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Katherine A. Hornowski
The Way We Speak Affects
Our Reality: Why Speaking
from the Values of Racial
Justice Begins the Creation of
a Racially Just World

ABSTRACT

This theoretical study is a declaration that speaking and acting from a place outside of opposition is powerful in creating a more racially just world. To explore this declaration, this thesis first reviews the language used in racial justice work today and the values that underlie this language. It then examines a different way of framing, one that seeks to come from a value system of acceptance of reality and working towards a more racially just world, rather than a value system rooted in opposition to reality and working against injustice.

There is little to no literature on this topic. Therefore, this thesis applies the work of political linguist, George Lakoff, to framing in racial justice. Lakoff speaks of framing from a place of one's values, rather than in opposition to another's. Through an exploration of prominent figures from history and today that have impacted social change, as well as an exploration of the prominent values in diversity, multiculturalism and antiracism work, important values of racial justice work are determined. These values are then used to create new possibilities for framing and speaking about racial justice work that emphasizes what kind of world we wish to create rather than what kind of a world we are against. Social workers will benefit from this thesis by gaining an understanding of how to speak in a different way about racial justice that both enrolls

more people into creating change and creates change merely by the enactment of speaking differently.

THE WAY WE SPEAK AFFECTS OUR REALITY:
WHY SPEAKING FROM THE VALUES OF RACIAL JUSTICE
BEGINS THE CREATION OF A RACIALLY JUST WORLD

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2008

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

My ideas for this thesis came from the gift of Smith College's School for Social Work program. Smith School for Social Work has a commitment to anti-racism. I am grateful for the structure Smith provided me to delve into anti-racism and White privilege work. Alongside this work, I have become passionate about Taoism and Buddhism through a Masters in Applied Healing Arts program in which I am also enrolled. Taoism speaks about not being in opposition to what is *and* that change is always occurring. The world is always both still and in movement. Water is both gentle and still and also powerful and destructive. Both peace and violence, black and white, hot and cold exist in the world. We would not know light without the darkness. Taoism teaches that peace comes from keeping life moving. Peace comes not from avoiding violence or darkness but rather not getting stuck there. Buddhism has then taught me about being at peace with what is. There is suffering in the world. There always was and always will be. We will all experience the pain and death of our loved ones and ourselves. How do we, as humans, practice both being at peace with the suffering while at the same time working to prevent needless suffering? I believe that this is possible with practice, and important to do. Buddhism suggests that one who works to end needless suffering is susceptible to spiritual degradation, often in the form of guilt, shame, anger, sadness, self-righteousness, and martyrdom, and therefore should practice a peaceful presence even more so than

someone not in the social activist field. I have found that a practice of acceptance of what is supports my work to lessen injustice around me.

With these Taoist and Buddhist principles in mind, I began learning about anti-racism at Smith. What I noticed showing up in myself were many thoughts and a visceral experience of opposition. This often came in the form of judgment, whether it was judgment of myself, judgment towards family or friends that did not realize their “White privilege,” or judgment towards my White classmates who judged others. This self-judgment (usually guilt and shame) and this judgment towards others, is thought to be part of the process of White privilege work. (Miller & Garran, 2008). While practicing Taoist and Buddhist principles side-by-side with anti-racism work at Smith, I began to wonder if there is another way. Is there a way to recognize racism as something incredibly painful and wounding for people of color and all of society *and* not be in opposition to it, not *fight* it? Buddhism may say that *fighting* something puts more attention on it and causes it to be stronger. Taoism teaches that you must acknowledge, even accept, what *is* before you can let it go or change it. So how does this apply to racism in the U.S? What would racial justice work sound like and look like from a perspective that is not oppositional?

These questions provided the drive and passion that it took to write this thesis. A place that I saw as an important starting point was language. As I thought about *opposition* within social justice movements, I noticed how prevalent language of opposition is in our everyday speaking. In movements that are in reaction to injustice, this oppositional language is overwhelmingly present. “Fighting injustice,” “war on poverty,” and “anti-racism” are a few examples of the ways we speak in opposition or

with words of violence. It seems improbable that we will be able to approach something without opposition while using this language. Can I *fight* racism without anger arising? Maybe. Is it the best way to move past racism in our culture? Maybe, maybe not. This is what I hope to explore in this thesis. Rather than assuming that I know the better way, I hope here to take a closer look at what we are doing, look at alternatives and offer the possibility of approaching racism in a new way in the U.S. It is possible that the way in which many social activists use language to speak about and engage in *fighting* racism is the way that serves the most during this time. I am not sure. However, I feel that the conversation is significant.

I am hopeful that this conversation is important both for social workers and activists, as well as the wider world. It is important for social activists because it will call us to notice the specific language we are using and the way we speak of racism, environmentalism, ableism, heterosexism, etc. I feel that it is important to be observant of how we speak. Are we speaking in opposition, in violent language, from a place of oneness? Only when we observe this, can we choose to speak differently. And that may not mean that we speak differently, but we will be choosing rather than speaking from a habitual place. If social activists consciously notice what type of speaking is more effective, it can be applied to social movements. If the way we speak is intrinsically tied to our consciousness, then a movement that speaks differently will change consciousness.

This is also helpful to social workers, in that we may notice that our presence is different when speaking oppositionally or non-oppositionally. I know that I will last longer as an activist if I am not constantly in a state of anger or resistance. While anger and opposition may be called for at times, speaking from both a place of acceptance of

reality and goals for the future leaves more room for speaking with people we might normally oppose. And this can lead to coming up with new possibilities. A social work activist that begins and works from a place of peace is already creating more peace in the world.

To explore what a different framing of racial justice could look like, I will begin this thesis by taking a look at what has been written regarding the framing of social movements. There is adequate literature on how ideas of social movements are brought to the larger population. There is little to no literature on the power or lack of power of oppositional/violent frames for these movements. However, it seems vital to explore what has been written about. The literature may still shed some light on why certain words are chosen and if any particular linguistic framing has been more successful than others. In Chapter III, I will then give a different perspective on framing, held by Gorge Lakoff (2006). Lakoff sees words and language as metaphors for cultural values and certitudes. What do the words of opposition and violence so prevalently used in the U.S. say about our cultural assumptions, values and certitudes? Do we feel that, on a large scale, we must *fight* something to change it? Lakoff's and others' work on language will shed light on how to begin to think about framing racial justice work differently.

The next chapter of this thesis will look at two figures from history that strategically (and often for spiritually grounded reasons) framed their actions and speaking around philosophies of nonviolence, oneness and interconnection. Looking at the values and beliefs of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. and their subsequent way of speaking expands Lakoff's idea that powerful framing must be solidly grounded in deep-seated values.

I will next explore contemporary social activists/workers for peace and justice who see unity as an important place to speak from. These contemporaries include Thich Nhat Hanh, the Buddhist peace activist and monk from Vietnam, Sharif Abdullah, peace activist from Camden, NJ, and Senator Barack Obama. These three men have very different, but powerful ways of thinking about bringing peaceful change. This chapter will explore the complexity of coming from a place of nonopposition in a very dualistic society.

The thesis ends with an exploration of the possibilities that arise for racial justice work from being conscious of our language and way of seeing the world. Different possibilities may offer confidence in what is presently being done. Different possibilities may give direction to change consciousness in ways that serve the whole with a more peaceful and fulfilling approach than what is being done now. My main objective is to bring to light what assumptions are being made when working to end racism in order to widen the conversation and choose a course of action more consciously. Thank you for being on this journey with me and being open to new possibilities.

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL MOVEMENT FRAMING

History of Social Movement Framing Research

To examine the way language and framing of social justice work is thought of currently and has been thought of in the past, it is easiest to look at literature that reflects on the framing of social justice movements. So what do social movement scholars say about the framing of social movements? It seems important to first define social movements. David Snow and his colleagues (2004) define them as:

collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture or world order of which they are a part. (Bate, Bevan & Robert, n.d., p.11)

Some social movement scholars assert that major changes that have occurred within the U.S. have all been the result of social movements, rather than a planned or incremental program of change (Bate, Bevan & Robert, n.d.). We can imagine that, if it were not for the Civil Rights Movement, it would have taken many more years for Civil Rights laws to be put into place. The linguistic framing of a movement alone does not begin movements, however it is recognized to have an important role in the process of mobilization (Noakes and Johnston, 2005). Noakes and Johnston (2005) write:

Even when oppression is intense or when leaders' tactics open up clear opportunities for action, individuals must be convinced that an injustice has

occurred, persuaded that collective action is called for, and motivated to act if a social movement is to occur. (p. 2)

Framing, if done well, can convince individuals to act. Framing can call individuals to identify with a cause and give them a reason to be involved. The most widely used definition of framing in social justice framing literature is from David Snow and Robert Benford. These two sociologists defined framing in the 1980s as an “interpretive schema that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action, thus organizing experience and guiding action by rendering events or occurrences meaningful” (Noakes & Johnston, 2005, p. 3).

Gregory Bateson, in 1954, was the first to introduce the concept of a frame (Noakes and Johnston, 2005). However, it was not until the 1980s that frames became a common part of the sociology literature (Noakes and Johnston, 2005). In the period of the 1940s to the 1960s, sociologists generally thought of social movements as overly emotional and irrational. Social movements were not seen as very different from mobs or crazes. After the movements of the 1960s—the Civil Rights Movement, Women’s Movement, Chicano movement, Antiwar Movement and others, sociologists came to realize that social movements are indeed strategic and organized (Bate, Bevan, & Robert, n.d.). Tarrow (1998) examined these movements and labeled the processes by which the state, media and social movements sought to influence people’s interpretation of political events the “struggle for cultural supremacy” (Noakes & Johnston, 2005, p.4). Tarrow’s work, in part, led to sociologists rejecting the conception that social movements were irrational and overemotional. Organizational theory and decision-making models then

dominated the field in the 1970s and 80s. William Gamson and his colleagues brought a balance to the study of social movements. They claimed social movements need both emotion and organization. Gamson portrayed how interpretive processes and meaning are vital for social action. He was primarily interested in why people were moved to enter social movements. Snow and Benford developed complementary ideas to Gamson's. They focused their research on movement leaders and their ways of recruiting movement participants. Logically, framing was an important concept to Snow and Benford. Since the 1980s, other social movement scholars have emphasized the importance of the participants' culture and the way meaning is constructed to the formation and sustainability of social movements. Therefore, both participants and leaders have a role in the framing of movements. Framing is now seen as of central importance in understanding social movements (Noakes & Johnston, 2005).

Key Concepts of Social Movement Framing

David Snow and Robert Benford are among the most well known social movement framing scholars, along with William Gamson, and they are often compared. Snow and Benford developed the term, *collective action frames*, to describe the frames used by social movement leaders to recruit participants (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 613). They then defined three basic framing tasks. *Diagnostic framing* interprets events to potential participants. It states the injustice and explains the injustice. *Prognostic framing* then presents participants with a solution. Strategies are formed to solve the problem. Lastly, *motivational framing* gives potential participants a reason to join the movement. This last framing task uses *vocabularies of motive* to enroll participants (Benford & Snow, 2000). Snow and Benford place their focus on how movement

leaders, often called *social movement entrepreneurs*, mobilize participants (Noakes & Johnston, 2005).

Gamson places his focus on movement participants and the reasons they would join a social movement. He also offers different components of a collective action frame. The *identity component* points out the similarities within an aggrieved group, creating a group identity. The *agency component* recognizes that the grievances can be changed and encourages the identified group to create this change. Third, the *injustice component* puts the blame on organizations or individuals that are causing the grievances and therefore sparks people to act (Noakes & Johnston, 2005). With Snow and Benford focusing on movement leaders and Gamson focusing on movement participants, the research conducted by these three sociologists have added complementary knowledge to the field of social movement framing (Noakes & Johnston, 2005).

How Collective Action Frames Are Constructed

Noakes and Johnston (2005) recognize that the way collective action frames are constructed can be organized into two categories. The first is seeing framing as a “purposeful action” built by social movement entrepreneurs (p. 7). The frame put into place by these entrepreneurs is constantly evolving, and the entrepreneurs are critical in this evolutionary process. This first process is the focus of Snow and Benford’s work. The second is seeing how collective action frames are constructed by looking at the culture out of which social movements are created. How does a group’s culture affect how frames or movements are interpreted? How do movements reach wide numbers of people with different grievances? Sociologists that have come after Snow and Benford have asked more of these questions (Noakes & Johnston, 2005).

Snow and Benford (2000) assert that a social movement entrepreneur communicates the movement's frame through *articulation* and *amplification*. Entrepreneurs articulate frames by “connecting and aligning events so they hang together in a relatively unified and compelling fashion, thus offering a new perspective on events or situations” (Benford & Snow, 2000 quoted in Noakes & Johnston, 2005, p. 8). Entrepreneurs may take symbols and metaphors from the “cultural tool kit” of the recruits' culture to help shape the entrepreneur's desired perspective (Swidler, 1986, quoted in Noakes & Johnston, 2005, p. 9). Cultures have many complex and sometimes contradicting symbols. It is therefore a strategic job to determine which cultural symbols will best serve the movement.

Collective action frames must then be *amplified*. “Frame amplification involves the highlighting or accenting of various issues, events, or beliefs from the broader interpretive sweep of the movement” (Noakes & Johnston, 2005, p. 8). Bumper stickers are an example of frame amplification. They allow the frame to be spread efficiently and often encapsulate the essential components of the collective action frame. Frames can be amplified with nonverbal action as well, such as particular clothing worn by movement participants or by participants going on strike (Noakes & Johnston, 2005). Along with how collective action frames are constructed, it is important to also examine their content.

Content of Collective Action Frames

So what are these collective action frames made of? As previously touched on, collective action frames are not pulled out of thin air by movement entrepreneurs. Rather, they are constructed in part from what Swidler (1986) calls a “cultural tool kit”–

the themes and symbols represented in the group of potential participants. People's day-to-day experiences are "made meaningful by shared components contained in the tool kit" (Noakes & Johnston, 2005, p. 9). These cultural components then guide people's decisions and actions. Social movement entrepreneurs therefore need to be aware of the culture from which they create frames. These entrepreneurs have the interesting task of using a population's cultural symbols and themes to give meaning and resonance to the movement's frames as well as offer a new idea that calls for change in the status quo (Noakes & Johnston, 2005). This is sometimes called "breaking the frame." Social movement entrepreneurs most often believe that there is injustice affecting a particular cultural group. Optimally, a frame will show this injustice as well as use cultural symbols and themes to make the proposed solution make sense and have power. Social movement leaders may use symbols that have meaning across groups to do this. Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, framed his appeal for racial integration through meaning made through the Bible and U.S. Constitution, mainstream cultural symbols that many could connect with (Noakes & Johnston, 2005).

Social movement entrepreneurs also use successful frames of the past when creating the content of their collective action frames. A glaring example is the "rights" frame. Its success during the Civil Rights Movement has meant that many other groups have picked it up and used it to bring forth their own cause, such as the Gay Rights Movement (Noakes & Johnston, 2005). The "rights" frame and others like it have been termed *master frames* by Snow and Benford (2000). Master frames are powerful because they come with a package of cultural symbols and associations, and often link *cycles of protest*, allowing somewhat unrelated movements to draw off one another for energy or

come together for a larger cause. Master frames can also limit movements by causing more radical groups' frames to seem more oppositional or radical than they would seem without the master frames in place. For example, the Gay Rights Movement's use of the "rights" frame may make a frame about sexual freedom or choice appear too extreme (Noakes & Johnston, 2005). We will now turn to qualities of frames that affect their resonance with movement participants.

Frame Resonance

Most research done on the resonance of frames has again been conducted by Gamson, Snow and Benford. Noakes and Johnston (2005) have thoroughly organized these three scholars' work and determined three variables affecting frame resonance—the makers of the frame (movement entrepreneurs), the receivers of the frame (target audience), and the frame qualities (a frame schema's contents) (Noakes & Johnston, 2005, p. 13).

The first variable, movement entrepreneurs, includes three factors. The first is the *credibility of the promoters* (Snow & Benford, 1998). Are the social movement entrepreneurs professionals in a field? What is their organizational experience? Maybe they are political figures or prominent in grass roots community movements. It is also important here to look at the group that defines the leader's credibility. Different types of movements need different types of leaders, thus these factors affect their credibility in different ways (Noakes & Johnston, 2005).

