The Praxis of Gandhi's *Satyagraha*:
The Scholar–Practitioner Educational Leader as Moral "Truth Holder"

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

Charles L. Lowery
Ohio University

Chetanath Gautam
Stephen F. Austin State University

Chance D. Mays
Mt. Enterprise (Texas) Independent School District

Through contemplation of a drastic divergence in thought from a paradigm of physical discipline and retaliation in learning environments to one of a peaceful demonstration of reflection and respect the authors construct a framework of spiritual leadership. From this framework a metaphor of satyagraha emerges as a means of leading schools and modeling meditative behavior for all—students, staff, and stakeholders. This alternative metaphor of educational leadership is based on the truthful speech of Gandhi, MLK, and Nelson Mandela—each with their own radical take on creating counternarratives to violence through non-violence and peaceful resistance. These counternarratives form four principal themes that require some degree of contemplation: truthful speech and teaching, authenticity of leadership, reality of experience as education, and goodness as advocacy and activism for social justice, equity and care. In conclusion, the authors explore how this connects the scholar–practitioner to the Satyagrahi—practitioners of "truth-holding."

Truth (*satya*) implies love, and firmness (*agraha*) engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement Satyagraha, that is to say, the Force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence . . . (Gandhi, 1968a, pp. 106-107)

Our human history—as well as our current condition—has been riddled with violence. Whether manifested as civil or world wars or the murders of individuals in local assaults, violent acts are constant and consistent and outside the constraints of time and space. Mass murders, terrorist attacks, and school shootings have taken their place among the societal ills of American experience and U.S. education. Since 1900, depending on sources, between 232 and 312 school-related shootings have occurred in the U.S.; these acts of violence have resulted in approximately 400 deaths with upwards of 450 others wounded (TimeToast, n.d.; Lankford, 2013; Kierz, 2014). This does not include the violence of rape and sexual harassment that occur on elementary and secondary school grounds. Nor does this include the failures to exercise due process for students, endless accounts of academic abuse, and acts of hazing, harassment, and bullying as well as other forms of physical violence.

Moreover the views on dealing with violence are numerous and nuanced. Today's educational leaders P12-and-beyond must embrace a robust culture of diversity and negotiate a complex network of interactions on subjects such as violence in schools (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). Presently, educational leaders at all levels handle issues in schools and learning organizations that run the gamut of the human condition. Typically, the responses to such acts employ techniques and tactics of more violence—in some places, corporal punishment and removal from the learning environment, in others microaggressions and administrative disciplinary acts rooted in power and physical control (Durrant & Smith, 2011; Farmer, Neier, & Parker, 2008; Portela & Pells, 2015). In the minds of many U.S. citizens, leaders should fight fire with fire, some seeing retaliation and retribution as a means to combat violence in any social setting, including primary and elementary schools (Giroux, 2015; Kozy, 2016).

Notwithstanding, we aim here to contemplate an alternative—a more spiritual and moral way of *countering* violence. As scholar-practitioners, educational leaders require a deep understanding of *thinking* and *doing* that find roots as much in Dewey's (1938) instrumentalism and inquiry as in Freire's (2005) criticality and consciousness. Implied in these epistemological stances are an understanding of varied methods of inquiry and an acknowledgement of various types of acquisition and experience. Among these diverse methods—this praxis—of thinking and doing, reflection and action, theory and practice, are ideals relevant to discussions of peace education and leadership for critical spirituality (Dantley, 2009, 2010). Based on these theories we "hold" and offer an alternate "truth" to the current narrative of fighting violence with violence.

Our previous article put forth a notion of spiritual leadership through consideration of the Buddha as a metaphor for the scholar–practitioner educational leader (Lowery, Gautam, & Mays, 2015). We contemplated the symbolism and mythos of the Four Sights and the Enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama as the Buddha. For us these revelatory excursions of the young prince represented the enlightenment that the three of us experienced as doctoral candidates being exposed to the notion of the scholar–practitioner educational leadership model. Here we extend the idea of a spiritually responsive and non-violent school leader in the person of the scholar–practitioner.

In this current work we apply that same notion into our respective lifeworlds as scholar–practitioners engaged in 21st century academia and public schooling. In this article we embrace the idea of a leadership of critical spirituality and an education of peace by exploring the example provided by Mohandas Gandhi and Gandhi's ideal of *Satyagraha*. Similar to our previous work, we are concerned with the ethic and values of leadership at the nexus of diversity and democracy within the spiritual dimensions of educational leadership through scholarly practice. This exercise in reflexive intentionality continues in examining education-based recommendations for leadership through metaphor and critical theory-based counterperspectives on violence, especially school-related atrocities, which include hate-crimes and microaggressions.

