarcerated further aids in the reduction of recidivism rather than participation only." (Hall, 2015, p.12).

I believe the leadership within the President's cabinet should embrace the fact that it is time for more Historically Black Colleges and Universities to bolster their enrollment numbers by developing and implementing face-to-face offerings for persons who are incarcerated. The goal is to provide selected men and women (who have sentences of five years or less and are currently incarcerated in the Department of Corrections across this country) opportunity and access to Prison Education Programs.

Through the Higher Education Act of 1965, which was renewed in August of 2008, the PEP provides 100,000 inmates with the academic opportunity to pursue higher education. It does this by allocating finances that create avenues and provides resources for inmates to pay for and earn educational degrees. The pilot program qualified eligible incarcerated Americans to receive Pell Grants and pursue postsecondary education degrees. The college degree is the spigot that provides an entrance to mid-level career-track employment. The college eligible incarcerated can support themselves and their families upon reentry to society. The Second Chance Pell Grant program results were so positive that the current administration has reaffirmed and expanded it for the incarcerated.

Incarcerated students are generally prohibited from receiving Pell grants, which provide need-based federal financial aid to low-income undergraduate students. However, the U.S. Department of Education has the authority to waive specific statutory or regulatory requirements for providing federal student aid at schools approved to participate in its experiments. Accordingly, the department initiated the multi-year Second Chance Pell pilot in 2015 to test if allowing incarcerated individuals to receive Pell grants will increase their participation in higher education programs and influence their academic and life outcomes; or if it can create an obstacle to the schools' administration of federal financial aid programs.

Dr. Michael L. Lomax, President and CEO of United Negro College Fund wrote an article entitled 6 Reasons HBCUs Are More Important Than Ever. His sixth reason, HBCUs Offer a True Value/Values Proposition, aligns with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s article, The Purpose of Education. Lomax writes: "HBCUs are rooted in faith, community, and service.

Black churches have long been pillars of the black community, and the history and life of black colleges are closely intertwined with faith, values, and service to others" (Lomax, 2015, p. 4).

HBCUs offer a real value/value proposition: not only are they a great value to their students, but they also produce students with great values. Over and over, one is reminded of the heroes and leaders who have emerged from HBCUs. Whether it is the kindness of parishioners at the Emanuel Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston who perished after opening their doors to a stranger, or the inspired, nonviolent Leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., HBCUs produce the best kind of values-based leadership. For more than 100 years, HBCUs have been educating minorities, giving them economic opportunities, and instilling great values. Not only have they consistently produced leaders in their communities and across the nation, but HBCUs in the past and today have always affordably made the leaders of the future.

Lomax's words of possessing and producing students with great values have the spirit, if not the letter, of King's thought of "knowledge plus character." King (1947) wrote, "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education" (p. 123). It is important to continue in the same spirit as Dr. Martin King, Jr. by providing ethical and creative leadership within HBCUs; and to take his legacy of great values to incarcerated persons by allowing them to change their reentry paths from not returning to prison.

Recidivism is a monumental problem to overcome by ex-felons who are not prepared to re-enter society. Recidivism is one of the most fundamental concepts in criminal justice. It refers to a person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after receiving sanctions or undergoing intervention for a previous crime. To achieve enduring significant and life-changing transformation, HBCUs must prepare prisoners for reentry by equipping them with the skills and education necessary to attain exemplary citizenship, gain a successful quality of life, and prevent recidivism. This is where the HBCUs can become not only instrumental but a deciding factor in taking the helm in reducing crime by educating incarcerated prisoners.

To restore this population of non-traditional students, transformational leaders can inspire their followers and give these incarcerated men and women a brighter future through education opportunities. Although the term transformational leadership was introduced by Downton (1973), the concept did not gain credibility and wide acceptance until the publication of the book Leadership by James Macgregor Burns (1978). In his book, MacGregor (1978) states:

> The transforming leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower. Beyond that, the transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the follower's full person. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents. (p. 4).

According to Burns (1978), the transforming approach encourages leaders to reimagine concrete change in leading HBCUs to embark on this new frontier of progressive education. New insights are driven by "purpose and character" within correctional educational programs, and they contribute to the inmates' recidivism rates being lowered.

The concept of transforming leadership is found in Burns' (1978) descriptive research on political leaders. Still, this term is now used in organizational psychology as well. Transforming leadership is a process in which "leaders and followers help each other advance to a higher level of morale and motivation" (Transformational Leadership, n.d., p. 3). As the Director of Prison Education Programs and faculty teach positive psychology within the offerings of degree programs to inmates, the students benefit from the transforming leaders' instruction to better themselves by articulating HBCUs' educational curriculum offerings. Teaching inmates who participate in college behind bars learn to rethink how they were and begin to imagine the way they may become better citizens. The influence of transforming leadership provides and instills in students the capabilities in their futures by imparting moral imperatives and ethical vision. Doing so helps change negative thoughts into adopting the concept of Dr. King's "purpose plus character." In Burn's book entitled, Transforming leadership, he writes, "The word for this process is empowerment. Instead of exercising power over people, transforming leaders champion and inspired followers…As leaders to encourage followers to rise above narrow interests and work together for transcending goals, leaders can come into conflict with followers' rising sense of efficacy and purpose" (Burns 1978, p.26). As HBCU leaders operate from the premise of "purpose plus character," leadership and followership unearth vital components to achieve the goal of administering degree programs to incarcerated men and women.

Seven years later, Bernard M. Bass (1985) further expanded the concept of Burns' work in the book Leadership by adding key components, which also explained transforming leadership and transactional leadership to becoming "transformational leadership." Bass added to Burns' (1978) initial concepts to explain how transformational leadership could be measured and how it impacts follower motivation and performance. Bass (1985) says, "Transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in

such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality" (p. 20). Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that causes a change in individuals and social systems. It creates a valuable and positive difference in followers' ability to develop into leaders in their ideal form. Transformational leadership enhances followers' motivation, morale, and performance through various mechanisms in its original condition.

