

Justice in the World and the Mission of Lasallian Education Today
Enacting the Common Good
LACU Livestream Symposium
April 7, 2021

The Catholic Church and the Lasallian Institute write powerful documents full of potential. Unfortunately, realizing the fuller potential of such documents as presented during the symposium go insufficiently tapped, and actively actualized. Nevertheless, I say thank goodness we have these powerful stated documents available to guide, rethink, and motivate movement that educates, with increased authenticity, those of poor circumstances toward realizing true Justice in the World. Fifty years pass, the question remains. “Is there adequate or sufficiently substantive achievement of what these documents outline, *Justice in the World, the Educational Service of the Poor and the Promotion of Justice?*” The unequivocal answer is no.

The death of George Floyd starkly poses the question. “What have we learned in the United States since the Rodney King beating?” A resounding “nothing” seems the answer. “I can’t breathe,” continues the refrain of voiceless victims of injustice – “*I can’t breathe, I am not heard, I am not seen, I am not understood, but my human body is easily destroyed.*” Fortunately, voiceless and marginalized people throw off being victims to become protagonists for transformation as the family of George Floyd and families of so many other names in need of remembrance so powerfully demonstrates. Still, the question of Rodney King echoes. “*Can’t we all just get along?*” Resoundingly history starkly responds, no.

A notion that deeply resonated with me during the presentations is despite all that we could or might do, we do little or nothing consequential unless there is attention to deep Interiority, as De La Salle might put it. Individuals and groups of people rush to many fast answer shallow extremes. I wonder about the theological and pedagogical interior depth of staunchly leaning right or left Christian leadership proclaimers. I miss seeing the promotion of extremism when I read the Gospels, the best-written documents of the Christian and Catholic Church, as well as the Lasallian Institute. I consider extremism a way of not looking and seeing another or not listening and hearing another. Indeed, commitment to a synod, “*a way together, a way of the gathered to raise voice, in a collective, collaborative, co-participation, consultative way,*” is better for mutual human respect and dignity.

Therefore, I resonate deeply with the expressed, by Dr. Gittens, need for creating safe spaces that hold space for each other as human beings to receive a hearing, with respect, with appreciation, and with value to embrace with celebration mutual human dignity. Where am I in the lights and shadows of my brother and sister human beings? What is “*I am here?*” These questions and dispositions cultivate the self-knowledge and awareness to pursue prudently, with persistence, Justice for all.

To me, it often seems globally people stand in simmering cesspools without fully realizing it. To cope, dangerous reactions of flight, fight, or freeze overtakes groups of individuals, especially

those in leadership positions. Indeed, the danger of “Verticalism” is real, detachment from social reality. Just consider denial reactions to the pandemic, climate change, and residual influence of slavery in the United States. Equally inadequate is “Horizontalism,” being too free from spiritual, attitudinal, emotional, and aspirational depth. I first hand have heard people say the Golden Rule is, “do unto others before they do unto you” or “do the same unto others as others have done unto you!” A final dangerous reaction is the opioid-type Domestication orientation. People, avoiding discomfort, suffering, challenge, sacrifice, and transformation toward wholeness with wholesomeness. Why can’t we just leave it alone and move on?

Indeed, the most important underlying message that welled up for me as I received the symposium presentations is the importance of attending to *Interior Depth*. Cultivating the capacity to be disturbed without becoming unhinged or utterly overwhelmed and thus becoming frozen or thrust into fight or flight is vital. It is essential to establish emotional, attitudinal, and spiritual intelligence, depth, and management. Both documents offer compelling cautions as well as powerfully compelling actions to weigh and pursue. If only we read them along with other compelling writings and converse about them individually then collectively.

The symposium reminded me of courageous acts by two people separated by more than fifty years. They serve as hope and motivation for me as I consider commitments to promote Justice and Peace.

A final scene of the movie *Shindler’s List* presents Oskar Shindler, an individual of privilege who saved twelve-hundred Jewish people from Nazi genocide, as guilt-ridden over the money he wasted, knowing he could have saved more people. Lamenting, “*I could have done more,*” a potential victim he saved responded, “*but you did so much!*”

A year ago, a seventeen-year-old girl of color held up her mobile phone to capture the murder of George Floyd then agreed and indeed testified. Darnella Frazier said, “*It’s been nights I stayed up apologizing and apologizing to George Floyd for not doing more and not physically interacting and not saving his life. When I look at George Floyd, I look at my dad, I look at my brothers, I look at my cousins, my uncles because they’re all Black. I look at how that could have been one of them.*”

A girl, easily marginalized, and one easily blind and deaf man due to privilege, allowed herself and himself to be disturbed to act courageously. Self-awareness and self-knowledge of these types with the capacity to act courageously out of discomfort need space for recognition, understanding, promotion, and encouragement. We also need time and space to read, realize, appreciate, and understand powerful principles of well-written available documents that add depth to acts of courage.

The Country and the World need our Lasallian Schools to provide quality *synod spaces* that sustain educators in accompanying students to well up with courage as witnesses of an authentically experienced Human and Christian Education. Experiences based upon the wisdom of the two documents examined along with other compelling documents and Scripture augment foundationally pursuing the achievement of “Justice for all.” Only if we invite ourselves and others to read, internalize, converse, and act upon them.

**Brother Brian Henderson Reflection on the April 7, 2021
LACU Symposium: Justice In The World**