At this point in our collective studies and our respective lives we are occupied with turning the 8-spoke *dharma* wheel—in search of our authentic selves and the truth or truths that have been placed in the trusteeship of the educational systems of our world. At its foundations this is a theoretical study of humanity and humility in moral leadership and ethical sensitivity. Educational leadership—and education generally speaking—is a "people work," of people, for people, by people. Therefore the work of education speaks to the politics and problems of the public realm of schooling and deals with what we view as the three-fold fundamentals of scholarly practice—social justice, equity, and care. Our belief is that these principles cannot be fully or effectively achieved without a deeper understanding of the spiritual aspect of leadership and transformation.

Turning the Wheel of Truth and Compassion, our personal and professional *dharmacakra*, gives us pause to reflect profoundly on issues of educator obligation, social justice, ethics sensitivity, and moral imagination in our researcher lives, teacher lives, and leader lives. We see these as issues that relate directly to metaphors in Buddhism's 8-Fold Path, the Christian Beatitudes, the Muslim's 5 Pillars, and the Hindu's Four Goals of Life (*kama, artha, dharma,* and *moksha*). From this juncture of understanding we find an applicable connection between the provinces of academia as it relates to scholarly leader preparation and the pragmatic motives within the daily service of leadership in the field. The province that emerges is one where the scholarly meets with the pragmatic—where the spiritual connects with the mundane.

In making this connection we encountered two exemplars to help exemplify our understanding of Gandhi's teaching of *satyagrah*a and the "Salt March" as a metaphor for scholarly practice and critical spiritual leadership for education—Mandela's moral sacrifice and moral selflessness and MLK's moral commitment and moral courage. As with "The Buddha Metaphor" (Lowery, Gautam, & Mays, 2015), we engage in a reflective and reflexive inquiry into the values and ethics of the doctrines of these men as metaphors for scholar–practitioner educational leadership. We see this metaphoric structure as a means to investigate with critical consciousness and intentionality a spiritual praxis for advocacy and transformation through a model of leadership founded epistemologically on a system of non-violence.

In considering this drastic divergence in thought from a paradigm of physical discipline and retaliation to one of a peaceful demonstration of reflection and respect we begin with a framework of spiritual leadership. From this framework we move into a description of the metaphor of satyagraha as a means of leading schools and modeling meditative behavior for all—students, staff, and all stakeholders. Next we draw from the truthful speech of Gandhi, MLK, and Nelson Mandela—each with their own radical take on creating counternarratives to violence through non-violence and resistance. These counternarratives form four principal themes that require some degree of contemplation: truthful speech and teaching, authenticity of

leadership, reality of experience as education, and goodness as advocacy and activism for social justice, equity and care. Before concluding, we look at scholar–practitioners as *Satyagrahi*— practitioners of "truth-holding."

A Framework of Spiritual Leadership

Houston and Sokolow (2006) propose their own 8-fold path to enlightened leadership. Their eight principles are intention, attention, unique gifts and talents, gratitude, unique life lessons, holistic perspective, openness, and trust. We believe that integral to an insistence on truth are elements of all of these principles, but especially a leadership approach that embraces democratic openness, holistic and holographic perspectives, and trustworthiness. Houston and Sokolow affirm that

> Spirituality can be seen in countless ways, but perhaps, it can best be expressed as each human beings personal relationship with the Divine. Spirituality connects you with the divine energy. This is an energy that can help you to grow and evolve into better and better versions of yourself. . . . Cumulatively, it is the energy that has the power to transform our world and truly make it better for us all. (p. xxiii)

Satyagraha, literally "truth holding" or "insistence on truth," was for Gandhi a spiritual force of peaceful resistance. For Gandhi and the people of India under British rule it was a means of altering the world. To speak of satyagraha is to consider ways in which leaders maintain peace in times of strong resistance and great transformative change. We situate this same spiritual worldview at the crossroads of divinity and diversity, turning a critical lens on how democratic leadership in education may possibly hold the potential to create spaces for accessibility and acceptance, community and collaboration, innovation and integrity, and moral literacy coupled with emotional, economic, and ecological resilience. Ultimately, a divine-inspired understanding of educational environments as democratic spaces in which diversity and differences are acknowledged, allowed, and accepted stands counter to the privileged elitist and status quo conceptions of longstanding educational models and state-mandated systems of assessment and accountability.

Considering the tensions caused by diversity in democracy in *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, Palmer (2011) explores some practical and relevant ways to engage our differences and expand our civic and civil capacity. He suggests embracing a spiritual counterclaim that would encourage educational leaders to "know how to hold conflict inwardly in a manner that coverts into creativity, allowing it to pull them open to new ideas, new courses of action, and each other" (p. 15). Likewise we propose a spiritual democratic leadership, grounded on ethics, values, and morality has no need of a legislated liability that imposes measures that are punitive and counterintuitive to authentic learning, critical thinking, and problem solving in P16 learning. Satyagraha as a metaphor of leadership does not seek the truth, it *insists* upon the truth. The "truth"—*sat*—that satyagraha mandates is founded on an enduring and essential, virtuous and valued spirituality. To the ancients, it was Brahman. In other words, it is Universal. Satyagraha echoes the sentiment of Freire's (2005) *conscientizaçao*—a critical consciousness for repairing the injustices in the world (Lowery, 2015).

