Towards a Pedagogy of Radical Love

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In 1989, while working in El Salvador with Peace Brigades International (PBI), I was briefly detained and imprisoned. PBI carries out nonviolent accompaniment work, providing unarmed bodyguards to teachers, unionists, students, indigenous leaders, church workers, and activists in all forms in countries where repressive regimes target such people and their organizations for the humanitarian and social justice work they do. At the time I was arrested, I was in a church refugee center, trying to improve safety for the refugees and the valiant Salvadoran church workers running the center. Despite our efforts, the Salvadoran military invaded the building, scattered the refugees, arrested and detained all the staff, and took five PBI workers to the Treasury Police Jail. There I was blindfolded, handcuffed, interrogated, kept standing without food and water, and threatened with rape and mutilation.

There is a long version of this story, but here's the heart of it. I was in a torture center. I knew that's what it was; I had had Salvadoran friends tortured in that prison and I could hear torture around me. While in detention I tried to speak out against the torture but was unable to stop it. Under my blindfold I caught glimpses of people lying broken on the ground. However, when the officials were ready to release me, I refused to leave. I had been imprisoned with Marcela Rodriguez Diaz, a Colombian colleague, and in our unjust world my North American life was being valued more than hers. I refused to leave the jail without her, and was re-imprisoned, staying with her until we could both be released.

Before we were released, an astonishing thing happened. My refusal to leave had confused the guards, who challenged me: "Do you miss us? Do you want us?" with all the sexual innuendo this entailed. I was frightened and I didn't know how to answer. But I had been learning about nonviolence from the Central Americans I was accompanying, and an answer poured out from me. I said, "No, of course I don't want to be here, but you are soldiers, you know what solidarity is. You know that if a comrade is down or fallen in

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battle, you wouldn't leave them, and I can't leave my comrade, not now, not here. You understand."

I don't know what response I thought I would get. After all, I was speaking to torturers. Yet, intuitively—and influenced by the Latin Americans whom I'd been supporting—I had placed the torturers in what George Lakey and Martin Luther King, Jr. before him have called a "dilemma demonstration,"[1] a Catch-22 where there is no "good" way out. Do the torturers agree with me and implicitly acknowledge our joint humanity? Or do they disagree and show themselves to be, even to themselves, inhumane tyrants?[2] They became still, silent. Then, gently, and after a long while, one said, "Yes, we know why you are here." From then on, the most amazing thing kept happening. Guards kept coming, apparently from all around the jail, looking for the two women they had heard about, the "inseparable ones," and responding with respect for love, friendship, and connection.

In that Salvadoran jail, I faced and learned many things. I learned the importance of what I call the "futile gesture": my small, hopeless act of returning to the jail for my friend, combined with the phone calls and messages PBI supporters around the world sent to the Salvadoran government on our behalf, led to our release. I learned that we do get second chances, and that a mistake—allowing myself to get separated from my colleague—can be rectified. I learned, incarnate, King's dilemma demonstration whereby you put your opponent in a no-win situation, and Mahatma Gandhi's conviction that liberating the oppressed also liberates the oppressor. But most important, I learned, embodied, the possibility and the power of connection.

The importance of connection has profoundly influenced both my understanding of how to teach and my practices in the Conflict Resolution Studies program at Menno Simons College (MSC), where I have taught for the last 15 years. Connection is crucial to any form of teaching, I would argue, but especially in peace studies, which seeks to move students and the world towards greater connection and greater compassion. In this article, I

[1] George Lakey, *Powerful Peacemaking: A Strategy for a Living Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1987 [1973]),103. See also Martin Luther King, Jr., "Meet the Press" television interview, n.d., in "A Force More Powerful Part 1: Nashville—We Were Warriors" (www.aforcemorepowerful.org/films/afmp/).

[2] My two-thirds world, white skin privilege gave me space and options not available to all, and not available in the same way for Marcela.

will make some observations on the importance of connection—and love—for teaching both generally and specifically in reference to peace studies, and offer a few remarks on teaching within an Anabaptist institution.

