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Forgiveness in Community Cultural Contexts: Applications in Therapy and Opportunities for Expanded Professional Roles

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ministry was directed to the estranged of society. Perhaps we need to ask ourselves how we truly respond when those with mental illness come into our churches or our offices, challenging our assumptions about the world's justice and goodness. The way in which we answer this question may influence how we offer empowerment, healing, and reconciliation to this population, and it may determine our ability to taste and experience the ministry of Christ.

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Forgiveness in Community Cultural Contexts: Applications in Therapy and Opportunities for Expanded Professional Roles

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After a decade of research, forgiveness is now emerging as a legitimately recognized psychological intervention. Clinical models, in order to be useful for the broad range of clients seen in therapy, are designed to be essentially nonreligious. However, many clients are religious and many cultural groups have used forgiveness to deal with a myriad of issues, both individual and societal. Descriptions of how diverse groups are currently applying forgiveness in a community cultural context are therefore needed in the clinical literature. This article will describe three such indigenous forgiveness applications. Forgiveness is seen to address racial, gender, and religious conflicts. Implications for clinicians in the therapeutic and broader community contexts are considered.

The empirical and theoretical literature on forgiveness has rapidly developed within the last ten years. Consequently, forgiveness has moved from a controversial, rarely discussed intervention to a more accepted, legitimate form of treatment in psychotherapy (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000).

One of the most recent examples of a clinical definition of forgiveness is found in the work of Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000):

People, upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when they willfully abandon resentment and related responses (to which they have a right), and endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence, which may include compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and moral love (to which the wrongdoer, by nature of the hurtful act or acts, has no right). (p. 24)

While no clear consensual definition of forgiveness exists in the field, variations similar to the above are widely used within the clinical literature (DiBlasio & Benda, 1991; McCullough &

Worthington 1995). The definition differentiates between forgiveness and reconciliation, as reconciliation implies a restoration of relationship (McCullough, et al. 2000). Interventions based upon this forgiveness definition or its variations permit a flexible framework for the treating clinician, a framework suitable for the non-religious as well as the religious client.

Efforts at developing flexible nonreligious forgiveness protocols for treatment are worthwhile and needed for the diverse populations seen in clinical contexts. Clinicians must have forgiveness models that are useful for both religious and non-religious clients. However, this de-emphasis on spirituality is in stark contrast to forgiveness as practiced in most cultural contexts. Forgiveness is more highly valued by religiously oriented persons (Gorsuch & Hao, 1993). Indeed, in current forgiveness studies, spiritual coping variables may not have been monitored as carefully as needed. For example, Pargament and Rye (1998) reported a spiritual coping confound in Rye's dissertation project, which compared a secular forgiveness protocol with a religiously integrated protocol. They discovered that though spirituality was not addressed in the secular group, that group used several spiritual resources in helping them through the forgiveness process. Future studies which include more process-oriented, qualitative dimensions in their methodologies will clarify whether this is happening in other studies as well.

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Truly, forgiveness' spiritual links make it much more challenging to research than other treatment techniques (Jones, 1995; Pargament & Rye, 1998). A small body of clinical literature, however, considering the influence of cultural and religious variables in forgiveness is now emerging. Most cultural groups do not separate religion from the rest of their cultural practices. Accordingly, various religious traditions are now beginning to be explored (Rye et al., 2000; Temoshok & Chandra, 2000). Some of these groups are applying forgiveness as a component of the reconciliation process in racism, religious maltreatment, and the mistreatment of women by men. Attempts have been made at exploring how clinical models of forgiveness might aid that process (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough, Sandage, & Worthington, 1997). Such attempts are highly laudable and suggest the rich potential for interactions between cultural communities and forgiveness therapists.

Thus, while secular forgiveness models are needed, the time is right to examine more closely indigenous expressions of forgiveness found in the multicultural community. Without a thorough examination of current forgiveness interventions being done in these communities, we might unintentionally impose nonreligious clinical forgiveness models on cultural groups that are already applying forgiveness in a religious framework. Indeed, Meek and McMinn (1997) have noted the need to consider theological aspects of forgiveness in the formation of clinical interventions. We must be learners as well as teachers.