With this conceptual framework underpinning our line of inquiry, we attempt to speak to the idea of satyagraha as a concept and a metaphor for a critical spiritual leadership empowered

to counter aggressive thinking and violent acting. From this we develop a connection of Gandhi with Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela, providing through this connection a basis for resisting violence as a means of teaching and leading for non-violence. Consideration is given to truthful speech and teaching through authenticity and creating democratic spaces through social justice and care, to existence and reality in experience through educational endeavors that teach and model embracing and "reading the world," and to goodness as advocacy and activism for resisting and provocative peacefulness, devotion to emancipation, and service as community. Finally, we offer a model of the scholar-practitioner educational leader as a *satyagrahi* dedicated to holding or preserving truth and participating in advocacy for social justice, equity, and care.

Satyagraha as Metaphor of Leadership

Gandhi's work in India can be viewed from many different perspectives. However, any examination of the relevance of leadership of Gandhi's work should question, what was Gandhi's driving force? As with the story of the Buddha, Mahatma already had a comfortable life. He had been educated abroad. He had practiced law successfully. Why did he not take the path that other ordinary individuals would have taken? The argumentative response to the question could be *the moral inner drive of Gandhi for abolishing the immoral social, economic, and political architecture of India*. We posit that this same drive can help to empower educational leaders to model and teach others—students, teachers, parents, and colleagues—the same moral selflessness, sacrifice, courage, and commitment.

Translated, *satyagraha* implies existing through a truth on which an individual politely insists. Braatz (2014) defines satyagraha as "a method of nonviolent conflict resolution that approaches conflicts as opportunities to reduce violence of all types and also as opportunities for transformation of all parties involved" (p. 106). It is derived from the Sanskrit root meaning "insisting for truth" or "the moral truth." Gandhi's resistance to violence was a non-violent act, grounded in the concept of "holding firmly to the truth" and allowing such an insistence on truth to become for him a "truthforce."

The Salt March (or Dandi March) is in many ways an active manifestation of Gandhi's teaching, concerned with holding firmly to the truth of non-violent. This notion serves as a metaphorical representation of leadership for social and ecological justice, activism for equity and equality, advocacy for caring about and caring for students as children, emerging adults, and adult learners, ethical decision-making and morally imaginative problem solving. We further explore this metaphorical structure through the persons and sayings of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson "Madiba" Mandela.

Mahatma, MLK, and Madiba

Reflection on Gandhi's *satyagraha* leadership, which inspired MLK in the U.S., Nelson Mandela in South Africa, and many others, requires reflection on what Nix (2014) put forth in the following questions: What were the claims about the moral architecture of Gandhi's circumstances (i.e. the field of practice)? What were the flaws or distorted logics behind his claims (i.e. the assumptions or presumptions)? Why and how should people, following Gandhi's model, question or present a counterclaim about the structure/design of the state of things in their circumstances (i.e. the architecture of politics, problems of the public, and asymmetrical systems in schooling)?

Also we must consider, how can modeling such strategies impact our stakeholders? Can the exemplars of teaching with truthful speech and authentic decision-making impact those in our surroundings and inspire them to act likewise? Will the violence learned through the examples of some be overcome by the non-violence offered by others? In other words, does the truthforce presented in Gandhi's Salt March offer an adequate metaphor for a leadership of peace through non-violent examples?

Quite possibly the Mahatma would have viewed his counter claims as moral propositions. However, perhaps *satyagraha* was and arguably still is the best way of eradicating immoral architectures in socio-political settings (which for us is the educational environment). Gandhi stated, "[T]his much I can say with assurance, as a result of all my experiments, that a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realization of *ahimsa*" (Gandhi, in Narayan1995, vol.11, p. 752).

Pava (2011) stated, "Most moral criticism is only partially heard and usually misunderstood" (p.100). Educators and community leaders, embracing their spiritual self, combat and contest immoral, inauthentic, and insincere claims in education today. These spiritual beings—*Satyagrahi*—carry the weapon of Satyagraha in an endeavor to disturb, deconstruct, and tear down the immoral architectures bound up in status quo educational systems, in order to reconstruct a new moral system. In this sense, Satyagraha is a moral action. It is the praxis of moral critique (Nix, 2014) and critical consciousness (Freire, 2005).

Satyagraha, as Gandhi, MLK, and Mandela put into practice, now inspires scholar–practitioners to be the *Satyagrahi* in education as spiritual leaders. In this work, we present this in four actions that modern educational leaders engaging in scholarly practice can embrace: 1) truthful speech and teaching, 2) authenticity of leadership, 3) existence and reality in education (or in other words, reality of one's existence as education), and 4) goodness as activism and advocacy for social justice, equity, and care. Together these form the basis of the work of the scholar–practitioner as satyagrahi engaged in a march against violence in her or his schools. First, we look at truthful speech and teaching and examples from Gandhi, MLK, and Mandela.

