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## Journey Into Shame: Implications for Justice Pedagogies

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# Journey Into Shame: Implications for Justice Pedagogies

## **Cover Page Footnote**

The author thanks Ben Rogers, archivist at the W.R. Poage Legislative Library at Baylor University, for assistance with the John Howard Griffin Collection.

## **Erratum**

A new version adhering to APA guidelines replaced the original version on 12/01/2015.

## Journey Into Shame: Implications for Justice Pedagogies

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*Being formed for justice can be a painful experience. Sometimes that pain takes the form of shame and contributes to the formation and exercise of conscience. But shame in other forms can be opposed to human flourishing and social justice. Psychologist James Fowler provides a spectrum of two forms of healthy shame and four forms of unhealthy shame, to which the author adds four other varieties, strategic shame and spiritual shame, at one end of the spectrum, and murderous shame and genocidal shame, at the other. Various experiences of shame are dramatically illustrated in *Black Like Me*, John Howard Griffin's classic narrative of racism in the Deep South. It is crucial for social justice educators to be able to discern among these forms of shame in their own experience and when reported by students, so that healthy forms can be sympathetically honored and unhealthy forms critically examined.*

In more than thirty years as a practitioner, I have learned that education for justice is all about the intimately personal risk that accompanies crossing borders -- national, geographic, cultural, class -- and thereby discovering one's privileged social location in a world of destitution. As my students say, it's about getting out of your comfort zone and into a discomfort zone, such as a shelter for the homeless just blocks from your campus suite. Being formed for justice, undergoing a conversion to the cause of the oppressed, can be, perhaps must be, a painful experience. Sometimes that pain takes the form of shame, which, when found in the young, in Book IV, section 9, of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (1999) called shame semi-virtue. Lest there be any misplaced resistance to the positive role that some forms of shame have to play in personal transformation and critical pedagogies, it is crucial to acknowledge the ways that other forms of shame can be negative and opposed to human flourishing and social justice. Theologian and psychologist James Fowler, author of the pioneering study, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (1981), provides an analytic spectrum of both good and bad forms of shame in his long essay, "Faith and the Fault Lines of Shame," which appears as Part Two of *Faithful Change: The Personal and Public Challenges of Postmodern Life* (1996).

### Healthy Shame

At one end of the spectrum we find healthy shame in two forms. *Discretionary shame* "protects those qualities of personhood that are grounds for esteem in the eyes of others and for honest confidence and pride in the self" (Fowler, 1996, p. 105); discretionary shame is "premonitory and anticipatory" and depends upon the moral imagination to foresee how possible actions might play out (Fowler, 1996, p. 106). *Disgrace shame*, on the other hand, is not anterior but posterior to a revealing act and "evolves as the painful set of emotions in which one feels exposed as unworthy, or as having failed to meet some set of standards necessary for the

esteem of important others and of the self" (Fowler, 1996, p. 106). Disgrace shame is more global than guilt, just as the pattern or trajectory of a life is distinguished from one action within that life. This suggests why I would be inclined to rename what Martin Hoffman (2000) calls "guilt over affluence" as "shame over previously unacknowledged privilege" (pp. 184-187). Both of these healthy forms, discretionary and disgrace shame, provide a foundation for moral self-identity. In many of the accounts of student experiences I have examined over the last decade or more, disgrace shame is clearly at work. One of the primary tasks of moral education is the fostering of healthy shame as a dimension of the well-formed conscience.

These two forms of healthy shame are demonstrated in this student reflection on her experience volunteering at a residence for the elderly as part of a service-learning course:

The other day I saw a man in his forties sitting outside the nursing home. He looked shabby and very rough. All I could think was to wonder why this man was standing around bothering the residents. He made me nervous. Then one of the residents called out to him with a big grin, and the man grinned back. I found out that the man is a construction worker in the area who comes to volunteer during his lunch hour and after work. The only other volunteer I have met at the home is a man named Donny, who I thought was a resident the first time I saw him. Donny does not look older than forty-five but is in a wheelchair and speaks slowly. There is something wrong with him physically. He volunteers more than twenty hours a week, and the residents know him by heart and love him. I am beginning to feel very ashamed of myself. Not only do I judge the residents,

but the other volunteers. While I am doing this they are helping each other attempt to live a better, more fulfilled life. As sick as I feel when I think of going, I am beginning to feel even worse at the idea of not going (quoted in Bergman, 2011, pp. 144-145).