The second factor of the movement entrepreneurs variable is their *charismatic authority*. Charismatic leaders can use their personalities and sense of commitment to motivate participants. Bate, Bevan & Robert (n.d.) write that leaders exhibit three

important characteristics: the ability to create a new inspirational vision, an energizing quality that stimulates others to join and act, and the ability to enable participants by creating processes or structures that allow people to easily participate. Bate, Bevan & Robert (n.d.) also assert that charismatic leaders create a sense of urgency through their speaking and actions, as well as embody the change they are seeking. Noakes & Johnston (2005) reflect on the “cool-headed” presentation of leaders of the Civil Rights Movement (p. 14). This strategic presentation portrayed legitimacy of their cause and fit well with the “rights” frame. It may be ideal for a movement to involve a variety of leadership; leaders that have formal leadership positions, leaders that bridge the movement to others, and leaders that are always engaged in the more grass-roots activity of the movement (Bate, Bevan & Robert, n.d.).

The last factor of the movement entrepreneurs variable is the *strategic/marketing orientation* of the leaders. Do the entrepreneurs get famous persons involved, have television commercials, or put people on the streets with petitions? Media will begin to cover any sizable movement. Entrepreneurs will want to think about what phrases and sound bites they want to be publicized. If a movement already has well-established frames, it is likely the media will pick up on them. This will in turn affect how possible participants will respond. (Noakes & Johnston, 2005).

The second variable that Noakes and Johnston (2005) state as affecting a frame’s resonance is the target audience. A factor that affects this variable is *ideological orientation*. Oliver and Johnston (2005) point out that when examining framing, it is important not to see ideology and framing as synonymous. They see ideology as, “a system of meaning that couples assertions and theories about the nature of social life with

values and norms relevant to promoting or resisting social change” (p. 192). Framing processes, on the other hand, communicate a particular message, or one message over the other, in order to infer how the message is to be understood and connected to the objectives of the movement. It is important to recognize these as different so as to better examine how framing processes extract meaning from an ideology and apply it to a particular context. Steinberg (1998) also calls us to not only look at how frames are pulled from dominant ideologies, but also how ideologies emerge from the framing process. Framing processes and ideologies are interwoven, complex concepts that warrant further exploration.

Another factor affecting the target audience variable is *demographic, attitudinal, and moral orientations* (Noakes & Johnston, 2005). Snow and his colleagues (1986) speak about this by looking at *frame extension* and *frame transformation*. *Frame extension* “extends aspects of a frame to new areas that are presumed to be important to the target audience” (Noakes & Johnston, 2005, p. 12). *Frame transformation* uses the frame to transform old meanings into new ones that can still be understood by the particular culture (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Noakes and Johnston’s (2005) third variable affecting frame resonance is a frame’s qualities or a frame schema’s contents. The first factor of this variable is the frame’s *cultural compatibility*. *Centrality*, a term used by Snow and Benford (1992), is a component of this factor. It refers to how core values and beliefs of a culture are echoed in a movement’s frames. An example is how the movement affects the lives of the movement’s targets. Snow and Benford (1992) also talk about a frame’s *narrative fidelity*, meaning how a frame meshes with cultural narratives, myths and assumptions.

Frame *amplification*, the catchiness of the frame or slogans used to get the frame known, is another quality important to a frame's cultural compatibility (Snow, 1986).

The majority of criticism of current frame theory points to too much emphasis on the entrepreneurs' roles in the framing process and too little on the role of the participants. Hart (1996) writes about movements arising out of a culture, and therefore the importance of closely examining the culture. He cites religion as a powerful, important part of U.S. culture which calls people to a commitment to certain values, and which is not examined closely when looking at the framing of social movements. Kane (1997) calls us to go beyond the "cultural tool kit" perspective, which looks only at cultural practices, and instead look more closely at meaning making through the interpretation of symbolic systems and metaphors within a culture. The mechanism of meaning making, in her view, is vital to examine if seeking to have resonant collective action frames (Kane, 1997). Williams (1995) asks us to take a look at the importance of collective identity in social movements. Do the frames of the movement reach out to participants and make them "members" by giving them feelings of belonging? Williams (1995) explains that this is an internal dynamic that framing should consider. Benford and Snow (2000, 1993) recognized this in their work, though they did not give it much attention.

Klandermans (2004) does examine movement participation and believes there are three "dynamics of movement participation" (p. 361). These are *instrumentality*, *identity* and *ideology*. Participants may join a movement because they want to influence change, because they identify with an aggrieved group, or because they are searching for meaning or a way to express their views (Klandermans, 2004). Bate, Bevan and Robert (n.d.) add

that further factors to participation are: a sense of urgency, the perception of a good chance of success and being able to see the first steps of how to join the movement. All of these reasons for joining show the constant interaction between the influence of the leaders' framing on participants and meaning making by the participants that in turn influence the framing.

Steinberg (1998) calls us to look at both in order to examine the “staying power” of frames. Framing by leaders must be flexible in order to continue to relate to the discourse of participants, while also maintaining internal consistency. Hull (2001) gives an example of this when examining the “rights” frame used in Hawaii during the same-sex marriage debate there. She found that the participants’ discourses to legalize same-sex marriage were sometimes different than the framing by movement elites. Movement participants most often framed the issue as one of acceptance and tolerance, rather than rights, as the movement leaders did. The opposition rejected the “rights” frame, and used the discourse of democracy and morality to frame their side of the debate. Hull (2001) contends that if the movement leaders were more attentive to the discourses and framing of non-elite participants, the movement may have been more successful.

Returning to the factors of the frame qualities variable, Noakes and Johnston (2005) suggest the second factor is *frame consistency* (Noakes & Johnston, 2005). Do different frames within a movement synchronize? Are the movement’s beliefs, ideologies and actions consistent? If not, the movement is letting itself be open to easy criticism from opponents by the possibility of being seen as hypocritical (Noakes & Johnston, 2005).

The last factor of the frame qualities variable is *frame relevance*. It is important that the target audience sees the movement as important to their lives and that the frame is congruent with their day-to-day experience. Benford and Snow (1992) call this a frame's *experiential commensurability*.

Does a frame that has been determined to have *resonance* mean that it will definitely create a powerful social movement? Because frame resonance is often examined in hindsight, this cannot be determined. Frame resonance and movement success are correlated, and successful movements always have resonant frames. If some movements are not successful in mobilizing enough participants to create change, and their frames have resonance, why don't they succeed? There are many possible reasons for this. One is that movements are faced with countermovements with competing frames (Noakes & Johnston, 2005).

Countermovements and Competing Frames

Benford (1993) states that, "the very existence of a social movement indicates differences within a society regarding the meaning of some aspect of reality" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 626). Sometimes oppositional movements use twists on the frames that they are opposing to create polarization between the movements, forcing participants to choose sides. The former movement must then sometimes alter their original frames to regain resonance with the target population (Benford & Snow, 2000). An example of this is the Pro-Life, Pro-Choice movements. The "pro-life" framing of the countermovement caused the women's movement to take on the "pro-choice" frame in order to continue to show its commitment to women's rights and not appear "pro-death" (Page, 2006).

Benford and Snow (2000) remind us that movements can also have internal disagreements about frames. These disputes can cause multiple movements to form, possibly making the power of any of them smaller. An example of this is the question of marriage equality within the Gay Rights Movement. This again amplifies the importance of a frame's resonance with all its participants, if it is to be powerful in creating change.

Another part of society that offers competing frames is the media. Noakes and Johnston (2005), cite Tarrow's (1998) belief that the media has "as much if not more control of the construction of meaning than state or social actors" (p. 19). Movement leaders and actors have little control over what the media decides to cover or how the media represents a movement (Benford & Snow, 2000). When a media's discussion of the movement is positive, "the movement's collective action frame will likely reach a broader array of people" (Noakes & Johnston, 2005, p. 19). When media discourse appears negative, movement participants can quickly be seen as radicals or not representing important cultural values (Noakes & Johnston, 2005). Terkildsen and Schnell (1997) assert that the media influences the public by *agenda setting* and *priming*. The media sets the agenda by deciding what to cover and participates in priming by elevating some issues over others. The media can also prime and frame an issue simultaneously, for instance choosing to label a group either "freedom fighters" or "militaristic thugs" (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997, p. 881). This is a clear example of how quickly media can affect popular opinion.

Movement leaders must also take into consideration that media coverage is more episodic than thematic. Movements can count on the media to record and share large events more than thematic movement. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the other leaders of

the Civil Rights Movement were strategic to this end, mobilizing protests in cities where they felt the police would react violently. These events captured by the media would then create a contrasting vision of peaceful civil rights advocates being attacked by the evil, violent police (Noakes & Johnston, 2005).

Another way that movements use the media to engage participants is through marketing (Oliver & Johnston, 2005). Movements with the financial ability to make commercials reach a broad audience with both verbal and visual frames. Movements can also market through using famous personalities to advocate their cause in talk shows, etc. (Noakes & Johnston, 2005). Therefore the media can be both friend and foe to a movement's objectives.

Frames and Language

A closer look at the actual language used to frame movements is crucial to this thesis' objectives. Terkildsen and Schnell (1997) allege that linguistics is an important variable. They cite Kahneman and Tversky (1982) when they state that, "linguistic alterations in the formulation of statistically identical choices shift subjects' reference points and influence subsequent behavior" (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997, p. 881). They then cite Sanders (1990) to say that, "the study of wording effects shows that shifts in the reference points used to evaluate affirmative action (e.g., portraying the policy as an 'unfair advantage' versus 'reverse discrimination') produced judgments that were based on unique sets of values" (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997, p. 881). Benford (1993) touches on the importance of words and linguistics when he speaks of *vocabularies of motive*, used to give participants reasons to identify with the movement and take action within it. By saying that certain vocabularies motivate more than others, he speaks indirectly about

the meaning behind words. Yet there is little research, by Benford or elsewhere, on the assumptions or cultural beliefs behind the actual words chosen.

Steinberg (1998) partly speaks to this when he states that, “rhetorical and discursive processes that tie frames to larger ideological structures remain largely unspecified” (p. 847). Steinberg (1998) emphasizes the meaning within discourse and calls us to examine discourse when examining social movement framing. He claims that no discourse is neutral and the meaning of discourse is in flux depending on the cultural situation. To this point, Steinberg (1998) uses the Bakhtin Circle discourse theory to say that speech is the social practice through which meaning is constructed. He calls us to examine social movement framing by looking at the *discursive fields* within which the framing takes place (Steinberg, 1998). This means that rather than looking at belief systems, it is important to look at meaning as it is *in use* in discourse. While this brings more attention to the meaning of discourse, it still neglects to specifically examine the assumptions or cultural values behind words chosen in this discourse.

Discourse is made up of words that form narratives. During the framing of movements, it is therefore important to look both at the words used and the assumptions and values behind these words, as well as the story or narrative that the framing is pointing to. Kane (1997) studies meaning construction in social movements and speaks of narrative as being the primary way that discourse is made socially available to a wide range of people. She states that, “narratives put into play- employ- characters, space, and time; and by giving history a specific orientation, narratives allocate moral responsibility, causality, and agency and provide exemplary models for action” (Kane, 1997, p. 258). Bate, Bevan & Robert (n.d) also speak about the importance of narrative and they include

metaphors as important to these narratives, because well-constructed metaphors can cast an idea in a different light. They then state that:

It is thus words not arms that are the messengers of meaning and the 'wings' of the movement...the difference between a successful movement and an unsuccessful one may simply be a case of choosing the right words and the right story. (Bate, Bevan & Robert, n.d., p. 41)

This quote taken alone seems oversimplified, however what follows will examine this statement, specifically in relation to the words used and stories made about racism and racial justice in the United States. I assert that a closer look at words and stories, and the values underneath them, will open up possibilities for the framing of future movements.

Summary

The widely held definition of framing used by social justice framing scholars Snow and Benford, is again an "interpretive schema that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences and sequences of action, thus organizing experience and guiding action by rendering events or occurrences meaningful" (Noakes and Johnston, 2005, p. 3). Because sociologists considered social movements to be emotional, irrational and unorganized until the movements of the 1960s, research on framing is relatively young, with Snow and Benford beginning their work in the 1980s.

Frames are created, articulated, and amplified according to the defined problem, the culture of the possible participants, and the desired solution. Whether or not frames resonate with the population depends upon the credibility of the promoters of the frames, the leaders' abilities to inspire participants, the marketing strategies of the frames, the

frame's fit with participants' ideologies, and the frames' cultural compatibility and narrative fidelity.

Some research has been done on the more subtle linguistics of framing. It is implied that certain words or vocabularies assume certain meanings, but this is not discussed specifically in the literature. Some researchers, such as Kane (1997), do point to the importance of seeing the connection of words used in framing and the narratives they incite. This is beginning to get closer to looking at words as metaphors for unconscious concepts, an idea we will look at in the next chapter.

While a movement's frames and the movement's success are correlated, there is no cause and effect relationship. Frames of social movements have so far all been studied in hindsight. I wish to use the work of George Lakoff and others in the following chapters to propose a way to think about and work with framing in present time, for the racial justice work of today and the future. We will therefore turn to an entirely different perspective on framing, one that I feel is important for social movement leaders and activists to begin to pay attention to in order to increase the power of our speaking.

CHAPTER III
NEW WAYS TO THINK ABOUT FRAMING

Frames as Conceptual Structures Made of Metaphors

So why should I, or anyone, care about the particular words and frames we use when speaking about racial justice? I began realizing the importance of words and frames after reading George Lakoff's work. George Lakoff is a Professor of Cognitive Science and Linguistics at University of California at Berkeley, founding senior fellow at the Rockridge Institute, and a world-renowned political linguist. He speaks about the power of language and framing in U.S. politics by speaking of all words as metaphors for a cognitive frame.

Lakoff defines a frame as a "conceptual structure used in thinking" (Lakoff, 2006, ¶ 2). He explains that concepts govern the thoughts of our intellect and our thoughts about our everyday life. It is our concepts that structure how we relate to others and how we perceive our world. Our concepts are therefore of the utmost significance in how we define ourselves and our realities. Lakoff goes on to contend that, out of necessity, our conceptual system is highly metaphorical (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This allows us to speak and act in ways that others from the same culture, say U.S. culture, can easily understand. For example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) speak of the metaphorical concept of "argument is war" (p. 4). For those that have grown up in U.S. culture, an "argument" is a metaphorical concept that comes along with images of winners and losers, those that

are right and wrong, arguments that can be shot down or that are indefensible (p. 4). This is not to say that arguments do not have other metaphorical concepts connected to them, though the metaphorical concept of “argument is war” is one that is easily recognized when pointed out. On the other hand, when speaking in daily life, these metaphorical concepts that structure our language and thinking usually go unnoticed because they are our practiced way of speaking. Our thought processes are therefore highly metaphorical without us realizing it. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) call us to think about what an “argument” would look like if we were to have the metaphorical concept of “argument as dance” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). An argument thought of in this way would look very different. The goal may not be to have a winner but to perform well as participants in the argument (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). One can see how much this changes the actions of an argument. Lakoff does not suggest that there is a cause and effect with language use, thinking and actions, rather he states that by looking at our language and our common metaphorical concepts and frames, we are able to gain insight into the way we think consciously and unconsciously. He writes:

Since metaphoric expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way, we can use metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical concepts and to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of our activities. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 7)

Our way of thinking, acting and speaking are all highly correlated. So while not one of these three processes cause the others, being conscious about one and changing it will cause some shift in the other two (Lakoff, 2004).

Now how do metaphorical concepts relate to frames and framing? Frames are words or groups of words that evoke metaphorical concepts. Frames are used in

movements, politics, and advertising for purposes of involving people and giving an idea about what the movement, political cause, or product is about. The way frames are used in social movements is discussed in Chapter II. Lakoff calls us to look at frames more carefully. He asserts that we must look at the, often unconscious, metaphorical concepts that the frame evokes when choosing our language to create frames. We can consciously use frames to create metaphorical concepts that, if used enough, will come to seem as common sense. This is because the more a frame is evoked, the more it is reinforced in the brain. Evoking the frame activates a neural circuit that is strengthened with repetitive activation (Lakoff, 2004).

An example from politics that Lakoff (2004) uses often is the frame, “tax relief” (p. 3). This is a frame that George W. Bush began using when he took office. “Relief” is a frame that evokes a metaphorical concept of a relationship between an afflicted person, an affliction and a causer of pain. “Relief” is the taking away of the pain by some reliever. Therefore, by using “tax relief” over and over, a frame is reinforced. Taxes are a burden or affliction that is caused by afflictors. The taxpayer is the afflicted victim that needs a reliever of pain to save him by relieving the taxes. The more one hears this frame, the more “common sense” it is to view taxes and those who implement them as afflictors and those that promote tax relief as the heroes that deserve gratitude (Lakoff, 2006).

