Quaker Higher Education QHE

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How to establish and nurture right relationships? Most of the pieces in this issue grew out of the June 2014 conference of the Friends Association for Higher Education at Haverford College. This year's conference included many passionate and careful explorations of how we can support each other, our students, and our society.

This is a milestone issue of QHE! The founder and editor for many years, Donn Weinholtz, has decided to pass the torch to other hands. We begin this issue with a letter of appreciation from all of FAHE for Donn's work on this journal.

We also welcome a new co-editor to the task of continuing what Donn started: Abigail E. Adams, Professor and Chair of Anthropology at Central Connecticut State University and familiar presence at FAHE gatherings every June. An alumna of Haverford College, where she first studied anthropology, she carries out research in Central America and New England. Abigail and her family are members of Storrs Friends Meeting in Connecticut. Welcome aboard, Abigail!

Ari Betof, head of New Garden Friends School and a member of the Board of Directors of the Friends Council on Education, shares with us his thoughts on the financial challenges facing Quaker Education today, and why we need to avoid a naïve revulsion of fundraising.

Douglas J. Burks and Cathy Pitzer of Wilmington College join David Ross of Bryn Mawr College in an analysis of how the choice to structure higher education after a particular kind of corporate business model has led to a commodification of education. Is this a modernization or a Faustian bargain?

Laura Rediehs, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Coordinator of Peace Studies at St. Lawrence University, builds on the financial theme by taking a wider look at how far the values of our money-driven society lie from Quaker values, and what we might be able to do to counter this "Economic Idolatry."

Lonnie Valentine, of the Earlham School of Religion, takes a closer look at a particular aspect of Friends' relationship with money: he provides a historical overview of the Quakers' stance on the responsibility of the citizen to the state with regards to the financial support of war. As the Society has never spoken with one voice on this topic, it is indeed "Unfinished Business."

Finally, Diana White shares her challenging and insightful experiences as a "Black Belt Yankee," a New England Quaker teaching in the nursing program at Tuskegee University. Her "chatty ethnographic view of three years in Alabama" poses questions about our right relationships to our students, each other, and our history in the United States.

We also include two images from Ron Todd's photo series "Real Toys." Ron is a Professor Emeritus of Art at Central Connecticut State University and taught photography, video and media.

Submissions: *QHE* is published twice a year, in the spring and the fall. Articles submitted for possible publication should be sent as Word documents to: either **dsmith4@guilford.edu** or to **adams@ccsu.edu**. Since *QHE* is not wed to any particular referencing format, you may use the professional style of your choice. In case you want to send a hard copy, our addresses are: **Donald Smith**, Guilford College, 5800 West Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410 and **Abigail E. Adams**, Anthropology, Central Connecticut State University, 1615 Stanley St., New Britain, CT 06050. If you would like to discuss an idea that you have for an article, our telephone numbers are: 336-316-2162 (DS) and 860-832-2616 (AA).

FAHE ANNUAL CONFERENCE
June 18-21, 2015

Mark your calendars now for June 18-21, 2015. FAHE will meet at George Fox University to consider "*Truth and Transformation*." The call for papers with queries will be made available at the FAHE web site; submissions will be accepted and reviewed in the fall and winter.

FAHE

Donn Weinholtz steps down as editor of QHE

In 2006, Donn Weinholtz, Professor of Educational Leadership at the University of Hartford, and long-time member of the Friends Association for Higher Education, was inspired to begin an on-line journal: "Quaker Higher Education." Impressed by the quality and value of the presentations being made at the annual FAHE conferences, Donn envisioned the possibility of making certain of the best of these available to a broader public, beyond those who were able to be present in the session itself. Endorsed by the FAHE Executive Committee, but doing almost all of the heavy lifting himself, Donn oversaw the production and publishing of Volume 1: Issue 1 of "Quaker Higher Education" in April of 2007. Thus began Donn's faithful editorship of two issues per year since then, taking responsibility for the editorship of the first nine issues on his own. In the autumn of 2011, Don Smith, Associate Professor of Physics at Guilford College, joined Donn as co-editor, and together they have edited the last six issues of QHE, up to and including the April 2014 edition.

Donn Weinholtz was, moreover, the principal driving force behind FAHE's first print book: *Quaker Perspectives in Higher Education*. Joined by his QHE co-editor Don Smith and current FAHE clerk Jeffrey Dudiak, many of the best articles from the first seven volumes of QHE were selected with the aim of providing an overview of the variety and depth of work being done under the auspices of FAHE, issued in book form.

After fifteen issues and seven-and-a-half years of dedicated labor at QHE, Donn deserves a rest! Beginning with Volume 8: Issue 2, Donn will be stepping down as editor, and the reigns of "Quaker Higher Education" will fall into the hands of the current co-editor, Don Smith, who will be joined by a new co-editor, Abigail E. Adams, chair of the Anthropology Department at Central Connecticut State University.

We at FAHE profoundly thank Donn for his vision, his initiative, his energy, and his able editorship of our very own FAHE journal over the course of the last seven-and-one-half years. What a wonderful gift Donn has given us!

Jeff Dudiak
The King's University, Alberta
Chair, FAHE Executive Committee, September 2014

The Synergy of Doing Good and Doing Well to Do Good

Ari Betof
New Garden Friends School

Friends schools and colleges are exceptional because of the people in our educational communities. We are what we are because of who we are. Embedded within this strength are the challenging realities of our expense and revenue structure.

Education is expensive. Student-centered education is more expensive. And education in a manner and quality consistent to our Quaker core is even more expensive. Our schools and colleges are staffed by talented, dedicated, and caring professionals. The largest portions of our budgets are committed to employing individuals who walk cheerfully over our campuses answering that of God in our students and in each other.

We ask much of the faculty, counselors, learning specialists, nurses, coaches, and support staff (as well as those of us who are administrators). Professionals deserve to wake each morning knowing that they can support their families and can look forward to the security of a comfortable retirement. The sum total of these costs alone places our tuitions in a range that is increasingly inaccessible to most Americans without significant financial aid.

That reality leaves us in a challenging place. A fundamental tension exists for Friends schools and colleges as organizations that offer a premium service at a premium price while embracing simplicity and eschewing luxury.

The difference between *luxury* and *premium* is more than a nuance. The definition in Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary of *luxury* includes, "*something adding to pleasure or comfort but not absolutely necessary…an indulgence in something that provides pleasure, satisfaction, or ease.*" In contrast, the definition of premium includes, "*of high or higher than normal quality*."

Learning at a Friends school or college is challenging, engaging, and meaningful. I loved the pairing of academic rigor and intellectual collaboration that I found as a student at George School and Guilford College. At New Garden Friends School, we teach our students to both listen deeply and have their voice be heard. Our schools and colleges push students (nonviolently!) and they push us back. It is exciting, intellectually stimulating, and at times exhausting. We wrestle with hard questions and look for elegant answers. Although they may be rewarding, gratifying, and meaningful, these efforts are not *comfortable* and they are rarely *pleasurable* in the sense of the definition.