Those Who Went Before

Who were the teachers who inspired us? What made them great? Of course there are disconnected, cynical teachers out there, too many of them. Sometimes I too am one of them. But there are also great ones. In my case, one was Mrs. Stern, my ninth grade Language Arts and Art teacher, who as a rookie in the classroom didn't know where to set the bar. She set it too high and had 14-year-olds reading and reciting Chaucer, Milton, and Shakespeare. She didn't know these things were beyond us; she believed we could do them. And we did! I learned from her that people will rise (or fall) to expectations. In high school there was Mr. Dickens, a South African refugee to Canada, who made me feel that education mattered and had something to do with making a difference in the world. At university there was Professor Arthur Walker-Jones, who trusted us to design our own assignments and gave us the freedom to set our own goals. Three different teachers and three different styles, but they shared one attribute: they loved what they were doing and put that love into action.

Love the Students

George Lakey, the noted peace educator, activist, and author, offers a simple teaching mantra: "Love the students, love the material, love yourself."[3] But what does "love" mean in the educational context? What does it mean to love the students? It takes an act of courage, trust, resilience, and vulnerability on the instructor's part. It can be heart-breaking, because to love is to risk. It can be exhausting; at the end of an academic year I sometimes feel utterly spent, like a marathoner just making it across the finish line, with nothing left to give. It can be challenging: if we give our hearts to our students, we will have theirs, not only this year, but next year and the year after, with the number of people wanting, needing, and deserving our time growing exponentially. And it can be very rewarding.

[3] George Lakey, "Training for Social Action Trainers" workshop, Philadelphia, December 1990.

Students in peace studies programs are deeply aware that they are living in a world which is falling apart, where we remove mountain tops—literally blow them off—to get energy. This is a world where the addiction to oil leads to slate fracking and the devastation of the tar sands. All my generation had to worry about when growing up was nuclear war! Now, we have a world of melting polar ice caps, pending global economic and environmental collapse, and peak oil. The issues are overwhelming, and students drawn to peace studies realize to a large extent that the world is at risk. At the same time, they and other young people are not getting increased connection and support in our culture. Instead, they are becoming increasingly isolated, hooked into computers and videogames. The soldiers in the story with which I began this paper were also lost in detachment, prisoners in their own jail, isolated in horror. In a smaller way, students get lost in the isolation of technology and consumerism, afraid of the horrors that surround us all. It makes them easy to teach, because they are longing to be attached, cared about, and loved. I too benefit from this dynamic, since fracking, global warming, and peak oil terrify me too. The students support, motivate, and inspire me, and I'm glad to be in this world with them.

It is becoming clear that to learn at their best, students must have their hearts engaged. Gordon Neufeld, the Canadian developmental psychologist, promotes an attachment-based development model. Children need to feel a strong connection to a mature caregiver in order to thrive and grow.[4] At a lecture several years ago, Neufeld described a study that examined the impact of early reading on children.[5] Brain scans showed that reading to the children caused a significant, measurable increase in activity in the brain's language centers. Researchers subsequently concluded that children's brain development could be stimulated by reading to them from an early age. However, to their consternation, subsequent studies failed to show the same surge in brain activity. Trying to explain this difference, they realized one variable had changed: in the first study, each child was sitting on the mother's lap, whereas in the later studies they were being read to by research assistants. Neufeld concludes it was not that the children were being read to

[4] See Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Mate, *Hold on to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2006).

[5] Gordon Neufeld, public lecture, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2005.

at a young age that made the difference. It was that they were being read to by someone who loved them and whom they loved. It was their attachment to the beloved reader that opened them to learning.

I contend that our students will do best—as learners, as people—if their hearts are engaged. It is perhaps even more crucial, in that the world desperately needs them to have engaged hearts because only then can they act in the peacemaking ways that are required. School shootings, mass attacks, war—all these ultimate acts of alienation demand detachment, a separation of self from other. Increasingly, war itself is detachment: fighting unseen foes, firing high-tech missiles from rooms in North America on targets in another continent, and employing drone strikes and robots. If detachment enables one to kill, then attachment is surely the antidote. If acts of violence require detachment from the victim and ultimately from the self, then the way out of this conundrum is through connection. What we need is for students to engage their hearts. But they will not and cannot do so unless we engage ours with theirs. This is at the core of peace education. In our courses and in our pedagogy,[6] we must model attachment, connection, and love, and support students to be loving in their journeys into the world.

