

My Last Lecture

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I have been at Holy Cross for all of my professional life. I was just 26 – about to turn 27 – when I started here. My oldest students that first semester in 1975 were 21 and 22. The classrooms were on the ground floor of Alumni. There were platforms in front – a good 6-8 inches high – for professors to stand on and above the 30 students sitting there looking at me – all knowing, I was absolutely sure – that I had nothing to tell them. I was terrified.

And I had taught before, as a graduate teaching assistant. My assignment then was to prepare five lectures for the social problems course for which I was TA. Two hundred students were enrolled in that course and we met in a huge, amphitheatre style hall with video monitors to relay and microphones to amplify what was going on at this podium far, far below.

I am nothing if not obsessive and I prepared those five lectures well in advance. I wrote them out – word for word – scores of pages. When the day came for the first presentation, I walked to the podium, took the sheaf of notes from my folder and read – all five lectures – in perhaps 20 minutes.

I cannot begin to tell you what I saw when I looked up. Utter distain. And with the clock indicating 50 more minutes to go – I said all that was possible to say at that moment: “are there any questions?”

I left the room to their laughter and went to my advisor’s office to resign – from the TA, from graduate school. He talked me out of it. And eventually into applying for my first – and last – job at Holy Cross. I had never heard of it. But it was close to Albany where I had a productive collaboration. Holy Cross seemed to be a good place to figure out this teaching thing – a year or two, three at most.

In that year or two I knew I wanted to be ... here. I am pretty sure my teaching got better ...but it never got easier. It remains the hardest thing I do. I wake up especially early on my teaching days and there is still the adrenaline rush just before class begins. So ever since Tom asked me to give the “Last Lecture” that “First Lecture” has been on my mind. And here we are and there are so many of you and I have this sheaf of notes.

It took a long time to figure out an approach to this talk. In a very real sense it is my last lecture – I am leaving the position of Class Dean and next year will be my last at Holy Cross. What do I say? I was at Fr. O’Halloran’s funeral mass in early March when I knew what I wanted to do with this opportunity. Sitting with colleagues who are friends and who were from every religion and none, teachers of disparate disciplines, saying goodbye to someone whose connection to Holy Cross spanned 46 years, with time off to preside over a college in Syracuse, after founding a department here. There were

students, former students, former colleagues - from the faculty, student affairs, the library, and administrative staff. There were Bill's brothers from the Society of Jesus, many of whom are also colleagues here – past and present, and, of course, Bill's family and friends. It all fit like a glove. It was one of those moments in the rhythm of life here – my life here – for which I am so grateful.

So, I will tell you what Holy Cross has meant to me, what it has been like to participate in this most important project: to make a difference in the lives of our students that they might make a difference in the world to which we send them. And I will do this by telling you what and why I teach.

Once upon a time, I thought that teaching was about making sure students had lots and lots of information about my field. I teach criminology (and back then deviance, sociology of law, and research methods) and I taught it as if they needed to know the differentiae of crime and of law, federal definitions of the index crimes, the percent of police action provoked by citizen complaint and the routes into, through, and out of criminal justice. I taught as if they needed this information to score well on GREs and as if they were going to graduate school. I talked nonstop – as, Chip – that's Jeremiah O'Connor and Ann (Bowe) McDermott will tell you. All of this, I am sure, barely made it into short term memory. My teaching was consistent with the way I was taught. On a campus of 18,000 undergraduates, it was up to the students to get something from their education; it was the professor's job to deliver it.

Unlike graduate school where I lived exclusively in a department, it was hard to stay insulated from the larger environment that was this college. It was not long before Marilyn Boucher, Associate Dean of Students, was dreaming up ways of getting faculty involved in the lives of students outside the classroom (no, this idea wasn't invented last week). And there were more committees then than there are now and junior faculty were there for the pickin'. Women faculty were especially vulnerable because the new sensitivity to inclusiveness meant there had to be at least one of us on every cock-a-mamie committee in this college and we had to invent new ones to study the ways to fully engage women in campus life. Every time I turned around we were organizing to celebrate co-education at Holy Cross... but you get the point. From the very beginning – through CISS, Honors, committees, student affairs programs, governance, and endless ad hoc projects, Holy Cross has long pulled its faculty in – into the heart of the Cross. It changed what I taught and how.

Teaching criminology is hard whatever the approach. Ordinarily students take an elective course in something about which they would like to learn. They come to criminology already certain about crime and criminals. This certainty is a whole lot like faith – it crosses the line between knowledge and belief. Like faith in God, beliefs about crime are core. They are learned early in life and from authoritative sources – the same sources, in fact, that teach them about God: parents, religion – and television.