This is just one of many examples that Lakoff uses when pointing out the power of framing in politics. Lakoff emphasizes how frames become common sense over time by explaining how merely speaking reactively about a frame one doesn’t agree with doesn’t work. In the frame, “tax relief creates jobs,” once it becomes a reified concept it

is difficult to contradict. You can rattle off statistics and facts so someone that believes this frame, but research shows that at the end of the day this person will still believe the frame that has been reinforced. This is because our cognitive processes stay organized by throwing out information that doesn't fit with the frames reinforced in our minds. One of Lakoff's books, *Don't Think of an Elephant!* is a more simplified example of this. It is impossible not to think of an elephant when given this directive. Lakoff believes that the only way to change people's minds about a frame such as "tax relief" is to reframe rather than work to contradict the frame already in existence. This involves proactive use of language rather than reaction to frames already highly reinforced in American society. With the example of "tax relief" this proactive work may look like progressives articulating the moral basis for progressive taxation over and over (Lakoff, 2006)

Lakoff explains that reframing does not merely involve changing the words of the frame as a strategy for fast change. He asserts that our new frames must be rooted in ideas that tap into our core human values. To Lakoff, reframing means "telling the truth as we see it" (2006, ¶ 19). This means getting in touch with the values and morals behind the frame and speaking the new frame with integrity and moral conviction. Because reframing requires a rewiring of the brain, the process of reframing takes time. "Tax cuts will not create jobs" reinforces the frame of "tax cuts will create jobs" because it is directing energy to the neural circuits of a frame that is already in place. To replace this old frame with a new one, one must go through the process of repeating the new frame so that it is reinforced in the brain more than the old frame (Lakoff, 2006).

Lakoff then boldly asserts that, "reframing is social change" (Lakoff, 2004, p. xv). This is because changing our frames is changing the way we unconsciously view our

world. It changes what is reinforced in our brains, therefore changing what is seen as common sense (Lakoff, 2004). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state that “not only are metaphorical concepts grounded in our physical and cultural experience; they also influence our experience and actions” (p. 68). By speaking differently we are affecting the way we think and therefore act.

Let’s look at this more closely. How does the way we speak and use words as metaphor affect our experiences and actions? Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state that:

If a new metaphor enters the conceptual system that we base our actions on, it will alter that conceptual system and the perceptions and actions that the system gives rise to. Much of cultural change arises from the introduction of new metaphorical concepts and the loss of old ones. For example, the Westernization of cultures throughout the world is partly a matter of introducing the TIME IS MONEY metaphor into those cultures...New metaphors have the power to create new realities. (p. 145)

If we want to promote social change, it behooves us to create frames that will guide actions. The actions will therefore fit the metaphors and reinforce them to make the experiences coherent. In this way metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Unconscious Ideologies and Discourse as Social Practice

Norman Faircloth (1989) presents a similar take on language in his book, *Language and Power*. He explains that there are assumptions embedded in the language that we use on a daily basis. These assumptions are ideas that are taken for granted by the speaker. Lakoff would most likely say these assumptions were the same as the metaphorical concepts he speaks of. Faircloth calls these assumptions “ideologies.” If the assumption or ideology is that certain groups are in power and certain groups are not, this will show up in your speaking, consciously or unconsciously. This speaking then,

therefore, reinforces the power relations. Faircloth states that this means the speaker of these ideologies, whether of the group in power or not, gives consent to the power relation as it stands (Faircloth, 1989). The “myth of free speech” is an ideology that Faircloth uses as an example (p. 63). He calls it the myth of free speech because of the many restraints on certain speech and writing in the U. S. So while the frame seems to assert that all speakers have the same freedoms, the ideology behind it holds that some groups are more able to exercise free speech than others. Yet we use it without necessarily thinking about this. Like Lakoff, Faircloth claims that when language is part of a dominant discourse that is used often, it soon seems to be common sense. He calls this transition to the commonsensical, “naturalization” (Faircloth, 1989, p. 107). When an ideology has become common sense, it is no longer seen as ideology and therefore continues its ideological effect without the speaker realizing (Faircloth, 1989). Lakoff’s example of tax relief could be seen in this way. It is now fairly commonsensical to think of taxes as undesirable.

Faircloth encourages those that wish to work for equality in power relations to recognize that it is important to critically study the language we use. Only then can we see the way our language upholds certain ideologies and therefore change our language to represent our values. He calls this using “discourse as social practice” (Faircloth, 1989, p. 22). Faircloth (1989) states that “there is a dialectical relationship between language and society” and “linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena are (in part) linguistic phenomena” (p. 23). He would agree with Lakoff that changing our framing is creating social change.

Limits of Language

Language use has been critically studied by many women's rights leaders and groups. In *Words and Women: New Language in New Times*, Casey Miller and Kate Swift (1976), cite the linguist Calvert Watkins saying, "the lexicon of a language remains the single most effective way of approaching and understanding the culture of its speakers" (p. 59). Our language use comes from our assumptions about reality and Miller and Swift (1976) suggest that this can be limiting. They claim that because of the strong connection between our thinking and our language, our language can limit our thinking to ideas that can be expressed in our language (Miller & Swift, 1976). We can come up with new words, however, "it is only when we become aware that we are struggling to cope with nameless things that we begin to search for words to describe them" (Miller & Swift, 1976, p. 154). They use the example that racism was not a word until the 1950s. Miller and Swift (1976) suggest that it might be that language expressing "the struggle to break with cultural patterns of the past must sometimes precede language expressing newly sensed possibilities of the future" (p. 155). This may be because the language to express new possibilities has not been imagined yet. People instead grapple with the existing language to state their values that may then lead to language that will move beyond the struggle (Miller & Swift, 1976). Lakoff (2004) suggests that the shift in language is a large part of what creates the movement. Miller and Swift (1976) propose that a way to look at language critically is to ask whether a "term or usage contributes to clarity and accuracy or fudges them?" (p. 168). For example, "when man first domesticated animals..." is not an accurate statement because it was not only men that domesticated them, but also women and children (Miller & Swift, 1976, p. 168). We

can shift our use of the word “men” to “people,” being more accurate and also denying the worldview of privileging men with the credit of domesticating all animals. Changing the language is therefore a social justice action.

Speaking the World into Being

Dianne Connelly, scholar of Chinese Medicine and cofounder of The Tai Sophia Institute in Laurel, MD believes very much in the power of language. Through language we describe the world we live in as well as relate to one another. Connelly (1998) calls us to, when we speak, “be aware that we are speaking, what we are speaking, and how we are building the word-world with others” (p. 34). A phenomenon happens in our world and we speak about it, not realizing that the way we speak about it is influential to how we and others view this phenomenon. Connelly (1998) encourages us to speak remembering that our speaking can elicit breakdown or offer possibilities. She therefore asserts: “change the language and we change the world, the view, the perception, our ways of being” (Connelly, 2001, p. 41).

I see all of this as extremely important when thinking about ways to conduct racial justice work. Lakoff would say it is important because the way we frame our work will influence the work itself, consciously or unconsciously. For example, if we are working to end racism and reinforce the frames “fighting racism” or “antiracism”, we may be in fact reinforcing in our minds all of the frames associated with racism. Lakoff would call us to ask ourselves what our values are concerning racial justice. How can we articulate these values into a frame that speaks of what we wish to create? What language can we use repeatedly to reinforce in our minds a world without racism? Doing this will repeatedly construct and activate neural networks in the brain that believe a

world without racism is possible. Once this becomes common sense, change is already taking place and the work of changing systems is much easier.

What Are We For?

Someone that is involved in this work is Barbara Love, Ph.D, a professor in the Social Justice Education program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She has taken all of the ideas explained above and applied them to her work to liberate oppressed groups. For the past 10 years, Love has been calling herself a “liberation worker” in her work for social justice (Love, personal communication, February 11, 2008). Love asserts that what we focus on is what we accomplish, “what we put most of our attention on, we get more of” (Love, personal communication, February 11, 2008). Seeing that much of social justice work’s attention is put on oppression, Love decided to begin putting her attention instead on liberation. In many ways, Love is doing the work in the social justice field that Lakoff is doing in the political arena. Rather than reacting to forces of oppression, Love is calling us to work for liberation. She therefore does not speak of being *against* racism but *for* liberation.

Love explains that she first began thinking about language being tied into systems of oppression while researching for a book she is working on, tentatively titled, *Good Hair, Fair Skin, Thin Lips*. She started looking specifically at the ways that the language we use helps “reinforce, install, perpetuate and maintain racism and internalized racism” (Love, personal communication, February 11, 2008). For example, the word *fair* literally means that which is good, right and just. When speaking about skin color in the U.S., the term fair is usually associated with lighter skin tones. Over time, without realizing it, both White people and people of color are seeing fair skin as better, more right, or more

just. Love calls this being indoctrinated into the “rightness of whiteness” (Love, personal communication, February 11, 2008). This is closely related to Fairclough’s ideas about ideologies becoming commonsensical. Love contends that in multiple ways our language causes this ideology of the rightness of whiteness to seem commonplace and it is therefore not questioned. This then contributes to systems of oppression not being questioned (Love, 2008).

To counteract this, Love believes in forming a new language that is not part of the ideology of the rightness of whiteness. And behind the new language is a new set of ideas that are based on helping both dominant and oppressed groups learn about the understandings and attitudes that result in their collusion with oppressive ideologies, much like Fairclough’s notion of consent. This puts responsibility on individuals to look critically at our common language and daily actions and then speak and act from an ideology of liberation rather than oppression (Love, 2008). Lakoff may say that creating a frame such as liberation, with clear values and ideas behind it, is exactly the way to change the systems of oppression. Ideally, this new language and new ideas, once repeated consistently, will eventually become a common sense way of viewing the world. At this point, much of the work is done. Love is on the forefront of creating this change in the social justice field. Love also points out the importance of consistently linking language with the values and ideas behind it because catchy language can often be subverted to other causes. For example, she points to a commercial which appropriates Barack Obama’s slogan, “Yes we can” to sell their product (Love, 2008).

Words of violence in U.S. culture, such as "war on hunger" or "war on poverty" come with the idea that we must fight to create big change. Love agrees that it is these

thoughts that are taken for granted in our culture that lead people to think that something like liberation is naïve or impossible. When Love encounters these thoughts from others, she reminds them of the things that have happened over the last 50 years that no one thought was possible, such as the end of apartheid in South Africa or a Black man running for President of the United States (Love, 2008). By saying that liberation is impossible, we are not speaking the possibility into existence. As Connelly (1998) believes, we must declare possibilities that we wish to see in the world to allow them to manifest.

Summary

To summarize, a different way of thinking about frames is to think of them as conceptual structures that inherently evoke metaphorical concepts, inherently because metaphorical concepts structure all of our thought and speech. The metaphorical concepts that frames evoke are usually unconscious, because the associations between the words and meaning have been repeated consistently in our minds to the point of seeming commonsensical. When we hear, "tax relief," the assumption that taxes are undesired goes without thinking. Negating a frame like "tax relief," continues to reinforce the frame that has been established in our neural networks. It is therefore of the utmost importance to frame from a place of one's values rather than in opposition to another's frame. The new frame can then slowly begin to become common sense to those that hear it repeated. In this way, reframing *is* social change.

Phenomena happen in our world, and it is humankind that gives meaning and language to it. We have the choice to begin speaking the world we desire into being. Barbara Love has begun this work by speaking what it means to be a liberation worker.

She uses language and framing to speak what she is *for* rather than *against*. Part of the work towards liberation will be done if many were to see liberation work as a commonsensical thing to do in their everyday lives.

As Lakoff and Love suggest, it is important to speak and frame our speaking from a place of deep-seated values. This makes sure that our framing is not in reaction to another frame and helps others connect to our message. It also means that we are speaking with integrity. In the next chapter, we will learn from two great figures from history who speak from their values to lead powerful movements.

CHAPTER IV
WHAT TWO MASTERS HAVE TO TEACH US

We Need to Fight for Change

After looking at Lakoff's work on metaphors and framing, I would like to assert that we have a metaphor in the United States that the creation of *large-scale social change is a fight*. First it seems important to point out the commonality of words of violence and opposition in our culture. Our government uses phrases such as "war on poverty", "war on hunger," and "war on terrorism." These have been said so often that the average American doesn't question them. What does a "war on poverty" look like? For me it conjures up images of struggle, something that is hard and requires strength to overcome weakness, something that must be fought. Not the poor, right? So what, or who? This phrase of violence offers no solutions while consciously or unconsciously triggers our brain to images of war. Spend a day looking out for this vocabulary of violence and you will be surprised how often you hear phrases like, "I had to fight the traffic this morning," "My mom is battling breast cancer," "10 ways to fight stress," "I have time to kill," or "Fight cravings with three power foods." It's as if anything we don't find appealing, we must fight to get rid of. These examples show that the fight metaphor applies to more situations in the U.S. than large-scale social change. Unfortunately, that is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in depth. It is helpful, though, to realize this metaphor's prevalence.

Of course, this way of using words like "battle" and "fight" don't mean necessarily taking the undesirable object, feeling, disease, etc. by physical force. However, when we look at what images show up in our minds when we say words of opposition and violence, it does not include images of being at peace or accepting what is so. I assert that energetically, we do feel some sense of resistance *against* whatever we feel we are fighting, whether it be "battling weight gain" or "waging war" against your cigarette smoking. When we speak this way, there is little room to be at peace with reality. It is possible to accept your current weight and then choose to exercise and change your eating habits from that place of acceptance. I believe this is more difficult when you are feeling as if you must fight a part of your body through exercise and eating. It may seem like a subtle difference at first, but I have found the practice of omitting violent and oppositional language from my vocabulary to be profound in my day-to-day life. I would invite anyone to try it.

Again, within the metaphor of *large-scale social change is a fight* is the idea that we are *against* something. Above, we have discussed what images this language conjures in us. Another way to examine this is to think about what images *don't* come up. We are against poverty, hunger, terrorism, racism, and the list goes on. But what are we for? Barbara Love has thought about this question within the realm of racism and other types of oppressions and chooses to be for liberation rather than against oppression. Putting our energy towards being *for* something allows us to think of what we want in the world rather than focusing on what we don't want. George Lakoff challenges progressives to create frames from their values rather than in reaction to conservatives' frames. This is another way of stating what is desired rather than undesired. I do not

believe that Lakoff is asserting that progressives are not against some conservative values, rather he is saying that speaking this is not effective. I would like to declare that within the realm of racial justice work, it is important to speak from our values rather than in opposition to others' values *and* to declare an underlying philosophy of not being in opposition to reality. Change is not as effective when it is spoken about and created against something else. Change is not as effective when the metaphor for the change is a fight.

Because this metaphor of *change is a fight* is one that is very rooted in our culture, it is not easy to merely begin living from a place of nonopposition. Chinese medicinal tradition teaches that one must accept things as they are before change can happen. Therefore, racism is. Being against or fighting what is wastes energy that could be used towards creating a racially just world. The difference can seem subtle, though the effects of this mental and verbal shift are huge. The students that work with Barbara Love speak of their shift from anger, frustration and burnout to inspiration after beginning to work with her. I too have noticed that while I still have feelings of sadness, anger and shame when acknowledging racism's existence and working towards racial justice, it is a lighter feeling in my body than when I think about fighting racism or being an anti-racist. I am not against racism or for it. Being against racism is being against reality. This is a waste of energy. Racism is. I instead direct my energy on creating racial justice in the ways that I can.

Two Figures to Turn To

In order to think more concretely about ways to think outside of our fighting metaphor, I think it is useful to look at two prominent figures from history who have

worked with the idea of creating nonviolent change. The first of course, is Mohandas K. Gandhi and the second Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I would like to explore their philosophies and values and see how they spoke from them, as Lakoff challenges us to do. I will also focus on the ways they were able to come from a place other than opposition, ways they were caught in an oppositional framework, and how we can learn from both.

Mohandas K. Gandhi

To truly understand Gandhi's meaning behind his idea of nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience, it is important to understand his spiritual beliefs. His political actions all occurred under his goal of getting closer to Truth. Most Americans that studied Gandhi and brought his ideas to the United States studied his political strategies more than his religious thought. However these strategies were but one part of his larger quest for realizing himself at every moment to be God or Brahman. God to Gandhi "pervaded everything, yet is above and beyond everything" (Chernus, 2004, p. 93). Everything is God, including *maya* (the impermanent reality around us), and the permanent source of all that is. Sometimes, Gandhi thought of God as the relationship between all things, all things being part of this one reality of God. Therefore a person's actions must affect the whole of reality. We are all bound together as if in a web, rather than separate bodies acting independently. Obviously, in this world where we do seem to have separate bodies, as well as individual desires, it is challenging to remember we are part of this vast oneness. Gandhi believed this was the goal of a spiritual life, to "know oneself, totally at every instant, as Brahman, a spark of the divine, a drop in the infinite

sea of Truth” (Chernus, 2004, p. 95). Living in this way for Gandhi, meant controlling selfish desires and doing service for the good of the whole.