This honest and painful self-assessment expresses both disgrace shame – “I am beginning to feel very ashamed of myself,” and discretionary shame – “I am beginning to feel even worse at the idea of not going” (quoted in Bergman, 2011, pp. 144-145).

Because she is aware of being ashamed of her present attitudes, she can foresee that acting to avoid them in the future, by not returning to the site that provokes those attitudes and that shame, would cause an even more disturbing shame. It would be cowardly and selfish, she seems to imagine, to abandon people who themselves rise above the very impairments that scare her or whose appearance makes her nervous but whose generosity of self seems to accuse her. Whether one thinks of this as semi-virtuous or healthy shame, surely it is to be applauded and encouraged, even as one commiserates and identifies with her in her painful self-revelation.

### Unhealthy Shame

A very different kind of shame, *perfectionist shame*, often with roots in early childhood, is distorting and unhealthy. In thrall to the approval of important others, who may seem never to be satisfied, perfectionist shame limits access to the truth of one’s own experience and self-evaluation. Whereas healthy shame nurtures or protects a true self-identity, perfectionist shame creates a false self-identity, which is “reinforced by the parents, with the sanctions of religious and class ideals of moral superiority” (Fowler, 1996, pp. 114-115). This inflated form of shame lacks humility and compassion toward the self, conviction about the enormity of one’s own sins making forgiveness impossible.

*Ascribed shame*, or “shame due to enforced minority status” (Fowler, 1996, p. 118), is another story altogether and is especially salient in justice education programs. It can be learned within a family of marginalized social status even before the child is exposed to the wider world. “It has little to do with the personal qualities of the family or their children. It has everything to do with the social environment’s devaluing of some qualities over which they have no control. Most potent among the forms of this type of ascribed shame are the distortions due to socioeconomic class, race, ethnic background, sometimes religion, and – most commonly – gender” (Fowler, 1996, p. 119). Two factors make this shame especially pernicious and difficult: it can exist alongside any of the other forms of shame on the spectrum, and it cannot be

fully healed apart from addressing issues of social justice (Fowler, 1996, p. 121).

The late Jesuit theologian Thomas Clarke (1988) used the term “cultural disparagement” to describe what Fowler calls ascribed shame. “Human dignity is most tragically affronted, not by material deprivation as such, but by every projection of contempt onto individuals and especially onto groups, on whatever basis” (Clarke, 1988, p. 96). Clarke expressed agreement with an insight of the U.S. Catholic bishops in their 1986 pastoral letter on the economy: “The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be actively treated or passively abandoned as if they were nonmembers of the human race” (No. 77). Clarke went on to observe that “what brings cultural disparagement to its peak as a truly demonic evil is its acceptance and interiorization by the scapegoated group...native Americans, black males, Jews, women, the handicapped or whoever...” (Clarke, 1988, p. 97).

So the healthy shame privileged students might feel in a homeless shelter may be complicated by an awareness of the cultural disparagement or ascribed shame – the socially unjust shame -- they see in the shelter’s guests. One service-learning student (Bergman, 2011, pp. 83-84) was painfully moved by the way her older affluent peers, the ladies of the Junior League, condescended to the women of a shelter for the homeless and thereby reinforced their ascribed shame. Feeling vicariously the ascribed shame of the shelter’s guests, a shame for which they were not responsible and which was an internalization of their oppression, it’s as if this young privileged woman also felt a variety of disgrace shame on behalf of her older peers in privilege, the shame they should have felt but did not. There is something powerful about the encounter between unjustly ascribed shame for poverty and healthy shame for previously unacknowledged privilege.