Even as it is core, like faith in God again, faith in things related to crime is democratized. That is, while we know in our hearts that what we believe is the one true faith – about

God and about crime – we are firm in our conviction that other people are entitled to their beliefs; to their opinions. It is in this sense that all opinions are created equal which belies the fact that I know your opinions are – just stupid. Still, as if we really did think that everyone is entitled to believe what they will, we debate – with friends, family, publicly – and claims get made at the dinner table, in bars, and in local, state, and national election campaigns about - whether or not Mormons are Christians; whether or not the death penalty works. This one says yes; this one says no. And the winner – well the loudest, the more eloquent, the one who gets the most votes. Minds rarely get changed in these debates – but in their outcome, real lives hang – when, after we vote, religious wars and wars against crime get declared.

We would not dream of democratizing engineering, the diagnosis and treatment of disease, algebra, plumbing. But things related to algebra and plumbing are not core – not at the core of who we are – and who we are not.

I ask students to suspend their beliefs about crime and criminals for the 13 weeks we will be together - that's suspend, not renounce. And while I intend to challenge their beliefs, at the end of the day, at the end of the semester, they are free to choose. I want to challenge and I want students to understand something about why we are so ferocious about our beliefs about crime. What is it about crime that gets us so worked up?

To begin, distinguishing between goodness and badness, right and wrong, between the angels and the devils is a human necessity. Moral relativism is an academic abstraction.

We do not live moral relativity. We can't. And, the raw material for making essential moral distinctions, as Kai Erickson pointed out (1966: 8-9), is the behavior of those around us. Not one of my students – and I ask every semester – has ever read the statutes of the commonwealth of Massachusetts, or of their home states. All are aware of where the lines are. But more, they know who crosses that line. There are thieves and these are different than all those who take property that does not belong to them. There are murderers and these too do not resemble all people who take other people's lives. They know who the rapists are and they are not like all those who take sex from someone who cannot give consent. "Who" patrols the line between good and evil, right and wrong, is at least as important as what line gets crossed. We carry with us flesh and blood images of who is responsible for all this suffering. We see their faces and how they are dressed; these people are of a certain age and we can certainly make a reasonable guess at their annual income. We can come up with rich descriptions of their lives, histories, families, and, you know what, in all of the years I have been asking my students to close their eyes when I say the word crime and tell me who and what they see, never, not once, has anyone reported imagining a woman. HE is responsible for murder and mayhem and these people who parade across our imaginations wrecking havoc on innocent victims (we don't care about the guilty victims) make us angry; they fuel our ferocity.

This is the place where I tell them – as they are feeling what they feel about the parade of devils in their mind's eye – that most, most of all in our 13 weeks together, I want for us to learn something about ourselves. I want students to know that this study of crime – is not a study of THEM – it is really a study of US. Crime is something that human beings

create – if nothing more than by passing laws that render some behaviors criminal – but more, oh so much more.

Crime – like family, religion, education – is patterned and enduring. Durkheim (1938:65-73) noted a century ago that there has never been, nor can there be, a crime-free society. In a perfect cloister of saints, he pointed out, there are those whose behavior is abhorred. Crime is not what goes wrong in social organization; it is a part of how we organize. Family and education ensure the survival of society over time – and crime does. The economy makes it possible to distribute resources and to rationalize that distribution, and crime does. Religion binds us together; and crime does too. We study family to learn something about families and about the society that they reproduce. And likewise, we study religion and education and government. Let us study crime this way – this patterned and enduring part of us that we might learn about us – individually and collectively. There is no THEM, there is, after all, only us.

This year, we started our semester with James Gilligan’s book, Violence (1996). It is based on ten years of experience with violence as Director of Psychiatric Services for the Massachusetts prison system. His book takes us on a “visit to hell” populated with “dead souls” – the most violent of the violent. How did they get this way? They were murdered, he says, shamed to death – mort-ified (Ibid, 49). In the bowels of MCI, he meets the men who refer to themselves as “rotting meat,” “zombies,” “already dead” – who in “righteous slaughter” (Ibid, 77, borrowing the phrase from Jack Katz, 1988: 30) sometimes destroyed the eyes and cut out the tongues of their victims. Gilligan is

reminded of Delilah who had Sampson blinded when “behold” he had “mocked her” (Ibid, 70, from Judges 16); and of the angels who “smote with blindness” the men of Sodom who tried to rape (and thus dishonor) them (Ibid, 70, from Genesis 19:11). Then too, he says, Proverbs (30:17) tell us that “the eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth to obey his mother shall be picked out by the ravens and the young eagles shall eat it” (Ibid, 70); Cleopatra threatens to blind the messenger for shaming her with news of Anthony’s marriage (Ibid., 72); and, in Troilus and Cressida, Ajax responds to the insults of Thersites by threatening to cut out his tongue (Ibid., 73).