For Gandhi, desires separate us from Truth, because desires cause us to think that we are separate from what we desire and separate from others. When we have no desires, we realize we are not separate from all of existence, from God. Gandhi believed that the best way to control one’s desires was to love others. Desire, which comes from the ego, is about self-love. Therefore loving others selflessly transcends the ego. Gandhi writes, “True development consists in reducing ourselves to a cipher. Selfless service is the secret of life. To rise above passions is the highest ideal” (Chernus, 2004, p. 97). In order to serve through selfless love, we must develop an inner attitude of selflessness. We must not enact service to satisfy our own desires. This means that we must also overcome fear to serve Truth. Fear is closely related to desire. We are afraid of not getting what we desire and losing it if we do get it. Fear is also about desiring to avoid pain or negative consequences. One can give away true love without caring what is given back in return. If we are able to serve Truth by overcoming desire and fear, no one has power over us and we are free. We know that we are a divine spark of God and can love others completely (Chernus, 2004). These ideas are the basis for Gandhi’s ideas of nonviolence. Gandhi writes:

If I found myself entirely absorbed in the service of the community, the reason behind it was my desire for self-realization. I had made the religion of service my own, as I felt that God could be realized only through service. (1993, p. 158)

Logically, a woman or man seeking Truth cannot be violent. Hurting another is not realizing your intimate connection with all that is. Gandhi uses the term *ahimsa* to mean, “the test of truth was action based on the refusal to do harm” (Erikson, 1969, p.

412). *Ahimsa* also meant to Gandhi that not doing harm to another is respecting the truth within him. Gandhi's ideology then asserts that only the voluntary acceptance of self-suffering can reveal truth in a conflict and in the opponent. Truth for Gandhi represents the step humans must take in order to realize our connection as one human species (Erikson, 1969). He believed that treating others as if they are separate from us is the basis of all suffering.

Does this mean that we are passive onlookers to injustice? Gandhi differentiated between nonessential truths, which he felt it was best to compromise to promote peace and harmony, and essential truths, such as oppression, that required nonviolent resistance. Gandhi's understanding of service meant that if one sees another being oppressed or treated unjustly, one must serve by nonviolently resisting this oppression. For Gandhi, it is not about resisting one's own oppression, but about performing service out of selfless love. When we see the truth that all are one and all are God, we can do nothing else. By resisting laws, oppressive action, etc., without inflicting violence, harm can only come to oneself when engaging in nonviolent resistance. If you are practiced in loving others selflessly and seeing yourself as connected to the whole, this promotes the least violence possible in the situation (Chernus, 2004).

Gandhi believed that being passive and not resisting oppression is worse than fighting that oppression with violence. Acting with nonviolent resistance and accepting self-suffering, is not a passive action, but is part of a "truth force" (Erikson, 1969, p. 434). Refusing to participate in violence is an action, just as opposing violence with violence is an action. The action of nonviolence involves presence and attention. By giving the opponent's "truth" presence, one is giving the opponent the "courage to

change” (Erikson, 1969, p. 435). Gandhi means here that through acting nonviolently, you are showing your opponent that you see them too as God, and therefore would not harm him. If the opponent is then able to glimpse himself as God and also see the interconnection between you, he will have the courage to choose a different course of action. Gandhi also taught that you should choose to harm yourself over others, because you know this self-sacrifice is for the good of the whole. Through the self-sacrifice, you are recognizing that all of life is intimately connected and sacred (Erikson, 1969).

How do you know if your truth is correct? Gandhi believed that if you are truly acting out of love for others, rather than selfish desires, you are always serving Truth. If you are serving out of anger or desire for fame, it is likely your truth is not part of the spiritual path to knowing oneself as God. When laws are changed or people freed because of nonviolent resistance, Gandhi would be careful not to see that as victory, but as discovering truth. The means is more important than the end. The act of serving selflessly and knowing your intimate connection with Brahman is the goal, not winning a victory over oppression. This belief is core to Gandhi's philosophy. If he cared most about choosing a strategy that always got the desired victory, it would have been easy to see violence as an option in certain situations (Chernus, 2004).

Gandhi realized that because we are human, everyone's truth is partial. He therefore thought of his quests for Truth as experimental, even naming his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiences with Truth*. “If every conviction of absolute certainty is seen as an experiment with ourselves rather than a battle against an enemy, then absolutism and tolerance can coexist” (Chernus, 2004, p. 102). Here Gandhi is practicing not being in opposition with reality. Both exist. We can both stand up for what we

believe to be in the best interest of the whole and truly love those we are resisting. In one way, we are taking all the suffering on ourselves. However, if we truly understand the oneness of the universe, we see that actions that serve the whole lessen our suffering. This understanding can only be reached when we realize we are not a separate self.

Therefore Gandhi would say that we should not fight others, because that would mean we are fighting ourselves, fighting God. And rather than fighting a particular reality, Gandhi teaches to live another reality. “Real freedom, for Gandhi, meant inward freedom, the freedom to do what is true and right in any situation, regardless of the consequences” (Chernus, 2004, p. 105). If we are acting with selfless love for others, we are free. This acting will involve resisting oppression and injustice, but as long as we are resisting from the realization of ourselves as God, there is nothing else to accomplish. Therefore we can experience freedom while resisting oppression. We are not in a state of being against or in a fight with this oppression. Rather we are free and engaged in resistance because we are serving with selfless love. Resistance from a place of selfless love of all beings is not oppositional or violent. In this way, Gandhi did not fall subject to the metaphor that large-scale social change requires a fight. He would say that change may require resistance, but that this resistance can be enacted from a place of freedom.

Where Gandhi does seem to be oppositional is against his desires. He writes:

It is always the case of intense mental struggle. It is not that I am incapable of anger, for instance, but I succeed on almost all occasions to keep my feelings under control. Whatever may be the result, there is always in me a conscious struggle. (Chernus, 2004, p. 97)

He also wrote extensively about practicing control over his desires through fasting and abstaining from sex (Gandhi, 1993). Gandhi therefore envisioned a fight against a part of

himself—his ego. Because he saw that without his ego, he would live in his knowing of his connection with the divine, he made it a practice to fight and control his ego. A further step may have been for him to realize that even his ego is part of the divine and therefore did not need to be struggled against, but instead gently acknowledged. This does not mean that Gandhi would then listen to his desires, but would instead, as Connelly lovingly suggests, “kiss them and scooch them aside” rather than put so much energy into controlling them (personal communication, March 4, 2007).

Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence was very much rooted in his search for the Truth. This meant that nonviolent resistance as a means (not as an end) was what was significant for him. Though his leadership often resulted in positive change, this is not what Gandhi felt was most important. Because of this belief and the spiritual philosophy behind it, Gandhi was able to speak about both having freedom and resisting oppression through nonviolence. He did not act *against* oppression, rather he engaged in nonviolent resistance as a way to serve others, recognizing all as God or Brahman. It is amazing to think of the possibilities of this outlook. Imagine activists both knowing freedom and peace while also resisting oppression. This is power that can create revolutionary change.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Let us now turn to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. With Gandhian influence, as well as heavy influence from his Christian upbringing and study, King single-handedly put nonviolence on the map in the United States. It is useful to explore King's spiritual roots, as we did Gandhi's, to discover what King's ideas of nonviolence were grounded in. There are many similarities between Gandhi and King's nonviolent philosophies. The

differences point to the different ways that Gandhi and King understood God and the ways that U.S. culture affected King's understanding of nonviolence. Looking at how U.S. culture affected King's understanding of nonviolence shines light on the complexity of trying to speak and act without opposition in a country in which individualism is highly valued, often fostering separation rather than communion.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a man of unity. His leadership was made strong by his ability to draw from African American tradition and experience and speak it in a way that connected it to the dominant White culture. The groundwork of King's message was based in his understanding of Christianity. He recognized Christianity to be a "religion of freedom and liberation" (Chernus, 2004, p. 162). Core to African American Christianity is the understanding that God is personal and religion is a personal experience. We were all created in God's image. King believed that, "God is the infinite perfection of those qualities that make each one of us a person: self-consciousness and self-direction...Therefore, the foundation of all being is infinite personality" (Chernus, 2004, p. 163). God is perfectly free and because we are his children and made in his image, we too are innately free. King states that freedom is "the opportunity to fulfill my total capacity untrammelled by any artificial barrier" (King, quoted in Chernus, 2004, p. 163). Equal rights then, are required to have freedom. Freedom is a state of being, for King, as much as it is about societal allowances. When one is free, they are filled with God's love and living to their fullest potential (Chernus, 2004).

Because we are all God's children, we all have the same rights to happiness and freedom. Like Gandhi, King saw all in the world as intimately connected in some way. He writes:

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. This is the interrelated structure of all reality. You can never be what you ought to be until I become what I ought to be. (King quoted in Chernus, 2004, p. 164)

What affects one affects the whole. This is why King preached that we must treat our neighbors with *agape*, or selfless love. *Agape* means respecting and loving others because you recognize they too are children of God. This does not mean that you have to like them or agree with their values. However, it does mean treating them the way you would want to be treated (King, 1992). *Agape* is an underlying value of King's nonviolence. This is similar to Gandhi's belief that we are all sparks of the divine. Gandhi believed that our interconnection means that we are all a part of God. Loving others is recognizing this. For Gandhi, practicing selfless love helps us to reach the realization that we are not separate from each other. The act is taking you closer to spiritual realization. While this was the goal for Gandhi, for King, *agape* love was more about bringing about a beloved community as a heaven on earth (Chernus, 2004).

Because we are all interconnected and all made in the image of God, King taught there can be no individual spiritual development without taking social responsibility. My freedom is tied up in yours and vice-versa. This belief came from both his theology and experience growing up in a southern African American community where he saw firsthand the power of community. One can see the influence of American individuality here as well. King sometimes emphasized service to community in order to serve your own spiritual fulfillment. While Gandhi saw the Truth as everyone existing as a drop of water in the ocean of God, King saw us as both separate and interconnected. He considered love of self very important and emphasized that love of self and others go

hand in hand, while Gandhi emphasized loving others over the self, seeing self-love of the ego as something to struggle against. Self-love meant we were separate, a belief that, for Gandhi, took us away from the Truth. U.S. culture and Christianity in King's lifetime saw God as more separated from humans and humans separate from each other. While we are connected through the parts of God within all of us, King did not think of self-love as sinful or in opposition to loving others. To the contrary, King saw how internalized oppression affected African Americans in lowering their self-esteem. Therefore, if one conducted service and this in turn raised his self-esteem, King would applaud this. King believed that if we did not love ourselves and see ourselves as images of God, it was impossible to love others. Gandhi would attest that loving oneself is exactly what keeps us from knowing ourselves as God (Chernus, 2004). These differences point out different sides of opposition and separation. While King sees humans to be separate from God and from each other more than Gandhi, he also sees less of a duality between loving oneself and others than did Gandhi. Gandhi seemed to believe that you cannot practice self-love and selfless love if your goal is Truth. While Gandhi works to see no separation between himself and God, he seems to oppose his ego to reach this goal. For King, self-love assists us in being able to love others selflessly.

King's concept of personality may be similar to Gandhi's ego. However, King believes that we should work for everyone's personality to be free and live its fullest potential. He does not attempt to take us away from what makes us human or separate—our egos. King does distinguish between our human nature and our Godlike essence. Our essence is innately good, and we all carry this innate goodness. However our human nature can and does sin. Sin is not only actions, but also the concept of our separation

from our essence. So, for King, while it is important to nurture self-love, it should always be in the direction of becoming closer to your Godlike essence, not in the direction of selfish desires (Chernus, 2004).

Along with King's belief that we are all interconnected is his belief in divine love. Divine love, or God's love, is a cosmic force always working to heal separation and conflict. He states that, "the universe is under the control of a loving purpose...the moral arc of the universe bends toward justice" (King quoted in Chernus, 2004, p. 167). When we serve our communities and love others with *agape* love, we are tapping into this cosmic energy. This idea is both religious and not religious to King. He saw the universe as moving towards harmony and wholeness, even when it seemed in chaos. This harmony on earth looks like humans living in interdependence, equality and unity. Power is shared. King did not see power differences as bad in and of themselves. Rather he thought everyone should be able to participate in power in some way. Those with more power would use it to maintain harmony in a nonviolent manner. This was the overarching goal of King's work, seen most during the last three years of his life when he began speaking against the Vietnam War and other global injustices (Chernus, 2004).

This brings us to King's specific beliefs about nonviolence. He saw it on three interwoven levels. Pragmatically, violence breeds more violence. Nonviolence is the only way to create a beloved community. The resistance involved in nonviolent action shows that the goal is not defeating the other but reconciling. The goal is justice, not revenge. The enemy is the social structure, not the people that are upholding it. King also recognized how nonviolent resistance affects the opponent's consciousness. It calls the opponents to think from their hearts rather than act defensively. While all of these

practical reasons were well understood and agreed on by nonviolent activists, King emphasized that the principles must be held within the larger context of moral and religious thought (Chernus, 2004).

Agape comes in here. Nonviolence is “selfless acts of love aiming for the well-being of all” (Chernus, 2004, p. 171). Like Gandhi, King’s spiritual background called him to emphasize the means rather than the end result. If we are acting nonviolently with *agape* love, then a beloved community is being presently created. Practicing nonviolence is not an ideal, but how to live in the correct moral order of the universe, in the present moment. Nonviolence is also congruent with the strongly held belief of the value of self-sacrifice for the whole. By joining nonviolence to Christian and moral values, King easily interpreted the self-sacrifice as Christ-like suffering. This promoted self-esteem and gave pain meaning. Like Christ, those that practice nonviolence are showing their willingness to suffer for the healing of the world (Chernus, 2004).

Self-sacrifice can be painful and therefore requires the nonviolent person to engage in both inward and outward nonviolence (King, 1992). King emphasized that throughout nonviolent action, resisters must practice loving the enemy because “hate scars the soul and distorts the personality...hate is just as injurious to the person that hates” (King, 1963, p. 45). He explains that when our consciousness is overcome by hate and anger, we are not able to recognize our values and live in alignment with creating a beloved community. King also taught that we must love our enemies because, “love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend” (King, 1963, p. 46). Like Gandhi's notion of recognizing God in one's opponent and therefore giving the opponent the courage to change, King recognizes that violence will never bring community. Only

through loving our enemies, can we give them a chance to love us. King (1963)

powerfully states:

Have we not come to such an impasse in the modern world that we must love our enemies—or else? The chain reaction of evil—hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars—must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation. (p. 45)

Nonviolence, therefore, is the only way to create change in society that keeps us in right relationship with ourselves, others and God. There are injustices that are not in alignment with the harmony that divine love is capable of bringing to earth. King (1992) states that, “the struggle is between justice and injustice...between the forces of light and the forces of darkness” (p. 31). God is on the side of justice. One must be active against injustices to bring communities into this harmony. Only nonviolent action takes communities toward harmony rather than away from it. King would say that the action is already harmonious and a beloved community is being created when nonviolent action is conducted (Chernus, 2004).

When looking at King's philosophy and words, he also has subtle ways of being both outside of and in opposition with reality. On the one hand, he speaks about "loving your enemies." This is recognizing that we are in fact separate and we are divided into enemies and friends. While he teaches to love our enemies, the use of the word "enemy" quickly evokes images, narratives and feelings of anger, distrust, and hate. King didn't preach that we are against our enemies. Rather he spoke about being against injustice, or the darkness. This sets up a duality. Rather than seeing all as God, as Gandhi did, King comes from a place of seeing both God and evil forces. Being against injustice and seeing people as enemies is focused on being in opposition. While King is oppositional

in this way, in general his words and actions are ones that speak the possibility of a new world. He states that if we are practicing loving others and practicing nonviolence, we are creating a beloved community. This is the goal, being Christ-like in the present moment. It is the means that is important. Alongside this, King also spoke about what a beloved community could look like in the future, focusing on what he wanted to see rather than not see in the community. While he still seemed to be working under the metaphor of *change is a fight*, the fight being against injustice, he defined fighting as nonviolent, filled with self-love and love of others, in order to create a beloved community for all of humanity.

I would rather be in this kind of fight than another, however I am interested in the possibility of believing change doesn't require a fight at all. I think King and Gandhi's philosophies point to this. There are prominent figures of today that have been exploring this idea as well; how to bring people together to create change through peaceful means. In the next chapter I would like to discuss three of these figures. All have a different way of approaching unity and oneness and I believe all can help us to see new possibilities for doing racial justice work outside of oppositional speech and thought.