Love and Peace Education

What I am arguing is distinctly counter-cultural. Universities are bastions of intellect and rational thought. Teaching through the power of connection is probably slightly disconcerting to some administrators; it is unnerving to some students. But peace education instructors are accustomed to creating alternative cultures and upending oppressive ones. We, of all people, should know that unsettling the status quo opens opportunities, as my unsettling of the soldiers in the Salvadoran jail opened the opportunity for Marcela's freedom. We, of all people, should be able to move past a culture that tells us repeatedly *not* to love the students and warns us that getting "too close" means losing perspective and becoming biased.[7] Implicitly we are told—through big classes and institutional red tape—not to love. Explicitly we

[6] Here, and throughout this article, I use "pedagogy" while a more accurate term would be "andragogy." Unfortunately, "andragogy" is so little known as to be problematic.

[7] It's an interesting reflection on our culture that we are warned about getting "too close" but don't have similar language or directives for being "not close enough."

receive directives; even elementary teachers are told, "Don't hug."

Several years ago, the University of Winnipeg, where Menno Simons College is located, received an explicit threat that was taken very seriously. Among other things, professors were given instructions from Security on how to respond to an intruder. Many of these instructions made sense: lock-down procedures, emergency contacts, locating exits. But one stipulation rather horrified me. We were explicitly told "not to engage with an intruder." What else could one possibly do, if not engage? Pretend the intruder didn't exist? Surely, engagement it is the only human way to respond and, at least for me, the only chance to affect a situation positively. Ultimately I can't be certain how I would react in a campus crisis. I hope I would react like professor Liviu Librescu of Virginia Tech, who tried to protect his students during a shooting in 2007. Whatever I would do, I would be reacting through engagement.

Given our culture of disengagement, it is not so simple to love the students. What does it mean to try to do so? For one thing it means really knowing who the students are. According to Neufeld, attachment happens in various ways. At a surface level, it happens through "sameness." I work this angle consciously on the first day of class. From my colleague Rick McCutcheon, I have learned to greet and shake hands with every student as they enter the room or settle cautiously into their seat. With each one, I look for some point of connection, or sameness, and I say things like: "I love that shirt! That shade of blue is one of my favorite colors, too." Or, "Oh, you're reading a book by Kenneth Oppel. Have you read *Silverwing*?" Or, "Jets jersey, eh? What did you think about the draft picks this summer?" It's a great way to start, but only a superficial way of connecting, which is why it's easy.

Much more profound is attachment through being known. Bruce Tuckman's research on group development indicates that a group becomes a high functioning team only when it has moved past the stage of polite sameness ("Oh, look how alike we are!") to a stage where members allow their real selves to show.[8] At this point the profound question is "Will these people still like me if they know how I really am?" Teachers need to really

[8] See Bruce Tuckman and Mary Ann C. Jensen, "Stages of Small Group Development Revisited" (1977), www.freewebs.com/group-management/BruceTuckman%281%29.pdf, accessed October 2012.

know their students, and this means providing space—in classes, curricula, assignments, and offices—for students to be themselves. We must be ready and willing to learn, from them, who they are.

Truly knowing the students requires awareness of the complex structures of classism, racism, sexism, ableism, and heterosexism that color their lives and that privilege or de-privilege them. Consider this example. At the University of Winnipeg the number of aboriginal students is continually on the rise. Several years ago, for instance, I had 9 aboriginal students in a class of 27. Thirty-three percent—what a gift! I intentionally structured the class towards this demographic. Obviously it would have been ideal to have an aboriginal instructor (in the not-too-distant future we hope we will), but in the meantime I had a curriculum with aboriginal content, aboriginal authors of readings, a text by an aboriginal author, and aboriginal guest speakers. Still, 7 of the 9 students failed to pass the course.

It is not enough to have registration numbers. We must have classes, structures, and professors who can meet students' needs. Disturbed by losing so many students, I approached Neil Funk-Unrau, coordinator of my department. He found the same rate of failure existed in other department courses, so he contacted Julie Pelletier, chair of the Indigenous Studies program, who confirmed that the dropout rate in their department too was roughly the same as ours. Her analysis was that many students were arriving terrified, filled with the post-colonial legacy of residential schools and society's messages about their inadequacy. These students, she suggested, largely drop out when the first assignment is due, or the first exam is conducted. Force-fed self-limiting beliefs, they are afraid to hand a paper in lest it confirm what they already "know," namely that they aren't "good enough."