Shame, after all, dwells in the eyes of those who see your nakedness and in the tongues that can tell others (Ibid., 65). If I destroy the eyes of those who see my shame and the tongues of those who speak of it, I destroy shame (Ibid, 65). Righteous slaughter, indeed. Gilligan tells us he has never seen an “act of violence that was not provoked by the experience of feeling shamed and humiliated, disrespected and ridiculed” – and one that “did not represent an attempt to prevent or undo this ‘loss of face’” (Ibid, 110). And we see this in the lethal character contests that describe most homicides (Luckenbill, 1977); the hits of organized gangs in wars over turf; terrorist strikes and declarations of war. And too - a crime is committed and the offender is punished. Crime and punishment – “reciprocal systems for the symbolic exchange of honor and shame” (Ibid, 144). The criminal dishonors the commonweal in his assault upon the victim; justice requires that honor be restored by shaming the offender – by inflicting pain on him. The ultimate source of shame – the kind that kills souls – is violence. Jean Amery tells us this in his reflection on his torture at the hands of the Nazis (1980). The torturer’s absolute control

of the body – the ultimate boundary of the self – is annihilating; it renders the victim nothing.

Shame, then, is the pathogen in Gilligan's analysis of violence as a problem in public health and preventative medicine. This is how he understands violence and understanding is not about forgiveness. Forgiveness in this context is irrelevant (Gilligan: 25). I despise cancer and heart disease; my loathing will not cure either. I need to understand. This is hard to remember when it comes to crime – where understanding is seen as an act of weakness, softness – very interesting!

If shame is the pathogen, the water supply in which it is distributed is, again according to Gilligan, our socioeconomic system - the inequalities of age, race, class, and gender.

Long before Gilligan, Gandhi pointed out that poverty is the deadliest form of violence. Poverty kills directly – in poor health, nutrition, medical care. It also kills indirectly. Those at the bottom of our systems of inequality not only have less, they are seen as less. This is Sennet and Cobb's "hidden injury of class" (1973) – the humiliation (and it is the same root as humus – dirt) of failure (Ibid, 201).

And that violence is men's work? Men, says Gilligan, are violence objects, as women are sex objects. Men are the source of violence (arrested for most violent crime) and they are the vast majority of its victims. They are honored for their willingness to be violent – as in war or in standing up for oneself – and dishonored for refusing to be violent – as in

desertion or backing down (Ibid, 231). In addition, manhood itself is defined as something to be achieved in a way that womanhood simply is not. Girls become women; men prove manhood – over and over and over – and, not coincidentally, proof is closely aligned with achievement in our status ranking system. Failure here renders men powerless – impotent – failures at manhood. It is a problem in shame.

Even as shame has provoked so much violence, it drives civilization. We are urgent to avoid shame, to seek its opposite pride; to prove our worth, that we are worthy – seen as worthy – worth more – more than who? More than those below. Shame resides in the eyes of others, inequality is literally “invidious” – to be seen against, in comparison to others. You know you have won the race by the fact that there are others behind you. Your team wins only when the other loses. My GPA, salary is meaningful relative to yours. I succeed when you fail.

We strive. And in our strife – we have accomplished so much – civilization has advanced and the USA has led the way. Among the amazing advances – in knowledge, medicine, science – is the technology to destroy the world and if joined with the motivation to prevent or undo the injustice of being treated shamefully, we could do just that. This, says Gilligan, is the “tragic flaw of civilization” (Ibid, 246).

After contemplating Gilligan’s work as a social psychiatrist we turn to a journalist’s account of the rape of Leslie Faber by “our guys.” Our Guys (1997), the title of the book is more apt that I think its author Bernard Lefkowitz is aware. These guys – the most

popular kids in the affluent community of Glen Ridge, New Jersey, who raped with a bat and a broomstick a 16 year old girl , overweight, retarded, someone at the very bottom of the social hierarchy in that town – were raised by this village. They were its pride and glory. The rape in that basement was the culmination of a young lifetime of her abuse at their hands: one made her eat dog feces – to prove her devotion; another served her mud pies; one pinched her arm until it bled and another asked her to insert frozen hotdogs into herself when she went door to door selling Girl Scout cookies. But there were others in this village. Mary Ryan – an equally unpopular kid. They destroyed her house. “Ryan’s Wreck” came to be known as one of those unforgettable experiences in the senior yearbook (Ibid, 137). And Gerard – with his stutter and facial tics. They went after him and Jackie, one of a very few black girls in town. And other, assorted “losers.”

Students reading this book told me how they hated these boys; how hard it was to read about their abuses and did so only in anticipation of the final chapter when “surely the tables would be turned;” when they will “get what they deserve;” when they will see what it feels like

Oh, oh. Back to Gilligan and the futility of legal violence as a solution to the problem of illegal violence and remember: One of our guys, indicted for Leslie’s rape, awaiting trial, was so enraged at the injustice of being held to account for something like this done to someone like that that he fist-raped a freshman woman at BC. “Right here, right now” he is alleged to have shouted (Ibid, 279).