Truthful Speech and Teaching

For Gandhi the act of truthful speech and teaching (critical aspects to *satyagraha*) was not separate from non-violent praxis (*ahimsa*). Humanity has lost its hold on the truth that speaking peace to others is speaking peace to us ourselves. We have become divided creatures—separated from our own spiritual identities. If all humans are created in the divine image, to harm another is to harm oneself. How we behave toward humanity speaks to our understanding of moral duty as an educational leader. In many ways, both literally and figuratively, truthfulness was God and therefore humanity is truth. Implicated in this axiom is the deep spiritual dimension of *satyagraha* leadership. As the Mahatma (1968b) stated,

> One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach Truth. Are not Non-violence and Truth twins? The answer is an emphatic 'No'. Non-violence is embedded in Truth and vice versa. Hence has it been said that they are faces of the same coin. (p. 112)

According to Gandhi, praxis of *satyagraha* could only be achieved through a way of daily living or everyday doing. Truth and non-violence do not represent a dyad or binary. Instead each is

dependent on the other—of, for, and by the other. Satyagraha emerges as a routine collaboration of our authentic selves with the world around us—the community, the stakeholders, the nation, the environment. Represented for the educational leader is an incontrovertible integrity in his or her daily dealings with stakeholders (a resistance to reacting, a commitment to responding through reflection).

Schools are places of community and characteristic of the society in which they are situated, public places with public problems. Anger, frustration, instinctive response, confusion are natural and normal human characteristics in such settings. Recognizing this, school leaders must exude a peacefulness in their words and their deeds that surpasses policy and politics, that overcomes underlying issues of frustration and anger, that counters ill intentions and unfounded prejudices. According to Gandhi's teaching in *The Voice of Truth*, educational leaders must understand that . . .

> The very first step in non-violence is that we cultivate in our daily life, as between ourselves, truthfulness, humility, tolerance, loving-kindness. Honesty, they say in English, is the best policy. But in terms of non-violence, it is not mere policy. Policies may and do change. Non-violence is an unchangeable creed. It has to be pursued in face of violence raging around you. (p. 127)

Satyagraha, for Gandhi, held a transformational and liberatory aspect in its educative process:

> The outward freedom that we shall attain will only be in exact proportion to the inner freedom to which we may have grown at any given moment. And if this is the correct view of freedom, our chief energy must be concentrated on achieving reform from within (Gandhi, in Narayan, 1995, vol. VI, p. 441).

By this direct connection of truthful speech and teaching to the notion of freedom and reform, Gandhi was embracing the idea that the articulation of vision and mission of one's cause could be articulated through more than words, that a leader's theory and practice could manifest in meaningfully symbolic modeling engaged in throughout the day. For example, Gandhi's resistance and non-violent activism was manifested in the symbol of wearing *khadi*, a handspun Indian textile. In Mahatma's words:

> Therefore I consider it a sin to wear foreign cloth. . . . Economics that hurt the well-being of a nation are immoral and therefore sinful. . . . On the knowledge of my sin bursting upon me, I must consign the foreign garments to the flames and thus purify myself, and thenceforth rest content with the rough khadi made by my neighbours. . . . I venture to suggest to the Poet that the clothes I ask him to burn must be and are his. . . . (Gandhiin Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 90).

For the scholar–practitioner educational leader, the khadi (and later the *dhoti*) metaphorically states her or his association to the context in which practice is analyzed and applied. The statement is one of humility and integrity that stand in an unambiguous contrast to violence and microaggressions in schools. This same humility and integrity can be seen in the model of leadership represented by MLK.

As an educational leader in his own right, Martin Luther King, Jr. consistently conveyed messages of hope for his followers. In his commitment he modeled nonviolent actions that inspired others to act peacefully even against the desire to react out of "justifiable" anger and frustration. According to Walker (2007), after King's home was bombed, the spiritual leader addressed to his supporters and affirmed,

> If you have weapons, take them home; if you do not have them, please do not seek to get them. We cannot solve this problem through retaliatory violence. We must meet violence with nonviolence. . . . We must meet hate with love. Remember, if I am stopped, this movement will not stop, because God is with the movement. (p. 216)

While many individuals could have understandably turned to violent acts to rage against injustice, to seek revenge and retaliation, King, Jr. instead called for authentic peaceful resistance—*satyagraha* leadership.

Nelson Mandela an activist, who earlier in his life viewed violence as a defensible approach to resisting injustice, presented his own exemplar of non-violence. In Doeden's (2014) account of Mandela's trial, he writes,

> Mandela looked out at the courtroom. A group of white onlookers sat before him. His black supporters, forced to sit apart from the whites, were off to the side. He addressed the court, sharing his vision for South Africa:
>
> > *During my lifetime, I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunity. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.* (p. 8)

Madiba's words echoed those of the Mahatma's in *Gandhi*, "They may torture my body, break my bones even kill me. Then they have my dead body not my obedience" (Attenborough, 1982).

Authenticity of Leadership

For so-called scholars including us, the *agragha* (the insistence or the "holding onto") has to be lived. According to Braman (2000) . . .