Descriptions of specific religious forgiveness interventions and community activities are therefore needed in the clinical literature. In particular, we must ask two questions. First, what can therapists learn about forgiveness practiced in indigenous cultural contexts that can be applied to therapy with religious clients? Exploring forgiveness in naturalistic settings may challenge therapists and force thinking "outside the box." Subsequently, adaptations more effectively utilizing the client's religious coping resources may occur. Wuthnow's (2000) intriguing study on a nationally representative sample of 1379 adult U.S. citizens highlighted the utility of supportive religious groups that emphasize prayer and sharing in facilitating the forgiveness process. The study supports the merit of considering clinical adaptations with appropriate clients. The second question is also important. What can therapists well versed in clinical forgiveness models con-

tribute to current religio-cultural forgiveness endeavors? Interactions around this question are essential given the afore-mentioned indigenous applications of forgiveness as a component of the reconciliation process for such significant social problems as racism, religious maltreatment, and the mistreatment of women by men.

This article begins addressing the lack of investigation currently seen in the clinical literature in regards to specific indigenous forgiveness interventions. To explore the questions posed above, examples will be given to stimulate thought concerning potential religiously-congruent additions to current clinical models and to highlight opportunities for further interaction between forgiveness therapists and the cultural groups applying such interventions. Due to space limitations, the scope of this article will be limited to examining cultural expressions found in the broad Christian faith tradition; however, it is acknowledged that exploring indigenous forgiveness practices in other traditions is likewise essential.

An African American Developed Approach to Forgiveness: "Sister, I'm Sorry"

Many obstacles stress African American male-female relationships. Historical racism, poverty, decreased educational opportunities, increased risks of African American male incarceration and male unemployment damage the stability of marital relationships, increasing the potential for abuse in the marital context (Bethea, 1995; Sue & Sue, 1999; Vanzant, 1998, 1999). For the African American community, religious faith expression is a vital indigenous resource to handle these stressors. Expressions of forgiveness between men and women have emerged out of this spiritual context. "Sister, I'm Sorry", developed by Reverend Donald Bell, challenges men to seek forgiveness with the women and children in their lives.

The "Sister, I'm Sorry" Program

In the church setting, Reverend Bell leads men, many for the first time, to truly listen to women's most painful stories of loss and abandonment. The men are led toward identification as men who may not be personally responsible for a woman's pain, but who bear some guilt through neglect and passive acceptance of the status quo. An empathetic apology ensues, and prayers are made for the women. In a recent national television broadcast, a diversity of women reported release from years of silent hurt and anger by this intervention (ABC Transcript, 1999).

Reverend Bell uses Biblical passages to highlight the concept of corporate identity, a theme common in some Christian circles. Corporate identity centers on recognizing the implications of one's group status from a historical context. Egregious acts perpetrated by one's group have an influence on individual relationships, whether personally responsible or not for the historical events. For example, though an individual man may not have been involved in sexual or spouse abuse, the history of such abuse by men in general influences his relationships with women in the community. Reverend Bell uses this idea to bring to men's awareness their responses to women's historical victimization.

To highlight men's common responses, Reverend Bell uses the story of Tamar (2 Samuel 13) as an example. Tamar is lured into a position of vulnerability and raped by her half-brother. Afterward she is left in shame and despair as he rejects and despises her. Hearing of the trauma, some men of Tamar's community tell her not to worry about it, invalidating her experience. Another grew angry, but held it within, making attempts at covert revenge.

Reverend Bell links this story to today and confronts the men about their current indifferent attitude toward the abuse and mistreatment of women. This challenge leads the men to listen and corporately identify as part of the problem. Such identification opens the door for them to be part of the solution, beginning with an apology and seeking forgiveness for the indifferent attitude that implicitly supported the abuse. The sometimes-intense services include men praying for the women of the congregation, asking God to heal their wounds, as well as prayers by the women asking God for the grace to release their offenders.