As transformational leadership evolved, Bass (1985) expanded on the four primary areas as he noted the four I's for a leadership change. First, Individualized Consideration is the degree to which the leader attends to each follower's needs, acts as a mentor or coach to the follower, and listens to the follower's concerns and needs. Secondly, Intellectual Stimulation is the degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks, and solicits followers' ideas. Thirdly, Inspirational Motivation is the degree to which the leader articulates a appealing and inspiring vision to followers. Lastly, Idealized Influence provides a role model for high ethical behavior, instills pride, gains respect and trust (Bass & Bass, 2008).

Burns' definition of transformative leadership and Bass' explanation of the four areas display the type of leadership that HBCUs need in Prison Educational Initiatives. Now on the cusp of a new frontier in Higher Education with the "College Behind Bars" concept, HBCUs can help offenders imagine having a life that can transcend the scarlet letter of having been incarcerated. Having a college degree arms students with knowledge, skills, and attitude to meet society's demands. Beyond the course content, students become immersed in a collegiate experience that ultimately lays the foundation for professional opportunities and careers. It is the restoration of hope and the beginning of a new journey. It is essential to understand that 25 percent of offenders enter the correctional system without a high school diploma or GED; additionally, only a third more have noted that their highest earned level of education is a GED (Couloute, 2018 p. 2). Furthermore, African Americans are five times more likely to become incarcerated than their White counterparts (Criminal justice fact sheet, n.d.; Nellis, 2016). A social call to action for Historically Black Colleges and Universities to make a rather significant impact by efficiently and effectively offering prison education programs may be necessary.

Over 2.3 million individuals are in American prisons, jails, and the vast majority of them will return to their communities ill-prepared to do anything different (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). Transformational leadership could be the catalyst for change; it will work as a strategy to keep them from returning. The concept of transformational leadership has dominated the leadership literature since the early 1980s (Jackson & Parry, 2008; Northouse, 2007). Northouse (2007) defines transformational leadership as being "a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values,

these standards, and long-term goals. It includes assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and trading them as full man beings" (p. 163). Bass and Avolio (1993) expanded the transformational leadership concept to include more effective aspects of followers' and leaders' feelings and emotions. They also delineated vital elements of the idea: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. Contemporary leadership theorists and researchers still cite these four elements as fundamental transformational leadership components (Kim, 2006; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Northouse, 2007).

Agility and Removal of Path-goal Obstacles to Facilitate Change Within PEIs in HBCUs

According to Heifetz (1994), leaders are confronted with two types of problems: technical problems, which can be solved by expertise and good management, and adaptive problems, such as poverty, drug abuse, and racial tensions, which require innovation and learning. HBCUs Prison Educational Programs must equip themselves to overcome both technical and adaptive problems by being agile in their development and educating incarcerated individuals. It is noted that adaptive leadership, with the understanding of having to lead without authority, can constructively attack the problem of Prison Education Initiatives (PEIs) in HBCUs, a problem that case research can facilitate the exploring of the complexities of launching this program to non-traditional students.

Consequently, addressing problems that will arise in PEIs, and being able to be adaptive, will lead to obtaining more positive outcomes. Adaptive leadership, as defined and explained by Ronald A. Heifetz (1994) in his book *Leadership without Easy Answers*, is a "Practical leadership framework that helps individuals and organizations to adapt to changing environments and effectively respond to recurring problems" (p. 34). With this definition in mind, specifically regarding the problems of launching this initiative, adaptive leadership will be required. Northhouse (2007) adds to the understanding of being agile in planning this type of progressive education to non-traditional students by saying such leaders help "Others do the work they need to do, in order to adapt to the challenges they face" (p. 258).

The author of this article has devised an eight-step plan to develop and implement Prison Education in HBCUs that will help to alleviate obstacles or concerns that leaders may have while attempting to institute PEPs at their schools. The eight-step prison initiative plan takes from a manual entitled: *The Dream Re-Imagined Historically Black Colleges and Universities Releasing Purpose to Prisoners* by G. Martin Young. For this paper, only the first four steps will be outlined. They are:

Step One

Recruit a lead person or persons who will direct the PEP (Prison Education Program) initiative. The ideal candidate will be at ease of entering secure prison environments. Next, disseminate promotional information to recruit qualified professors to teach; this may involve convening a search committee to ensure the best selection of instructional professionals. The recruitment process may include selecting adjunct instructors interested in affiliating with the schools' first teaching course offerings to educate incarcerated adults. Recruit staff who will be liaisons and can provide the support services required to ensure effective facilitation occurs between the academic and operations components of school.

Step Two

Through the school's administration, contact the institution's accrediting body and the state's Department of Education to initiate the process of offering courses leading to a degree within selected prison venues. The program director will follow institutional directions to ensure the university and the courses comply with all rules and regulations. The school recognizes that it is crucial to obtain authorization from the state's accreditation body to get approval to offer modified but challenging courses within a confined setting. It is also critical to recognize the financial and resource commitment that institutions must make to accommodate changes and updates in the academic plan for this new venture. Therefore, solicit funding such as the Second Chance Grant and other state and/or federal options can help subsidize tuition and fee costs.

Step Three

The PEP's objective is to oversee the coordination of the following components to maximize their joint yet flexible operation in concert with one another. The director will also be responsible for working within the school's regulations to conduct information dissemination and provide public service updates. Accountability is essential, and the director will provide monthly reports on student progress and services offered and utilized. The director will give a quarterly update and an annual end-of-year comprehensive report.

Step Four

The admissions team, financial aid team, testing center, and registrar's office will receive an orientation to this particular segment of the student body and its specific requirements. The orientation will build program familiarity, comfort, and

commitment to maintaining school requirements in a confined atmosphere and answering pertinent questions concerning the “College Behind Bars” initiative's expectations and format.