CHAPTER V

HOW OTHERS ARE ATTEMPTING TO SPEAK UNITY

As discussed in the previous chapters, it is important for frames to come from deep-seated ideas and values. Only when the language of the frames is linked to these values and ideas, can the frames become common sense over time and therefore be an integral part of social change. I believe it is therefore important to look at current leaders that speak from ideas and values different from those of mainstream U.S. culture. Doing this will not only reveal assumptions from U.S. culture that often go unnoticed, but will also give new possibilities for how to speak and act from different belief systems.

Thich Nhat Hanh

The first person I would like to highlight is the Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh. His ideas of interbeing and notion of *being* peace are central to acting and speaking outside of opposition. Thich Nhat Hanh was born and raised in Vietnam, where he became a monk. During the Vietnam War, Nhat Hanh remained neutral, promoting peace in Vietnam and the U.S. While speaking out for peace in the U.S. in 1966, he was exiled from Vietnam. Since then, Nhat Hanh has been the most influential leader of “engaged Buddhism.” This movement has brought Buddhist philosophy into the realm of nonviolent activism in the United States (Chernus, 2004). He later established a large retreat center and Buddhist community called Plum Village near Bordeaux, France where

he now lives. He comes to the U.S. frequently to speak about living mindfully and, “making peace right in the moment we are alive” (Nhat Hanh, 1991, p. xii).

Nhat Hanh has come up with new language to describe his philosophy of being. His term, “interbeing” means the interdependence of all beings, all reality (Chernus, 2004, p. 192). The principle of interbeing is crucial to Nhat Hanh’s life work because it is the foundation of his thought, speaking and action. Nhat Hanh bases his life in ideas and values that are Buddhist in nature, namely that the self is a fiction. The connection of all beings, “interbeing,” means that we are not separate selves. The idea that we are separate selves is an illusion that causes suffering. Affecting one life in a particular way affects all of life. Relationships are therefore more real than the individual self. All of life is One and all beings are therefore part of the One. Although we are not separate, it is also true that all beings are unique expressions of the One. As Nhat Hanh states, “Unity is diversity and diversity is unity” (Chernus, 2004, p. 194). Even when looking at a sheet of paper, Hanh calls us to see the sun and trees and people that have gone into the making of the paper. As we look deeper, we can eventually see ourselves in the piece of paper, knowing that everything is intimately connected (Nhat Hanh, 1991). Another way Nhat Hanh describes it is, “all things rely on each other to be” (Chernus, 2004, p. 194). Nhat Hanh uses the word, “inter-is” to speak of this. “Everything inter-is with everything else” (Chernus, 2004, p. 194). We are all caught in the web of the universe that connects us to all else, together being one body or being. Like Gandhi, Nhat Hanh believes it is vital for the creation of peace to know our intimate interconnection with others.

Thich Nhat Hanh believes that meditation is a powerful way to know for oneself the interbeing of all things. Not only will meditation and mindfulness awaken us to this

reality, but it will also bring us peace that then resonates with all beings. For if you are peace, than all of life is a little more peaceful. Therefore the way to personal peace and societal peace are very intertwined (Chernus, 2004). An excerpt from one of Nhat Hanh's famous poems, *Please Call Me by My True Names* is an example of this. Nhat Hanh had been receiving letters about young refugees being raped by sea pirates in Southeast Asia. He meditated on this and wrote:

*I am the twelve-year-old girl, refugee on a small boat,
who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea
pirate,
and I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable of seeing and
loving.*

*I am a member of the politburo, with plenty of power in my
hands,
and I am the man who has to pay his "debt of blood" to my
people,
dying slowly in a forced labor camp.*

*My joy is like spring, so warm it makes flowers bloom in all the
walks of life.*

My pain is like a river of tears, so full it fills the four oceans.

*Please call me by my true names,
so I can hear all my cries and laughs at once,*

so I can see that my joy and pain are one.

Please call me by my true names,

so I can wake up,

and so the door of my heart can be left open,

the door of compassion.

(1991, p. 123-124).

Whereas mainstream U.S. thought teaches that we as individuals are separate from society, Thich Nhat Hanh and engaged Buddhism teach that:

by understanding the true nature of the self, we better understand the true nature of society; we then use that enhanced understanding to gain an even deeper understanding of self, which leads to deeper understanding of society, and so on. (Chernus, 2004, p. 196)

This idea of interconnection and oneness of Thich Nhat Hanh's gives us another reason to look at mainstream U.S. language to see the true nature of our society. Our individual use of words, and values behind them, give insight into the values of our society as a whole.

Because individuals and society, as Nhat Hanh says, "inter-are," ills of society such as racism, affect all of us individually, whatever racial or ethnic group you identify with. Nhat Hanh believes that when we practice meditation and realize our oneness, we will be motivated to improve the world's ills. When you realize how intimately connected you are to everything else, you can more easily have compassion for all of life (Chernus, 2004). If we think of the world as one body, we would not pit our arm against our leg. This only causes more harm (Nhat Hanh, 1991). Therefore in Nhat Hanh's

worldview, there is no one to judge or defeat. One's motivation to engage in social action is therefore not to stop the oppressors or kill the enemy. Rather, the motivation is to ease our own suffering and therefore the world's suffering. To hurt another is to hurt oneself. This would be illogical. We must therefore change our daily lives. Nhat Hanh challenges us to do this by practicing mindfulness (Chernus, 2004). He states that, "our presidents and our governments are us. They reflect our lifestyle and our way of thinking. The way we hold a cup of tea, pick up a newspaper, and even use toilet paper have to do with peace" (Chernus, 2004, p. 199). For Nhat Hanh, individual work that brings peace to oneself is also work that brings peace to the world.

Another idea that is deep-seated in Buddhism and held by Thich Nhat Hanh is that everything is changing, even ideas, values and truth. We must therefore be willing to give up our current ways of thinking about things when the circumstance calls for new ways of thinking. Attachment causes suffering, so we must be in constant practice of non-attachment. This keeps us awake and in the present, which is the best way of knowing one's connection to all of life and therefore acting from that place rather than from convictions (Chernus, 2004).

Nhat Hanh also calls us to pay close attention to our thoughts in meditation. We then can see more clearly our own violence. Like White privilege work and other ways of examining one's racist ideas, Nhat Hanh challenges us to examine our own pain, anger, sadness and shame. There is no boundary between this and the pain, anger, sadness and shame of the world for Nhat Hanh. This anger in us is the source of the world's conflict and violence (Chernus, 2004). To let go of feelings of anger or despair, Nhat Hanh teaches us to be in oneness with those feelings. See what they have to say and

teach you. Do not be in opposition to them or you will be more in opposition to life. When one lets go of these negative emotions, they can become compost for new, beautiful growth. Suffering is also valuable and part of the oneness (Nhat Hanh, 1991). Therefore to ease our own suffering is to change the world. We no longer have to think in terms of good and evil, rather we can focus on being compassionate to ourselves and the life around us. Nhat Hanh teaches that, “when we see that the antagonists in any conflict are merely two sides of the same problem, we can stop fighting. We can become ‘non-fear, non-anger, and non-despair,’ and experience a new kind of calm, harmony and peace” (Chernus, 2004, p. 20).

Speaking on the Vietnam War, Nhat Hanh expresses that many Americans wanted to obtain peace through defeating the wrongdoers. When looking at this through a lens of interbeing, defeating is causing more violence and harm and therefore does not create peace (Nhat Hanh, 1991). Peace will never come from anger or violence (Nhat Hanh, 1993). Nonviolence, then for Nhat Hanh, is not only a way of acting but a way of being. This is not passive, but rather active on a daily basis. And practicing mindfulness in the present does not mean one would refrain from marching for peace or standing up for one’s beliefs. Rather, one would do these things while practicing being mindful and being peace (Chernus, 2004). Nhat Hanh (1991) writes:

Can the peace movement talk in loving speech, showing the way for peace?...peace work is not a means. Each step we should be peace. Each step we should be joy. Each step we should be happiness. If we are determined, we can do it. We don’t need the future. We can smile and relax. Everything we want is right here in the present moment. (p. 111, 42)

It is from his groundedness in his connection with all things that he speaks. His words of interbeing, inter-are, and inter-is, come from his assumptions and certitudes about life,

that all are one. Nhat Hanh does not speak about waging war on cancer or fighting racism because that language does not fit or make sense in the worldview that he lives in. His language reflects his deep belief in oneness.

Thich Nhat Hanh dwells in a state of being that is not in opposition to anything. In fact, he claims that by the practice of being at peace and not being in opposition with the way life is, peaceful change is occurring in the world. This is so interwoven into his being that he is unable to speak in opposition. The metaphorical frame he is living under is *being peace is peaceful change*. Interestingly, Nhat Hanh is very focused on self-practice, though he does not see the self as separate from the rest of life. It is this belief that enables him to assert that self-practice creates universal change. While Gandhi saw his ego as something that took him away from the knowing of the oneness of all things, Nhat Hanh sees the ego as part of this oneness. If Nhat Hanh were to respond to King's call to "fight injustice," he would probably speak of the injustice existing in the self and suggest starting there. Nhat Hanh promotes both loving oneself and others because he sees no difference between them. They are the same, therefore you have to do both. This does not mean that Nhat Hanh advocates that we only meditate for a peaceful presence, not paying attention to the world around us. While he would say this is better than not practicing a peaceful state of being, he encourages activism while also practicing a peaceful presence. Thich Nhat Hanh's way of living his life is a powerful example of what this looks like.

Sharif Abdullah

Another man that speaks from ideas and values different from mainstream U.S. culture, though lives within U.S. culture, is Sharif Abdullah. A Black man born in

Camden, NJ, Abdullah probably had every reason to want to approach oppression with opposition or violence. He describes his life in Camden as a “study in toxic relationships, including welfare, public housing, grinding poverty, almost constant violence, and a polluted environment” (Abdullah, 1999, p. 219). During his many years as a lawyer in North Carolina, Abdullah began shifting his beliefs about how change can happen—through *inclusivity* rather than opposition. He later fully shifted his focus in this direction and now directs the Commonway Institute and Three Valleys Project with the purpose of bringing diverse people together to build inclusivity and civic engagement. Abdullah has taught his principles of inclusivity to public and private organizations, and federal agencies around the world, including the United Nations. Straddling the worlds of what he learned growing up in the U.S. and what he has learned through teachers such as Vaclav Havel, Gandhi and King, Abdullah creates new language and a new story for Americans that wish to save themselves and the planet (Abdullah, 1999).

Let’s look more closely at Abdullah’s ideas and values and the language he uses to speak them. An organized way to do this is to look at the values and vision of the Commonway Institute, an institute founded by Abdullah and funded by the Rockefeller Institute. Abdullah founded the Commonway Institute for the purposes of building inclusive community and spreading the values of inclusivity.

Sharif describes the Commonway as having three core values. The first is *inclusivity*. For Abdullah this means “recognizing that my life, my fate, my future is inextricably linked to yours” (n.d., Core Values section, ¶ 2). Inclusivity is a word created by Abdullah to describe his deep belief in interconnection with all of life. This word is contrasted with *exclusivity*, meaning for Abdullah that “I” am separate from

“you” or any “other.” Exclusivity has become the status quo, according to Abdullah. Much like Fairclough and Lakoff, Abdullah explains that this notion of exclusivity has become common sense, even though it is only one way to look at the world. Abdullah states that exclusivity is not in and of itself a bad concept. It has been a vital way of thinking for many of the world’s scientific breakthroughs and for ways of practicing medicine. Abdullah rather believes that it is important to see both sides of the coin, that we are both separate from each other and interconnected. He asserts that racism, sexism, homophobia, etc., all stem from the belief that we are separate. To explain this further, Abdullah speaks about racism specifically. He explains that when treated badly because of his race, he is often told the common belief that his pain would go away if racism was abolished. Abdullah does not argue that racism is not real, he instead asserts that racism is one form of exclusivity out of many and his pain will not go away until we are living in an inclusive society (Abdullah, 1999). Abdullah sees this sense of separateness to be behind everything from wars to slavery and poverty. It is the root of human suffering even though we often think we benefit from it (Abdullah, 1991). For example, many may think that living in the U.S. is beneficial because we are the wealthiest country on the planet. However, because we are interconnected in ways seen and unseen, Abdullah asserts that the suffering of a poor child in India contributes to all beings’ suffering across the globe.

Abdullah contends that under the deeply held idea of exclusivity, a world that works for all is impossible. He therefore calls for a shift in consciousness to one of inclusivity. With this shift, Abdullah believes that a world that works for all is possible right now, in this moment. He asserts that we have the resources and technology to make

this happen, we only need to be grounded in the value of inclusivity first (Abdullah, 1999). This is similar to Thich Nhat Hanh's belief that we can create peace in this moment if we are to practice mindfulness. It is a shift in consciousness, not something that needs to be "done."

The Commonway's second value, named by Abdullah, is "Human Ecology: balancing our relationships" (n.d., Core Values section, ¶ 3). To Abdullah, this means "moving beyond the idea of 'honoring diversity' to embrace inclusivity" (n.d., Commonway's Principles section, ¶ 10). Rather than being tolerant of one another, Abdullah believes it is time to facilitate relationships among a diversity of individuals. Human ecology is the "healing and dynamic equilibrium of human populations with each other and with our environment, with the goal of affirming and sustaining life in all its diversity" (Abdullah, n.d., Core Values section, ¶ 3). Abdullah has enacted a specific example of how this can be done by beginning many of what he calls his Commons Cafés. In these Cafés Abdullah brings together selected people from many different backgrounds, usually weekly. Some may be homeless, some environmental activists, some businessmen and women. He brings them together to discuss issues of racism, ecological sustainability, violence and other pertinent topics. There are rules for table selection so that a table of six will have individuals from a variety of backgrounds. Throughout the appropriated time, the people will be switched from table to table. Abdullah has found that when people connect in this way, they are willing to find common solutions that work for the whole. He also claims that this bringing together of people from many different backgrounds produces many more possibilities than a group of people from similar backgrounds could come up with. He writes:

Once we finally get it through our heads that no one is in control of our disastrous predicament, what do we do? Anything is more useful than beating up in each other. If we listen, we will hear suggestions coming from all sides. People will be drawing on their intelligence, intuition, collective wisdom, and instinct as they grapple with the oppressive reality. Perhaps one of their proposals will work. Perhaps none of them will. However, exploring these options draws us together and builds a communal strength that generates further creativity and a will to change. (1999, p. 99)

After the tragedy of September 11th in the U.S., Abdullah put together a Commons Café initiative. His website gave detailed instructions for how to host a Commons Café, and they were hosted in January, 2002 all over the U.S. as well as in Canada, Ukraine and England (Abdullah, n.d., Cafes for a New World section, ¶ 1). Abdullah understands that thinking from a place of inclusivity is new for most of us. He also believes that people have good values for the most part but don't know how to create the environment in which to practice those values. He therefore gives many practical ways of being and acting from one's values from day-to-day activities to large scale projects (Abdullah, 1999).

Another way of practicing Abdullah's second core value is through what he calls the Inner and Outer paths (Abdullah, 1991). The outer path involves first acting from universal interest. This means that decisions are made with the whole in mind, rather than the individual self. On a small scale, this may mean bringing cloth bags to the grocery store to avoid adding more plastic to the waste system. Gandhi is an example of one that fully lived for universal interest, being willing to give up his life for the sake of the whole. The second part of practicing the outer path is practicing the Golden Rule. We practice this by making decisions that are a win-win for both parties, rather than a win-lose. Conversations continue until both parties are satisfied, not until one party

backs down. Abdullah believes that having everyone at the table creates an abundance of possibilities that are not feasible when one self-interest is trying to get their way over another. By bringing people together, as in the Commons Café, it may not be as hard as it seems to please both parties. The third leg of the outer path is practicing forgiveness. If I am practicing inclusivity and know that we are all one, then there is no enemy. Living from this place, I can practice forgiving those that I used to see as my enemy, as I am them, they are my sisters and brothers (Abdullah, 1991).

The inner path also involves three practices. The first is releasing anger. Abdullah states, “anger is a force, not a power. In fact, anger is an expression of powerlessness...It is impossible to experience both power and anger” (Abdullah, 1991, p. 65). Abdullah does not contend that the emotion of anger itself is bad. Rather, if we build our identity around anger towards certain groups or participate in activism from a place of anger, we are throwing away much of our power. He encourages us to practice releasing this anger and then being an activist from a place of oneness. Knowing that you are a part of the problem and the solution puts you in a more powerful position to act than if you see yourself as opposed to the problem. The second practice of the inner path is releasing fear. Again, this does not mean that we will not experience fear, or that fear is bad. Here Abdullah is asking us to acknowledge our fear but not act from a place of fear. Acting from fear often leads to acting only for oneself. It is part of the dynamic of opposition. Abdullah teaches to live from your values, not in reaction to your fear. When you do not live from a place of fear, you are very powerful and cannot be threatened. You live with integrity. Gandhi and King are role models of this. The last practice of the inner path is releasing the need to harm. This is closely related to the

other two. If we consistently practice inclusivity, we will not wish to harm others because we see our connection to them (Abdullah, 1991).