Comments on "Sister, I'm Sorry"

Nationally, a variety of Christian sub-cultural groups from all racial backgrounds are pursuing the "Sister, I'm Sorry" program. Reverend Bell has utilized religious resources to add something rarely seen in clinical strategies (see Madanes, 1990) and that no clinical forgiveness intervention has so far been able to develop—an apology. Research has shown the power of an apology in the forgiveness process (McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brtown, & Hight, 1998; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). Though often not an apology from the actual offender, the symbolism in

having men in the congregation empathize with the women and asking their forgiveness permits the women to move forward in the forgiveness process. The religious principles of corporate identity taught by Reverend Bell are intriguing. They give men internal permission to take more responsibility for their treatment of women whether or not they were the actual perpetrators of offenses.

What if the man making the apology was the perpetrator? Forgiveness therapists here have a good example of their opportunities for working with churches in implementing Reverend Bell's seminar. A positive side of Reverend Bell's program is that the perpetrator must now deal more fully with the reality of his behavior. In addition, the congregation as a whole is more activated to deal with such issues so that women's chances of safety are increased. A caution is that repetition of the abuse cycle could take place unless counseling and follow-up resources are available. Therapists, especially those trained in conflict mediation (e.g., Umbreit, 1995), can help these churches mobilize resources to continue the healing process.

Promise Keepers, the Family, and Racism

Promise Keepers is an evangelical Christian organization that challenges men to accountable relationships with each other for their conduct in relation to God, their families, and communities (Promise Keepers, 2001a). Stadium conferences, educational seminars, and local small groups are used in this endeavor. Specific cultural applications of forgiveness are seen in how Promise Keepers addresses marital/family relations and racial reconciliation.

Marriage and Family in Promise Keepers

In marital relations, Promise Keepers challenges men to take more responsibility for their family. This starts by the husband asking forgiveness and acknowledging his part for the family problems (Promise Keepers, 2001b). To promote forgiveness, Promise Keepers utilizes rituals and teaching in conferences, and published materials (e.g., Clark, 2001). One recommended ritual involves Jesus' example of washing His disciples' feet (John 13:5-20). Humbling themselves, men wash their wives feet, confess their sins in regard to the wife and family, and ask for forgiveness. The intent of the ritual is to seek forgiveness and begin modeling servant leadership instead of corrupt patriarchal power.

Controversy exists regarding this organization's perspectives on leadership. Cultural and worldview differences in this debate are apparent (see, e.g., Erzen, 2000; Kelly, 2000). McDonald (1997) notes that "despite NOW's [the National Organization of Women] contention that Promise Keepers is designed to foster a new breed of swaggering misogynists...scores of...wives indicate the movement is more likely to produce the opposite: a generation of freshly sensitive husbands who are not afraid to unload the dishwasher or their tears." (p. 28-29). Sociologists and other researchers are now beginning to examine the Promise Keeper's movement more carefully (e.g. Claussen, 2000).

Racism, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation

Promise Keepers addresses racism and racial reconciliation as a goal in "the Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper" (Promise Keepers, 2001a). Experiences emphasizing the seeking of forgiveness and repentance among racial groups are observed in many Promise Keepers events. For example, cultural group representatives stand before the crowd and confess the sins of their group in regard to another group. An example would be Caucasians' sins toward African Americans. In a time of prayer, individuals repent of personal sins of racism and acknowledge their "corporate identity participation", much like the "Sister, I'm Sorry" program. A symbolic act, such as hugging a man of a different cultural group and asking forgiveness, often follows the prayer. This affirms the beginning of the process. Promise Keepers has written materials on how men can continue the process of seeking forgiveness and reconciliation.

Comments on Promise Keepers

Promise Keepers utilizes religious resources to challenge men to seek forgiveness and accept responsibility for actions that have hurt their wives, children, and people from other racial groups. The large initial response to this movement in conservative Christian circles highlights the power of religious variables to motivate persons to seek forgiveness and reconciliation for serious family and social issues. Therapists working with conservative Christian men may want to consider this group as an adjunctive resource in facilitating marital and family forgiveness.

Will Promise Keepers racial forgiveness and reconciliation activities result in improved race relations? Many conservative Christian groups support Promise Keepers efforts in dealing with

racial issues. Others say those efforts do not go far enough. Emerson and Smith (2000) observe that the organization's strategy, like that of many predominantly White conservative evangelical organizations, focuses on individual responses to racism, without addressing the greater social structures that help perpetuate racism. Time will tell whether Promise Keeper's individualistic strategy bears substantial fruit.