In contrast, I would argue that our schools are of *higher than normal quality* and the value of what we teach is much needed in today's world. As one head of school shared in my 2011 study of financial and organizational sustainability of Friends Schools, "I have never seen a time when the values that we have held since the inception of the

[Religious] Society [of Friends] are more relevant and more pertinent." This Friend speaks my mind.

Such meaningful education can only happen if we steward viable nonprofit organizations. Financial capacity provides the fuel for our schools and colleges to live their mission. We must, year after year, cultivate adequate organizational capacity and agility in a manner consistent with Quaker values and Quaker-based decision making practices. This good work requires openhearted engagement and partnership with people who have considerable financial capacity.

Divergent perspectives about wealth and the simplicity testimony have existed in Quaker communities since the beginning of our religion. More than three centuries later, there is little discourse and even less, if any, sense of unity within Friends communities on the topic of wealth. Friends have long embraced thrift as an aspect of living a simple life. We pride ourselves on striving to use only what we need, and we stretch to do more with less. And that brings us to issues of wealth and simplicity.

Hamm (2003) writes, "On both sides of the Atlantic, Quaker thrift, moderation, and reputation for fair dealing had brought considerable wealth" (p. 32). "The relationship in the minds of Friends between wealth and simplicity is particularly complex.... Certainly, for three centuries now Quakers have had the reputation of generally being economically well off. For some Quaker families, being indifferent to wealth while at the same time possessing it was a mark of a life lived in the Light" (pp. 104, 105).

Ackrill and Hannah (2001) suggest that by the early 18th century, "growing Quaker wealth [in Europe] set definite limits to strict Quaker practice" (p. 38). They go on to suggest a less spiritual reason for the depletion of Quaker wealth, especially wealth held by private Quaker bankers. "Informal processes of social exclusion, requirements to abandon slavery and to embrace pacifism, and a formal ban on marriage to non-Quakers [by Friends Meetings] were the root causes of Quaker depletion" (p. 39).

There has certainly been a decline of wealth in the Quaker community since the days when major buildings in Philadelphia were named after wealthy Quaker families. Since wealthy Quakers founded so many Friends schools and colleges, it leads one to wonder about the origins of this distain for wealth. What was the impetus? When did it originate? Why did it take hold? No systematic investigation of such perceptions over the last century illuminates the development of these viewpoints. A rigorous study of this depletion of wealth and the changing perceptions about wealth during that period would be informative. Even without such research, it is clear that varied perceptions about the accumulation and use of wealth fosters a point of conflict and has for many years.

There is a fine line between fiscal prudence and foolhardy, shortsighted frugality. On the wrong side, the picture looks very different than a commitment to simplicity and equality. Badly designed buildings do not stand the test of time. Underfunded budgets lead to enormous deferred maintenance expenses. Thoughtful educators spend their time fighting with outdated technology rather than engaging with students. Schools and colleges lose deeply dedicated faculty by forcing a choice between love for the institution and adequate compensation to support one's family. Students who are able to thrive at the school or college are unable to enroll due to a lack of financial aid. These are manifestations that seem inconsistent with our identity as Quaker-based institutions.

One of the clearest findings of the 2011 study was that the heads of school were deeply concerned with cultivating adequate organizational capacity to carry out the school's mission. In his most recent book *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*, Malcolm Gladwell raised public awareness about the importance of being located at the right point when operating in a reverse U-shaped curve environment. For example, there is danger in having too little human capacity because the school will not be able to perform needed functions. There is also danger in having too much human capacity, because it will go unused and be wasted. It is a Goldilocks problem. Schools need to have organizational capacity in just the right amount—not too little and not too much.

Lack of adequate organizational capacity will rob either current or future students of the best education the school or college can provide. As one head described, a school risks "eat[ing] its own corpus" by stretching its people, physical resources, and program too thin. Another head of school shared, "I am realizing that our school has been burning muscle for the past several years" leaving staff feeling "profoundly tired." The risk of damage caused by inadequate capacity has long existed for Friends schools and colleges. It was exacerbated by the acute nature of the Great Recession and remains an issue that many of our schools have not yet fully navigated.

With little that can be done on the expense side, the solution to expand organizational capacity must come from increasing revenue. In that part of the income statement, the two big levers are tuition revenue and philanthropic support. Both revenue streams connect back to decades-old conversations about wealth.

The tension that exists within Friends schools and colleges around wealth is not bad in itself. Embracing tension creates opportunities for discussion. A head of school described how one could lift up discourse about wealth for students in a productive manner suggesting, "[T]hese kinds of conversations…actually help us clarify who we are [and] what we are as Quaker schools." As one head said, "We need to become more comfortable talking about money." Another head explained: "It has struck me how cautious one needs to be in a Quaker setting about the language of money and wealth… You don't want to get trapped into demonizing wealth, as if wealth is categorically or automatically bad."

Demonizing wealth depresses tuition revenue and fundraising capacity. It also undermines the core ethos of respect in a Friends educational community. We pride ourselves on inclusion and acceptance of others. A longtime head of school described that disdain for wealth "is a kind of peculiar Quaker phenomenon—we ought not to hold [significant personal wealth] against people." Another head shared, "We really need to get over this suspicion, almost reverse discrimination against people who make [significant fundraising] possible." Condescension toward those who want to provide significant philanthropic support is inconsistent with our values, a challenge to daily operations, and a threat to sustainability.

Negative connotations about fundraising within the board of trustees are particularly challenging. As one head of school explained, "It has been hard getting people, especially the board, to commit to fundraising. They would like you to have a lot of money at the school to do the things you want to do, but they do not want to be part of it. They want somebody else to do that." Another head described a "kind of non-fundraising tradition," and explained, "At some moment in the school's history … [it must be] decided that it is okay to raise money… But it comes at a price because you get resented for it. Many people accuse you of abandoning Friends values."

In contrast, lifting up discourse creates the opportunity for a virtuous cycle: openness creates more funding, additional financial capacity improves the education of students and the retention of faculty, programmatic quality encourages others to support the school, and the cycle continues.

A clear manifestation of this cycle is the building of endowment for financial aid. If we want our schools to embrace diversity in all of its dimensions, we must be able to infuse our annual budgets with funding to support great students with significant financial need. Building endowment is often a long process, but every year we do not make progress is a year we are further dislocated from our rising tuitions. Asking for gifts in support of endowed financial aid is my favorite fundraising ask because it is so literally about who the school is as a community and about impacting students' lives.