No, you do not have to like our guys; you can hate them; hating, liking; condemning, forgiving all irrelevant to the issue at hand. We need to listen to what happened in Glen Ridge, understand. Knowledge is not an excuse; understanding is not forgiveness.

Our Guys. It takes a village to raise a criminal. We got exactly the crime we asked for; what we deserve. Leslie Faber did not, nor did Mary Ryan or any of the others, mostly female but always weaker, who were bullied, abused, degraded, raped – punished – by our heroes.

Lefkowitz asks, rhetorically, if our guys were comfortable with what their village asked of them (Ibid, 114). Of course not. The demands placed on them were never ending. Every day was a test they could fail. Never enough. Achievement always tentative. How am I seen in the eyes of others? Another problem in shame. And so much more for boys – kids – with limited means for proving their worth – given their age. The real opportunities are yet to come, when they take their place on the wheel to establish their worth where it really counts.

What we see in the behavior of our guys, I think, is another face of shame – another facet: contempt. Another way of establishing one's place in the order of things; a way of sorting out winners and losers. Not – I hasten to add – for the benefit of those treated with contempt – but for those in whose eyes pride or shame will be reflected – the other guys, their brothers, their fathers, their mothers. The eyes that matter. Leslie did not need to be put in her place; her place was clear. Not so clear the place of those boys.

I got the idea for the role of contempt in a showing of the film, *Six Degrees of Separation* (1993) to FYP students – several iterations ago. There is that first homosexual kiss – and this audience of FYPers moaned and groaned and hooted and hollered. They were quite clearly – quite audibly – disgusted.

The next morning, in class, I asked my group if they had heard what I heard. They did – and, as a matter of fact – they quite spontaneously reproduced the very same sounds! I let it go for a couple of minutes then asked if they were aware that there were undoubtedly several gay students sitting in that theatre. They were horrified. We did not mean to offend; no one wanted to hurt anyone else. Then what? We wanted to distance ourselves from this; to dis-identify. Who is the audience: the eyes that matter – peers, faculty. I want you to see me as straight, not gay. But more, much more the hoots and hollers, moans and groans, the sounds of disgust tell you quite clearly not only am I not this, this is beneath me, the object of my contempt.

How else do we understand hate crime? Hate crime is defined by the FBI as crime motivated by bias – biases based on race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity and national origin, and disability. Hate crimes have been tracked by the FBI since the early 1990s (FBI, 2006). The only recent change is the addition of Muslim as a category of hate crime committed for reason of religious bias.

Race – as a reason to hurt someone, intimidate them, wreck their houses, schools, cemeteries, places of worship – leads the way – year after year. Most of these are directed against blacks. Religious bias is another reason to hurt and it comes in second. Most of these offenses are – and long have been – directed against Jews. Anti-Islamic crimes are second. There is hate expressed as crime against people (and their stuff) because of their sexual orientation - most of these are against male homosexuals; some are against female homosexuals. If you add up anti-gay, anti lesbian, anti either, anti bisexuality, you get 98% of all offenses committed because of bias against someone's sexual orientation! Heterosexuals are targeted – because they are heterosexuals – 2% of the time. There are hate crimes motivated by biases based on ethnicity/national origin. Six out of ten of these are attacks against Hispanics because they are –well – Hispanic.

And then there were the crimes committed against folks with disabilities – 94 cases in all in the last report (Ibid.): 74 motivated by bias against mental disability; 20 by bias against physical disability.

Contempt for your shameful status – which is not me. In your weakness and subordination, in the questions you raise about the value of whiteness, Christianity, heterosexuality – and especially – male heterosexuality – you deserve to be punished – like Leslie Faber. And Matthew Shephard – who made a pass at some guys, they said, and for which he was nailed to a tree. Crucified for his sin or to bear ours and answer finally any question about our salvation.

Who asked our guys to be contemptuous of weakness? We did. We do. You and I.
Every day.

I was at a birthday party for a 10 year old when her dad had some difficulty opening a jar of mayonnaise. His friend, James, said, “if you want to open the jar, you first have to take off your skirt.”

My horse Beau died this February. He was 32 and after a three day battle to reverse a colic, the vet concluded that there was a strangulating tumor – common to elderly horses. The barn where I keep my horses is full of people – mostly women. Without thinking twice I called at home the one male who belongs to our co-op to come help put Beau to death. Euthanizing my horse required walking him to the place he was to be buried. I wanted Will to do that – as a man, because he was a man – and could take it like one so I did not have to. It takes a village – indeed.