While attempting to execute any of these steps, it will require agility and dedication; step one to step four will have many challenges depending upon the timetable of implementation set by the leadership. This is where agility and Path-Goal Theory adds to the success of launching an HBCU prison education program. According to Northouse (2007), Path-Goal Theory is: “How leaders motivate followers to accomplish designated goals…is designed to explain how leaders can help followers along the path to their goals by selecting specific behaviors that are best suited to followers’ needs and to the situation in which followers are working” (pp. 117-118).

The agile behavior of the PEI’s leadership in directing, supporting, participating, and achieving orientation goals is crucial to maneuvering from one step to the next. Northouse (2007) continues by adding, “Path-goal theory is an approach to leadership that is not only theoretically complex, but also pragmatic” (p. 123). This thought is not just about theory but the importance of practice, which leads to overcoming barriers and challenges that will arise in the developing and implementing PEIs at HBCUs. One may agree with Northouse (2007) when he says, “Path-goal theory provides a set of general recommendations based on the characteristics of followers and tasks for how leaders should act in various situations if they want to be effective” (pp. 126-127). This statement is crucial, especially when leading a new team through the steps toward launching a PEI with followers who need to be guided through specific duties to reach the launching deadline.

Conclusion

PEIs that operate with leaders and followers who subscribe to transformational, service role-taking, and removal of Path-Goal obstacles to facilitate change are essential for HBCUs facilitating the work to bring valued college education to the incarcerated. As HBCUs benefit through progressive education and vocational training in prison, reducing recidivism, and improving job outlook, inmates receive general education and vocational training. They thereby are significantly less likely to return to jail after being released and are more likely to find employment. Incarcerated men and women can potentially add to their state's human capital if observed as assets, future resources to the state, communities, and citizens.

To achieve enduring significant and life-changing transformation, HBCUs must prepare prisoners for reentry by equipping them with the skills and education necessary to attain

exemplary citizenship, successful quality of life, and prevent recidivism. The first four steps of the eight-step manual could be utilized at HBCUs to help them begin PEPs at their schools to reduce the recidivism rates in America and be a part of the solution by producing productive citizens who value themselves and others. HBCUs can become an instrumental part of the solution by offering college classes to inmates. However, they can become a deciding factor in effectively impacting incarcerated men and women to re-enter society with college degrees. PEPs and pertinent PEIs can change the course of incarcerated individuals forever and strengthen a positive impact on the community to which they will return.

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Reimagining American Democracy: Community not Chaos

Stewart Burns, Ph.D.

> In democratic countries knowledge of how to combine is the mother of all other forms of knowledge. One may think of political associations as great free schools to which all citizens come to be taught the general theory of association. (Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*)
>
> This ugly pandemic has opened up a path to a new world. (Fareed Zakaria, *Ten Lessons for a Post-Pandemic World*)

The insurrection of January 6th, 2021, finished off Donald Trump's presidency but it raised up the prospect of a second civil war. The insurrection crystalized the failure of liberal democracy, of electoral-representative democracy, to "establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty" (quoting the Constitution's preamble). Joe Biden's presidency will do a lot of good, but he is bound to make compromises that further the exploitative capitalist order, fall short of achieving racial justice, and foster renewable energy without really taking on the fossil fuel industry. Not only but especially in extreme crisis, liberal democracy has shown its incapability to resolve systemic problems like slavery and white supremacy, immoral wars such as Vietnam and Iraq, widespread poverty, particularly child poverty, and most astonishing, its absolute failure to address the extreme peril of climate catastrophe.

Let us put aside the January 6th insurrection for the moment and look at our critical situation even without that horrendous stain on American democracy, which compounded the dire predicament we face.

The jury is out on whether Joe Biden's New Deal-like (New Deal lite) torrent of presidential action will stem our storm of crises, breaking through congressional deadlock. As public intellectuals we have a responsibility to look at the larger picture

and take a longer view. A grim picture for sure, though not without silver linings. The inescapable fact is that American democracy has not "prevailed" as President Biden asserted in his inaugural address and others have parroted. If in fact it has ever prevailed or even existed, despite systemic disfranchisement that has plagued us since the founding, American democracy has been badly wounded, perhaps mortally. Not merely by four years of Trumpism but by forty years of corporate takeover that opened the floodgates to Trump's attempted dictatorship and the fury of working-class and "formerly middle class" whites royally ripped off by the mega banks and corporations. Of course peoples of color were plundered worse.

In this essay I am advocating that "we the people" rethink the meaning of American democracy and imagine an alternative democratic ecosystem that actually meets human needs, upholds human rights, solves root problems, and can potentially resolve the storm of crises we face. Yet this is not all we need democracy for. The pandemic we are enduring has put in sharp relief people's need for connections with others who value and respect them, who care about them and for whom they care. We have seen up close the emotional devastation of loneliness, for kids on up to elders. This globe-wide desperation, the barely bearable pain of aloneness, draws some to white nationalist groups that provide belongingness through shared hatred. But most people do not want to make hatred their home, sensing how it may eat them alive. While they suffer the loss of belonging, many of them are galvanizing people of conscience to gather together in mutual aid and collective self-help.

Generations of political scientists like Harvard's Danielle Allen have extolled the "genius" of the U.S. Constitution as a force for stability and gradual change.[i] Yet a close look at the founding document and the *Federalist Papers* justifying its ratification makes clear that the Constitution was crafted to hobble majority rule and to privilege minority rights if not minority rule. (I don't mean rights of racial minorities.) In famous Federalist #10 James Madison asserts that certain "factions" should be suppressed, especially the majority faction representing non-elite citizens. But the elite factions have been protected and rewarded by congressional committee barons, the antidemocratic Senate, the electoral college, president's veto power, judicial review, deference as a public virtue, and other "checks and balances" designed to thwart majority rule.