*Toxic shame*, Fowler’s (1996, pp. 122-126) third form of unhealthy shame, arises in children whose families are dysfunctionally organized around a parent’s alcoholism or abusiveness. A false self must be constantly on display or at hand, playing by the rules that allow the dysfunction to remain publicly unchallenged and the alcoholic or abuser unaccountable for his behavior. The suppression of the true self’s suffering becomes poisonous. As toxic shame may often be present among the poor and marginalized, as both cause and consequence of their plight, our students may often encounter it hidden in the resentment of those they may expect to find appreciative of their presence and service.

Finally, at the far end of the spectrum from healthy shame is *shamelessness*, or socio-pathology, the complete lack of empathy, respect, and conscience. Fowler (1996) gives as examples the political tyrants Stalin, Hitler, and Saddam Hussein, all of whose biographies reveal childhoods in which abusive or shut-off parents made the development of healthy shame an impossibility (pp. 126-131). True socio-pathology

being rare, I would not expect our students to be more likely to encounter it in one of our programs than anywhere else. They are more likely to be confounded by a prejudicial paucity of empathy for the poor on the part of the affluent, as in the case of the student volunteer, the homeless women, and the Junior Leaguers.

### **Murderous and Genocidal Shame**

To Fowler's taxonomy of unhealthy shame I would like to add another, which may make us think twice about the very notion of shamelessness. I will call this variety of painful emotion *murderous shame*, which is analyzed by psychiatrist James Gilligan in his book *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic* (1996). At the time of the publication of his book, Gilligan had spent twenty-five years treating and studying the lives and psyches of men responsible for the kinds of crime we think of as heinous and shameless. Yet however shameless these men may have been in their actions, as we normally understand that usage of the term, Gilligan claims that such extreme violence represents a desperate attempt to defend against the shame of being thought of as less than worthy as a man. Gilligan detects in such shame an absence of self-love and traces its evolution from overwhelming pain, as might be experienced in abuse as a child, to affective numbness, to virulent hate, to murder – which Gilligan understands as an attempt to kill the shame by killing a person who mirrors that shame back to the perpetrator.

Like Fowler, Gilligan also makes reference to Hitler, not to his abusive childhood but to the source of his power over the German people. Gilligan (1996) observes that "Hitler came to power on the campaign promise to undo 'the shame of [the Treaty] of Versailles [which ended World War I]'" (p. 67). That national shame and humiliation was a prominent theme of *Mein Kampf* (Gilligan, 1996, p. 69, and p. 275, note 10). The logic of the "final solution," if we can call it logic, went like this: "If we [Germans] destroy the Jews, we will destroy [our] shame – [so that] we cannot be shamed [any more]" (Gilligan, 1996, p. 69). When a people becomes subject to shame in this way, through the manipulation of an evil genius like Hitler, murderous, scapegoating shame can become *genocidal*. Shame, we might say, can become demonic not only in the internalization of disparagement as described by Clarke (1988), but also in its massive externalization, as understood by Gilligan (1996). Joseph Kahn (2013) observed that China's shame and humiliation due to conquest by Britain and Japan in the 19th century fuelled its drive to develop economically in the 20th century. Patriotic shame need not turn genocidal.

### **Strategic Shame**

Since reading Fowler (1996) I have come to take as my own the first sentence of his long essay on shame: "Now that I have eyes for it, I see it everywhere" (p. 91). In fact, I have

come to see it in places Fowler did not. I see it in Jesus' advocacy of nonviolence as described by Walter Wink, I see it in Richard Gregg's discussion of the "mirror" of Gandhian *satyagraha*, I see it in Kwame Anthony Appiah's analysis of three actual and one incipient moral revolutions. I will briefly describe each of these instances of what I think of as *strategic shame*, a third category to add to Fowler's basic twofold taxonomy. We have not only the healthy, potentially enlivening shame of the conscience-driven person, who seeks to do away with the unhealthy, oppressive shame of the culturally disparaged, but also the link between the two, the strategy by which the satyagrahi or social justice advocate might address both the capacity for healthy shame in the oppressor and the capacity of the oppressed to unburden themselves of the unhealthy shame of their disparagement.