Issues of organizational sustainability and varying perceptions of wealth can be uncomfortable to address openly, but Friends schools and colleges teach our students how to have hard conversations—to listen deeply and still have their voices heard about issues such as equality, violence, and ethics to name just a few. An opportunity exists for Friends schools to draw upon Quaker practices of discernment to lift up issues of stewardship and financial sustainability. Group processes like threshing sessions and clearness committees are well suited for difficult discussions. Our schools and colleges have used these approaches to consider difficult issues in the past: slavery, race relations, sexual orientation, war, and violent conflict. This is a mostly untapped resource for financial issues.

Our communities of practice entered (and in some cases exited) the Great Recession largely unprepared to engage in dialogue around financial issues. Friends schools and colleges need not stay that way. We can continue getting better at honoring the gifts that each family brings, including embracing those who are committed to the concept of doing well to do good and supporting our educational communities in the process.

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The Commodification of Quaker Higher Education in America

Douglas J. Burks, Cathy Pitzer
Wilmington College
& David Ross
Bryn Mawr College

> And like the corporations, whose appetite for "growth" now seems ungovernable, the institutions of government, education and religion are now all too likely to measure their success in terms of size and number. All institutions seem to have learned to imitate the organizational structures and to adopt the values and aims of industrial corporations. It is astonishing to realize how quickly and shamelessly doctors, lawyers, and even college professors have taken to drumming up trade…
>
> (Barry, 2000, p.25)

As members of the higher education community in America, we too often believe that we understand the complex system in which we participate and work every day. We are all familiar with trends such as the increased use of part time and adjunct faculty, the tendency for administrators to act like corporate management, and the propensity to regard students as consumers. Market forces now drive colleges to such a degree that the nature of higher education has changed. Liberal education, values and mission driven curricula, and preparation for civic engagement are disappearing from the heart of the educational experience, threatening the last stronghold of liberal education, the small, private religiously associated college. Commodification and commercialization define higher education in the Twenty First Century, even at Quaker-related colleges.

The term "commercialization of education" was first popularized by Wesley Shumar in his book College for Sale: A Critique of the Commodification of Higher Education (1997). The concept was later expounded upon by Derek Bok, former president of Harvard University, in Universities in the Marketplace: the Commercialization of Higher Education (2003). Bok delineated this trend to evaluate education in terms of volume as encompassing changing patterns of research, academics, athletics, administration, admissions and marketing, rising use of adjunct and part-time faculty, and increasing amounts of debt.

Prior to the Twentieth century, most colleges (excepting land grant universities) focused on religion, philosophy, the arts and the moral and civic development of students. In the early Twentieth century, however, this focus began to change, especially at larger universities, towards technology, industry, and serving economic interests. Boards of Trustees, once comprised of ministers and educators, became dominated by business leaders. Similarly, the locus of decision-making changed from faculty to administration and the application of the principles of business administration became paramount.

A significant leap forward in the movement towards a market orientation occurred after World War II, with the influx into higher education of two million former military personnel under the GI bill. While these students had the effect of democratizing higher education, they also spurred the growth of a career orientation in the curriculum for a growing economy that needed managers, marketers, and accountants. The 1960s and 1970s saw an additional influx of students from middle, lower middle and lower income families. The idealism of the l960s was short lived, and was soon replaced by students whose major goal was to improve their economic condition. For the vast majority of college students the emphasis is upon job training and the acquisition of credentials. Students and parents have embraced this idea, perhaps understandably so when tuition costs commonly exceed $30,000 a year, and students often graduate with a large amount of debt.

The trend towards operating colleges as a business has been reinforced by the federal government in the last decade. The "Spellings' Report", for example, a study commissioned by the Secretary of Education in 2006, envisioned higher education as in crisis, and recommended "policymakers and higher education leaders should develop, at the institutional level, new and innovative means to control costs, improve productivity, and increase the supply of higher education" (this report was criticized by the AAUP for its focus upon "managerial approaches to solve systemic dysfunctions").

Religiously-linked colleges, such as the historically Quaker colleges, have not been immune to these trends. They are in fact the institutions most disadvantaged by the new market-driven environment. Kent Chabotar, past President of Guilford College, identified those colleges most at risk in a 2014 Chronicle of Higher Education article by Scott Carlson, as small, private four year colleges without large endowments, a description that fits many of the Quaker colleges, five of which had endowments that totaled less than $25 million in 2013 (NACUBO, 2014). These small colleges, which are particularly tuition dependent, are facing the challenges of rising discount rates, enrollment declines, stagnation in net revenues, cuts in state aid, competition from online providers, increased price sensitivity on the part of students and parents, and a smaller, regional pool of traditional students from whom they largely draw. Even the more "elite" Quaker colleges, with larger endowments, have been shaped by these trends. Daniel Weiss, President of Haverford College, which currently has an endowment that exceeds $300 million, cautioned attendees at the 2014 annual conference of the Friends Association for Higher Education, that colleges could no longer take a "business as usual" approach. Weiss particularly stressed the impact that escalating operating costs are having on college budgets, leading to tuition rises that are not sustainable over the long term.

Budget constraints have resulted in increasing emphasis on marketing colleges to prospective students, who are now seen as consumers of education. Marketing has become increasingly refined with the advent of the Internet and social media. Every college has redesigned its website. Most have adopted "branding" campaigns that involve new school colors, logos, mascots and taglines. Wilmington College, for example, adopted a new logo and brightened its green colors, changed its tagline to "hands on learning, hands on living", and prominently features a "Quakerman" mascot on its webpage. Earlham College recently launched its "fully present" brand initiative in 2013, while George Fox adopted a new logo for its Bruins, described on its website as "classically collegiate" with an "aggressive modern edge". Websites prominently feature blogs, videos and RSS feeds, and links to social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Google+, Instagram, You Tube, LinkedIn, and even Pinterest.

College brochures, view books and websites portray their product not as an education, but as an experience that includes friendship, athletics, internships, independent research, musical and theatrical productions, and service learning. Prospective students are encouraged to enhance their leadership skills, increase their self esteem, participate in sports, and travel abroad. Nowhere is there any indication that students must attend class, take tests, use the library, write papers or, perish the thought, study. Wesley Shumar, in College for Sale, summarizes a typical college marketing handout:

> This whole fantasy scene is (fresh from the documentary cameraman's darkroom) a pleasing image of fun, affluence, excitement, activity, and has no reference to college anywhere… It's no accident the catalog looks like a Gap ad; this is a typical product of mass advertising, complete with demographics on the projected college audience and assessments–read conscious manipulation–of that audience's concerns (76).

Websites of Quaker colleges also promote their latest rankings on "U.S. News and World Report" or "Washington Monthly", inclusion as a "Best Buy" in Fiske Guide, holder of a "Green Rating" in the Princeton Guide to Green Colleges, listing in Colleges That Change Lives, and even their designation as a "Military Friendly School". While the purpose of this marketing is to differentiate one college from another, the approach is universal. Recruitment and retention are now handled by "enrollment management" offices with finely tuned strategies designed by market consultants, who sell their services and approach to competitor schools.