Abdullah's third core value, "commitment to a new society" involves ways to practice activism on a larger scale (n.d., Core Values section, ¶ 4). This value speaks of a different type of social activism than we see most often today. Much of the activism seen in the U.S. is about standing up *against* or *fighting* for a cause. Abdullah speaks of activism that begins with a consciousness of inclusivity. When confronted with conflict, he encourages us to think of possibilities that work best for the whole. We start with ideals rather than fears when looking to solve a problem and work on problems from a place of shared values and common purpose (Abdullah, n.d.). This may seem idealistic or naïve at first. That is why Abdullah offers many practical ways of practicing a commitment to a new society. This could be as simple as practicing seeing those in the grocery store as your friends, or getting your neighbors together to discuss neighborhood concerns. An important daily practice that Abdullah emphasizes is to "stop blaming others" (Abdullah, 1999, p. 84). He explains that as long as you blame others for problems you see in the world, you are seeing yourself separate from them and not seeing yourself as a powerful part of the solution. Or you see yourself as the one who must work against the enemy, which comes from a place of exclusivity (Abdullah, 1991). In his book, *The Power of One: Authentic Leadership in Turbulent Times*, Abdullah explains that when a leader or government blames another, an enemy is created and therefore a solution is usually not seen as possible without some kind of fight (1991). As with Communism in the 1950s in the U.S., fear is created by setting up a dynamic of an enemy of the United States, and citizens feel that opposing or fighting is the only option.

On a larger scale than the Commons Café is what Abdullah speaks of as the Commons, a self-sustainable, ecologically sound, socially just community (Abdullah, 1999). In the last chapter of his book, *Creating a World that Works for All*, Abdullah lays out how to build this parallel society that practices inclusivity. Rather than opposing parts of society as they exist now, Abdullah encourages those that can to create inclusive communities. He points out that transformation of a society takes place when only 5-15% of the population shifts. Therefore, small groups of people creating these inclusive communities can in fact change society without having to fight anything (Abdullah, 1999).

Like we have seen with Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Thich Nhat Hanh, Abdullah's values are grounded in his spirituality. Practicing inclusivity for Abdullah is a spiritual practice. For example, when someone acts in a sexist way towards me, and I practice seeing my connection to him and forgive him, this is a spiritual act, grounded in my belief that this is the only way to create true peace on the planet. Practicing inclusivity is seeing the value and worth of all of life and acting from this place. These are spiritual acts. Abdullah (1999) sees the practice of inclusivity inextricably linked to the practice of giving and receiving love. We must cultivate deep love for ourselves and others in order to live from a place of inclusivity. Abdullah's sense of spirituality also has some components of Buddhist belief, such as the belief that we all experience pain but we create our suffering by the way we handle our pain. Abdullah sees the destructiveness of our world linked to not knowing how to handle our pain. Practicing observing our pain and not acting from pain and fear is a spiritual practice that Abdullah emphasizes. From Abdullah's spiritual groundedness in the idea of oneness, he states

with faith that our problems are also a blessing. We can look at our problems as the world asking us to wake up and shift our consciousness. Our problems could be the catalyst to get us to a place beyond where we've ever been before as a human race (Abdullah, 1999).

How does Abdullah's language reflect his core values? Abdullah (1999) understands the power of language and states that a big reason for his writing of his book, *Creating a World that Works for All*, was to create a common language that those wishing to practice inclusivity can use. He uses the words, *Keepers*, *Breakers* and *Menders* throughout the book. Each word represents a story of a way to live. *Keepers* is a word used to describe those from societies that function in an interconnected way with their environment. Humans lived this way for thousands of years and some still do. The story of *Keepers* is that all of life is sacred and we must live in harmony with it. *Breakers* are those humans that act as though the earth was created exclusively for human use. Parts of the *Breaker* story include humans being dominant over animals and nature, using them in whatever way we choose. This is how the western world lives. *Menders* are those who are conscious of interconnection and are actively working to restore balance and harmony to the earth. Abdullah is therefore creating new language to frame a new story of a way to live in the world. He states that the dominant story of our culture is ingrained in us in childhood. We always live the story of our culture whether it benefits us or not. This is because we are so deep into the story that we see it as reality. Abdullah suggests that the story may be beneficial, but even when it turns destructive, we will continue to enact it unless we are given a better story to take its place (Abdullah, 1999). Therefore all of his writings and work describe ways to live the new story he proposes.

As already mentioned, *inclusivity* is a term coined by Abdullah. He felt the need to create his own word, much like Thich Nhat Hanh with “interbeing”, to appropriately speak a way to be and act from our interconnection. Abdullah also calls us to speak about what we are *for* rather than what we are *against*. This means speaking from a place of our deep values rather than speaking in opposition to something. He points out the many “anti-” movements and asserts that what we focus on will get stronger (Abdullah, 1991). For example, the more we resist racism, the stronger it becomes. Linked with this is Abdullah’s belief that it is important to avoid using language of war such as, *win* or *defeat*. Abdullah writes:

Do the Perot voters or the Million Man Marchers want The Other to ‘win?’ Do they see that their solution *must* include The Other? Or do they believe that The Mess is actually *caused* by The Other, who must therefore be ‘defeated?’ In most cases, those who could unite to make powerful changes in our society are instead locked by their ‘I am separate’ thinking into fighting each other. (1999, p. 78)

Abdullah also calls us to look at the language and ideas behind protesting. He states that if you are an activist *attacking* a system, you have not understood that you must act with compassion for The Other to create lasting peaceful change. He states that “civil disobedience without compassion is just noise. Marching without heart is just motion. Speeches without love are just words” (Abdullah, 1999, p. 108). He even points out the language of *nonviolence*. He states that:

Many of us recognize that violence is only a symptom of a deeper malady. We do not necessarily recognize that nonviolence is also merely a symptom. It is a symptom of a deeper healing and wholeness, of a world going right. So, instead of trying to practice nonviolence (no one practices violence—they are just violent), let us try to practice the connections that make violence both inappropriate and impossible. (Abdullah, 1999, p. 77)

Two words that Abdullah uses often are love and compassion. He defines love as, “my willingness to extend myself for another’s growth” (Abdullah, 1991, p. 54). You can easily see his definition of love connected to his value of inclusivity. He defines compassion as “love’s verb” (Abdullah, 1999, p. 159). We bring love into the world by practicing compassion.

Therefore to step outside of the story of the Breakers, and begin living the story of the Menders, Abdullah calls us to practice speaking, acting and being from a place of knowing inclusivity. Again, when 5-15% of the population begins enacting a new story, this story appears “normal” and transformation is possible, and is already happening. Currently we have a politician that speaks more from a place of inclusivity than any other U.S. politician that I know of. Unlike Abdullah, Barack Obama does not have the choice of creating a parallel society in his work. Rather he is attempting to bring values of interconnectedness to mainstream U.S. politics, a politics deeply entrenched in a story of separateness. Because Obama is currently running to be the Democratic candidate for the upcoming presidential race, it is exciting to bring him into this thesis and look at the way his language and framing reflect his values and is different from that in politics as we have known it.

Barack Obama

Much like Abdullah is working to do, Obama is creating a new story for the American people to choose to live into. He has done this rapidly and it is fascinating to see how many people in the U.S. are hungry for this new story. Perhaps because it is not new at all in many ways. Obama has taken the deep seated American values of life,

liberty and justice for all, and not only lives them but enrolls others in living them through his words. Let's look more closely at how Obama uses his words to do this.

First, in every speech, Obama uses “we” rather than “I” or “Democrats” or another potentially divisive word to make people belong to his message. He then taps into American people's values by stating that they already want what he speaks of, they are already included. In his Iowa victory speech, Obama states that:

We are choosing hope over fear. We're choosing unity over division...This was the moment when we tore down the barriers that have divided us for too long; when we rallied people of all parties and ages to a common cause; when we finally gave Americans who have never participated in politics a reason to stand up and to do so. (January 4, 2008)

Before the primary election process began, I don't know how many Americans were stating that they wanted a candidate that would bring unity across party lines, across racial lines, across all lines. However, soon after Obama began speaking this way, people were attracted to his message and frames of unity and change. By Obama *declaring* that this is what Americans are looking for, many Americans in fact found that he was talking to them, that he reminded him of their “true” American values. Stephen Denning (2008), author of several books on leadership and narrative, writes that Obama is creating a narrative of “who we are” through his use of “we” alongside the American values he points out (§ 4). Denning states that Obama frames the story of “who we have been” by connecting his message to the strong American values from our Constitution that speak of life, liberty and justice for all (2008, § 6).

Another way Obama has used language to enroll people in his message is the way he has used himself as a metaphor for change. Contrasting Senator Hillary Clinton's message that she is a “fighter” and will “fight” the Republican Party and special interests

to get the change Americans want, Obama looks at the difference between the present and the future. He is not *fighting* the Republicans or special interests, rather he is enrolling Americans to *create* a new future with him. He is focusing people on what they are *for* rather than what they are *against*. Denning calls this the narrative of “who we are going to be” (2008, ¶ 5). Obama, being a self-identified Black American from a White mother and Kenyan father, is the embodiment of this change to the future. His life up until this point has been full of events in which he is calling for change for the future. He grew up with his White mother and relatives, seeing the class inequalities that still exist among people of all races. He also grew up Black, knowing about racism firsthand, even from within his own family. He therefore knows what it is like to be a person of color in the U.S. and knows what it is like in the White world as well. He has come from a past of knowing racism and other inequalities personally and wants to create a future that begins to resolve inequalities for all citizens (Obama, 1995). Obama as president would be symbolic of this change beginning, a change that he declares the majority of Americans are looking for.

Within this metaphor of Americans wanting change from the past, he describes what past we are trying to get away from. This past is full of divisive, partisan politics; policies and practices that divide us in terms of our race, class, and gender; divisive politics that decides who can get healthcare and who cannot; divisive politics that send jobs overseas rather than supporting American workers. Obama does many things here. He separates himself from Senator Clinton and Senator John McCain, as they represent old, divisive politics. He frames his role, not as a “fighter,” but as a uniter, willing to “bring Democrats and Republicans together to get the job done” (Obama, January 4,

2008). Speaking after winning the South Carolina primary, he does not state that he is against Republicans, but against the “status quo” of politics that:

tells us that we have to think, act and even vote within the confines of the categories that supposedly define us, the assumption that young people are apathetic, the assumption that Republicans won't cross over, the assumption that the wealthy care nothing for the poor and that the poor don't vote, the assumption that African Americans can't support the White candidate, Whites can't support the African American candidate and Blacks and Latinos cannot come together. (January 27th, 2008)

Through his speaking he inspires others to see new possibilities for themselves and the country. Only by emphasizing what we are *for* is this possible. Obama even goes as far as not excluding those that many would expect him, as a Democratic candidate, to be *against*. In his speech after his loss in the New Hampshire primary, he states that, “we can bring doctors and patients, workers and businesses, Democrats and Republicans together, and we can tell the drug and insurance industry that, while they get a seat at the table, they don't get to buy every chair” (January 8, 2008). He is going beyond the politics of boxing certain issues into certain political parties, recognizing that people within every party have a variety of views. Also, in this example of his speaking, he discounts no one, allowing everyone to be a part of the conversation, while not giving some more of a voice than others.

This is in alignment with his promise to unite. And this call to unite, Obama declares, is a call that Americans (“we”) want and are ready for. Over and over Obama speaks about what unites Americans. In his keynote address to the Democratic Convention on July 27, 2004, Obama spoke about the:

belief that we're all connected as one people...that it is the fundamental belief—that I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper—that makes this country

work...that there is not a liberal American and a conservative America—there is the United States of America.

He states repeatedly that the tragedies of September 11th should unite us rather than divide us. He speaks that loving your neighbor as yourself is a universal truth that American values are rooted in. In his speech on race, Obama points out the Constitution's words that "had as its very core the ideal of equal citizenship under the law; a Constitution that promised its people liberty, and justice, and a union that could and should be perfected over time" (March 18, 2008). He reminds and emphasizes to Americans the values of justice and unity that this country was founded upon. These are values that all Americans can relate to and therefore feel enrolled in when Obama declares their current applicability and importance. By stating that he wants to join the country in moving from divisive politics to the politics of unity that this country holds dear, Obama is calling people to a higher truth that many identify with.

Within this call to unity and his use of "we," Obama emphasizes that it is the people that want and are making the change, not him. By giving ownership to the voters, he is again reminding citizens of the American value of democracy while also encouraging involvement and responsibility in the voting process. In an interview with ABC News Anchor Terry Moran after making his speech on race, Obama emphasizes his commitment to the change he wants in the U.S. by saying that, "I've always believed that this campaign couldn't just be about me, my ambitions, winning a nomination, that the process itself had to reflect the changes I say I'm going to bring about when I'm president" (March 19, 2008). He separates himself from other by politicians by living the change he wants to see. He presents himself as a vehicle for the American people to get

the change they want, not as someone that is the sole creator of the change. He speaks that he wants something bigger than winning the presidential nomination, he wants Americans to remember and begin living by the values of equality and justice.

Obama spoke from this place when making his speech on race on March 18, 2008. He began the speech by reminding Americans that he believes in solving the country's problems together. He does not say that Democrats will solve the problems or that people of a particular race will solve the problems, but that we all must together solve America's problems. He then states that he knows that all Americans want a better future for their children and that "this belief comes from my unyielding faith in the decency and generosity of the American people" (March 18, 2008). He points out that he is an embodiment of this belief, being that a man of his background could nowhere else in the world be running for president. He then eloquently speaks about the dirty truths of racism in this country, all within a larger frame of oneness and unity. In alignment with this, he does not disown Reverend Wright as a friend. He instead uses the situation of Wright's seemingly "anti-American" or "anti-White" words to point out the contradictions within the African American community. These contradictions include an anger that shouldn't be ignored by Whites and shouldn't be used counterproductively by Blacks. These contradictions also include a group of people that still suffer from discrimination on a daily basis and yet also love their country. He is showing Whites in America a part of the Black experience that they are naïve to, while holding a larger vision than blame for the future. Also, by condemning Wright's words but not Wright himself, Obama shows his compassion for human hypocrisy and contradiction. He sees both good and bad in Wright, as he does the CEO's of drug companies. He is pointing

out that imperfection is human and does not discredit the entire individual (Obama, March 18, 2008). This stands in stark contrast to partisan politics that condemns any misspeaking or loves to point out contradictions as symbolic of people not knowing what they stand for. It is a compassionate stance that fits his message of coming together as American people.

He also spoke unity in this speech by acknowledging the sense of injustice poor Whites must also feel when faced with things such as affirmative action for Blacks without seeing their White skin color giving them much of an advantage. He speaks of unity by saying that American society is not static, that moving beyond racism is possible and that Americans want that change, as they want other changes that promote equality and justice. As part of this move for change, he challenges Whites not to ignore but to address the continued discrimination that “will ultimately help all of America prosper” and challenges Blacks to:

embrace the burdens of our past without becoming victims of our past...while continuing to insist on a full measure of justice in every aspect of American life...and binding our particular grievances...to the larger aspirations of all Americans. (March 18, 2008)

He places responsibility on both Whites and Blacks to create the change he declares Americans want to happen. He then frames this in his metaphor of past versus future: “we can see the racial conversation as a way to divide us, or we can see the way it is being used as an avenue for other candidates to distract Americans from what they truly want, change through unity” (Obama, March 18, 2008).

Barack Obama is a current figure in U.S. politics that is using language to frame new possibilities for our country. To create new possibilities, it is important to create a

“story” of American life that is different from the dominant story of today. Obama skillfully does this by tapping into longstanding American values of equality and justice to create a story for the future that embodies these values. He then uses skillful narrative to declare that the majority of Americans, no matter what party they belong to, what economic status they hold or what race they identify with, want this shift to a more unified nation. It is not Obama by himself that wants or will create this change, rather “we” as Americans want and will create this change. Obama not only speaks and lives this, but his success in the primary race, acts as proof of its truth.

In this chapter, we have seen how three different individuals speak about justice in various ways through oneness, interbeing, inclusivity, and unity. Thich Nhat Hanh’s words come from a rich background of Buddhist practice and meditation. Growing up outside of the U.S., he was distant from the American language and culture of opposition and violence as the way to create large change. He has been able to bring his message of peaceful presence and mindfulness to the U.S. as a way to move beyond injustice. His popularity shows the hunger many have for this message. Sharif Abdullah, growing up in Camden, NJ, was not able to escape a childhood of knowing America’s violent ways of handling injustice. He recognizes that fighting to change the unjust systems in the U.S. will only continue the cycle of violence that is so prevalent here. He therefore encourages Americans to begin living differently, from a place of inclusivity, creating our own communities that will eventually cause the dominant oppositional way of life to crumble. Barack Obama, also born knowing the oppositional way many Americans try to make change, has begun a new narrative within U.S. politics. His message of unity taps into the American values that many of us hold dear. His narrative is holding for us the

possibility that great change can occur without a fight, by Americans coming together and living what our Constitution states this country is all about.