### **Walter Wink on Matthew 5:38-41**

Walter Wink's (1998) exegesis of Matthew 5:38-41 is well-known to many advocates of nonviolence who operate out of a Christian commitment. This is the famous passage in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus teaches his followers to resist not evil, to turn the other cheek, to give one's inner garment as well as outer, and to go the second mile. Wink tells us that just about everything we think we know about this passage is wrong. Resist not evil? Surely that can't be right, for what does Jesus save his followers from if not evil? Wink argues persuasively that the sentence is better translated "Do not return evil for evil," or "Do not return violence for violence." And then Wink unpacks the three tiny vignettes that exemplify what Jesus is suggesting as an alternative. Let me focus on just one (Wink, 1998, pp. 103-106), as it best relates to my theme.

A rich man has taken a poor man to court over an unpaid loan, for which the collateral is the poor man's robe, perhaps his most important possession. Deuteronomy 24:10-13 stipulates that when such a garment is taken as collateral it must be returned every night for use as a bedroll. Now the debtor is demanding that the robe be awarded to him permanently as payment of the poor man's debt. Jesus admonishes the debtor to give his under garment as well, to strip himself in the public court. Here's how Wink (1998) explains Jesus' shocking counsel: "Nakedness was taboo in Judaism, and shame fell less on the naked party than on the person viewing or causing the nakedness....By stripping, the debtor has brought shame on the creditor" (pp. 104). In a kind of moral ju-jitsu, the surprising behavior of the oppressed man has turned the tables on the rich man. His greed has been exposed in the naked destitution of the poor man. Jesus makes shaming of the uncaring rich a part of his public ministry on behalf of the reign of God. Jesus counsels the poor to use what I am calling strategic shame to claim their dignity, self-respect, and social standing—to shame their way out of their shame. A similar dynamic is operative in the famous episode of the woman caught in adultery (John

8:2-11), when Jesus turns the tables on her accusers: “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.”

### Richard Gregg on Gandhian satyagraha

Terrence Rynne (2008), in his *Gandhi and Jesus: The Saving Power of Nonviolence*, sees something similar at work in Richard Gregg’s analysis of Gandhian satyagraha as a mirror held up to the violent or oppressive party. According to Rynne (2008), “Gregg quotes the eminent psychiatrist Carl Rogers to the effect that people never change their habits of thinking, acting or feeling unless something happens that changes their picture of themselves...’The suffering of the satyagraha is as it were, a mirror held up to the violent party, in which the violent ones come gradually to see themselves as violating human unity and its implication....They sense the disapproval of the onlookers and wanting social approval, they begin to search for ways to *save face* [emphasis added]” (pp. 71-72). Way is opened by the positive regard of the satyagrahi towards his opponent. He appeals to his sense of healthy shame, to his conscience. Responding out of this capacity, the oppressor reverses his public shame by ending the unjust, unhealthy shame of the oppressed, whose satyagraha or nonviolent suffering has offered the possibility of restoring honor to both parties. Strategic shame, because it appeals to the dignity of the oppressor through mirroring the dignity of the oppressed, is a form of love, an act of friendship toward the enemy.

### Kwame Anthony Appiah’s *The Honor Code*

In *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen*, Kwame Anthony Appiah (2010) analyzes three major historical instances of nonviolent social change: the end of dueling and of the slave trade in early 19<sup>th</sup> century England and the end of female footbinding at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in China. Significantly, all of these movements occurred before or without reference to Gandhi’s “experiments with truth” in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Appiah (2010) also applies prescriptively what he has learned from these case studies to the contemporary phenomenon of so-called “honor killings.” Here I want to highlight briefly how Appiah sees what I’ve called strategic shame at work in these moral revolutions.