Academics have been affected in many ways by the commercialization and commodification of education. Because education now centers upon career orientation, one obvious impact has been the proliferation on liberal arts campuses of applied majors, once limited to nursing and education. At Wilmington College, for example, sports management and athletic training are now two of the largest majors. Even within majors concentrations are much more applied; many biology departments, for example, now focus their curricula on pre-professional preparedness, health science fields, and forensics. A second obvious impact has been a shift in emphasis from the residential campus to online and branch education, in an effort to capitalize on an expanding market of non-traditional students. There has also been a movement towards accelerated and block formatted courses. Traditional liberal arts majors with limited enrollments may run the risk of budget cuts or even elimination.

The process of education has also changed. In an environment where credentialism is emphasized, and courses and scheduling are often designed for scheduling convenience, students arguably become less engaged in their course work. They expect to be told exactly what they need to know and how to do it. They expect that they will be provided the content directly with little effort on their part. How often do faculty hear “I pay your salary”? The converse is to what extent have we, as faculty, designed our teaching and interaction with students to provide what they are seeking? Students expect access to class lectures and notes on Blackboard, detailed instructions for assignments (White, 2007, 593-604), and assessment rubrics in the syllabus. The result is students who are passive rather than active learners. In an atmosphere of buying a degree while spending the least possible amount of time and effort in doing so, students expect professors to do “anything and everything possible” to insure they receive good grades. This may include review sheets, power points, notes passed out in class, extra credit opportunities, 24 hour e-mail communication, open book tests, and opportunities to retake examinations.

The excesses of big-time athletics in NCAA Division One programs are well known. All Quaker colleges belong to either the NCAA Division III or the less competitive NAIA, with the exception of Malone University, which is NCAA Division II. It would be incorrect, however, to assume these schools are immune to commercializing athletics. To the contrary, most Quaker schools average one-third to one-half of their students involved in club or intercollegiate sports, with a high of 70% at William Penn University (College Express, 2013). Playing sports is often the deciding factor for where to go to college for those students who are not quite good enough to play at Division I or II schools. Large sums, therefore, are devoted by colleges to recruit these students, and new athletic facilities are a major draw. Within the last ten years, according to the respective college websites, Haverford has built a new indoor integrated athletic center; Bryn Mawr opened the Gardner Center, an integrated athletic complex; William Penn built a massive indoor field house; Earlham began construction on a new million dollar baseball complex; Guilford completed a new golf complex; Wilmington began construction on a new athletic/athletic training building, the Center for Sport Sciences; and George Fox University completed a new outdoor athletic complex.

At most of these colleges the number of sports offered has expanded, partly in response to Title IX requirements, but also to attract new students; recently added sports at many schools include lacrosse, competitive cheerleading and dance, and water polo; George Fox University began an intercollegiate football team after a 46-year hiatus. The jobs of coaches and assistant coaches now focus more around recruiting than on coaching and the number of coaches and assistant coaches employed by schools sometimes rivals the number of full time faculty. Haverford lists more than 65 coaches and assistant coaches on its website. Almost all schools now feature live video, audio and stats, have an Athletic Hall of Fame, and prominently advertise winning teams on their websites. It would be hard to argue that these programs are highly related to the mission of Quaker colleges, particularly as resources devoted to wellness and intramural activities for students not interested in intercollegiate competition are often minimal.

One of the most controversial trends in higher education has been the shift in expenditures from instructional costs to administration and student services. This trend began in the 1970s; between 1975 and 1995 the number of faculty nationally increased by 5.9% while the number of administrative positions increased by 17.9% (Shumar, 1997, p.72). By 2009, according to the Delta Cost Project (2009) only 39% of funds expended by private bachelor's colleges were spent on instructional costs, with the remainder going to student services (17%) and administration and administrative support (44%) In terms of organizational structure, this has meant the proliferation of vice-presidents and associate and assistant vice-presidents, many of whom earn much more than full time faculty. Federal tax returns filed by colleges identify the five highest earning employees. Prior to 1990 these were generally faculty (excepting the President). Now they are generally all administrators. As faculty salaries stagnate and as full time faculty are replaced by part-time and adjunct employees, faculty worry that their power has been reduced.

Paralleling trends seen in private industry, colleges are increasingly concentrating on their "core competencies", while outsourcing units such as bookstores, food service, student health care, computer services, maintenance, and web design. Since about half of all college courses are now taught by adjunct or part time faculty, it can be argued that even the "core competency" of teaching is now being outsourced.

What are the impacts of the commercialization of education upon liberal arts colleges and their students? First, the idea that the primary purposes of education are the growth of the individual, self- knowledge, and preparation for living a life of purpose and civic involvement, has become passé. This is particularly true at institutions that are less competitive in their admissions and where there is a large percentage of first generation college students. Only the few "elite" Quaker colleges still center on a "traditional" liberal arts education. Carol Roderick (2010) has pointed out that students are themselves being commodified in college. They are pressured to turn themselves into marketable products, particularly in the senior year when they are transitioning to life after graduation. This process may include selecting an applied major, undertaking internships, setting long term career goals, developing skills sought by employers, networking, and developing an online presence on sites such as Linkedin. Exploring personal interests, becoming a well-rounded person, majoring in a traditional liberal arts field, developing a philosophy of life, or imagining and working for a better world, are objectives that are seen as "self-indulgent and frivolous" (p. 57).

Mission-driven, religiously-affiliated liberal arts colleges, such as those comprising the Friends Association for Higher Education, need to push back. A clear vision of the meaning of education in a liberal arts college is needed, now more than ever. Our colleges need to remain true to that vision, and most importantly, articulate that vision for today's families. The academy needs to find a balance between educating the individual for a life of meaning and educating for participation in the market economy.

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Right Relationship to the Economic System: Countering Economic Idolatry

Laura Rediehs
St. Lawrence University

Mainstream American culture is increasingly guilty of economic idolatry: placing economic considerations at the center of decision making, even above ethical considerations, and demanding that we each, above all, serve the economy, as workers, consumers, or investors. "The economy" has become a god, though not a god of unconditional love; this god is taken to be central in providing for all of our needs, but also demands our exacting obedience.[1]

There are many ways we have come to let economic considerations trump ethical ones in our decision-making. For example, we have become accustomed to thinking that economic factors make it impossible to address global climate change, alleviate poverty, or provide good education and health care to all. But these ethical goods are not economically impossible. Furthermore, it may be economic rather than ethical factors that are the main determinants of war, since our system allows some people to profit from war without having to fully face its negative consequences or account for its ineffectiveness.