These men are pointed out as examples of ways to use language and framing to narrate what one is *for*, what one's values *are*, in order to create change. The final chapter will look at racial justice work specifically. I will examine the common values held by those doing diversity work, multicultural education work and antiracism work. I will then use the work of many of the individuals already discussed in this thesis to create commitments to hold when framing and speaking about racial justice issues. These will be commitments that describe what the movement is for, not against. They will come from a place of the movement's core values, not from a place of opposition, and will point to new possibilities. They will point to frames and narratives that will create change just by being spoken.

CHAPTER 6

SPEAKING OUR VALUES IN RACIAL JUSTICE WORK

Up to this point, we have examined how the framing of social justice movements is most often studied, explored the different way of looking at framing set by George Lakoff and others, and asserted that a metaphor we have in this country is that creating large, long-lasting social change is a fight. We have seen how even those that are proponents of non-violence can fall into the trap of this metaphor, as well as looked at examples of people living from a different set of values and beliefs and how they then frame their social justice work. In the last chapter, we saw how Barack Obama is attempting to have one foot in the world of mainstream U.S. culture while also saying there is a new way to talk about change. Sharif Abdullah does this by asserting that we should begin building communities outside of mainstream U.S. culture that are born of the values of interconnection and inclusivity. Barack Obama talks about inclusivity in a different way, seeking to appeal to all Americans. He does this by setting up opposition, but in a unique way that unites all Americans in creating a better future, in opposition to the past of divisiveness. While in opposition to the past, he is speaking outside of the conversation that we must fight to create great social change, unlike Senator Clinton, who prides herself on being a “fighter.” While Obama is working with this dilemma in U.S. politics, my work in this thesis is to think about this dilemma in relation to racial justice. What are different ways of framing racial justice work that step outside of opposition and

speaking about change that can be created without a fight? After all, we have seen in Chapter III that speaking of a change in a nonoppositional frame that reflects our deep values is already creating change. In this chapter, we will examine the ideas and deep values of today's racial justice work. We will then create frames that reflect these values using the help of the individuals already cited in this paper. I declare that if we come from a place of acceptance and nonopposition to reality, consistently use new frames that come from our deep values about racial justice, and encourage others to use the new frames, there will be a shift in the racial justice work of today that will be in truer alignment with peaceful change.

Current Frames Used in Racial Justice Work

So how are racism and racial justice being framed today? To give a little background, affirmative action began to be implemented in the 1960s to mid-1970s and had a large impact on education. Courses were redesigned to fit the increasingly multicultural college campuses. However, by the 1980s attacks on affirmative action as well as linguistic and civil rights caused curricula to take a watered down approach, less intimidating to the White majority, that reflected the political and economic *status quo* of the time. Multiculturalism became diversity and the emphasis was placed on different cultures' food, dance and music rather than on critiques of power. Today in schools, with increasing value placed on standardization of curriculum, teachers have less autonomy in how they bring diversity, multiculturalism or antiracism into the classroom (Katz & O'Leary, 2002). The three frames mentioned above, diversity, multiculturalism and antiracism/White privilege are the most common frames seen today in regard to racism in the U.S.

Diversity

Diversity is a word seen often used in documents of organizations and schools, especially colleges and universities, to call attention to the commitment to a spectrum of ways of being in a multicultural setting (Andersen, 1999). At one end of the spectrum, diversity is used to point out that the setting is diverse and to celebrate that through things such as having “diversity awareness programs” or “diversity week” in an organization, with Chinese food and music one day and Mexican food and music the next. Sara Ahmed (2006), citing Deem and Ozga (1977), states “the notion of diversity invokes the existence of difference and variety without any necessary commitment to action or redistributive justice” (p. 120). The word diversity does not evoke histories of struggle and therefore can be used to present a diverse community as a “happy place” through celebration of difference (Ahmed, 2006, p. 121). However, because of this, use of the word/frame diversity can be helpful in that it is appealing. An organization with a group of employees that are committed to more serious racial justice work may use this word to begin the organization on a process of self-examination. For instance, beginning to use the frame diversity with the frame of equality, could call the organization to critiques of power as well as celebration of difference. Diversity as a frame alone though, seems to often be used in a way that covers and ignores inequalities and power differences within an organization by painting a pleasant picture of celebration (Ahmed, 2006).

Bell and Hartmann (2007) conducted a study about the word diversity. Interviews were conducted to explore popular conceptions of the word as well as questions about how diversity related to equality and justice. They found that, while most Americans they interviewed considered diversity to be a positive attribute of the country, further

questioning revealed that the word was deeply racialized. Bell and Hartmann (2007) citing Bonilla-Silva (2003) state that “Americans have adopted colorblind ways of talking about race because colorblindness fits comfortably within core liberal-individualistic ideals” (p. 905). Bell and Hartmann (2007) go on to say that this kind of discourse “has the ironic, if by now familiar effect of reinforcing and legitimating the racial status quo and its associated inequalities” (p. 905). Therefore by using the frame of diversity, an organization can look as if differences are seen as valuable, while it really serves to ignore inequalities and thereby keep them in place. Also, because diversity can mean differences in so many ways other than race, it downplays racial discrimination. In this way people, (mainly Whites), can speak about diversity, a frame that is highly racialized, and yet never mention race or have to focus on it within their organizations. Lastly, Bell and Hartmann (2007) point out that the frame of diversity upholds White normativity by its lack of definitional specificity. Diversity connotes difference and therefore one must ask, “different from what?” The answer in most contexts in the U.S. where this word is used, is different from the dominant White norm. Diversity Celebration weeks therefore serve to “eroticize, criticize, trivialize, and compartmentalize the cultural objects of people of color as *contributions* to the enrichment of a presumably neutral ‘us’” (Bell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 909).

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is another well-used frame in current racial discourse. It is most often associated with higher education’s commitment to being more inclusive in their curricula of diverse groups’ experiences (Andersen, 1999). James A. Banks (2007), a leading proponent of multicultural education states that this frame is used to describe, “a

wide variety of programs and practices related to educational equity, women, ethnic groups, language minorities, low-income groups, and people with disabilities” (p. 7). Banks (2007) recognizes that most teachers primarily relate multicultural education to ethnic, racial and cultural groups, possibly because of the way the word *culture* is often racialized in the U.S. This can lead math and science teachers to not see how multicultural education relates to them, relegating curriculum change to subjects such as social studies and literature. The many ways that multicultural education can be implemented is explained by Christine Sleeter (1992) to be grouped into five views. One approach, “Teaching the Exceptional and Culturally Different” attempts to help students of color, low-income students, and/or special education students assimilate in mainstream society. The “Human Relations” approach aims to strengthen each student’s self-concept and foster positive relationships between members of diverse groups in the classroom. The “Single-Group Studies” approach raises consciousness about a specific group, such as women’s studies, disability studies, etc., through curriculum. The “Multicultural” approach as Sleeter explains it, promotes equality and cultural pluralism throughout the entire education process. The last approach Sleeter lists under the larger umbrella of multicultural education, and the approach that she calls educators to use, is the “Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist” approach. This approach builds on the Single-Group Studies approach and the Multicultural approach and also teaches students to “analyze inequality and oppression in society and help them develop skills for social action” (Sleeter, 1992, p. 7).

Banks (2007) calls educators to consider five factors when implementing multicultural education: “(1) content integration, (2) the knowledge construction process,

(3) prejudice reduction, (4) an equity pedagogy, and (5) an empowering school culture and social structure” (p. 20). Sleeter’s preferred approach goes beyond Banks, in that it emphasizes the importance of social action within and outside of school systems. While Banks calls multicultural education to be antiracist at its core, Miller and Garran (2008) see the frame of *multicultural* as being distinct from *antiracist*. They define a multicultural organization as one that, “values all consumers and employees while responding to the varying cultures that are part of the human mosaic,” while an anti-racist organization “goes beyond this to examine power and inequities in privilege in addition to building cultural responsiveness and competency” (p. 210). Others, such as Tony Platt (2002), assert that the multicultural frame is now being used much in the way *diversity* is, to serve as a smokescreen for deeper inequalities such as institutionalized racism. He states that multiculturalism is also used to focus on celebrating differences and maintain the status quo rather than dismantle inequalities (Katz & O’Leary, 2002). Platt (2002) also expresses that multicultural education has in many ways become an “apology for inequality and segregation” (p. 41). He explains this by pointing out that most university/college students are required to take one course on multiculturalism, rather than it being infiltrated throughout all curricula as Banks and Sleeter call educators to do. Platt (2002) also asserts that these multicultural classes are oversimplified, not teaching about the deep and important intersections of race, class and gender. He states that a shift has occurred in multicultural literature from literature that focused on racism to literature that now focuses more on the social and cultural contributions of the victims of racism to the larger society, much like the diversity frame. Platt (2002) attributes this shift to the

growing importance of “political correctness” to liberal Whites and the separation of multicultural education from radical politics.

Christine Sleeter and Anita Perna Bohn (2001) also attribute this shift to state education standards and assessments. They express that universal standards are oppressive in that they assume that all students have an equal opportunity to learn. Even schools that have created standards that embrace multicultural education can be limiting. As stated above, multicultural education can be defined in various ways and therefore standards can use the frame of multicultural education to merely celebrate difference rather than investigate and dismantle racial and cultural power differences within school systems (Sleeter & Bohn, 2001).

Therefore the frame of multiculturalism is ambiguous at best. In many respects, it has become in recent years a frame used much like *diversity*. Andersen (1999) asserts that both *multiculturalism* and *diversity* have begun to, “blunt the imagination, since when they are associated only with culture, they ignore issues of justice, power, and equality” (p. 15). There are still proponents of multicultural education, such as Christine Clark (2002), that work to lay out instructions for implementing multicultural education that includes work to dismantle inequality, believing that it is not being done because educators don’t know how. Others have turned to a different frame to push educators and organizations to do things differently. This frame is antiracism.

Antiracism and White Privilege

Antiracism is used as a frame to stress the importance of engaging in direct action against racism within settings and society as a whole, in addition to the more culturally competent additive curricular approaches often connected with multiculturalism.

Gillborn (1995) points out that the strength of this model is that it places emphasis on power difference and inequality related to power. However, Gillborn (1995) warns that it is important that antiracism discourse not adopt a simplified “zero-sum notion of power as a commodity” (p. 6). This may then blind us to more subtle forms of power that arise from intersections of race with other identity factors. If simplified, one runs the risk of reinforcing unequal power dynamics. Gillborn (1995) points out the Burnage report, a report put out after a race-based murder at Burnage High School in Manchester, England, that warns that the antiracism frame can lead to an essentialist and reductive approach to race and ethnicity, not seeing the importance of the intersections race has with class, gender and age for example. Gillborn also expresses that in practice, antiracism work has often embodied a Black/White worldview rather than equally considering the impact of racism on all races and ethnicities. This Black/White worldview can also undermine the importance of other factors such those that intersect with race. Macdonald et al., (1989) is quoted by Gillborn (1995), stating that the Black/White polarization that is sometimes created within the frame of antiracism:

has reinforced the guilt of many well-meaning Whites and paralyzed them when any issue of race arises... It has taught others to bury their racism without in any way changing their attitude... this simple model assumes that there is uniform access to power by all Whites, and a uniform denial of access and power to all Blacks (p. 5).

Gillborn (1995) therefore challenges those working within an antiracism framework to view race and ethnicity to be of critical importance while also holding that their, “precise form and interaction with other variables is uncertain, open to change” (p. 9). He calls us to keep a view of “plasticity” when thinking of race, ethnicity and racism (Gillborn, 1995, p. 9). He also challenges those working against racism to reject the simplified

version of the criminal/victim stereotype of the White/minority dynamic. This is, he says, a racist view in that it maintains a fiction about the “goodness” of minority groups, therefore treating them as if they were not subject to the same depth and variation as Whites (Gillborn, 1995, p. 11).

While Gillborn warns antiracism workers of the way the frame can be used to oversimplify and therefore uphold racist structures that it is attempting to dismantle, George J. Sefa Dei explains what antiracism work would look like at its best. Dei (1996) defines antiracism as:

an action-oriented strategy for institutional systemic change that addresses racism and other interlocking systems of social oppression. It is a critical discourse of race and racism in society that challenges the continuance of racializing social groups for differential and unequal treatment. Antiracism explicitly names the issues of race and social difference as issues of power and equity, rather than as matters of cultural and ethnic variety. (p. 249)

This definition acknowledges that race does interlock with other systems and identities of social oppression. Antiracism as Dei understands it, then, addresses these interlocking systems and does not simplify to purely racial power dynamics. Dei (1996) also understands antiracism to be overtly politicized and states that one cannot be an antiracism theorist without also practicing antiracism. If one is White, then this practice inevitably means examining one’s own White power and privilege, and then working to balance the power structures that keep Whites privileged. White privilege then, is another frame that is closely tied to antiracism.

Peggy McIntosh (2005) is often cited when talking about White privilege, for her work, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” McIntosh (2005) openly acknowledges of all of the ways she has noticed her own White privilege and states that

with this acknowledgment comes accountability. She explains what is meant by the frame *White privilege* when she differentiates privilege earned or begotten by luck to privilege that “simply confers dominance because of one’s race or sex” (McIntosh, 2005, p. 112). Acknowledging White privilege then means acknowledging that all a White person’s achievements are not only due to earning them, but also due to the privileges that being White affords. For example, Robert Jensen (2005) speaks of White privilege in terms of affirmative action. He asserts that Whites that disapprove of affirmative action because it privileges people of color do not realize that affirmative action for Whites is always in place. Whites engaged in antiracism must constantly consider the impact their skin color has on their lives. It is only through this consistent awareness that racism in all its facets can be dismantled.

White privilege as a frame may encounter problems that Gillborn warned of with the use of antiracism. If White privilege work is simplified to a White/privileged, people of color/underprivileged dynamic without looking at the intersection of race with other factors of power, it too could uphold racist ideas without realizing it. Therefore, for the frame to be the most effective, it may be useful to hold Gillborn’s idea of plasticity in regard to identity.

After looking at the frames of diversity, multiculturalism, antiracism and White privilege, we see that they all receive criticism and all have their strengths. I wish to now look at the ideas and values that these frames hold in common and that I believe are the core values of most people that engage in racial justice work.

The Values These Frames Point To

A value the diversity frame accentuates is the celebration of differences. This is an American value, in that we are a country made up of more races/ethnicities than any other country in the world. Though the U.S. has a long history of treating non-Whites in racist, unequal ways, in general Americans are proud of the diversity of the country. Bell and Hartman's (2007) study on the word diversity reflects this, as well as Obama speaking this value to carry a message of unity. The value of celebrating our differences is criticized when it is used within the context of seeking to ignore or minimize power differences in society, or when it is comparing targeted groups to groups of power. However, it is important to see it as one of the many values of racial justice work.

Because multiculturalism and antiracism share many of the same values depending who is speaking about them, I will talk about their values together. Multiculturalism, focused more on education, places value in creating curriculum that does not favor one culture over the other. Others values, then, are racial equality in the way curriculum is taught, consciousness raising about different cultural groups as part of the educational experience, fostering positive relationships between students of different cultural groups, working to eliminate racial and cultural inequalities in how the school recruits students, and creating a student and faculty body that not only works to equalize power differences within itself, but also works to dismantle racism in the society at large. Similarly, antiracism holds values of examining power and inequalities in privilege in all parts of society, from the level of individual interactions to the institutional, systemic level. Another value in antiracism is engaging in direct action against racism. This includes knowing strategies when faced with racism in individual interactions or within

groups where one group is exercising power over another group based on their race, as well as strategies for institutional, systemic change. I assert that these “antiracist” actions can still be engaged in while working within a frame that is outside of opposition. Gillborn (1995) would emphasize the value of plasticity as well when doing racial justice work, always being cognizant of the intersections of racial oppression with other forms of oppression, being careful not to oversimplify. Also, an understood value that people working for racial justice share is the value that every person in this country deserves an equal opportunity to good education, employment with adequate wages, adequate housing, proper nutrition and healthcare.