Appiah (2010) writes that “one day, people will find themselves thinking not just that an old practice was wrong and a new one right but that there was something shameful in the old ways. In the course of the transition, many will change what they do because they are shamed out of an old way of doing things” (p. xvii). Shame is the contrary of honor: “To care for your honor is to want to be worthy of respect. If you realize you have done something that makes you unworthy, you feel shame whether or not anyone is watching” (Appiah, 2010, p. xviii). In the moral revolutions Appiah studies, honor was at first maintained by slaving,

dueling, and footbinding. But each of these now abhorrent practices ended when these practices became shameful. The challenge is to moralize honor and shame, and to do so on behalf of universal human dignity and human rights. As Appiah (2010) puts it, “Honor isn’t shame; but the psychology it mobilizes can unquestionably be put in the service of human achievement” (p. 187).

Appiah (2010) takes as one contemporary example a Pakistani woman whose story has been told by Nicholas Kristof of *The New York Times* (pp. 199-204). Muhktaran Bibi was sentenced by a village council to gang rape as punishment for an alleged assault on the honor of another family by 30-year-old Muhktaran’s 13-year-old brother. Normally a woman of Muhktaran’s lowly status would simply have suffered in silence, but in this case there was local and even international defiance. Muhktaran, as Appiah (2010) puts it, “rather than retreating in shame,...told [the police] her story” (p. 201). As a result of this personal refusal to uphold one honor code, Muhktaran has helped to establish another. According to Appiah (2010), “Muhktaran Bibi has transformed her village and her country. The illiterate farmer’s daughter has become Muhktar Mai, Respected Elder Sister....Rather than hiding with the shame that her rapists meant to impose on her, she has exposed *their* depravity and insisted on justice, not only for herself but also for the women of her country” (p. 202).

### Journey Into Shame: A Case Study

The main title of this paper, “Journey Into Shame,” replicates the title of the original series of seven *Sepia* magazine articles by John Howard Griffin (1960a, 1960b) that became one of the most influential and enduring books of the Civil Rights Era, *Black Like Me*. One of the book’s principal motifs is Griffin’s repeated encounter with his own image in a mirror. In his third such encounter, by which time he has observed the profound injustice of racial oppression and bigotry up close and personal, he reports an

...onrush of revulsion, the momentary flash of blind hatred against the whites who were somehow responsible for all this, the old bewilderment of wondering, “Why do they do it? Why do they keep us like this? What are they gaining? What evil has taken them?” (The Negroes say, “What sickness has taken them?”) My revulsion turned to grief [shame in 1960b, II, p. 51] that my own people could give the hate stare, could shrivel men’s souls, could deprive humans of rights they unhesitatingly accord their livestock” (1960a, pp. 66-67).

Griffin is revulsed to the point of hatred against whites and aggrieved and ashamed on their behalf, as a fellow white, for their shameful practice of shaming blacks so shamelessly.

Griffin's (1960a) repeated experience of the hate stare—"Nothing can describe the withering horror of this" (p. 91), became the kernel of a recurring nightmare—"it was becoming such a profound personal experience, it haunted even my dreams" (p. 116), and led him to despair. "I realized that my despair came from sorrow for the whites, sorrow to find them sunk so deep in the quagmire of shame. Their attitude of bigotry and prejudice had carried them on a tangent so far from reason that it bore the marks of mass delusion" (Griffin, 1960b, V, p. 33). But as sickening as was the hate stare, nothing so disturbed Griffin (1960a) as the sexualization of racial oppression he encountered especially when hitchhiking with white drivers in Mississippi:

I must have had a dozen rides that evening....It quickly became apparent why they picked me up. All but two picked me up the way they would pick up a pornographic photograph or book—except that this was verbal pornography. With a Negro, they assumed they need give no semblance of self-respect or respectability....Some were shamelessly open, some shamelessly subtle. All showed morbid curiosity about the sexual life of the Negro, and all had, at base, the same stereotyped image of the Negro as an inexhaustible sex-machine with oversized genitals and a vast store of experiences, immensely varied....all that I could see here were men shorn of respect either for themselves or their companion (pp. 86-87).

This sexual dimension of racism came home to Griffin (1960a) even more intimately when he tried to write a letter to his wife...