In historian Garry Wills' take on Madison's Federalist #10, "Minorities can make use of dispersed and staggered governmental machinery to clog, delay, slow down, hamper, and obstruct the majority"—the alleged "tyranny of the majority" that Madison and Alexander Hamilton most feared. What the Constitution "prevents is not faction, but action," protecting not the common good but the privileged interests and rule of the dominant elites.[ii]

Madison and his colleagues also made it extremely difficult for citizens to amend the Constitution to make it more democratic and representative. It took the Civil War to bring about the emancipatory postwar amendments. But each of these amendments had a self-negating catch. The 13th abolishing chattel slavery (1865) did not prevent new forms of enslavement like sharecropping, convict-lease system, and actual sale of emancipated Black citizens.[iii] The 14th Amendment giving citizenship rights to African Americans and women (1868) the Supreme Court interpreted to give citizenship and even "personhood" to corporations and in 1896 authorized racial segregation if "separate but equal," always a fraud. (When the high court overturned the *Plessy* decision in 1954, its implementation order to desegregate schools explicitly encouraged delay.) For almost a century the 14th Amendment was utilized primarily by corporations to block labor and consumer laws and other regulation in the public interest, and still today. And the 15th Amendment of 1870 giving Black men the right to vote did not prevent restrictions that nullified the amendment until the Black freedom movement secured the Voting Rights Act in 1965, only to be dismantled by the Supreme Court fifty years later (2013).

In short, the United States has never been a democracy—if that hallowed word means rule by the people, by a majority of citizens. Minority rule by wealthy elites, white supremacists, and large corporations was built into the nation's core by the founders and later constitutional reformers. But it did not become fully consummated until the end of the 20th century.

This emerging reality was smokescreened when the white man's government and the railroads it paid for enabled white folks to colonize the West as homesteaders and businessmen, uprooting and massacring Native American tribes that got in their way—the white man's "manifest destiny." The exploitation and suffering of African Americans (and lower-class immigrants especially of color) was kept veiled from the white majority. The collapse of capitalism in the Great Depression brought about the New Deal, which did not end the depression (World War II did) but saved the capitalist order, providing jobs for white folks while regulating corporate capitalism in its own long-term self-interest.

Massive war spending, expanding global trade, technological advances, and labor unions lifted (white) Americans' living standards after the war, with middle class income actually growing at a higher rate than the wealthy, making American society more egalitarian in income than at any other time in its history and probably more so than any other country in the world. This relative equity, growth of consumerism, and rapid expansion of higher education helped to catalyze broad, powerful youth movements the likes of which Americans had never beheld. Conservatives like Samuel Huntington wrote

hysterically about "the crisis of democracy." This alleged crisis meant that democracy was actually *working*. (In the past it had worked for a decade during Reconstruction and a decade of labor militancy during the Great Depression.)

The social upheaval of the 1960s proved too much for corporate leaders and their allies. They decided to strike back—hardball on stilts. They launched a counterrevolution that was as covert as the 1960s' protests were loud but ultimately more efficacious. Despite all of its constraints, democracy seemed to have gotten out of control. They would have to coopt or squash it. Prominent corporate lawyer and soon-to-be Supreme Court justice Lewis Powell sparked the counterrevolution with a 1971 call for action he sent out to the corporate world entitled "Attack on American Free Enterprise System." Blaming white and Black radicals and consumer advocates like Ralph Nader, as well as complacent corporate types, Powell's battle plan "electrified the Right, prompting a new breed of wealthy ultraconservatives to weaponize their philanthropic giving in order to fight a multifront war of influence over American political thought."[iv]

The Powell Memo flew under the radar of liberals and progressives enabling its recipients to move with stealth during the 1970s, creating richly endowed think tanks and new media to galvanize a transformation of the American political economy. Big business and wealthy elites mobilized like never before. Not only did they solidify public support for the new capitalist order but they evangelized for the glorification of "free markets" and neo-liberalism, a new gospel of wealth that economic growth favoring the wealthy would "trickle down" to those below, that a rising tide would lift all boats. This was surely make believe.[v]

Corporate leaders "had been trolled and attacked during the late 1960s," journalist Kurt Andersen writes, "felt besieged, and started imagining or pretending to imagine that some kind of socialist revolution might actually happen." President Nixon warned about it. They were becoming resolutely *class conscious* and began organizing and mobilizing for a long-term struggle.[vi] Not only did they secure legislative reforms and judicial relief, Ronald Reagan their champion. In mostly bipartisan fashion corporate leaders with their front groups and PACS defanged federal and state regulation, reformed finance and banking laws (such as eliminating the New Deal's Glass-Steagall Act under Bill Clinton), freed Wall street investment from tax and other constraints, and encouraged the rise of ungodly financial schemes like leveraged buyouts and mortgage-backed securities.

Thus the relative parity of income growth rates during the first generation after World War II morphed into the most extreme inequality in U.S. history, surpassing even that of the late 19th century Gilded Age. By the turn of the 21st century, less than one percent of the citizenry owned 90% of the nation's wealth. Since then the disparity has only gotten

worse. This all happened well before Donald Trump orchestrated his failed dictatorship but all of which he furthered.

Tis the season for doomsayers, growing in sway while Pollyannas and even cautious optimists are fighting for air. No one can deny that we are living in perilous times. The question is what silver linings we might be able to unthread. Throughout history, certainly U.S. history, positive, forward-looking, breakthrough reforms have only come about in the midst of or aftermath of serious crisis—e.g. the Civil War and the postwar amendments. Or the social legislation that came about because of the Great Depression. I have faith that great changes for good can potentially arise out of our current storm of crises. But we cannot afford to *underestimate* the severity of our intertwined perils—political, economic, racial, cultural, and above all, the global climate catastrophe.