And the economic system dehumanizes us. We increasingly demand that humans serve the economic system instead of insisting that the economic system serve humans and their ethical goals. Many consumers are forced to go into debt to be able to pay for their houses, cars, and education. Those who cannot even qualify for such loans still often go into debt in other ways to make ends meet. Workers are increasingly exploited; pressured to do more for less pay or risk losing their jobs.

Our proper relationship to money has become inverted: we have come to regard money as an end in itself, when really money is a means to other ends. When we say, "We cannot afford to do what is right," we invert right relationship. To restore right relationship, we need to be asking: "How can we use what money we have to do what is right?" The ethical requirements are clear. Where they are disputed is frequently because those who benefit from economic inequality do not want to give up their privilege. But those are the people who are in power. So, how can we address this problem? Can we gain insights from how power is analyzed in theories of nonviolent action?

The hardest problem faced by advocates of peace and nonviolence is how to stop the harm caused by violent uses of power without using violence in turn. The answer offered by the field of peace studies is that there is a third way to respond to threats, beyond fight or flight: a way that directly engages power, but nonviolently. Theorists of nonviolence have compared this third way to *jiu jitsu*, which operates by capturing the energy

[1] I have written about this concern in essays and sermons that can be found on my university blog page.

of the aggressor and either defusing it or channeling it towards a resolution of the underlying conflict.

One prominent way that power is wielded in today's world is through money. Money for most of us is a means towards ends, most especially the ends of survival and opportunity. But for many who are wealthy, money is power. Money can be used to manipulate political power and the economic system itself. In 1932, Bertrand Russell noted: "Finance, like war, suffers from the fact that almost all those who have technical competence also have a bias which is contrary to the interest of the community" (91-92). This sad fact is still true today: the power wielded by money is often used to further the interests of the wealthy instead of the interests of the community as a whole. Meanwhile, those without the technical competence to understand the economic system fail to perceive this abuse of power, or feel powerless themselves to effect change.

How might we employ the techniques of nonviolent change to address the kind of violence implicit in this abuse of power? According to Gene Sharp in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, the basic process is to begin with education, protest, and persuasion, and if that fails, then to move into forms of nonviolent coercion, which Sharp subdivides into noncooperation and nonviolent intervention.

Russell pointed out that education about finance is difficult:

> Hardly anybody knows about it in detail except those who are engaged in making money out of the present system, who naturally cannot take wholly impartial views. . . . One of the impediments to successful democracy in our age is the complexity of the modern world, which makes it increasingly difficult for ordinary men and women to form an intelligent opinion on political questions, or even to decide whose expert judgment deserves the most respect (92).

Nevertheless, Russell insists that "the cure for this trouble is to improve education" (ibid.). Quaker writings can provide the basis for such an education on ethics and economics, from John Woolman's "A Plea for the Poor," to the work of Kenneth Boulding and the more recent works on economic issues produced by contemporary Quaker economists and Quaker organizations such as the Friends Economic Integrity Project of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and the Quaker Institute for the Future.

Persuasion must be attempted, and this is a strategy employed by Quaker organizations such as the Friends Committee on National Legislation and the American Friends Service Committee. There are many ways that each of us, in our daily lives, can continue the ongoing work of education and persuasion, by witnessing against economic idolatry and in favor of grounding decision making in ethics to support the common good.

But are there also more direct ways we can begin to change the structures of power? Are there analogues to Sharp's methods of noncooperation and nonviolent intervention? Generally, of course, cooperation is good. We humans are interdependent beings, and cooperating in a well-ordered society benefits all of us. But Gandhi, after reading Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience"[2] and Tolstoy's "Letter to a Hindu,"[3] had noted how his people were, to a great extent, complicit in their own oppression. Cooperation within an unjust system of power helps to hold that power in place. Gandhi's insight was that the refusal to cooperate with injustice weakens that injustice. Sharp catalogues the ways that such "noncooperation" can be applied, socially, economically, or politically, to weaken unjust structures of power. "Nonviolent intervention" consists of more assertive tactics, including ones that actively disrupt existing structures of power, or replace existing structures with alternatives. Such tactics are often called "direct action" in that they act more directly even than violence on the structure of power itself. Without harming individuals, these tactics change power relations.

The effective use of both noncooperation and nonviolent intervention requires developing a good understanding of exactly how the current structure of power operates, and how our complicity enables and supports it. It further requires the ability to envision a more just alternative, and to develop ways to use nonviolent action to begin the process of realizing that alternative. For example, when Gandhi had the Indian people make their own salt and clothing, he not only employed noncooperation to weaken the Indian people's support of British production, he also employed nonviolent intervention by encouraging the people to begin the process of living out their independence and self-sufficiency. Similarly, in the Civil Rights Movement, when black and white students together organized lunch-counter sit-ins in the segregated south of the U.S., not only did they weaken the economic standing of the stores that refused service to African-Americans, but they also displayed to the world what harmonious racial integration looks like.

Our economic system as a whole has good aspects and problematic aspects. What we want to change are the problematic aspects, including the economic idolatry that motivates and drives the development of those problematic aspects. One way that economic idolatry manifests is through those who seek money as a way to gain power, and who then use that power to manipulate the system to serve their own interests instead of serving the common good. We can tell this is happening when we see the rich become richer while the poor become poorer: it is a sign that the system is changing to favor those with the most power. Because of this way that economic idolatry brings forth the problematic aspects of our economic system, one way of potentially addressing these problems is to counter economic idolatry by challenging and transforming the patterns of thinking and speaking that support it.

We also must examine the ways that we ourselves participate in the problematic aspects of the system, and find creative ways to stop supporting these, to break them down, or to replace them with new structures that are more just. It is easy to become discouraged when we become aware of the limitations of our knowledge and the lack of our access to power. But it is important to note that the lack of self-confidence behind such discouragement is itself systemic—those in power maintain their dominance in

[2] Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"

[3] Tolstoy, Leo, "A Letter to a Hindu"

part by reinforcing this lack of confidence by closing off access to knowledge and power.

Saul Alinsky, in his *Rules for Radicals*, offers valuable advice that can help us here: he advises activists to remain close to their own experience. Once we develop the self-confidence to take our own experience seriously, it becomes a treasure-trove of data revealing the problems of the existing system and the keys to the transformation to a new and more just system. The knowledge that arises from the authenticity of one's own experience is knowledge that those in power have trouble anticipating, because the very way they have built a barrier to keep ordinary people out of their elite world has also blocked them from perceiving this knowledge. Standpoint theorists, such as Sandra Harding, point out that the marginalized are thus positioned to gain a more objective view of the situation than those at the center of power, because they can see more clearly than the privileged exactly what that power is, how it works, and what effects it really has.

It is clear that those who are poor are marginalized in the economic system, but increasingly so is the middle class. Just as Gandhi and King both could perceive the injustice of marginalization more clearly than most because they both also had experiences of dignity and justice, so too is the middle class in the U.S. today uniquely situated to perceive the exact nature of the growing economic injustice because of watching their own situations get worse. This experience offers tremendous potential for transformative insight.