I needed to write to her, to give her my news—but I found I could tell her nothing. No words would come....It was maddening. All my instincts struggled against the estrangement....My conditioning as a Negro, and the immense sexual implications with which the racists in our culture bombard us, cut me off, even in my most intimate self, from any connection with my wife....The chains of my blackness would not allow me to go on. Though I understood and could analyze what was happening, I could not break through. *Never look at a white woman—look down or the other way. What do you mean, calling a white woman 'darling' like that, boy?*" (p. 68).

So thoroughly has he internalized his black identity, and so powerfully was that identity a projection of white sexual obsession, Griffin the black man cannot overcome the imagined and fearful shame of speaking to a white woman, even by private letter, even when that woman was his wife.

White shamelessness reached its most threatening climax in one particular encounter, when the white driver asked him

"Do you know what we do with trouble-makers down here?" "No, sir." "We either ship you off to the pen or kill you"...."You can kill a nigger and toss him into that swamp and no one would ever know what happened to him"....I forced myself to picture this man in his other roles. I saw him as he played with his grandchildren, as he stood up in church, as he drank a cup of coffee in the morning before dressing, as he visited with friends on the front porch. That was the man I had seen when I first got into the truck. The amiable, decent American was stamped on all his features. Yet now he had turned into an animal, cold and merciless. Surely not even his wife or closest friends had ever seen him like this. It was a side he would show no one but a Negro" (1960a, p. 104; 1960b, III, p. 37).

His conduct in private conversation with a black, where shame was not operative, where bald viciousness had no limit, would have become shameful if known in polite white society—or so Griffin imagines, in an attempt almost to redeem the offender's humanity.

In one of the most intriguing forms shame takes in *Black Like Me* (1960a), Griffin makes use of his European experience during World War II to describe his experience in the Deep South. At a particularly low moment in his travels, Griffin (1960a) seeks refuge in the home of

... the sympathetic white newspaper editor and personal friend P.D. East: "Once again the terrible truth struck me. Here in America, in this day, the simple act of whites receiving a Negro had to be a night thing and its aura of uneasiness had to be countered by gallows humor. What did we fear? I could not say exactly. It was unlikely the Klan would come riding down on us. We merely fell into the fear that hangs over the state, a nameless and awful thing. It reminded me of the nagging, focusless fear we felt in Europe when Hitler began his marches, the terror of talking with Jews (and

our deep shame of it). For the Negro, at least, this fear is ever present in the South, and the same is doubtlessly true of many decent whites who watch and wait, and feel the deep shame of it" (p. 72).

For fear of the Nazis, one didn't talk with Jews, but one felt ashamed to become complicit in such vicious anti-Semitism. Griffin (1960a) imagines that many whites in America feel a similar fear about speaking out against racism but also a similar "deep shame" (p.72).

Having given expression to healthy disgrace shame for white racism, an unhealthy ascribed shame, each of which he experiences as a man simultaneously white and black, Griffin (1960a) also sees how militant nonviolence can speak to the entire dynamic:

In Montgomery, the capital of Alabama, I encountered a new atmosphere. The Negro's feeling of utter hopelessness is here replaced by a determined spirit of passive resistance. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s influence, like an echo of Gandhi's, prevails. Non-violent and prayerful resistance to discrimination is the keynote. Here the Negro has committed himself to a definite stand. He will go to jail, suffer any humiliation, but he will not back down. He will take the insults and abuses stoically so that his children may be spared them in the future. The white racist is bewildered and angered by such an attitude, because the dignity of the Negro's course of action emphasizes the indignity of his own (p. 120).

The antidote to shame is honor. By seeking a higher form of social relations not only as an end but as the morally requisite means, the nonviolent activist honors not only herself but her oppressor as well. Think of Muhktaran Bibi, in her new identity as Muhktar Mai, Respected Elder Sister.