> . . . the question of the constitution of authentic human existence is a question of a moral ideal that ought to be taken seriously because the meaning of authenticity has shaped, and continues to shape, our understanding of what it means to be human. (p. 224)

Freire (1970) suggested that critical awareness, praxis, and struggle are synonyms (p. 51). Freire wrote, liberation from oppressive forces can only be accomplished "by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 51). This connection of one's personal praxis in the struggle of satyagraha in our postmodern context can be seen in Pava's (2011) *Jewish Ethics in a Post-Madoff World:*

It is true that we are products of our own culture and society, but it is also true that culture and society are accountable to the individual no matter how unique or idiosyncratic we may be. Every voice counts and every voice is crucial. In speaking from our own perspectives, inside our own histories, and experiences, each of us possesses an irreplaceable and infinitely valuable point of view. You are the only one with your exact set of values, desires, goals, and skills. *You* are the only one that has lived *your* life, experienced *your* experiences, and seen and heard what *you* have seen and heard. As the great philosopher Immanuel Kant noted you are not only a means to the ends of others you an end unto yourself. (p. 93)

If this passage is true, it is the work of the educational leader to respect and represent the multidisciplinarity of our contemporary context. This means not only *holding* onto truth, as some personal reality, but *insisting* on the truth of our collective and democratic experience. To understand the complexities that will surface in such work requires that leaders routinely and rigorously engage in scholarship that informs and practice, and stepping back to examine practice in a way that illuminates scholarship. Otherwise the practice becomes commonplace and taken for granted. Educational dilemmas such as school violence are met with an artificial or perfunctory deliberation lacking ethics sensitivity, ethical reasoning, and moral imagination (i.e. moral literacy) (Tuana, 2007). Decision-making becomes careless, looses its authentic status as an act of leadership and fails as a model of *satyagraha*.

Existence/Reality in Experience

In April of 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. (1994) uttered the words, "Now we're going to march again, and we've got to march again, in order to put the issue where it is supposed to be" (p. 9). These words imply a current and continuous struggle—a march that was (and is) ongoing. Additionally, "the march" indicates a means "to put the issue where it is supposed to be." Inferred is not merely a method of "setting things right," but also indicates a work that "brings things to light." Underlying these words is a leader's realization that the problems that exist and the reality of one's struggles are embedded in our independent and collective experiences.

As Fletcher (2013) acknowledged,

People lead authentically moral lives when they reflect their individuality in their actions while also recognizing their potential and their limitations as agents existing in a relational context. Aware that their social relationships and interactions help define their identities, relationally authentic people create life projects that simultaneously support their individuality while complementing, if not supporting, others' flourishing projects. (p. 84)

Regarding Mandela's own model of existence and reality as an experience of truthholding, Derrida (1987) wrote,

What is obvious right away is that Mandel's political experience or passion can never be separated from a theoretical reflection: about history, culture, and above all jurisprudence. An unremitting analysis enlightens the rationality of his acts, his

demonstrations, his speeches, his strategy. Even before being constrained to withdraw from the world into prison, and during a quarter of a century of incarceration, he has been acting endlessly and giving a direction to the struggle. Mandela has always been, like all the greatest politicians, a man of reflection. . . . (p. 14)

For these exemplars, existence and reality as education was a matter of being in the world, embracing our place in the world, and employing our moral literacy to read the world. When it comes to Gandhi the major practice comes to leading the grassroots by converting yourself morally and authentically to accept the challenge of standing (i.e. *being*) for social justice. The model of both King and Mandela—an archetypal model of *satyagraha* seen in the work of Gandhi—is in the manner that they used their states of affairs, their existences, their struggles as a means of teaching others, of holding firmly to truth, of demonstrating a dedication to peace in the middle of the reality of turmoil.

If for Dewey purposeful experience was education, for the satyagraha leader reality and existence are education. By being and being in the world, we are learners. When we fail to recognize our state as learner we loose our identities to greed, anger, hatred, fear. When we fail to appreciate our existence and be conscious of the realities that make up our world we fall victim to ignorance and become morally illiterate. The satyagraha leader sees existence and reality in experience and the experience in education. Such a leader sees the potential of modeling a way of living, the demonstration of peaceful resistance to oppression and injustice, as a means not only of being in and reading the world but also as a way of educating others. To be a Satyagrahi is to teach others non-violence.

Goodness as Advocacy/Activism

Gandhi, King, and Mandela stood for truth as a way of education, advocating for an activism against status quo through passive resistance though education. Although their lives evolved very differently they exhibited a common devotion to emancipation and empathy. Fighting injustice by voluntarily submitting the self to suffering—suffering as pathos/passion—compassion as passion for and with others each worked toward their goal with unadulterated determination. As Gandhi has been quoted, "Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will."

In satyagraha leadership, advocacy and activism is a form of service and service manifests as an essential aspect of community. If we do not start a community event as scholar-practitioners, if we do not step out from our comfort zone and dissolve the status quo, we fail to hold the truth in true sense. As MLK proclaimed,

I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I would like you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land. And I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. (Carson, 1991, p. 419).