It is not enough to have aboriginal curricula, or even aboriginal instructors. One of Pelletier's solutions, which I've since implemented, is to have all the students on the first day write a short piece in class and hand it in, not for grades and not as an assignment. It is only for feedback, for starting to make a connection, and, most important, for getting past the fear and beginning a new pattern in handling assignments.

Instructors who want to know their students will profit by acquainting

themselves with Howard Gardner's work on "multiple intelligences"[9] and implementing it in the classroom. In particular, we must be aware that kinesthetic learners, those perhaps most marginalized in mainstream school systems, are entering universities and colleges in ever-increasing numbers. Again, it is not enough to have such learners gain access to the academy; we must also welcome them, and we can do that by accommodating their various learning styles.

Loving the students also means trusting them, an act that is counter-cultural in hierarchical institutions such as schools and universities. Several years ago, my department leaders asked me to teach a course in Conflict Theory and Analysis, an area that was not my bailiwick. They acknowledged it was a course that likely could not be taught in participatory ways, and that many students considered it unremittingly boring. I was discouraged, since I'm committed to a teaching philosophy that highly values engagement. I couldn't imagine teaching a whole course through lectures.[10] Nor could I see myself learning a wholly new course and finding ways to make all 12 weeks engaging in the short time frame I'd been given. In near desperation, I decided to trust the students. I set them the challenge of coming up with an activity each week that was participatory and would help them remember the theory. I would still teach the theory and make sure everyone understood it, but the students were responsible for helping each other engage with it. They succeeded magnificently, and this assignment is now a standard part of the curriculum.

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[9] See, for instance, Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, 3rd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

[10] Let me be clear here. Some people learn best through lectures, some people teach best through lectures, and all the principles I am outlining can be used by lecture-based professors. There are wonderful lecture-based professors out there, but I'm not one of them! In my earliest teaching experiences, I tried to imitate the styles of my own university professors, and failed. It was not until I returned to Canada after my experience in El Salvador that I found my own voice and style. Passionately concerned for the fate of my Salvadoran colleagues, some of whom were imprisoned and perhaps facing torture, I found myself speaking and teaching from my heart, and in the experiential ways that work best for me as a learner. I realize there are students in my classrooms who are disadvantaged by the lack of lectures, but I accept this as a limitation I have as an instructor. Fortunately, those who learn best through lectures have many fine options to choose from at the University.

Love as a Challenge to the Academy

Loving the students means loving the whole of them, and that takes us to controversial ground for the academy, namely the realm of spirituality. To love someone is to make space for the whole person, including the person's spirituality. This is anathema to many in academia, and often for good reasons. The legacy of colonialism and residential schools should make us deeply wary and puts us on dangerous ground. I teach at Menno Simons College, a college of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), a "Christian University"—a term that many of my secular colleagues may see as an oxymoron like "dry wine," "jumbo shrimp," or "just war." I'm an outsider to this place in many ways; I was brought up in a firmly mainstream Protestant, but not Anabaptist, religious tradition. From my perspective, one benefit of teaching in an Anabaptist institution is the relative lack of attachment to hierarchy. Universities are, may I say, almost ridiculously hierarchical. Consider the theatrical display of robes and hats at convocations, or note the nuanced and rigid terms that speak volumes to the insider but are virtually ignored by everyone else (full professor, associate professor, adjunct professor, instructor).

Of course there are power and rank differentials among Mennonites (perhaps most notably along gender lines), but there also seems to be a kind of disdain for the hierarchical ordering of humans, a disdain that in my experience creates a less hidebound institution. The President of CMU, the Deans of MSC, the Program Coordinators—all the people who fill these roles—interact with us with a sense of the equality of our humanity and a respect for the gifts each of us brings. In practical terms, I've experienced great respect for my style of teaching, and much openness and support for the quirky or unusual things that I try. This is fortunate, because one distinct problem with teaching from a place of love is that students tend to do "too well." It's a problem I find deeply ironic; if we were doing our jobs brilliantly, wouldn't our students do brilliantly too? Every year the computer discovers that my students' marks are too high, and I must justify their success. I wonder how I'd fare in a system with a stricter hierarchy or a less generous administration.