Respected historian Peter Turchin predicted ten years ago that the 2020s would be an "age of discord." His specific predictions are coming to fruition, that we will face "civil unrest and carnage worse than most Americans have experienced," with civil war a definite possibility. According to Turchin, nothing short of fundamental change will avert "total civilizational collapse." Transactional leadership and incremental change will not save us.[vii]

[break]

These assertions may sound grim but I believe we have potential for hope, for repairment and even redemption. So where do we go from here, as MLK asked Americans before he left us, chaos or community?

The short answer: community. I am setting forth a longer answer in this essay.

Herewith are six assumptions:

- First, American "democracy" and its governing institutions are broken.
- Second, we are facing a storm of intersecting crises—chief among them Covid 19, climate change, racial injustice, economic want, nuclear and biological weaponry—crises potentially more catastrophic than ever before in U.S. history.
- Third, under current conditions our perils show no sign of abating, despite hopes aroused by the new Biden administration.
- Fourth, as authorized by the Constitution, its amendments, and Supreme Court decisions, the federal government (and the states) does not have the capability or political will to resolve these crises.
- Fifth, the brokenness and paralysis of the government have been made significantly more intractable by the corporate counterrevolution of the past forty

years, which has given corporations and the wealthy class unaccountable control of all three branches of government—near absolute minority rule.
- Sixth, American citizens do not live in a democracy but a plutocracy.

In my view the only "way out of no way" of our perilous plight demands systemic change achieved through "non-reformist," transforming reform as building blocks for a fundamentally new, extraconstitutional ecosystem of democracy as countervailing power to the dominance of our corrupt (though constitutionally authorized) electoral-representative system that operates through the two-party infrastructure.

As thinkers like Robert Bellah have pointed out, Americans have always spoken two languages, the dominant language of individualism and the diminished language of community.[viii] The self-interested language of individualism has been incarnated by the Constitution and the nation-state it established. Communitarian language, originating in 17th century Puritan communities, the slave world, Indian tribes, and later among anti-federalists after the American Revolution, has fostered America's vibrant civil society celebrated by Tocqueville. This language of sharing and common life has threaded its way into a myriad of nongovernmental groups and associations. We need to free ourselves from our one-dimensional thinking about democracy and commit to envisioning the *understory* of democracy, embedded not in individualistic striving but in the joys and travails of community.

Let us imagine that the anti-federalists who opposed the Constitution for its centralization of power reluctantly accepted it after ratification by three fourths of the sovereign states. Let us imagine that they then decided not to champion states' rights but rather envisioned a governing structure closer to the people, akin to the concept of "participatory democracy" articulated by white and Black radicals many generations later.

"The article nearest my heart," Thomas Jefferson wrote to his friend Samuel Kercheval in July 1816, "is the division of counties into wards." Each "ward republic," as he named it, would comprise several hundred families—the bottom line being that everyone would know each other and directly govern themselves.[ix] Anti-federalists, now perhaps calling themselves grassroots democrats, might then have explored the internal nature of such mini-republics and designed a structure for federating the multitude of local communities into state, regional, and/or national federations—learning from failures of the Articles of Confederation that coordinated the thirteen ex-colonies for a few years after the Revolution. Jefferson and anti-federalists might have been bold enough to construct their own counter-constitution to set forth the structure and principles of their alternative federalism, faithful to the original meaning of federation.[x]

They did not do it then, but it may be our task today to construct a new charter not to *replace* the ruling structure that has guided our nation for 240 years but to *complement* and *supplement* it. Our revered Constitution having been written in prose, our new one might need to be written in poetry, or song; but most of all acted out, lived out, practiced every day.

Our task is creating an alternative not to the government, though that needs to change markedly, but an alternative to the established party system, whether two parties or more. The Democrats and Republicans part company in many ways but they have agreed on fundamentals: upkeep of white supremacy, growth of racially stratified capitalism, and America's superpower dominance in the world, all intertwined.

What might be key principles of this unconventional people's charter or manifesto aimed at charting a new path for Americans: our national destiny to manifest not the mere promise, myth, or dream of "liberty and justice for all" but its reality, which I contend can only be attained by the legitimation, institutionalization, and coalescence of grassroots democracy (GRD) as countervailing power and alternative value structure to the reigning system of electoral-representative democracy (ERD)? Grassroots democracy, grounded in citizen activism, moral passion, and community building, has particularly been the expression of social movements (large or small) struggling for substantive moral ends (freedom, justice, equality, human rights) that entail significant social change, preferably structural and systemic. GRD takes place outside of and in creative tension with the party system and formal government, sometimes cooperating, sometimes conflicting—acting in decentralized fashion even if centrally coordinated. Optimally grassroots democracy aims at "structural renewal" of the "cell-tissues" of society (Martin Buber's metaphor), not only supplementing but supplanting the state or some of its functions—not *replacing* the state as in traditional revolutions, but transforming it.[xi]

Electoral-representative democracy and its party system are more familiar—encompassing all institutions, policies, and activities run by the government, whether federal, state, or local. It is legitimized and regulated by elections, no matter how few citizens vote. Office holders from president on down claim to represent individual citizens, not groups or organizations, though that claim is belied in practice.

Whether expressed by movements or in other ways, grassroots democracy is always present even if latent, but as a political force it expands and intensifies during periods of crisis, often eclipsing ERD, as in the height of the Black freedom movement in the mid-1960s. The disruptive and cultural power generated by movements engaged in GRD has been the primary agency of both reform and revolution throughout the world. Popular

movements in the U.S. have been the driving force behind the American Revolution, abolition of slavery, struggle for women's rights, empowerment of labor, resistance to white supremacy, ending the Vietnam War, victories for environmental justice, and much more. While GRD has sometimes taken on conservative causes like "right to life" and tax relief, such causes trample on GRD principles when funded by fat cats or violating human rights. So too "progressive" GRD has been known to violate its principles when it has replaced compassion with certitude, openness and moral sensitivity with self-righteousness and moral absolutism.