We must, however, also realize that there are great forces at play that threaten this transformative potential. We are discouraged from taking our experience seriously. We are shamed into interpreting our struggles and declining circumstances as personal weaknesses, which we then try to hide.

But if we face our own experiences honestly and learn to see them for exactly what they are, we learn how power operates. From our struggles and our pain we learn to perceive what is wrong and unjust. From our longings we can develop a vision for a system that is more just. From keenly watching the dynamics of our own motivation, we gain insight into both our own internal sources of power and how external power gains its hold on us. Thus do we develop the ability to perceive where we are complicit in supporting injustice, and how we might participate in transforming it into justice. To paraphrase George Fox, let us strive to live "in the virtue of that life and power" that takes away the occasion of all economic injustice.

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Quakers and War Taxes: Unfinished Business?

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The primary stance of early Friends on the question of the payment of war taxes to the government was clear until John Woolman and a few others in colonial Pennsylvania felt led to move beyond the established position. His insight has yet to be realized. So, this paper briefly presents these positions for background if we ask what we might now do since some—or most—of our federal taxes are used for war.

Early Friends were born in revolution and were a large part of that revolution, but their position on war during the English Civil war can be confusing. Contemporary historians warn us that these early Friends did not have much in common with us today. Those Quakers were turning the world upside down, taking down the pillars that held up the social system of England. They attacked the political structures, economic arrangements, religion, and the military.

Early Friends mounted their attack by joining the revolutionary army, which they saw as the most significant way to overthrow those in power. Here are a couple of words to the army from important early Friends:

> Spare none, neither old nor young: kill, cut off, destroy, bathe your sword in the blood of Amalek, and all the Egyptians, and Philistines, and all the uncircumcised—Francis Howgill, 1655 (In Brock, p. 12)

> It will teach you in your places to serve the living God, and to do violence to no man, but to be terror, and reprovers, and correctors of all violence, and of such who live in it. And it will teach you not to strengthen the hands of evildoers, but to lay your swords in justice upon every one that does evil. And it will teach you not to make war, but to preserve peace in the earth; and this is your place and duty required of you from the Lord God commander and chief unto whom you must all give account—Edward Burrough, 1655 (In Brock, p. 13)

Now, most every Quaker knows about George Fox's refusal to serve as an officer in Cromwell's army, as the *Journal* describes it. In 1651, before the strong Holy War statements just noted, Fox says that he was twice offered a position of rank in the army, but told those making the offer that he was "brought off from outward wars" and now lives "in the virtue and power that took away the occasion of all wars." (Fox, Journal, pp. 64-66) And there are other records of early Friends who had come to reject war, such as the great story of Thomas Lurting in his account, *The Fighting Sailor*.

However, in the case of Fox there are records that indicate Fox also supported the army and those Quakers who served in it. Before the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, George Fox also wrote to the army as Howgill and Burrough had done. In a 1659 letter to officers and soldiers, Fox chastised the army and the leaders for not taking their holy war into Europe and on to Rome to vanquish the Pope, the anti-Christ: “And if ever you soldiers and true officers come again into the power of God which hath been lost, never set up your standard until you come to Rome, and it be atop Rome, and there let your standard stand.” (Fox, *To the Council of Officers...*)

How is it that Fox held he would not be a warrior while at the same time urging the army, with its Quakers, to fight on?

In 1654 Fox wrote a letter to Oliver Cromwell that explains his position. Fox again proclaimed, as he states in his *Journal,* that he is not to participate in war but rather bring people to Christ so that wars might end. However, in his letter he told Cromwell that it was legitimate for government to wield the sword against evildoers, as long as this was done justly. That is, while Fox and others had their mission, the task of the government was to do justice, including using war to do so.

On the question of payment of taxes to the government which would be used for war, the early Friends after the Restoration continued with the distinction that Fox made to Cromwell in the midst of the revolution. Friends said that they understood they were to pay the taxes due the government, even though some would be used for war. In 1678, Fox wrote an epistle that set forward this position in relation to a poll tax being instituted that was clearly related to war:

> So in this thing, so doing, we can plead with Caesar and plead with them that hath our tribute if they seek to hinder us from our godly and peaceable life...then (if payment were not made) might they say and plead against us: How can we defend you against foreign enemies and protect everyone in their estates and keep down thieves and murderers, that one man should not take another's estate from them? (In Hirst, p. 73)

However, one form of government taxation was closely related to personal participation in war. This was related to the call up of the militia. When the militia was called, individuals were to serve or pay another to serve in their place or to provide arms and money to support the militia. Here Quakers followed the distinction Fox had made between the duty to conscience and the duty to the government. They would continue to pay general taxes, even if some went for war, but they would refuse to participate in the militia by giving money or equipment, because this was understood as direct personal participation in war.

They expressed this position in a minute from London Yearly Meeting in 1693 during the rule of William and Mary when war tensions were high:

> You very well know our Christian principle and profession in this matter, both with respect to God and Caesar, that, because we are subjects of Christ's kingdom, which is not of this world, we cannot fight (John 18:36); yet, being subjects of Caesar's kingdom, we pay our taxes, tribute, etc., according to the example of Christ and his holy apostles, relating to Christ’s kingdom and Caesar's, wherein we are careful not to offend (Mat. 17:27, 22:20; Rom. 13:6-7) (In Hirst, p. 76).

In the American colonies, this way of making the distinction between refusing to pay so directly for war when the militia was called up and willingly paying taxes to the general government even when some went for war was continued.

From 1672 there is a fine example of how Friends stated their willingness to cooperate with government taxation in ways that were peaceable while at the same time refusing to cooperate with war preparations, just as the Society had done in England. Here is a letter to the governor of New York at the request of the local sheriff who asked Quakers to make their position clear:

> We have been (ready) to pay our customs as county rates and needful town charges and we have behaved ourselves peaceably and quietly amongst our neighbors, and are ready to be serviceable in anything which does not infringe upon our tender consciences, but being in measure redeemed of wars and stripes we cannot for conscience' sake be concerned in upholding things of that nature, as you yourselves well know. It has not been our practice in Old England since we were a people, and this in meekness we declare (In Jones, p. 329).

In Rhode Island where Quakers did have political influence, the first conscientious objector law in America was enacted in 1673. This provision stated:

> No person that is or hereafter shall be persuaded in his conscience that he cannot or ought not train, to learn to fight, nor to arm, nor to kill any person or persons, shall at any times be compelled against his judgment and conscience to train, arm, or fight, or to kill any person or persons (In Hirst, p. 331).

However, this legislation was part of a war preparations law that maintained that all colonists were obligated to support war-making is some fashion. Even when the Quakers had political control of the colony, which lasted to 1714, there was apparently no attempt to alter the legislation requiring payment from conscientious objectors to the militia.