Roman Catholicism, Historical Religious Maltreatment, and Terrorism

In the last several years, Pope John Paul II has traveled around the world talking with various religious groups and seeking forgiveness for the sins perpetrated by the Catholic Church against these groups. One very pertinent example of his efforts will be highlighted.

Pope John Paul II and Forgiveness in the Middle East

In March of 2000, Pope John Paul II traveled to the Holy Land to ask forgiveness from the Jewish and Muslim peoples for the Roman Catholic Church's historical maltreatment of each of these cultural groups. He dialogued with Jewish Rabbis and Islamic clerics, as well as national government officials, about forgiveness and ending the religiously fueled violence in the region. The realities of World Trade Center disaster in the United States illustrate the importance of the Pope's efforts. Terrorism has religious underpinnings. The role of clergy of all involved faiths in ending the violence is apparent. Praise and skepticism followed the Pope's efforts (e.g., Murphy, 2000). Nevertheless, his efforts, along with those of Rabbis and Islamic clerics, are critical.

The Catholic Church has developed organizational structures, such as the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, to seek appropriate reconciliation between faiths. These efforts are not tantamount to universalism however. The Pontiff has made it clear that he is not pursuing such a stance (see, e.g., Ratzinger, 2000). Rather, the Pope seeks to address areas of common purpose and value, such as ending terrorism and other forms of religious violence. The fruit of the Pope's forgiveness petitions remains to be seen.

Comments on Roman Catholic Efforts

Current clinical models of forgiveness emphasize the role of empathy in truly walking through the forgiveness process. Some of the writers of this article have been to Ground Zero and exper-

rienced firsthand the suffering and agony inflicted by this atrocity. Our personal rage dies slowly. Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) advocate taking a cosmic perspective in order to facilitate the process of forgiveness when the committed acts of offense are so heinous they are almost incomprehensible. These writers agree, and would add some important elements when appropriate: Prayer and religious community supports.

The presence and efforts of religious leaders like the Pope, however imperfect, toward forgiveness have taken on new meaning for us. The slow process of developing empathy for the attackers has been an act of God's grace. Our prayers for the terrorists and extremists supporting them have been difficult, as difficult, we imagine, as it might be for them in regards to historical religious atrocities and grievances. Shriver (1997) and Staub (1989, 2001) have emphasized the importance of dealing with historical atrocities in promoting international forgiveness and peace efforts. Staub advocates the value of restorative justice in promoting true forgiveness and reconciliation. The critical role of leaders in diminishing longstanding historical hostility is apparent. We are therefore thankful for the Pope's efforts.

As for the therapy context, the Pope's labors have convinced us even more of the importance of sensitively using religious resources when available. His efforts have also highlighted the potential role for forgiveness clinicians in working with these religious groups. Religious institutions will need wisdom in how to promote the development of empathy between offended parties. Enright, in Doyle and Cundiff's (2000) film, *Forgiveness: Healing the Wounds*, notes that it will take up to a full generation to walk through the forgiveness process for groups experiencing such severe conflicts. Hence, another area of opportunity emerges for therapists in the form of consultation. Dr. Enright has established a school through his International Institute of Forgiveness that promotes forgiveness between cultural groups. With the inherent dangers of racial hate crimes and continued terrorism in the United States, these writers support such efforts.

Applications in Therapy

The above indigenous forgiveness examples serve to stimulate discussion and further creativity on the part of clinicians practicing forgiveness interventions in psychotherapy. Many ideas can be gleaned from the above examples. Briefly

noted are four areas worthy of more extensive investigation.

Corporate Identity Principles

Two of the examples use corporate identity themes to heighten a sense of empathy and responsibility in persons not necessarily directly involved in the victim's injury. The example of the "Sister, I'm Sorry" program suggests that the victims, in turn, became more open to receive a request for forgiveness in this context. Perhaps, with appropriate clients, such concepts could be discussed in therapy and combined with Gestalt techniques, many of which utilize role-plays, to promote the forgiveness process. The therapist might embody elements of the offender's person (gender, for example) and apologize in a more religiously meaningful manner.