I conclude that the distance between virtue and vice, between justice and oppression, is measured by the kinds of shame active in any particular person. Healthy shame keeps us human and humane and nurtures moral flourishing; unhealthy shame suppresses our own deepest humanity and that of others, as John Howard Griffin came to realize so deeply. Strategic shame is the powerful link between the two. All of this has treated shame as a psychological or moral phenomenon. But there is one more category of shame that should not go unnoticed, especially in a Catholic university setting. Let me introduce this final type of shame through a poem by Mary Oliver (2012, p. 63).

### Spiritual Shame

At one point in recent years, it was our practice to attend mass on Sunday afternoon. That left the morning free for coffee on the porch while reading *The New York Times* and the local newspaper. Over a period of some weeks, I began to notice that by mid-morning, I was finding myself in a bit of a funk. So much bad news. So much contention, strife, suffering, scandal, betrayal, abuse, injustice, violence, war, even genocide. I found myself asking Mary Oliver's (2012) question from "The Morning Paper:" "What keeps us from falling down, our faces / to the ground; ashamed, ashamed?" (p.63). After a few weeks of this, it dawned on me to put my funk in the context of the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (Wolff, 1997), the founder of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits. I remembered how Ignatius, in the first phase of the retreat, instructs the retreatant to take a God's eye view of the human condition, of its endless cycle of sin and suffering and death. That sin, I knew, was both personal and social. At the very least, we are all guilty of the sin of omission. Moreover, we are all guilty of the sin of complicity, of refusing to refuse to cooperate with evil—of being, in Thomas Merton's memorable phrase, a guilty bystander. No one of any moral and spiritual sensitivity, I suspect, is immune to this kind of funk.

But I also remembered Ignatius' insistence, in the preliminary Principle and Foundation, that Creation is good, even with its human corruption, and that we ourselves have been created by God out of a love that sustains and redeems. I remembered what has become for me the salient insight of the Exercises: the appropriate human response to all that funk-inducing bad news is "shame and confusion." Indeed, Ignatius writes that the retreatant "must beg for shame and confusion" (Wolff, 1997, p. 19; the relevant paragraph is #48). What could be more counterintuitive? The morning-bad-news-blues could be a gift, a grace, even though I have not prayed for it and even wished it would go away. If I were to allow myself to feel and understand this interior movement—rather than fight it or repress it—it could become precious interior knowledge, and that knowledge could go deep, touching into an essential goodness that was, somehow, Jesus himself. Jesus wept over the suffering of his people, especially the poor and oppressed (the bad news of his day), tried to do something about it nonviolently, called others to do likewise, suffered the resistance of the Powers That Be, was brutally killed, but proven eternally resilient. In Christian perspective, the experience of shame and confusion is an invitation to forgiveness, liberation, and empowerment (Brackley, 2004). It can be the call of grace.

### Conclusion

"I am beginning to feel very ashamed of myself. Not only do I judge the residents, but the other volunteers. While I am doing this they are helping each other attempt to live a better, more fulfilled life. As sick as I feel when I think of going, I am beginning to feel even worse at the idea of not



going” (quoted in Bergman, 2011, pp. 144-145). I have come to be neither surprised nor disheartened when students report such painful emotions when they encounter the sin of the world, and their share in it, whether they call it that or not, and whether or not they identify their response as the grace of shame and confusion. Indeed, my concern would be raised if they did not experience some difficult emotions. The gritty reality of the world is like that. It raises excruciating questions. In the appropriate context of a community of faith and resistance, of what Dom Helder Camara (1982) called an Abrahamic minority, and with proper guidance, such emotions can lead to the kind of self-knowledge and vocational discernment that is an essential dimension of the Catholic university’s mission on behalf of its students. It is the context in which all the professions for which we prepare our students make ultimate sense and from which they take their deepest meaning. Shame in this context can be not only a psychologically healthy response to cultural disparagement (as argued by Fowler and named by Clarke), not only a semi-virtue in the young (as identified by Aristotle and as embodied in the student quotation above), not only a tactic or strategy as suggested by Jesus, Gandhi, and Appiah, but also a grace (as prayed for by Ignatius). Practiced discernment among these types of shame is especially significant for advocates of justice and peace, and so finds an essential place in the agendas of engaging pedagogies in Catholic higher education.

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