Of course, the key colony on this issue and so many others was Pennsylvania. Here we see the effort to maintain the distinction between denying direct support for the militia while at the same time providing indirect support for war thorough agreeing to pay general taxes. However, there would be, as in other colonies, an erosion of this position and at the same time an opening for resisting general taxes that would be in part used for war. This stance arose with John Woolman and a few others.

Woolman writes in his *Journal* that he had to wrestle with this question since it was not the established position of the Society. He wrote:

> To refuse the active payment of a tax which our Society generally paid was exceedingly disagreeable; but to do a thing contrary to my conscience appeared yet more dreadful. When this exercise came upon me, I knew none other the like difficulty; and in my distress I besought the Lord to enable me to give up all, that so I might follow Him wheresoever he was pleased to lead me (Woolman, p. 77).

To his surprise, Woolman was led to others who were thinking along the same lines.

During the French and Indian Wars that began in 1754, John Woolman and others proposed a conscientious objector tax status for those who would be willing to pay for general government if that money was not used for war. In a Memorial to the Governor in April of 1756 before Pennsylvania formally declared war, a number of Friends pledged to give money to restore friendship with the Native Americans. They stated:

> We hope to demonstrate by our conduct that very occasion of assisting or relieving the distressed, and contributing towards the obtaining of peace in a manner agreeing with our peaceable profession... and even though a much larger part of our estates should be necessary than the heaviest taxes of a war can be expected to require, we shall cheerfully, by voluntary presents, evidence our sincerity therein (In Hirst, p. 384).

However, 1756 marked the end of Quakers in the Assembly seeking to steer between support of Friends' non-participation in war, while seeking to give support to the government for war. As Rufus Jones says of the Quakers in the Assembly: "Up to 1756 it was possible to make the necessary adjustments, but when the issue became clear and defined, Friends resigned or declined re-election" (Jones, p. 478).

When John Woolman attended the Yearly Meeting that year, he found a number of Friends opposed to paying the new taxes being instituted because of the war. Though the Yearly Meeting would leave the payment or non-payment of such taxes to individual conscience, a deputation of leaders went to the Assembly and gave warning that some Friends would be refusing to cooperate:

> The raising of sums of money, and putting them into the hands of committees, who may apply them to purposes inconsistent with the peaceable testimony we profess, and have borne to the world, appears to us in its consequences to be destructive of our religious Liberties… We apprehend many among us will be under the necessity of suffering rather than consenting to the payment of a tax for such purposes (Churchman, *To the Representatives…*)

Thus, the contemporary idea was born of seeking to establish an alternative fund in the government where taxes from individuals could be placed for the promotion of peacemaking rather than being added to the general treasury where money would be used for war in part. Further, in the statement to the assembly, the position was established that some Friends would refuse to cooperate with providing money to the government when they knew that some of that would be given over to war-making.

These positions were new ground for Quakers, and they arose in the midst of warfare, when pressure to cooperate with the government was strong. Though many Friends did acquiesce to what the government asked, other Friends resisted. And this position, so long ago expressed, has yet to be recognized by the United States government. Friends worked with others to introduce the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund bill in each US Congress since 1971, and it has gone nowhere. Many individual Quakers and Quaker organizations have sought relief from paying war taxes in the Courts, but to no avail.

So, what now? This is unfinished business among Friends in the U.S.

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Black Belt Yankee

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In the summer of 2011 I drove south from the life I knew as a Quaker and nursing professor in northern Maine to resettle in Montgomery, Alabama. I had a one-year contract to teach nursing at Tuskegee University, and I knew two people in Alabama: a Tuskegee nursing professor I met at a Florida conference and the Dean who hired me. My decision to move and my career plan were loosely based in a leading to contribute to the cause of social justice in the South. I had an historic interest in Tuskegee University, and a knowledge/skill set needed there, which led to my employment.

It is now 2014 and I have begun my fourth academic year at Tuskegee University. I have an ethnographic bent to my ways of knowing and observing, and am a prolific journal keeper. My view of my three years here is informed by Quaker sensibilities, an acutely honed sense of justice, and a complex standpoint both emic and etic in perspective. In the three years I have been here, I have become involved in the social justice struggle both in Montgomery and Tuskegee. This paper outlines some of my observations about life in Alabama as a white northerner living and working mostly with African Americans.

Respect as an Absolute Obligation

As a northerner in the South, one notices immediately how "friendly" everyone is to everyone else: people of every color, and both genders, with a few exceptions. There is interaction with almost everyone one meets: at the gas station, in the grocery store, in the workplace, waiting in line at Subway. Sometimes this is a nod or acknowledgement, but more often pleasantries are exchanged. More than once a day I have a conversation with a total stranger. There is a certain forced quality to this friendliness; one realizes quickly that it is not optional to respond; it is required. I found it tiring as first, but I have adjusted and will sometimes initiate the grocery line conversation with whomever is in front or behind me.

It did not take long for me to realize that all this acknowledgement of each other is about respect as much as it is about valuing interaction. The sense of *obligation* I felt was an explicit demand for recognition: *you will not ignore my presence here, two feet away. Silence and averting your eyes is not an option. You will recognize me as a person and speak to me politely.* Northerners regard our mutual silence in public as respectful, allowing the other person space and privacy. In this culture, silence is perceived as lack of respect an unwillingness to acknowledge and engage.

The situations in which this is not true involve my status in relationship to some African-American men. Some African-American men are cautious around me and will not make eye contact. This is more often the case in Montgomery, which is 50% African American, than in

Tuskegee, which is 98% African American.

Older white women, particularly if they are well dressed, have high standing in the overall status hierarchy, which was a surprise to me when I arrived. Various explanations can be offered for this; I believe it is the continued legacy of wealthy white women's roles in the antebellum and post-bellum periods. I have tested that assumption by going to the store in work clothes and do see a difference in how I am treated: there is not as much deference when my socioeconomic status is not clear.

Identity for African Americans

Identity is a core issue in the African American community. One of the developmental tasks for all young people is to define themselves, and they often try on multiple roles and identities with friends and family. In our culture, African-American young people, particularly young men, can be themselves, as they define themselves, only in limited circumstances.

There has been much discussion in the last two years, following the shootings of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown, about the ways in which young African-American men are perceived and feared based on skin color. Young men are taught how to be as accommodating and invisible as possible, to protect themselves. I have seen young African-American men change in the blink of an eye from who they are among their friends to who it is that white people want to see.

Because African Americans find that they must define themselves, and be defined, both in their own communities and in the dominant white community, identity is a central concern for all African Americans whom I meet in Alabama. They are accustomed to multiple identities and slip easily between them. Because I am often the only white person in a room, many people here see no need to change in my presence; I have seen people I know well, and people I don't know at all, as they are in their home communities, not as they present themselves in the white world.