Who asks these boys, these men to do what they do? We do. When we tell them they must not be women.

Thus far we have been thinking about the social psychology of violence – at the effects of inequality, success and failure, and the problem of shame. We need to expand our analysis to the social and cultural context of inequality – the source of our achievement and of our troubles – as does Steven Messner and Richard Rosenfeld in Crime and the American Dream (2007). They begin their book with two quotes, one from Vince

Lombardi, “winning isn’t everything, it is the only thing;” the second, from Malcolm X, “by any means necessary” (Ibid, 1). Two people separated in all the ways two people can be – except one – the belief that the ends do indeed justify the means. And this is anomie; the anomic drive that fuels the American Dream – anomic – normless, unbounded – by design. The privileging of ends over means motivates innovative efforts at achievement. Innovation has been the key to economic development which moves that Dream still one more step ahead, inspiring even more effort at finding the ways to get there unto extreme means to achieve valued ends - drugs, and sex, and subprime mortgages. We get the crime we ask for say Messner and Rosenfeld; we are organized for crime – to the same degree as we are organized for success – by any means necessary.

The American Dream embodies the basic value commitments of the culture (Ibid, 68). People are expected to make something of themselves, to set goals and strive to reach them, to be somebody (Ibid, 69). We share a deep commitment to individual rights and individual autonomy. People should make it “on their own” without help. Competition not cooperation defines the struggle. All are invited – no, all are commanded to compete in the race. Universal standards; universal criteria will be used to judge the winners – as if the playing field really was level (Ibid, 69-70). Money is the measure of that success; achievement in dollars and cents. People who make more, are more valuable. This does not mean materialism per se, people everywhere seek material well-being. Rather it refers to the accumulation of money as an end in itself; money fetishized. And there are no limits; it is never enough and it requires never ending accumulation (Ibid, 70-71). Hence, the news that Warren Buffet has replaced Bill Gates **is** news.

These values are culture wide and deeply felt and, like all values, they are reproduced in and by social institutions – “the backbone of society” (Ibid, 71). Among which are the economy, polity, family, and education. These must be coordinated – they have shared responsibility for maintaining the system, not unique responsibility. So, family ensures the renewal of generations – literally and through socialization of the young; education socializes the young and prepares them for the economy; and so on. The relationship between institutions, however, is also dialectical – and necessarily so. Norms and values – from one institution to another – conflict to achieve balance. Thus, while the economy prizes normative universalism and the use of universal standards of achievement, the family runs on normative particularism (Ibid, 73) - to each according to need, from each according to ability – else both baby and grandpa would stare to death – for starters. The economy requires competition; religion emphasizes the ties that bind. Individualism is the name of the game in industry; polity is about the welfare of the whole. Individual achievement by any means necessary, on the one hand, and, on the other, cooperation, care, altruism, sacrifice, concern for the welfare of the whole, investment in the well-being of the family, a commitment to future generations and honor of past generations. Innovation on the one hand and conformity on the other. Detachment, on the one hand; attachment on the other. Individualism – commitment (and see Bellah, et al., 1985).

What has made us an economic superpower is exactly what gives us a world famous crime problem – an imbalance among these institutions. The anomic climate of free market capitalism is by design. The anomic relationship among institutions is what we

have chosen – or let happen – or become too greedy to care about and have closed our eyes to. The economy –and the values that drive it – dominates all other institutions (Messner and Rosenfeld: 74). Non-economic institutions have been **devalued** (Ibid, 76-79). Education has become a means to an economic end, despite our best efforts to convince students otherwise. Acquisition of knowledge, learning for its own sake is not highly valued. Parents want to know, trustees want to know – to what end. In the family, the homeowner is valued, not the home maker. Parenting, nurturing, providing emotional support are poorly compensated. And polity? The average citizen is not expected to be engaged in public service; the word politician is used to disparage (Ibid, 78). Messner and Rosenfeld note that “the citizen who refuses to vote may experience mild social disapproval; the able-bodied adult who does not work is socially degraded” (Ibid, 78). Too, non-economic institutions have to **accommodate** economic demands (Ibid, 79-82). Family routines are dominated by the schedules, rewards, penalties of the market place (Ibid, 79). People struggle to spend more time with their families; not many get to the end of life wishing they had spent more time in the office. The chronology of schooling is geared to entry and advancement in the job market (Ibid, 81). Schools are increasingly dependent on the economy for resources and they increasingly tailor their curriculum and research to attract that money. I am waiting for the request to come that named scholarships be printed on our transcript. The Dana Scholarship is one thing; how about the Walmart Fellow. It is coming. Finally, the economy has **penetrated** non-economic institutions (Ibid, 82-84). “Schools rely on grading ... like wages ... to ensure compliance” (Ibid, 82) and to measure success. The academic context is one of individualized competition – which now includes, by the way, competition for

certification as a “team player” - and individualized testing to sort out – yup – winners and losers – at cooperation! Economic terminology permeates and with every passing year more so: students are products, education is a consumable; parents are the consumers who “invest” in the college (in the kid) and the college is responsible to seek the very best business practices, and benchmarks, and ...