To be clear, while I don't see a role for mandatory religion in higher education, I also don't see higher education (at least in the arts) without

a created space for potential expressions of spirituality. I've come to this perspective not because of the dictates of my Anabaptist institution, which, as noted, has been highly flexible, open, and supportive, but because of many indigenous students in my classes. They see the separating out of the spiritual world as a weird western and colonial phenomenon that has led to a dangerous detachment from the world and the environment. These students are not advocating for religious education per se, but they are declaring a need for space and support for spiritual reflection. They remind me of a southern Baptist pastor who once told me, "I try every year to become less religious and more spiritual."[11] For students to flourish as their whole selves without the forced self-dissection that results from—and leads to—detachment, we must find ways to accommodate their spiritual journeys even within secular universities.

What if we have large classes (although many peace educators fortunately have sensible class sizes)? How do we love the students then? We love them in the moments of contact that we do have with them. We show them—their whole selves—respect, at all times. If the North Star of our teaching philosophy is love, then our practice will follow. Professor Harry Huebner, a long-time, well-loved CMU faculty member, told me one of his favorite methods. At the beginning of the year he tells students that not only is there no "stupid question" but if they don't have a question formulated they should just speak their thoughts, and he and they will formulate a question together. We need not be afraid of not having enough time for students. If we go forward in love, we will find methods, like this one.

Lastly, we can love students by enabling them to love each other, which they will do only through connecting with each other. It is imperative that we build community in our classrooms, not just on principle but because it enhances the ability to learn. We create attachment between students by using small groups, circles, and buddy systems; attending to learning styles; making introductions and learning names; undoing the academy's "argument culture"[12]; valuing students' thoughts; and trusting students, and

[11] "Walk Together Children" workshop, The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, Gulfport, Mississippi, July 1987.

[12] In this I have been influenced by the work of Deborah Tannen, especially *The Argument Culture: Stopping America's War of Words* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), where she

helping them trust and learn from each other. Further, as peace educators we must not fail to use the classroom as a form of mini-laboratory, a place where conflict resolution principles are not just discussed but put into living form.

Love the Material

Loving the students is where I started, but it is perhaps easier to love the material. Craig Kielburger, the Canadian activist, observes that in the face of the immensity of global issues people can become bogged down and overwhelmed. There is a way forward, however. It is, he once said in a radio interview, to "find something that breaks your heart, and then put your heart into it." [13] When we love our material—which we surely do, or we would not have been drawn to it as we have—then we put our hearts into it. When that happens, students will feel also feel our passion and be drawn in. In short, we cannot be afraid to be in love with what we teach and to show students that love.

Christopher Takacs and Daniel Chambliss have recently completed research[14] on the impact that good teaching has on enrollment, and conclude that the professor a student first encounters in any discipline acts as a gatekeeper for the discipline. If the professor is "good," students will likely be drawn into that field of study, whereas a poor experience with a professor will push them away, not just from a department but even from the discipline. My own experience as a university student bears this out. In my first year I took courses in various disciplines, unsure of where I wanted to head. That all changed in a heartbeat, partway through the year. My English professor, Walter Swayze, read this aloud to the class:

> I wandered lonely as a cloud
> That floats on high o'er vales and hills,

shows how communication in universities often does not serve us well. Debate does not necessarily lead to greater truth or depth but into entrenchment and close-mindedness.

[13] Craig Kielburger, in a radio interview in the 1990s, confirmed by private correspondence with Tess Finlay, Coordinator of Public Relations and Publicity for Free the Children, September 2013. See Craig Kielburger, *Free the Children* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998).

[14] See Daniel F. Chambliss and Christopher G. Takacs, *How College Works* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2014). A summary can be found at www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/08/12/study-finds-choice-major-most-influenced-quality-intro-professor.

When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
what wealth the show to me had brought:
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

As Swayze read Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," he wept unabashedly. It was in that moment that I decided to major in English Literature, not because of this great poem but because Swayze's passion inspired me. He showed me this was a study that has meaning and value, that matters. My colleague at MSC, John Derksen, is similarly loved by students. One reason they routinely give when I ask what makes him exceptional is that he is not afraid to show his emotions in class. We teach what we teach because it is or has been our passion, because it matters to us. Peace educators are in a discipline that also matters to the world. We need to find or remember that passion and be unafraid to let it show. How else can we expect students to love what we teach if we don't love it ourselves? If we do not show them, through our honest emotion and passion, that something matters, how can we expect it to matter to them? If we must love the students because *they* matter, we must love also the material because *it* matters.