Some other values that I also assert are important values to hold while doing racial justice work come from the prominent figures we have explored together in this thesis. Gandhi spoke that seeing the Truth in the opponent gives them the courage to change. Because I am speaking about the importance of being outside of the conversation of opposition, I will not say “opponent.” Rather, I will say seeing the Truth in those you disagree with gives them the courage to change. King spoke something similar, preaching to see everyone as a child of God. We treat others with respect because of this, not because we agree with them or like them. Combining these ideas, the value of practicing having respect and love for others, no matter who they are, is in alignment with racial justice work. Being in judgment of a blatantly racist White person creates suffering and separation in the world just as being in judgment of a person of color does.

King and Gandhi also spoke often about service to one’s community, this being related to our interconnection. What affects one affects the whole. This is another

important value, the value of serving the community to bring the world as a whole more peace. Hand in hand with this is the practice of loving and having grace for oneself.

King, Nhat Hanh, and Abdullah state that loving oneself is a very important part of loving others. How can we be in conversation with others that we disagree with, if we are not practicing loving the parts of ourselves we don't agree with? Nhat Hanh calls us to love the parts of ourselves we judge. He states that because all is interconnected, this is bringing peace to the world. I also believe that this helps us to love others we are angry with or in judgment of.

A value pointed out by Abdullah is the bringing together of different voices to create new possibilities. Like Abdullah, I believe that when people of diverse backgrounds are brought together to discuss racial justice, ideas spring up that wouldn't otherwise. To do this well, we must be willing to be in conversation with people that have different belief systems. Practicing not being in opposition to others while engaged in racial justice work makes it possible to see these conversations as helpful.

A value held by all of these men is that we are all in this together. Whether it is because we are all connected by or through God or the cosmic universe, we all affect each other. Quantum physics is proving this on a scientific level now. Therefore if we are opposing others, we are in some way opposing ourselves. We are in separate bodies *and* we are intimately connected in ways we are only beginning to understand. Knowing this helps us to remember to see the larger picture and to work for the good of the whole in racial justice work. We should work for win-win solutions not compromises.

Another value that all four men agree with is that creating peaceful change is both an inner and outer work. This is a value that I feel is not now emphasized in racial justice

work, and is of high importance. Serving the community and practicing a peaceful presence go hand in hand. The inner work allows us to serve without burning out or seeing opposition as the only option. The outer work allows us to connect with others and create new possibilities for change. Inner work can look different for everyone. For Gandhi, Nhat Hanh, King and Abdullah, this work is spiritual work. I'm not sure that it has to be spiritual in nature, though it certainly can be. We have seen the power of values that are grounded in deep spiritual belief from these men. Inner work can also look like non-spiritual meditation, spending time in nature or with your children, or a creating of daily practices that bring one to a centered place. Only we know what practices nurture us and bring a sense of well-being and calm. It is important to experiment and discover these practices because, as Nhat Hanh teaches, this inner work of bringing peace to ourselves creates more peace around us.

A practice that is primarily inner work that I assert is a vital practice for racial justice work is practicing not being in opposition with what is. To speak from a place that is not in opposition, it is most powerful to come from a value of acceptance of reality rather than being opposed to reality. Opposing something causes that thing to be resistant. It also sets up the dynamic that needs what is being opposed to exist. It is a law of nature. Antiracism work cannot exist without racism. Therefore, though those doing antiracism work have the best of intentions to dismantle and eliminate racism, the work framed and carried out in a belief of opposition as a way to create change, only works in a world with racism. Howard Ross, of the Cook Ross consulting firm which does nationally recognized diversity consulting, is presently working on a book that addresses this. He calls the oppositional conversations, "circular conversations of contention"

(Ross, personal communication, March 10, 2008). He asserts that if we stay in this circular conversation, we are keeping in place the inequalities we are trying to dismantle. As Lakoff (2004) states, “words draw you into a worldview” (p. 4). I am not suggesting that we should state that racism doesn’t exist or ignore it. Instead, we take on the inner practice of accepting reality. Racism exists *and* I will work to create a world that is racially just. We can state this and choose to have conversations about racial justice that do not include what we are fighting or are against. By accepting reality rather than opposing or resisting it, we get out of the oppositional conversation that must include racism and inequality to exist. Interestingly “nonopposition” is oppositional in nature, meaning not being oppositional. I have been using it to make my point of not being in opposition easier to understand. A better way to say it may be to say, “outside of the oppositional conversation.” For I do not mean be against oppositional language, rather I mean to create new frames and a new conversation that exists outside the language of polarities and points to what we are for, rather than what we are against.

Lakoff and Love speak of this as well. Now that we’ve discussed the important values for racial justice work, let’s turn to their ideas and use them to create new ways to frame racial justice and design commitments that reflect these frames. Stories and narratives can then easily be formed from these frames and their commitments. Again, stories are the world we create with our words that our frames are the heading for. When we use frames and the stories that explain the values of the frames enough, the ideas will become common sense and change towards justice and peace is happening.

Steps To Creating New Frames

Lakoff (2004) lays out in his book, *Don't Think of an Elephant*, eleven steps for progressives when thinking about new frame creation. Looking at them will be helpful in taking the values listed above and creating powerful frames. His first step is, “recognize what conservatives have done right and where progressives have missed the boat” (p. 33). Here Lakoff is emphasizing that conservatives have created frames that tap into American values and are not in opposition to progressive’s frames. On the other hand, progressives have chosen frames that are in reaction to the conservative frames, resulting in only strengthening the conservative frames in people’s minds. We can apply this to framing racial justice work by not using frames that are defensive in nature or reflect being against something rather than the values we are for. Antiracism is an oppositional word that, while it accentuates that the work holds a value of being against racism, it does not state what values it is for. What does a racist-free society look like? It is the values of power equalities and equal opportunities that should be emphasized.

Lakoff’s (2004) second step is, “remember, ‘Don’t think of an elephant’” (p. 33). Here he is emphasizing that using the language of what you wish to change only reinforces it. By using Lakoff’s logic and study of the brain, we can say that using the frame of antiracism actually serves to reinforce the story of racism, therefore being counterproductive to what antiracists are seeking to accomplish. Similarly, White privilege as a frame may serve to do the same thing, reinforcing that Whites are privileged in society. While it is much of the point of White privilege work to bring this privilege into consciousness, using the frame may serve to keep White privilege in place as well because the frame doesn’t speak of what we want the future to look like.

The third step Lakoff (2004) lays out for progressives is, “the truth alone will not set you free” (p. 33). Lakoff explains that merely laying out the facts of inequalities in the U.S. isn’t enough to sway people to your way of seeing things. You must effectively frame your values in a way that taps into values that others have. I feel that most Americans would state that they hold a deep value of equal treatment and opportunity for all American citizens, no matter their race and ethnicity. Frames like antiracism, because of its oppositional nature, may cause many (especially White Americans who are often the targeted group that should be making equality possible) to be defensive in the face of antiracism work. This can look many ways, such as Whites claiming that racism doesn’t exist, groups of color claiming that their group is more or less oppressed than others, Whites ignoring racism and their racial privilege, and people of all races and ethnicities feeling powerless, guilty, shameful and paralyzed. It is not a far jump to go from being against racism to being against racists. This creates a dynamic of ostracizing people rather than enrolling them in acting on some of their deep values of equality.

Lakoff’s (2004) fourth step is, “you need to speak from your moral perspective at all times” (p. 33). Along with this he states, “drop the language of policy wonks” (p. 33). It is important when framing racial justice values to not choose frames that are constructed to appeal to certain groups or interests, and that do not speak from the deep values of racial justice. For example, if working with a particular racial group on racial justice work, it would be important to not collude with ideas of that group being more or less advantaged or oppressed than another group. This leads to hierarchical and oppositional thinking that are stepping away from our values.

The fifth step for progressives is, “understand where conservatives are coming from” (Lakoff, 2004, p. 33). This can be easily translated to racial justice framing as well. We must know why certain people do not feel connected to or engaged in working towards a more racially just future. Once this knowledge is obtained, we can think of compassionate, enrolling ways to speak to these people that will tap into the values that are shared with the values of racial justice. Being against people that think differently will only serve to make them more resistant to seeing our point of view or seeing what we have in common.

The sixth step is, “think strategically, across issue areas: think in terms of large moral goals, not in terms of programs for their own sake” (Lakoff, 2004, p. 33). I like to think of this step as meaning always keeping the larger picture in mind. A racial justice group that wants to advertise and sends out large amounts of paper products for mailing purposes has lost sight of how environmental damage most often affects oppressed groups most dramatically. When this is remembered, it is then easier to join with other groups that share similar values but may seem very different on the surface, such as environmental groups and racial justice groups.

Lakoff’s (2004) seventh step for progressives is, “think about the consequences of proposals” (p. 33). Are certain goals that seem good for the short term going to be good in the long term? Though racial justice work can seem pressing, it is important to create goals that are in alignment with a long-term vision.

The eighth step is, “remember that voters vote their identity and their values, which need not coincide with their self-interest” (Lakoff, 2004, p. 33). This is good news when looking at White privilege. If racial justice frames and language tap into Whites’

morality and values in a powerful way, they will act in ways that are not in their immediate individual best interest. This is a much more powerful way to enroll those in power than shaming groups into action or creating mandatory programs and laws.

Lakoff's ninth step is to "unite! And cooperate!" (2004, p. 33). Again, working from the values and morality of racial justice, we have much more in common with other groups also working for change based on equality. Framing racial justice outside of the conversation of opposition makes it easier to build bridges to other causes and get more support. Specific values may differ among groups, but if you are working towards overarching visions based in your most deeply held values, you will find many shared values across groups.

The tenth step is to "be proactive, not reactive. Play offense, not defense: practice reframing, every day, on every issue. Don't just say what you believe. Use your frames, not their frames. Use them because they are the values you believe in" (Lakoff, 2004, p. 34). Lakoff's emphasis of practice is very important here. Because oppositional language and ways of seeing the world is so common in the U.S, it will take practice to speak outside of opposition. Enroll those around to practice with you. Also, when speaking with someone that uses different frames, say that of antiracism, be in dialogue with them but make sure to stay rooted in the frames of your deep values. Don't get stuck in the trap of getting in to the conversation of opposition to prove your point.

Lakoff's (2004) last step for progressives is to, "speak to the progressive base in order to activate the nurturant model of 'swing voters.' Don't move to the right" (p. 34). In racial justice work, this may translate as not sacrificing your values to enroll people in

your program, idea, etc. Rather use your deep values to relate to those you wish to enroll in a way that allows them to see how their values are linked to yours.

Let's also look more closely at Barbara Love's work, because she is one of the few, if only, people in the social justice field focusing on new ways to frame and story the conversation. Love (personal communication, February 11, 2008) asserts that we create what we focus the most on. This is much like Lakoff's view that an oppositional frame still reinforces that frame. Therefore if we focus on racism in racial justice work, we will create more of it. Love calls herself a liberation worker for this reason. She has begun speaking only about what she is for, rather than what she is against. In an interview, when I asked Barbara Love (personal communication, February 11, 2008) what she thought of the word "antiracism", she responded:

It works for many people. I don't condemn or criticize them, but I'm also aware that what you're tied to is what you're tied to- emotionally, psychologically, intellectually, etcetera. They're tied to antiracism that doesn't necessarily give you the space to think about liberation.

When you are in the conversation of opposition and only seeing what forces you are fighting or are against, it is much harder to see new possibilities.

In order to speak and work for something, it is important to be able to describe what this something is. Love and her colleagues (2007) have created a Critical Liberation Theory which defines liberation and liberation praxis, as well as lays out characteristics of liberation workers. This enables those that wish to do liberation work to have something to focus on that is different from the easily found focus of protest. The frame of liberation is one that can easily be used when working for racial justice. I believe *racial justice* is also a frame that comes from the values spoken about above that

is specific to creating a racially just world. As Barbara Love has done with her Critical Liberation Theory, I will attempt in this thesis to do something similar that specifically addresses racial justice work. I am one person with only one person's ideas. Therefore, I consider this a beginning and am excited for this thesis to be shared so that others can be in partnership to co-create this vision with me.

Speaking for a Racially Just World

First it is important to define what I mean by racial justice. I have chosen this frame for a few reasons. One is that it inherently speaks what is desired, rather than what it opposes, such as the frame "antiracism." Secondly, it infers that racism exists. Because other words such as diversity and multiculturalism have been used in many respects to deny the existence of racism, it seems important to connote race in the frame. Thirdly, the word "just" in the frame acknowledges the reality that there are racial inequalities. This frame serves to recognize this reality without speaking *against* it. My definition of racial justice therefore is this: the creation of a society where all people, regardless of race or ethnicity, have the equal opportunity to engage in high-quality education, safe employment with adequate wages, adequate housing, proper nutrition, and good health care, as well as have equal access to resources that promote each person's unique gifts and fullest potential.

We have spoken above about the values of racial justice. Below, I have taken these values and framed them as commitments of one that wishes to create racial justice. These commitments include:

- A commitment to the celebration of racial and cultural differences

- A commitment to the creation of school systems that show equity within their curriculum and the way in which it is taught, and that recruit students in an racially equitable manner
- A commitment to consciousness raising about different cultural/ racial groups
- A commitment to foster positive relationships between people of different racial and/or cultural groups
- A commitment to equalizing racial power differences in our individual relationships, our communities, our organizations and the larger society
- A commitment to plasticity and always acknowledging the intersection of racism with other oppressions
- A commitment to the practice of respecting and loving all people, regardless of their views or belief systems
- A commitment to the practice of acting for the good of the whole, knowing that we are all intimately connected in some way
- A commitment to the inner work of self-love and the outer work of serving our communities
- A commitment to bringing diverse voices together for the purpose of creating new possibilities for change that will benefit all involved
- A commitment to speaking and acting from a place outside of oppositional conversation

- A commitment to engage in the inner and outer practice of accepting reality rather than resisting it
- A commitment to speaking what we are for
- A commitment to creating frames and narratives that reflect our values and the world we wish to see

Seeing values laid out as commitments serves to give guidance and provide clarity to what working towards racial justice looks like. They all take into account Lakoff's steps for effective framing, speaking from a place of our values. In addition, narratives can be created from each of these commitments. For example, the "commitment to bringing diverse voices together for the purpose of creating new possibilities for change that will benefit all involved" can be used as a basis for a narrative if someone approached me and began speaking in judgment about a predominantly White environmental group that was negatively affecting a Black community with their conservation efforts. Rather than colluding in this person's oppositional framework, I could agree with the difficulty that exists and then speak about specific situations in which new possibilities were created when different groups were able to come together and discuss the issue. In this way, I would be speaking from my values and offering new possibilities for a different future reality, rather than staying in the circular conversation of which cause is more important.

Examples of frames that are rooted in the values of racial justice include: "More ideas, more possibilities," "Racially and culturally just schools mean kids that are successfully educated for our diverse world," and "Equality and justice for all humans and beings." As you can see by the examples, many frames can be created depending on

the setting and people involved, and these frames can always come from the values of racial justice work and speak for what we wish to see created.

Summary

This chapter has brought together the ideas about framing presented in this thesis with the values of racial justice work. With the frame of racial justice along with the values and commitments that this frame stems from, we can easily create other frames and narratives that will fit any situation. By getting clear on our values, we can always speak from that place and will be able to avoid the trap of oppositional conversation which often continues the systems of power we wish to dismantle. Because our values include practicing an inner peaceful presence, this way of conducting racial justice work is sustainable and inviting. Through this way of speaking and acting, we connect with others' values and enrolling people in creating a racially just world is much easier than through means of guilt or force. As King stated, by speaking and being this way, we are tapping into the "arc of the universe that bends towards justice" (Chernus, 2004, p. 167). And as Lakoff and others assert, the more we use the frames of racial justice, the more they become common sense. When they are common sense, change has occurred.

Speaking is powerful. As Connelly (1995) often proclaims, "we are always only a conversation away from a new world of possibility" (p. 55). In this thesis, I point to the power of our speaking to create new possibilities in the realm of racial justice. I am hopeful that others will also become passionate about how intimately connected language is to our subconscious' and be motivated to examine their own speaking and begin to speak intentionally. In examining my own speaking as well as listening closely to others speak, it became clear that the metaphor of *change is a fight* is a very prominent one in

our culture. In the course of reading the work of the people cited in this thesis, I have become convinced that speaking from a value system that is not in opposition to reality and that speaks for the change we want to see created, is an exciting and compelling possibility for speaking and engaging in racial justice work. I also declare that engaging in a practice of accepting reality creates peace for ourselves and the world in the moment and sustains us for the racial justice work of the future. From this place of acceptance, effective language outside of the conversation of opposition can come. Through my personal experience of speaking differently and engaging in the practice of not being in opposition to reality, I have noticed that my energy and inspiration for this work has soared. I am highly motivated to continue working for racial justice in the ways I have outlined in this chapter and am excited to enroll others on this journey with me.

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