I am on the board for St Mary’s, a nursing home run by Covenant Health Care, whose mission harkens back to the Gray Nuns. We run at an anticipated loss. Covenant (whose VP is a Holy Cross grad and two of whose executives have sent their children here) subsidizes our red ink. They act on the belief that serving poor people is a good thing, even if it is not profitable. Medicaid sees to this lack of profitability (I am still looking for a list of the deserving poor – it is as elusive as the list of guilty victims). At St. Mary the “medic-aided” poor deserve \$11 less per patient per day than it costs to take care of them. But since the industry (and I use that word intentionally and cynically) – since the industry standard is a loss of \$25 PPD, I guess we are doing pretty well. In any case, care at the end of life has also been invaded by a model that has no business (business, get it) – no business here either. Our administrator spends more of her time filling out forms than ministering to the elderly residents. That’s why she gets the big bucks and the staff – who care, really care – get just better than minimum. But, I’ll tell you we have quality control, and quality indicators, and they all – dozens of them – have a point value and when you add them all up on this thing called a dashboard, well we earned last year a score of 81.9. And we were so hoping for a 90.3. Maybe next year.

But not just St. Mary. All nursing homes – for rich folks and poor folks; unto all health care. Did you hear the one about the hospital (UMASS) who has offered a money back guarantee? If they cut the wrong leg off, you don't have to pay. As if that is what it is all about. A refund. I guarantee you that it would not have made me feel better if Harvard Pilgrim had refused to pay the doctor who punched a hole in my gut. The commodification of health care: care - as a commodity, a product - with warranties and recalls. The quantification of good job/bad job; right/wrong; successful/unsuccessful. It pervades. Good lawyering is measured in billable minutes. Good data entry in number of key strokes. They know if my sister is doing a good job at the surgical clinic by the number of minutes she spends on the phone. And they count! All day every day. As if this was patient care. Dear God.

The feedback from the economic domination of non-economic institutions is positive: it is the most important game in town and it becomes even more important. Dominance leads to progressive devaluation of non-economic institutions, increased pressure to accommodate, more extensive penetration. Americans are increasingly attached to the institution with the least restraining qualities – the economy. This, remember, is the institution that privileges ends over means – it is anomic by design. It works best that way to encourage the innovation that has meant extraordinary development in civilization. It is an economy that depends on the never-ending pursuit of goals that cannot be reached but remain one step ahead. It requires inequality – the failures that prove my success as I “long for infinity” (Durkheim, 1966: 61), the failures who long for more and for an end to the shame, registered in the eyes of all: undeserving, incapable;

not man enough. Inequality – by design. And inequality increases – the gap grows wider and wider and wider every year.

Messner and Rosenfeld call for institutional reform; they do not mean a fix for the economy. The economy is doing what it is supposed to do; what, in fact, its dominant constituent form – the corporation - is legally compelled to do (Bakan, 2004:36). No, they call for a revitalization of non-economic institutions (Messner and Rosenfeld: 112-119): real pro-family policies (not constitutional amendments to prohibit same-sex marriages), universal college education – as an end, because an educated citizen can better resist antidemocratic movements; salary and profit caps; nonpunitive welfare programs.

As urgently as we compete with one another for a goal that cannot be reached; as willingly as we become rivals to one another in securing an ever larger share – not our share – of resources that can never be enough; as we measure our progress against those behind us, below us; and protest a bit too loudly that our advance have to do with harder work, more perseverance, greater skill than those who are lazier, slower, and shamefully unmotivated, I do believe we long for something else.

You can tell we do by our selection of heroes. They are precisely the ones who sacrificed personal desire for the well being of others, for the love of neighbors, to use Steven Carter's formulation in Civility (1998): the fire fighters who lost their lives trying to save

total strangers who were neighbors on 9/11; those who have died and will die in Iraq; the Samaritan on the road.

Aaron Feuerstein, owner of Malden Mills, a textile factory that burned to the ground just before Christmas in 1995 (see Singer, 2000: 7-9). Mr. Feuerstein assembled the 3000 employees and told them he would rebuild and rehire every one who wanted a job; told them their Christmas bonuses would be there on time; told them he would continue to pay their wages for as long as he could. And he did.