The idea of corporate identity, or similar concepts, does not fit well into current clinical constructs of forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1997). In the community as well as in the therapy context, including higher order identifications into a forgiveness intervention model creates numerous conceptual challenges. Shriver (1998) poignantly captures the dilemma: "Collective guilt across generations may be a morally dangerous idea, but collective responsibility across generations may be a morally necessary idea" (pg. 141). Such challenges, while acknowledged, should not restrict creativity in this area. Rather, conceptual explorations and therapeutic applications should go hand in hand. People in many cultural contexts readily grasp the utility of this principle in their forgiveness and reconciliation efforts whether it fits logically into forgiveness or not. Perhaps we as therapists could learn from them.

Forgiveness Rituals in Therapy

While a few nonreligious forgiveness rituals are noted in the clinical literature (e.g., Worthington & DiBlasio, 1990), none were found utilizing religious resources. The Promise Keepers ritual of footwashing, closely tied to Jesus washing the disciples feet to model the idea of servant leadership in John 13, suggests the value of collaborating with clients in developing such religiously oriented forgiveness rituals. As the example illustrates, these rituals may be developed from stories found in the client's sacred text. Even if no rituals are developed, the collaborative investigation might validate the client's spiritual heritage and deepen the alliance.

Prayer

Prayer was an integral part in each example described. While prayer seems an obvious consideration when using forgiveness with religious clients, the lack of a formal clinical literature synthesizing prayer into current models is disconcerting. Our firsthand experience with the importance of prayer at Ground Zero heightens our appreciation of this element's value in the forgiveness process. Many types of prayer, such as petition, lament, contemplative prayer, and healing of memories (Garzon & Burkett, 2002) may be helpful and await research.

Clergy Consultation in the Forgiveness Component of Treatment

Clergy consultation was mentioned as a potential resource in the creation of forgiveness rituals. Reverend Bell's activities show just how effectively clergy can move previously indifferent people to participate genuinely in forgiveness promoting events. The Pope's macrolevel activities demonstrate the power religious leaders have to promote dialogue and to move the process of forgiveness and reconciliation forward. These observations from outside the therapy context have indirect implications inside the therapeutic setting. Clergy are powerful people in clients' lives. Their potential influence in the forgiveness process needs to be more recognized. Religious leaders could be a valuable resource in tailoring forgiveness interventions that more fully utilize a client's spirituality. Models of clinical forgiveness need to accommodate this reality through encouraging clinicians to consider such consultations.

Of course, there are many obstacles to clergy-therapist consultations, and strategies for overcoming these obstacles are still developing (McMinn, Chaddock, Edwards, Lim, & Campbell, 1998; McMinn, Meek, Canning, & Pozzi, 2001). A religious leader's influence can be positive or negative, and therapists must always guard their client's welfare. When appropriate, active collaboration in a forgiveness intervention might benefit both the client and address some of the distrust that is often present in many clergy-therapist professional relationships.

Opportunities for Therapists Utilizing Forgiveness

In each example described, mental health professionals well versed in forgiveness also have a potential role through community organizational

consultation. Already noted are the valuable contributions mental health professionals could make to Reverend Bell's intervention, as well as the potential for interactions with the Roman Catholic Church and other religious institutions involved in current global crises. Typically, consultation in the community has been regarded as outside the boundaries of traditional therapy. Such is not the case in the multicultural counseling literature. Sue, Ivey, and Pedersen (1996), in their framework for multicultural counseling, advocate for more active therapist involvement in community settings in order to address social issues at a macrolevel in addition to the microlevel of the therapy office. These writers agree with such a position, especially for therapists trained in forgiveness models.

McCullough et al. (1997) cite a successful beginning in the nation of Liberia when warring factions met and were helped to begin empathizing with the traumas each group had inflicted upon the other. Often in ethnic conflicts, forgiveness appears as a last resort. Let us hope that in the current global crisis, all sides quickly reach the end of their rope.

Advocating increased consultation activities necessitates consideration of therapists' organizational consultation competency concerning religious institutions. McMinn et al. (2001) recently described a training program for doctoral students at Wheaton College, which focuses on increasing skills in religious organization consultation. More such programs are needed. Clinicians adept at applying their knowledge in the community cultural contexts increase their ability to collaborate effectively with religious institutions on greater societal problems.