An issue of identity, which also addresses the issue of respect, is particularly evident in the academic community in the use of titles. African Americans expect to be addressed by their titles, for example, Reverend (Rev.) or Doctor (Dr.). People with titles are addressed as such in all settings. Completion of the education that leads to titles is highly respected in African American communities. In my department, we address people we work with every day with their titles. The familiarity of first names is rarely used.

There are many ways in which identity is defined and lived in the African-American community and that is tied to another significant factor, language. There are issues about shades of skin color, labeling ("black" as opposed to "African-American"), status, and dress. Issues of identity, as I observe them, will be covered in a separate paper.

Narratives about Education and Knowledge

Education is highly valued in the African-American community. African Americans recognize the importance of education as it relates to personal success and advancement in a traditional way: go to college, get an education, and then find a good job and a career. But it is far more than that: education and knowledge were systemically denied to the ancestors of the people I know, and they are acutely aware of the power that education represents.

If reading were not important, it would not have been a crime to teach slaves to read. If education were not important, the descendants of slaves and freemen would not have been denied access to higher education. If quality education were not important, schools in 21st century Alabama would not be so poorly funded. The struggle for quality education has been a fulcrum in the African American struggle for hundreds of years. One could argue, and it has been argued, that the right to a quality education is an important as the right to vote.

The debate in the African-American community about the relative merits of education and voting resonate with an argument between Booker T. Washington (the founder of Tuskegee) and W. E. B. Du Bois more than one hundred years ago. It is part of a larger argument about advancement and integration into American political and economic culture.

African-American parents care deeply about the education available to their children and sacrifice to ensure that the children are well educated. This happens around, and in spite of, poorly funded and staffed schools in the southern US. The narrative that the (mostly white) press distributes about African Americans and education, that children are not exposed to books at home, have smaller vocabularies, and do not value education, is a distorted and limited picture, which is arguably part of a larger narrative that structures and maintains inequality in the United States.

Education is a broad, complex topic that could be discussed at length. I will make one final point: many people I have met here value education and knowing about the history and struggle as a critical part of cultural literacy. Elders see that it is crucial that young people are taught the history of Africa, of the African diaspora, of slavery, and of the bravery and achievements of generations of African Americans in the struggle for equality. Both general education and historical/cultural education are seen as the path around the quicksand which litters the economic and cultural landscape here, the traps which keep people from becoming who they are capable of being.

Finding my Identity and Place in the Struggle

Tuskegee is a respected Historically Black University (HBCU) with a mythic reputation, one of the HBCUs with few European-American students or faculty. There is diversity on campus, defined on different axes than at a PWU (Predominant White University). These axes are diversity among people of color and diversity of religion: African Americans, Africans, Islanders (people of Caribbean origin), South Americans, Muslims, Pakistanis, Indians and others.
About a year ago I began to look for a way to name my identity living and working in a majority African-American community. I am a representative of three minorities on this university

campus, as defined in Southern custom: I am white (European-American), a northerner (Yankee), and female. I engaged in a search for identity as a reflection on both the African-American experience and my own experience in my time here.

When I arrived on campus, I found that faculty and staff were interested in how I defined myself. I also found that I was defined by others to fit their understandings of who I appeared to be and who I should be. I began to understand that while I saw myself as having one identify I presented to the world, there was an assumption that I had more than one. My identity, as described by white standards, is that I am a middle-aged, grey haired, fair skinned, somewhat dowdy (very Quaker) woman who teaches nursing at a university. Both students and faculty found ways to name my identity that reflected their own understandings of me.

"She is one of us! She must have been African American in a previous life." (professor)

"You look like a black woman! You are shaped like a Coke bottle!" (students, giggling)

There were also less flattering descriptions and suspicions about my motives at the University from some African Americans.

As part of their clinical work, I took the students to a mental health facility in which all the staff, patients, and students were African Americans. One of the patients, to make sense of what he was seeing, decided that I was a light-skinned African-American woman and commented on my hair. As a barber, he was interested in how I had gotten my (assumed) frizzy hair to curl in the way that it had curled. At first, I did not understand why he was so interested in my hair or what this man was trying to understand about me. Then I realized that it was easier to understand my presence in that setting as a light-skinned African-American woman than to accept that I was a white woman.

What was most interesting was what the students did with that. *"Of course he thought you were a black woman! You look like a black woman, you dress like a black woman, and you talk like a black woman."* This was the identity the students had created for me: I am fair skinned but one of them, someone they see as part of their culture, and by extension, and someone whom they can see as a role model.

In that context, I decided to name an identity for myself that explains who I am in Alabama, and I settled on *Black Belt Yankee*. That designation is loaded with multiple meanings: different in the white and black communities. I have only heard *Yankee* used by white people and not in a positive way. Southern whites say that "Yankees come to visit and damn Yankees stay." I am proud to be a Yankee and the general associations with that word, so I claimed it.

The Black Belt is a stretch of soil in a rough arc from Tennessee through Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. The rich soil supported the growth of cotton, a crop that requires nutrient-rich conditions and is labor intensive. Cotton was the cash crop supporting the South in the mid-1800s, requiring many people to work the fields and harvest it. Slaves were in high demand in that part of the South, and the descendants of those slaves still live in the same areas. In the 21st century, the words *Black Belt* refer to the historic connections between land, cotton, and slaves, as well as a modern re-imagining and radical subversion of that term to name the power that can be claimed by the residents of that part of the South.

So, in solidarity with the struggle for social justice that African Americans still wage in the South, I call myself a *Black Belt Yankee*. After a particularly fractious meeting in the African American community, where I was the only white person in the room, I asked a friend whether I should be attending the meetings. She said that yes, I should be there, because I could hear what African Americans were saying in context, understand it, and explain it in the white community.

At another, similar meeting, I arrived and sat toward the back of the hall. I was invited by two women leaders in the community to move to the front. I did so, but was uncomfortable, concerned that I was displacing a person who should be in the front row. When I said that, a local attorney said to me, "You teach the children. You are a leader. You belong in the front."

My leading, Friends, is to tell the story, to present the views of a vibrant and cohesive community which still has trouble being heard in this country and in being fairly represented in the media. My leading is to be in solidarity with the struggle and to make a contribution in the way that I can, as a Black Belt Yankee.

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"I make photos that are of the well loved, sometimes broken, scruffy toys that children clutch, so the toys are never left behind. People have come forward with offers to let me photograph stuffed toys that they have had as constant companions for more than four decades. Stuffed friends become so real to the people who love them. They dry tears, they play without complaint, they are a soft friend to cuddle any time of day or night and they are always there to love and care for. We create personalities for our stuffed friends and we love them forever. I hope to remind adults of their fond memories or even sad memories of their favorite stuffed friends and how stuffed friends are something that all generations have in common."

– Ron Todd