Unprecedented. A hero. Why did he do this? Said Mr. Feuerstein, how could he not. It was the right thing to do. Period. It was “common” decency – common – community. What one does for the members of one’s household, again, with Carter. We celebrated Aaron Feuerstein. He told a reporter: “My celebrity is a poor reflection on the values of the day” (Ibid, 9). Joseph Singer tells this story in his book, The Edges of the Field (2000). The common decency of Aaron Feuerstein is not common at all. Common decency has become uncommon. Mr. Feuerstein is a hero because he sacrificed for others. This expresses our longing and it reveals how rarely our longing is satisfied. Aaron Feuerstein is heroic because he is exceptional. And Aaron Feuerstein went bankrupt. Is the moral of this story that nice guys really do finish last?

There is a new commercial that starts with acts of common decency – people doing “the right thing” to help the stranger who is a neighbor: the woman struggling to carry a rolled up carpet; the man about to step into traffic – and then the voice over from the insurance

salesman representing a company which is committed to doing the right thing. The comodification of neighbor-love. This is sacrilege.

The American Dream – it is criminogenic: the dream compels achievement as measured in dollars and cents and because it does it compels crime. The values that support the dream are all about winning – about achievement, on one’s own, according to universal standards, the measure of which is more often than not monetary success – an end in itself.

The values are economic ones – they facilitate an economy that thrives – until these episodes of greed that topple Savings and Loan institutions and investment houses that we will all pay for. But thrive we have. The values have driven us to unprecedented heights. And they tear us apart. They are unrestrained by the values that bind us together: cooperation, altruism, sacrifice, particularism, commitment to the well-being of all. Of course these are not the values that run the railroad. They are not supposed to. These are the values that keep us together.

We have acted as if we really have believed that the causes of crime reside in the criminal – that some defect of mind, body, soul – explains the problem. Perhaps “he” was born that way, or he watched too many violent videos, or he chose the wrong friends. Ah ha! That’s why WR Grace sent all those folks into the vermiculate mine through layers of asbestos that killed them and the families to whom they brought the deadly fibers – too

many violent videos. And yes this is the same WR Grace accused of poisoning the aquifer in Woburn, 30 years ago.

If crime belongs to the criminals – rich ones or poor ones, we have only to do something about them: change them, punish them, kill them. Then with Captain Ahab, Gilligan reminds us (Ibid, 23), we will have rid the world of evil. We have given this our very best shot. Our efforts at rooting out evil have been every bit as extreme as the crimes we have attempted to eradicate. But who and what has been targeted? All crime? No, index crimes, the seven crimes we have decided are the operational definitions of the crime problem in America – the real crime problem. Our seven deadly sins: murder, aggravated assault, rape (of women), robbery, burglary, larceny, auto theft, and arson. And do we count even here all those who murder, rob and rape? No – the small – very small and with every step in the process increasingly small, and homogenized – fraction of those who are reported, arrested, prosecuted, and convicted. And the ones who make it to the end of the line - whose faces are bisected by prison bars is “distorted” says Jeffrey Riemann in The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison. (2001). It is a guilty face – way more often than not – but it is not a face that resembles the universe of us who inflict criminal harm. First, he is a he; he is poorer; he is darker skinned than the rest of us. Here he is “criminal man, the “dangerous offender” (Isabel Rennie, The Search for Criminal Man, 1978). He who can take responsibility for the rest of us. If I cheat on my taxes, have sex with someone who cannot give consent, cause the asbestos related deaths of hundreds of citizens in Libby, Montana, snort a little coke, I am not a criminal; I am not like them. And the “bonus” that comes with the portrait of “criminal man?” The

bonus of seeing with our own eyes that the dangerous offender is poor and disproportionately of color? What Riemann calls the “bonus of bias” (Ibid, 70)? We need not examine our consciences, much less our policies, about the huge and growing gap between the haves and those who have very little – they are bad, here is the parade of the undeserving – we have no list of deserving poor but here is the list of the ones who deserve – what – our contempt. Look at them! They get what they deserve. Punishment. Pain. The kind of violence we call legal. It is shaming.

At the beginning of this, I spoke of the heat generated by conversations about crime. I said it was unique. Well, it’s not. I just wanted you to focus. Listen to the feeling, the rage, the heat generated in discussions of poverty, welfare, affirmative action – things related to inequality. This is not a coincidence.

Why have I chosen this for my “last lecture?” Well, first, I can’t remember the last time I had a chance to say something that did not end with “please excuse.” I wanted to talk about what I do as a professor, as a sociologist. I want you to know that I think about things other than reaccreditation studies and curriculum initiatives. Well, that’s not true either. What I really want you to know is that my faith in Holy Cross is why I teach, what and how I teach, who I am as a Class Dean, as a sociologist/criminologist, why I care about the curriculum and the program formerly known as First Year and Montserrat – the mountain and the program, and Student Life at Holy Cross, and even those damn sick notes. There is a cloth here that comes from having been a student at Holy Cross – of Holy Cross – for all these years, as surely as I have taught at Holy Cross, for Holy Cross.