Love Ourselves

So, we must love the students and the material. This brings us to what is perhaps the hardest requirement of all: we must love ourselves. In *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer contends that "we teach who we are."[15] Teaching is not so much about "what" we teach or even "how" we teach, but about the "who." And who are we, when we're tired or not looking after ourselves? How

[15] Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 2.

can I be violent to myself, or to the planet, and not bring some of that into the classroom? To be at my best as a teacher, which admittedly I not always am, means to live my beliefs as consistently as possible. It also means to take care of myself, to be grounded, and to be living in peace with others and, fundamentally, with myself. It also means that I be loved, spend time with those I love, and laugh—and bring laughter to a place from which it is often excluded, the university classroom. If I can laugh and enjoy myself, perhaps the students can. It's crucial that we laugh, especially in these difficult times, for it is not an easy job that we do, and peace activism is not an easy path to walk.

One of Palmer's most helpful chapters deals with how much fear instructors must confront in order to teach, especially the fear of being vulnerable, of "looking stupid" or foolish.[16] Courage is not, however, being fearless but continuing on in spite of fear. It is, as Ernest Hemingway said, "grace under pressure." Loving ourselves means taking self-care seriously. It means, as I needed to do many years ago, finding our own individual true voices as educators, our own styles, using love as our compass point. Loving ourselves means taking risks. This is no minor thing. If we ask students to take risks and to expand their horizons, surely it is only ethical for us to do so too. As well, it means being willing to bring into the classroom our whole self—failures and struggles as well as successes—and our vulnerability, for being vulnerable is a gift to both students and instructors.

Lastly, loving ourselves means being committed to our own growth and learning, and to finding mentors and inspirations. Shirley Sherrod, former head of the United States Department of Agriculture, has become one of those for me. "I learned a lot of lessons from my parents growing up, but one of the most important ones is what my mother taught her children after our father was killed," she has written. "She told us we mustn't try to live with hate in our hearts. . . . Life is a grindstone. But whether it grinds us down or polishes us up depends on us. We can't yield, not now, not ever."[17] Sherrod, by word and example, calls on us to live in love, even in the most difficult times. Her words are echoed by retired South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu when he defines the virtue of "Ubuntu":

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[16] Ibid., 35-61.

[17] Shirley Sherrod, "Open Letter: "You and I Can't Yield—Not Now, Not Ever" (2010), available at www.naacp.org/news, accessed October 2012.

> It is the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up and is inextricably bound up in yours. I am human because I belong. It speaks about wholeness, it speaks about compassion. A person with Ubuntu is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share. Such people are open and available to others, willing to be vulnerable, affirming of others, do not feel threatened that others are able and good, for they have a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong in a greater whole. They know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are. The quality of Ubuntu gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them.[18]

What we need in this broken world is to be polished and not ground down. What we need for the world and for peace studies students is to *be* Ubuntu!

I began this paper with a story about imprisonment, and I'll end it with one about liberation. Ministers Stan McKay and Frances Combs both tell a story of blades of grass, which I will tell in my own way here:

> There is a section of highway that I know well, a piece of the "Trans-Canada" that runs through Ontario from the border with Manitoba to the town of Kenora. Years ago there was a smaller highway there, the first Trans-Canada, concrete and tarmac snaking its way through bush, past swamps and around hills. Not straight enough for modern travel, it gave way to the new highway laid down 50-plus years ago. As a child, when we'd travel that new road, it was a game to follow the old highway with our eyes. Concrete, rock-solid, invincible. Certainly stronger than the plants or blades of grass which it had subdued. But a miracle has happened there. Over the years, the concrete has bulged and broken open, revealing the strength of the plants, pulsating with

[18] Tutu's definition can be found at http://ubuntuchoirs.net/Ubuntu_spirit.php, accessed October 2012.

> life, beneath the hard surface. Plants whose vitality and energy of life gives them the strength to break open, break apart the tarmac above.

In each student, I trust that there are hidden "blades of grass" waiting patiently for their time to break forth. In the material that I teach, there too are "blades of grass," insights, that will burst open. And I trust there are "blades of grass" in me as well, upsurging love for the students, the material, and myself.

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