King's words, ". . . as a people. . .," speaks to his advocacy for his work to ensure the rights of his consociates in the civil rights movement was the goal—satyagraha is not an individual goal or an individualistic work. It is a work for the community, for the collective reality of all human beings. Similarly, the advocacy and activism of educational leaders are not

for personal glory or fame, but such societal engagement works for the good of the community as a service for social justice and care. As well this is or should be an aim of democracy.

Palmer (2011) advocates the following for leaders:

- To listen to each other openly and without fear, learning much we have in common despite our differences;
- To deepen our empathy for the alien "other" as we enter imaginatively into the experiences of people whose lives are radically unlike our own;
- To hold what we believe and know with conviction and be willing to listen openly to other viewpoints, changing our minds if needed;
- To see out alternative facts and explanations whenever we find reason to doubt our own truth claims or the claims made by others, thus becoming better informed;
- To probe, question, explore, and engage in dialogue, developing a fuller, more three-dimensional view of reality in the process;
- To enter the conflicted arena of politics, able to hold the dynamics of that complex force field in ways that unite the civic community and empower us to hold government accountable to the will of the people; [and]
- To welcome opportunities to participate in collective problem solving and decision making. . . . (p. 15)

Palmer's recommendations elucidate the intense power of satyagraha leadership. As scholar–practitioners the satyagrahi seeks ways of exemplifying these tenets in their study and in their practice, they serve as fundamentals of thinking and doing, they frame the theoretical and the pragmatic provinces of their lifeworlds.

Scholar-Practitioners as *Satyagrahi*

In a rather intriguing article, "The Satyagraha of John Brown," Braatz (2014) wrestles with the intents and actions of activist and abolitionist John Brown. While Brown's violence does not align with our philosophy non-violent modeling in leadership or Gandhi's peaceful resistance, Braatz's article reveals some profound and relevant observations about *satyagraha*. Braatz states,

> For Gandhi, Truth meant a*himsa* (without harm or coercion), and universal Truth is God. Put another way, the interconnectedness of all living things is ultimate reality. A *satyagrahi* is a person committed to Truth, both as a goal (the integration of all humankind) and a means to that goal (non-harming). In A.J. Muste's perfect phrase, "There is no way to peace—peace is the way." Satyagraha—persistence in Truth—is a way of life, one that rejects all forms of violence, but not one that ignores conflict. (p. 105)

Informed leaders are not so presumptuous to think that conflict can be ignored or even avoided. However, conflict in the mind of a leader engaged in scholarly practice does not equate anger or violence. While frustration is normal and being passionate about one's cause is hopeful, scholar-practitioners as *satyagrahi* embrace a divine or righteous indignation—one that is not personal but centers on issues of justice and fair treatment of others. This outrage may be passionate but it is patient; it certainly may even be intense but it is never irrational. As spiritual leaders there is a warrior mindset without the need for war. An adversary is seen not as an

enemy but as a democratic voice and a particular need—a need that may be uninformed or formed out of ignorance, one that may be instinctive and irrational—that should be heard and considered as a human thought.

Then it is the obligation of the leader to "resist" unawareness and animosity with peace and patience and to embrace a moral autonomy that demonstrates selflessness and courage. Being an educational leader may in fact insinuate bravely being the educator of everyman— especially of those who are oppressed by hatred and threatened by harm. This means manifesting and modeling a sense of self-reliance. Braatz (2014) avers,

> To break away from dehumanizing relations, a satyagrahi seeks to develop power over Self, or *autonomy*. This includes fearlessness, to neutralize threat power; self-reliance, to eliminate vulnerability to exchange power; and self-respect, to rise above the power of persuasion. Autonomy works on either side of a bad relation: power over Self rather than *submission to* Other, and power over Self rather than *power over* Other. (p. 105)

Moral courage and moral selflessness when linked with moral autonomy frames the practice of the educational leader with the spiritual willingness and strength to confront (that is, to resist nonviolently) the violence of terroristic threats in their communities, bullying in cyberspace, and microaggressions in the classrooms. Such activism is can take shape as a pedagogy of leadership—a leadership pedagogy deeply seeded in spiritual criticality and a Freirean liberation theology and the resistance of oppression through liberatory dialogue (Stenberg, 2006). Once more turning to Braatz's (2014) article, we can better understand the scholar-practitioner educational leader's moral obligation in this way:

> By holding firmly to Truth, by being willing to absorb suffering but refusing to inflict it, by showing respect and concern for Other, Self employs *integrative power*. Simply put, integrative power is the ability to attract empathy, and the surest method is by expressing empathy. . . Integrative power means appealing to the universal human need for interconnection, hoping this will inspire others to move in a similar direction. Gandhi called it "soul force." (p. 106)

Critical spiritual leaders engaged in *satyagraha* are compassionate advocates and activists who model thinking and doing, inquiry and action, scholarship and practice that work against violent tendencies in their students, community members, and other constituents. They stand over and against, in contrast to practices and policies, standards and strategies that do harm to and dehumanize students as individuals. Opposition to physical violence notwithstanding, scholar-practitioners have an obligation to oppose other "nonphysical" forms of aggression and assault as well. In K12 this may take the form of misuse and overuse of testing, microaggressions in the classroom, unjust discretionary disciplinary placement of marginalized students, or failure to create inclusive environments on campuses or in classrooms. At the post-secondary levels of learning, examples may present as practices that hinder students' academic progress based on assumptions, the profiling of international or immigrant that are rooted in fear and xenophobia, or the coercion of students into transactional interactions that benefit administration or faculty over the students educational experience.