I teach what I do, and I have chosen this as my last lecture, in small and imperfect witness to the College's Mission. Holy Cross has given me something to believe in and something to stake my life on. I have done what I can to engage and sustain the **“dialogue,”** as quoted from our Mission Statement, **“about basic human questions: What is the moral character of learning and teaching? How do we find meaning in life and history? What are our obligations to one another? What is our special responsibility to the world's poor and powerless?”** What could possibly be more important than this? It is this - this dialog that shapes our students. This is what they will take with them wherever they go, whatever they do and whether or not they ever compute a chi square, write a poem, handle another test tube, paint, translate another line of Latin. And some will do these things too. Crime is the lens I use to engage these questions, to help us think about us – who we are, what we stand for, and unto what we must stand against. This, I pray, my students take into conversations with friends about punishment as a solution to crime and think about as they consider political platforms and referenda on the penalties of death, clean needle exchange, and educational programs behind bars. I hope they remember our dialog when they raise their sons and daughters and that, accordingly, they take great care with what they ask of them; that they know that people do not have to make something of themselves, they are already something; that those who own more are not of more value; that winning is not everything, not the only thing.

Criminology is one small perspective on these awful questions; my way of contributing. I believe in this mission statement of ours and in the leadership and vision that inspired this

document. It is a statement of purpose that made prophetic sense of our First-Year Program and its question, *How Then Shall We Live*, onto Montserrat and fundamental questions about the self, the divine, the natural world, and global society, in addition to the “core question” of Montserrat’s FYP predecessor. Montserrat is the program with which we will introduce Holy Cross to all our students next year. In seminars taught by faculty from departments – strong departments – the intellectual homes for all of us – we will introduce students to the dialog that signifies us.

Disciplinary departments are where we came from, the bases from which we teach, work, write. They provide the strong voices that make possible our shared search for meaning and value. There is the breadth of what we do here too. Even as the college has been ever-attentive to the departments and their majors, we have made such strides in the rest of – which is the majority of – the curriculum – minors, concentrations, self-designed multidisciplinary minors and majors, certificate programs. Then there is Study Abroad and Study Away and we are planning expansions of both. And the introduction to all this is Montserrat. Before most of them have a major they get an introduction to the dialog among disciplines about fundamental questions of meaning and value. Holy Cross.

I think a lot of students make extraordinary use of the options we have for participating in the dialog. I know so: they spoke of their experiences in the 19 valedictory speeches I just read and heard; they reflect on them in their applications for internships, jobs, graduate programs. I have listened to them talk about the connections among courses that blows their minds as they get closer and closer to their final semester - as if we have

been saving these connections for last. At the end of every year there are performances, presentations. Awards are given and citations read. Our students are the measure of our success; we should listen to them. FYP has inspired many a FYPer to look for opportunities to participate in the dialog; I know this – my last group of FYPers is graduating next month; and I have watched what they have done. I fully expect that Montserrat will have the same effect. Since the whole class will participate in this introductory dialog and since the hunger for more of that kind of learning will grow, I hope we can satisfy it; I hope we continue to pay attention to integrative teaching and learning throughout the course of studies. In the second year and the third and onto the fourth. The incentive for sustaining the dialog can – must – come from faculty who believe in its centrality. From those who know that their discipline is more than an end in itself but a mean to engage and sustain the **“dialogue about basic human questions.”** Faith comes from practice – from saying yes to those opportunities to be drawn into the heart of this college. Say yes. You will not be sorry. Tired. Not sorry.

Finally I tell you the story of my course in criminology as a plea. I believe - and with Cornell West – that there is nothing higher than the Cross. It stands above all – it must – or we lose our souls. It is our responsibility, our duty, to resist – structures and values that necessitate inequality, privilege means over ends, prefer competition over care and individual achievement over sacrifice. We are not the partners of these structures or the spokespersons for these values, our job is to restrain both – they cannot restrain themselves; they are not designed for this. We are. Education is. And especially higher education. And the highest education – education at Holy Cross – must not be not toward

successfully innovative competition to achieve ends that are forever one step ahead, not about the teaching the skills to win the race that renders everyone else a loser; not about supporting a dream to be realized by any means necessary. It is to privilege the ties that bind, care for the least of us, a life commitment to reserving the edges of the field, to stand up to injustice.

The stakes are high. Very high. Lest there not be one child – left standing.

Gilligan says that the question is not: how then should we live but how then can we live?

What choices can we make that are life sustaining; which are life threatening (Ibid, 19)?

How then shall we live? There is nothing higher than the Cross; this Cross, the Holy

Cross, it is worth devoting a life to.

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