Final Remarks

This article has attempted to stimulate thinking "outside the box" of typical perspectives on forgiveness in therapy. It has done so in two ways: First, by describing indigenous religious expressions of forgiveness having potential applications in therapy, and, second, by expanding the traditional conceptualization of therapeutic forgiveness to include organizational community conceptualizations and applications.

Further explorations of cultural forgiveness interventions are needed on a variety of levels. On a conceptual level, for example, what are some of the implicit theologies found in these indigenous interventions, how do they compare with the implicit theologies found in clinical for-

giveness interventions, and how does race and culture impact each? Additional research investigations will produce greater opportunities for clinical involvement with communities that already use forgiveness interventions. Clearly, therapists can learn much about forgiveness through a closer study of ceremonies, rituals, and other methods found in various religious traditions to promote the process. Such an examination ultimately may result in more religiously congruent applications of forgiveness in treatment and a more robust conceptualization of forgiveness' theoretical underpinnings. Likewise, religious communities active in the pursuits of forgiveness and reconciliation at a community level may benefit from clinicians' knowledge and expertise. Ultimately, increased interactions between religio-cultural communities and forgiveness therapists could transform how we conceptualize our role as mental health professionals in the greater multicultural community.

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Wrestling with Destiny: The Cultural Socialization of Anger and Healing in African American Males

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Society's negative images of Black males have devastating consequences for their emotional and spiritual health. The PLAAY project (Preventing Long-term Anger and Aggression in Youth) is a multi-component program that seeks to reduce the anger and aggression of Black urban youth with a history of interpersonal conflict. The program components include in-vivo assessment and intervention during athletic movement (basketball play and escapist martial arts), cultural socialization therapy, and parent empowerment groups. In the martial arts and basketball intervention components, the role of movement is essential to understanding how the boys express their confidence and frustration. This article begins with a reflection on the author's own emotional and cultural anger towards the limits of Western scholarship and collegiality, examines the theological implications of imaging on Black male mental health, and finally describes the development and procedures of PLAAY. Theological and psychological implications of culturally relevant interventions will be discussed.

The negative images of Black males have left a hole so deep in the consciousness of the American society that rarely do Americans accept evidence to the contrary. And some of us are pissed about that. This is a rather bold statement coming from a professor of 12 years at an Ivy League institution where the racial politics are equally stressful and detrimental. I'm not ashamed of my association to an "Ivy-League" institution because all institutions carry a certain "peculiar arrogance" about its place in the world. "Peculiar arrogance" is Asante's (1987) description of the cultural hegemonic thinking of Western scholarship which is the arrogance of "not knowing that they do not know what it is that they do not know, yet they speak as if they know what all of us need to know." I do realize, however, that the academy is not the place for civil rights revolution or for changing these perceptions of Black boys pretending to be men, pretending to be big when they are small, pretending to just "be." Being "pissed," as it were, has its advantages, however. I, along with others, have fought within these "ivy" walls to preserve a modicum of dignity for the issues facing people who are different, who cannot speak loudly about their situation. Why is the academy so resistant? I believe it's because there are few

inside the walls willing to critique their own privilege or how this privilege maintains a cultural and intellectual hegemony.

My own response to this hegemony was anger, mostly at my inability to directly upend these subtle racial politics. So over time, I became embittered with my sense of helplessness. The more I engaged in useless "communication" with colleagues, the more helplessness, the more anger. But rather than pretend this anger did not exist or expect hope through flowery words of partnership, I decided to begin at the initial hint of emotional turmoil and from there construct a direct rather than indirect view of Black male psychological struggle. Only when I realized that a key element of self-alienation in the academy is my own distance from the mission that I held dear, did that anger change from an outcome to a motivation. This "distance from mission" is a type of distance from self, from family, from culture, from humanity; and the only one I had to blame was myself.

Eventually, I realized that being with the boys and girls and families I wrote and talked about was a beginning toward the healing of anger at anyone and anything that would dare play those race image games. Face-to-face challenging relationships countered the pseudo-niceness of Western society so prevalent in an academic environment. Why not come down from the ladder of erudite pleading and find peace in the very folks I so often spoke and wrote about? Why not teach the psychological judo skills to combat the emotional effects of negative imaging?

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