At high tide genuine grassroots movements in the U.S. have disrupted or shaken up the dominant political system. Yet an actual revolution or seizure of state power has rarely been the goal. In fact when GRD has been most effective it has paradoxically tended to strengthen the state while altering it, making it more democratic. Most often the goal has been countervailing power leading either to incremental or transforming reform to meet social needs or overcome injustice.

The Populist movement of white and Black farmers vied with the mid-20th century Black freedom movement as the largest social movement in U.S. history. While the Black movement may have had more *followers* (especially in 2020), the decade-long Populist crusade (1886-1996) marshalled a lot more *organizers*. Ever since its founding in the 1820s the organized Black freedom struggle has engaged primarily in grassroots democracy, for one reason because African Americans were not enfranchised until 1965. During the antebellum 19th century its creative state and national conventions and later its post-Civil War Union Leagues were models of dynamic non-governmental activism. But no movement till the 1960s came close to the mass participatory democracy built by the Populists to fight crushing exploitation by merchants, banks, railroads, and corporate "trusts" that was facilitated by Washington and the states. Because both Republican and Democratic parties were in bed with the big banks and corporations, dominated by them, midwestern farmers first tried building a third party, the Greenbackers, to no avail.

In the mid-1880s, starting in east Texas, farmers decided that collective self-help was their only recourse, grounded in their rural communities—their goal to free themselves from plutocracy by launching a cooperative crusade nationwide and ultimately evolving the "cooperative commonwealth." Though segregated, white and Black farmers organized thousands of neighborhood "suballiances" (50 to 100 members each, male and female) that were coordinated by state Alliances and above that the National Farmers Alliance & Industrial Union (NFA&IU), all of whose leaders were elected by the

suballiances. Crucial to the movement's rapid growth were thousands of well-trained "lecturers" in the dual role of organizer and teacher, circuit riding the suballiances and teaching the members farming techniques, political economy, and methods of change. Out of participants' dialogues came suggestions, recommendations, constructive dissent, and consensus building. The poverty-stricken farmers learned as well from several hundred "reform" weeklies whose mastheads rang out the Alliance watchword: "Equal rights for all, special privileges for none."

Powerful Populist orator Mary Lease, dubbed the "People's Joan of Arc," boomed her cri de coeur across Kansas prairies: "What you farmers need to do is raise less corn and more hell!" She declared that "Wall Street owns the country. It is no longer a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, but a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street, and for Wall Street. The great common people of this country are slaves, and monopoly is the master."[xii]

For the poor farmers white and Black, southern and midwestern, the Alliance *was* their government. They felt truly represented by the leaders they elected—not by the corrupted politicians in state capitals and Washington. When banks dried up credit and corporations withheld supplies a Texas genius, physician/attorney Charles Macune, put forth his "subtreasury plan" to provide public loans to farmers. Yet though the conglomeration of local, state, and national cooperatives sold cotton, wheat, and corn from coast to coast and overseas, the plutocrats joined forces to sabotage their grand endeavor.

The 1890 conventions of the National Farmers Alliance and the southern Colored Farmers Alliance made a fateful decision. They chose to play down the cooperative crusade in favor of going for broke with a new political party. For mutual aid the Alliances had already linked up with the labor movement, especially the Knights of Labor, supporting their strikes, and with the multimillion member temperance movement as well as woman suffragists. They leveraged this unprecedented grand alliance of farmers, workers, and middle-class women to establish the People's Party, which showed early success in several states and unheard-of biracial electoral coalitions in the South. But the new party's own entrenched oligarchy doomed it, letting it be swallowed up by the Democratic Party led by William Jennings Bryan. The Populists' single-minded party building brought about the collapse of the cooperative crusade and the truly democratic mass movement that had created the most extensive alternative to corporate capitalism in the nation's history. After their demise some Populist demands were realized, such as recall and referendum, senators' direct election, and in the New Deal subsidies to farmers and a massive public jobs program.

Nonetheless the Populists' defeat by the corporate powers and their unrelieved poverty planted seeds of resentment among millions of struggling farm families. Those who were Black barreled into the long siege of Jim Crow, many escaping to the North in the Great Migration. White farmers too were forced into penury or off their land, finding factory work in midwestern cities; their descendants lost their unions and their jobs, ripe fruit for the demonic appeal of Donald Trump.

Fast forward from the late 19th century to the early 1960s. Though sparse in detail and expressed more in action than oratory, "group-centered leadership" articulated and lived out by Ella Baker (1903-1986) emerged as the guiding philosophy of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and movements that it seeded, leading up to Black Lives Matter today. Baker's mantra: A leader's purpose was not to highlight their own leadership but to cultivate it in other people. Leadership inhered in the *group*, collectively, whether small or large. Harvard philosophy doctoral student Bob Moses was entranced by Baker and conveyed group-centered leadership to SNCC organizers in Mississippi and beyond. To his delight he found that the core of group-centered leadership—forming and sustaining personal relationships—was already manifested by the sharecropper families he shared risks with and helped to empower.

"Everywhere we went," Moses recalled, "we were adopted and nurtured, even protected, as though we were family. That closeness rendered moot the label of 'outside agitator.'" The most important thing "was to convince the local townspeople that we were people who were responsible," crucial to create trust.[xiii] Through supportive personal relationships the SNCC teams persuaded folks to attend citizenship classes and seek registration at the courthouse, even though they faced retaliation. Sometimes the determined sharecroppers led the trepidatious SNCC organizers up forbidding courthouse steps, not the other way around. SNCC workers encouraged *reciprocal* leadership and followership, leaders and followers often trading places.

SNCC organizers were most effective when they fostered personal, trusting, family-like relationships with local folks. In this way they could draw out "untapped sources" of strength, from their hosts and from themselves and maximize indigenous leadership. The longer SNCC cadres stayed around, the more violence they absorbed, the more sacrifices they made—the more committed to them their movement families were.