As well, turning a blind eye is a veritable contradiction to holding firmly to the truth of *satyagraha* leadership. Administrators and educators that avoid dealing with situations due to

fear of public perception, as an act of social protectionism, or because it creates an uncomfortable circumstance are similarly guilty of violence. Complicity is a non-truth and therefore negates peacefulness or any non-violent philosophies. By ignoring or refusing to confront issues of violence is not conducive to *satyagraha* and is in fact no less an act of violence itself.

In a sense, the scholar-practitioner's obligation is one of resistance—resisting temptation to not act, resisting the status quo of protectionism, breaking out of the molds of prejudice and presumptions. Satyagraha leadership is not conforming to the oppressive force of societal norms that disenfranchise others—whether in deed or by denial or disregard. In the motion picture, *Gandhi* (1982), the Mahatma delivers his speech of resistance:

> I am asking you to fight, to fight against their anger, not to provoke it. We will not strike a blow. But we will receive them, and through our pain we will make them see their injustice. And it will hurt as all fighting hurts. But we cannot lose. We cannot. (Attenborough, 1982)

Resistance is neither "inactivity" nor "movement." To fight with satyagraha leadership not physical violence but spiritual strength—to accept physical pain and swallow personal pride that others may move forward toward liberation. It is not provocation but peaceful provocation through resisting—resisting both violence and status quo.

In our original proposition of *satyagraha* we conceptualize a stance not determined to confront or counter violence but to create a spiritual ecology in which violence cannot thrive—in which anger and aggression cannot exist. Confronting and countering are movements that name violence—that define and identify it. Confronting and countering work to limit violence that already subsists as a reality within a given system. Fomenting peaceful and non-violent systems is the aim of educational leadership as *satyagraha*.

Conclusion

We do not naively assert that cultivating peacefulness through education or exercising non-violent activism that advocates for environments of truthfulness and goodness will completely eradicate societal ills in schools and other educational settings. On one hand, changing habituated thinking or cultural ways of doing does not happen overnight; no change is immediate. On the other, K12 schools and institutions of higher education account for only one of many agents of socialization in society. Issues of economic asymmetry and symptoms of poverty will always create frustrations and feelings of desperation. Unjust social and ecological tensions will persist in corrupting the hopes of our fellow human beings and polluting the air we breathe and the earth that nourishes us. Mental health concerns resulting from faulty, failed, or compromised healthcare programs will neglect too many citizens who could benefit from social services. Neoliberal promises and market-driven greed will remain a constant obstacle to collective and social viewpoints of a caring and equitable society. Racism and fundamentalist bigotry will still be spewed forth from divisive ideological factions, publishing and propagating misunderstandings and pseudo-interpretations of spiritual tenets and holy writings. Likely these factors will continue to contribute to fear, hate, ignorance, racism, profiling, war, murders, and terrorism.

Instead we call for an ideal for scholar-practitioner educational leadership that supports

social justice, equity, and care in the development of schools as democratic spaces. We aver that inherent to our program of scholarly practice is a "spiritual" and therefore very "human" understanding of the lived experiences and storied narratives of others and ourselves. Therefore, we recommend a scholarship and a praxis that is founded on the following:

- Embracing moral imagination to make ethical decisions in leadership (Jenlink, 2014);
- Generating an atmosphere of gratitude, fostering a holistic perspective in educational settings, and exhibiting trust and a mindset of openness; (Houston & Sokolow, 2006)
- Exercising a praxis of critical consciousness grounded in faith and hope (Freire, 2005); and
- Endeavors that serve to repair the world by countering fear and hatred with hope and faith. (Lowery, 2014)

Within this construct of scholar–practitionership we have acknowledged numerous parallels of Gandhi's notion of *satyagraha*. As such we view satyagraha as a fitting metaphor for scholar–practitioner leadership in educational settings. Only non-violence and peaceful resistance against acts of hate and anger can counter and ultimately re-culture the societal ills that foster the modern calamities we suffer as a people, that have claimed the lives and the innocence of our children and students.

References

Attenborough, R. (Producer & Director). (1982). *Gandhi* [Motion Picture]. UK: Goldcrest Films International.

Braatz, T. (2014). The satyagraha of John Brown. *In Factis Pax, 8*(2), 104-121.