One could say that SNCC organizers were grounded in "family values," the watchword of conservatives in the later 20th century. Though the rural Black families had plenty of hierarchy, patriarchy, and dysfunction, the families' love was plush even if rough edged. As shown by their hospitality, the struggling families extended their love outward into the larger community, making faithful friendship and converting strangers into friends

cardinal virtues. Grassroots democracy as lived out by sharecroppers and organizers alike was driven by empathy and caring. Its prime vehicle was compassionate listening, honest sharing, and open-hearted dialogue—group-centered leadership that provided mutual aid and practical communitywide solutions. One activist called it a "personal, deep communication type of politics"; in MLK's words an "inescapable network of mutuality."

SNCC organizers came to the "magnolia state" of Mississippi to help free Black sharecroppers from the harshest oppression but realized that the sharecroppers were giving them more in return. The partnership of SNCC organizers, local adults (some active in the NAACP), and feisty teenagers gave white supremacists a tough fight. The movement's triple whammy saw violence at every turn, but they were not cowed. On one courthouse visit Moses was nearly beaten to death by the sheriff's cousin. With blood flowing down his face he still accompanied sharecroppers to the registrar's office. The organizers spent plenty of time in jail for their defiance.

So did the teenagers, led by 16-year-old Brenda Travis, who were less interested in voter registration than desegregating the Woolworth's, bus station, and movie theater. Jailed for sitting in, Travis was expelled from school and sent to a harsh "Negro reformatory." Her schoolmates boycotted school, protested at city hall, and were jailed.

After three years of dangerous organizing in the Mississippi Delta, hundreds of assaults and arrests and at least two murders, SNCC leaders decided that federal intervention, always a last resort, was the only way to stop escalating violence by white supremacists. In summer 1964 they brought to Mississippi nearly a thousand northern college students to further voter registration while teaching kids (who didn't get much schooling) in freedom schools about Black history and culture as well as math, reading, and writing, lifting their self-esteem. Other volunteers helped build community centers for camaraderie and collective self-help.

Barred from the "white only" Democratic Party, local people with SNCC's support formed an alternative, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), to challenge the white racists for seating at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City. Sharecropper Fannie Lou Hamer was the most celebrated of several thousand local people the SNCC organizers brought into the movement. Her nationally televised testimony at the convention was so gripping and the MFDP challenge so formidable that President Lyndon Johnson considered resigning from the presidency for fear of losing the South.

"Is this America," she appealed to her nation, "the land of the free and the home of the brave?"[xiv]

Such is the potential power of grassroots democracy with visionary strategy, brilliant organization, and sturdy alliances far and wide.

Here we have seen two compelling instances of grassroots democracy, several decades apart, that not only nurtured local communities but built remarkable national coalitions outside, but on the edges of, the electoral-representative system—both of which ultimately failed when they were coopted by political parties. These broad coalitions were animated by a principle of inclusion that was articulated by MLK in his final book as he criticized his own mode of mobilization in favor of SNCC's way: that of *organizing* rather than *mobilizing*. In his twilight year he envisioned grassroots unions of the poor and disadvantaged coalescing into a bottom-up coalition, a "true alliance."

A true alliance, he wrote, was "based upon some self-interest of each component group and a common interest into which they merge. For an alliance to have permanence and loyal commitment from its various elements, each of them must have a goal from which it benefits and none must have an outlook in basic conflict with the others." One would not ally with a group that disagreed on fundamental values or principles, like anti-racism, even if sharing the same goals. Rather than the top-down coalitions he knew well that movement generals jealously guarded, he saw true alliances having participatory decision making built in.

What brought together the historic coalitions of the 1890s and 1960s was not so much the shared suffering of farmers, workers, disfranchised Black people, and oppressed women but consensus on their common goals—in the first instance nationalizing railroads, telegraph, and public utilities, restructuring the monetary system, banning strike injunctions; in the second instance enfranchising Black Mississippians, taking control of Black-majority counties, liberalizing the national Democrats, and realigning the party system. In both cases coalition members disagreed about much else—in the 1890s over the 8-hour day and woman suffrage and in the 1960s over the priority of decentralized organizing versus politics as usual. None of these "secondary" concerns were deal breakers.

Both the Populist and Mississippi movements flourished as they reached out and spread their wings but then suffered defeat after they entered the political party system. While the Farmers Alliance was still pursuing "independent political action" to sway both parties from outside, they expanded the NFA&IU into an even broader national confederation that encompassed labor unions, temperance groups, and woman

suffragists. Despite or because of surprising wins electing pro-Alliance politicians in 1890, they gambled on throwing their budding "cooperative commonwealth" lock, stock, and barrel into the electoral system. Within half a decade they lost it all.

Like the Populists the MFDP was not able to preserve its *independent stance* in relation to the party system and was taken over by it. At the Atlantic City convention Moses pleaded that they were not choosing *between* morality and party politics—their mission was to inject morality *into* the political arena. For the electoral-representative system to achieve systemic goals of socioeconomic reform, the electoral process and party politics would have to be transformed by the moral force of the freedom movement. Instead, the MFDP's defeat in Atlantic City was its death knell though it lasted for a few more years.

One of Ella Baker's singular contributions to the strategy of GRD was her long experience as an "outsider within"[xv]—one foot testing the waters in top-down organizations like NAACP and SCLC, the other foot embedded in local communities and decentralized "horizontal" groups like SNCC. That creative friction and mastering of ambiguity can hold both insiders and outsiders accountable. Congressman John Lewis played this role in Congress; not long before his death he organized a sit-in on the House floor.

A GRD organization like SNCC or the farmers' suballiances seems to work better with direct democracy and consensus than majority rule. But a true alliance (local, regional, national, or global) generally requires representation—of the participating groups not individuals. A Texas or Kansas suballiance, for example, chose a delegate to the county Alliance, which in turn sent a delegate to the district or state Alliance councils. All delegates would be mandated, rotated, and recallable by the group or assembly that elected them. Importantly each Alliance member had one vote regardless of how many shares of stock they owned.

In his final months Malcolm X began to create a global alliance of peoples of color in order to conquer global white supremacy—including putting the U.S. on trial for systemic racism before the United Nations or World Court. Difficult questions would need to be worked out, of course. On what moral or pragmatic basis would Black leaders lead multiracial alliances? What about Latinos and low-income whites? Would leaders be elected democratically from below or imposed from above? Certainly true alliances at every level must ensure equal representation of women. In some European parliaments women are guaranteed half the seats.

Many movement activists, especially in our digital world, have not understood that political and moral equality must undergird alliances that respect and value differences, that are *built upon* their differences. To make this happen we will need to halt practices of patronizing, guilt-tripping, self-righteous moralizing, and the new ill of "canceling" adversaries. Moreover, countering hierarchy, myopic specialization, routinization, inertia, and other bureaucratic impulses goes hand in hand with decentralizing initiative and power.

Populists saw clearly that their demands were tied together by the source of their exploitation, the advent of monopolies both economic and political. Their collective solution—shared by urban workers, southern Blacks, and some middle-class white women—was to replace unaccountable elites with democratic structures of power—a solution at least as vital for movements today. If distinct problems have a common cause—problems such as political corruption, climate catastrophe, and wasteful military spending (all produced by corporate capitalism)—they can't be resolved isolated from each other. Therefore the unifying goal of the alliances or the federation of movements must encompass solutions not just to symptoms or merely incremental, but systemic reforms pushing toward an alternative political economy.

Hopefully it's clear by now that these true alliances and federations of movements are fundamentally different than conventional coalition politics based on division not difference as their organizing principle. Philosophers Martin Buber and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon stressed that groups can federate properly only on the same principles of mutuality and solidarity that unify each group. As Buber put it, "the internal authority of a community hangs together with its external authority." Importantly the process of community building shall run through the relations of groups with one another so that a "deep, organic bond" grows among them. "Only a community of communities merits the title of commonwealth."[xvi]

These alliances and federations would aim at providing strong united political opposition—countervailing power—to elite power, a constructive alternative to dysfunctional political parties that have decomposed at the grassroots while oligarchizing at the top. (In 2020 the most effective Democratic callers and canvassers worked for non-party organizations like the New Georgia Project and Frontline.) The movement federations would serve as vehicles of fundamental change, foster the reclaiming of community (aided by but autonomous from government), and prefigure a future society, an empathic society decentralized yet interdependent.

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As Frederick Douglass hammered home in his own time, no entrenched power, whether slavocracy or plutocracy, will cease predation and release resources without organized mass demand. "If there is no struggle there is no progress."[xvii]

What today might be the common, focused aims of a true alliance, or network of alliances. outside of but interpenetrating the electoral-representative system? We must shape a consensus around shared goals involving systemic remedies for systemic maladies. No group or alliance would get everything it wants—each must make *principled* compromises. As activist Bernice Johnson Reagon reminded us, one cannot expect comfort or friendship in an alliance.[xviii] Participants must agree on what is most urgent, most widely shared, most achievable, but still visionary.

I believe we have a good chance to overcome the political, economic, and psychic tyrannies bearing down on us and give birth to an American democracy serving all of us, not just the favored few. Poet Langston Hughes gets the last word.

O, yes, I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be![xix]

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[i] Danielle Allen, "The Constitution Counted My Great-Great Grandfather as Three-Fifths of a Free Person: Here's Why I Love It Anyway," *Atlantic*, Oct. 2020, 58-63.

[ii] Wills, *Explaining America* (Penguin, 1982), 195.

[iii] Eric Foner, "Abolition Is Not Complete," *New York Times*, Dec. 15, 2020.

[iv] Jane Mayer, *New Yorker*, quoted in Kurt Andersen, *Evil Geniuses* (Random House, 2020), 59.

[v] This kind of false consciousness was in fact what Madison referred to as "public virtue," the generalized values and ideology derived from property ownership, including of slaves, that would help keep the have nots subservient. It was essentially what the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci called (ideological) hegemony.

[vi] Andersen, *Evil Geniuses*, 60.

[vii] Graeme Wood, "The Historian Who Sees the Future," *Atlantic*, Dec. 2020, 58, 60.

[viii] Robert N. Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart* (Harper & Row, 1985).

[ix] Thomas Jefferson, *Political Writings*, ed. Joyce Appleby and Terence Ball (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 212.

[x] Madison, Hamilton, and company cleverly changed the meaning of federalism to apply to a unified, top-heavy nation-state whose authority was supreme over the states and localities. The term more accurately refers to a united but decentralized society. The most thoroughgoing tradition of authentic federalism in the West was the decentralized Iroquois Confederacy of seven Indian tribes that prospered for centuries until the American Revolution; some scholars see its influence in the Articles of Confederation and even in the Constitution, though the latter is less likely.

[xi] Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (London: Routledge, 1949), 27.

[xii] Quoted in "Mary Elizabeth Lease," Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

[xiii] Robert Moses, "Mississippi: 1961-1962," *Liberation*, Jan. 1970.

[xiv] Hamer quoted in "Eyes on the Prize," episode 5, PBS.

[xv] Scholar activist Patricia Hill Collins coined this term, which Barbara Ransby applied to Baker in her biography, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2005).

[xvi] Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, 137, 75.

[xvii] Douglass address, "Significance of Emancipation in the West Indies," Aug. 3, 1857, Canandaigua, N.Y., in Douglass, *Papers*, ed. John W. Blassingame, vol. 3 (Yale Univ. Press, 1979-), 204.

[xviii] Reagon, "Coalition Politics," in Barbara Smith, ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983), 359. An important task of political education is to learn the art of principled compromise in coalitions and governmental bodies.

[xix]Langston Hughes (1902-1967), "Let America Be America Again," in Arnold Rampersad and David Roessel, eds., *Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* (Knopf, 1994), 189-192.