Braman, B. J. (2000). Epiphany and authenticity: The aesthetic vision of Charles Taylor. In A. Ramos (Ed.), *Beauty, Art, and the Polis* (pp. 224-236). Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press.

Carson, C. (1991). *The eyes on the prize: Documents, speeches, and firsthand accounts from the Black freedom struggle, 1954-1990 (Civil rights reader).* New York, NY: Penguin.

Dantley, M.E. (2009). African American educational leadership: Critical, purposive, and spiritual. African American perspectives on leadership in schools: Building a culture of empowerment. In L. Foster & L. C. Tillman (Eds.), *African American perspectives on leadership in schools: Building a culture of empowerment* (pp. 39-55). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Dantley, M.E. (2010). Successful leadership in urban schools: Principals and critical spirituality, a new approach to reform. *The Journal of Negro Education, 79*(3), 214-219.

Derrida, J. (1987). The laws of reflection: Nelson Mandela, in admiration. In J. Derrida and M. Tlili (Eds.), *For Nelson Mandela* (pp. 13-42). New York, NY: Seaver.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Logic the Theory of Inquiry*. N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Dimmock, C., & Walker, A. (2005). *Educational leadership: Culture and diversity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Doeden, M. (2014). *Nelson Mandela: World leader for human rights*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner.

Durrant, J. E. & Smith, A. (Eds.). (2011). *Global pathways to abolishing physical punishment: Realizing children's rights*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Farmer, A., Neier, A., & Parker, A. (2008). *A Violent Education: Corporal Punishment of Children in US Public Schools*. New York: Human Rights Watch.

Freire, P, (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed: 30th anniversary edition*. New York, NY: Continuum. (Originally published 1970)

Gandhi, M. H. (1968a). Satyagraha in South Africa (Trans. V. G. Desai). In S. Narayan (Ed.), *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Volume Two*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan.

Gandhi, M. H. (1968b). *The voice of truth* (Trans. V. G. Desai). Ahmedabad: Navajivan.

Giroux, H. (2015, December 25). *America's addiction to violence*. Retrieved from http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/12/25/americas-addiction-to-violence-2/

Houston, P. D., & Sokolow, S. L. (2006). *The spiritual dimensions of leadership: 8 key principles to leading more effectively*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Jenlink, P. M. (2010).The scholar–practitioner's obligation. *Scholar–Practitioner Quarterly, 4*(1), 1-10.

Jenlink, P. (Ed.). (2014). *Educational leadership and moral literacy: The dispositional aims of moral leaders*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Kiersz, A. (2014, June 10). The number of school shootings in the US has gotten out of control. *Business Insider* (online). Retrieved December 16, 2015 from www.businessinsider.com/school-shootings-chart-2014-6

King, Jr., M. L. (1994). *I've been to the mountaintop*. San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco.

Kozy, J. (2016). *Violence: The American way of life*. Retrieved from http://www.globalresearch.ca/violence-the-american-way-of-life/5318698

Larkford, A. (2013). A comparative analysis of suicide terrorists and rampage, workplace, and school shooters in the United States from 1990 to 2010. *Homicide Studies, 17*(3), 255-274.

Lowery, C. L. (2014). Faith, humility, and hope: Freire's critical consciousness for repairing the world. *Scholar–Practitioner Quarterly*, *7*(2), 125-136.

Lowery, C. L., Gautam, C. N., & Mays, C. D. (2015). The Buddha metaphor: The teacher-seeker, the wheel-turner, the scholar-practitioner. *Scholar–Practitioner Quarterly, 8*(2), 109-125.

Narayan, S. (Ed.). (1995). *The selected works of Mahatma Gandhi*. Ahmedabad, India: Navajivan Publishing.

Nix, T. (2014). Moral critique. In P. Jenlink, (Ed.), *Educational leadership and moral literacy: The dispositional aims of moral leaders* (pp. 123-132). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Palmer, P. J. (2011). *Healing the heart of democracy: The courage to create a politics worthy of the human spirit*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Pava, M. (2011). *Jewish ethics in a post-Madoff world: A case for optimism*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Portela, M. J. O., & Pells, K. (2015). *Corporal punishment in schools: Longitudinal evidence from Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Viet Nam*. Florence, Italy: UNICEF Office of Research.

Shields, C. M. (2013). *Transformative leadership in education: Equitable change in an uncertain and complex world*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Starratt, R. J. (2012). *Cultivating an ethical school*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Stenberg, S. J. (2006). Liberation theology and liberatory pedagogies: Renewing the dialogue. *College English, 68*(3), 271-290.

TimeToast. (n.d.). *School shootings in the U.S. (1900 to today)* [Digital Timeline]. Retrieved December 16, 2015 from www.timetoast.com/timelines/school-shootings-in-the-us-1900-to-today

Tuana, N. (2007). Conceptualizing moral literacy. *Journal of Educational Administration, 45*(4), 364-378.

Walker, R. J. (2007). *Let my people go! The miracle of the Montgomery bus boycott*. Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books.