

## Social Justice Leadership in Action: The Case of Tony Stewart\*

Kathy Canfield-Davis  
Mary E. Gardiner  
Russell A. Joki

### ABSTRACT

Reflecting on the 140th anniversary of the Fourteenth Amendment (ratified July, 1868), this qualitative case study described a response by educator-activist Tony Stewart to the Aryan Nations, a neo-Nazi hate group that attempted to intimidate Stewart's community, Coeur d' Alene, Idaho, between 1972-2000. Stewart galvanized community response using a social justice agenda. We interviewed Stewart and essential community members, and examined legal documents, articles, and documentaries. Findings indicated Stewart's leadership of public education and response via an anti-racism task force reduced and then defeated the group's viability. Educational practices included strategic planning and community outreach. The study revealed a social justice response to hate groups that educators and community leaders potentially can replicate in similar situations.

The birth, growth, and defeat of a neo-Nazi hate group in a community that experienced this phenomenon provides opportunity to teach citizens about social justice leadership and underscores the foundation for this study. The purpose was to describe the leadership of an educator-activist, Tony Stewart, who organized the community response to the Aryan Nations in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and who exemplified leadership in social justice. Social justice leadership is defined as a practice of confronting discrimination in communities and striving for democracy, inclusion, liberation, and action for change—rather than inaction preserving inequity (Lee & McKerrrow, 2005). Specifically, the article explores: 1) the leadership of one social justice leader, Tony Stewart, and 2) the policy and leadership lessons relevant to educators and community leaders.

Brown (2006) posed an essential question for further investigation: "What does leadership for social justice actually look like?" (p. 733). The present inquiry provides an exploration toward answering this critical question. In addition, it examines how leadership can emerge from advocacy at

---

\* This article was originally published in the *Journal of Ethnographic and Qualitative Research*, 3(4), pp. 205-217.

an individual level and can coalesce into a community response. Finally, this study describes strategies that permanently integrated social justice leadership into the community's political and cultural conscience.

Tuckman's (1965) situational leadership theory provided a useful way to understand Stewart's work and the evolution of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations as a response to incidents of hate in the community. Literature about multicultural diversity and social justice leadership (e.g., Banks, 2008; Brown, 2006; Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Theoharis, 2007) proved relevant in establishing a foundation for this study. Research about curbing hate also was reviewed since the study's focus was on one civic leader's response to hate (Dozier, 2002).

Administrators at every level must engage in social justice leadership. Doing so serves as an underpinning for their work in schools and universities, all of which serve diverse populations. Administrators guide teachers, staff, community members, and others in affirming diversity, which is necessary for teaching and learning to occur (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002). Students are not aptly motivated and cannot succeed in achieving their potentials in environments where a lack of safety, intolerance, or hate exists (Nieto & Bode, 2008). Effective administrators bring schools and communities together in ways that strengthen teaching and learning endeavors through the democratic process and the interchange of competing ideas. Oliva, Anderson, and Byng (2010), for example, affirmed the engagement of higher education in social justice leadership: "Educational Administration programs need to attract faculty who have both a strong commitment to social justice and who also either have strong links to school districts or extensive administrative experience" (p. 304).

Administrators are expected to exercise consistency, fairness, dignity, and respect when interacting with all individuals. Knowledge about the case of Tony Stewart has the potential to play a salient role in assisting educators as they become more effective leaders in schools and other organizations that affirm social justice. Furthermore, active engagement with political, economic, social, and environmental issues can lead to stronger, more confident democratic communities (Watson, 2008).

## I. METHOD

We utilized an embedded, single-case study strategy (Yin, 2003) as a means to understand the leadership of the individual educator-activist within the context of the community. This case study is about the leadership of one essential individual, Tony Stewart, and his response to the Aryan Nations in his community. Data from other sources included three partici-

pants who worked with Stewart. We also examined documentation to triangulate data and findings (Merriam, 2002). That is, we compared multiple data sources, finding them consistently portraying the same sentiments (Yin, 2003). The accord among the data sources strengthened the internal validity of the findings reported in this study.

#### A. *Participants*

In addition to Stewart, we selected three other study participants based upon their nearly 30-year experience in the Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, community and their work with Stewart and his anti-racism task force and human rights issues. They included: Mary Lou Reed, a former Idaho state senator; Bob Bennett, Executive Director, Human Rights Education Institute (HREI); and Sandi Bloem, the first female mayor of Coeur d'Alene. The researchers considered these individuals the most likely to help elucidate the phenomena of Stewart's leadership (Maxwell, 2005).

The above-mentioned participants worked closely with Stewart in the fight for democracy and social justice leadership in northern Idaho. They were instrumental in aiding our understanding of his leadership and the collective work of the group he spearheaded. Their comments generated information-rich data that offered insight and understanding of Stewart's social justice leadership (Patton, 2002). The selected individuals continue, to this day, their commitment to social justice advocacy. However, they are not considered representative of social justice leaders, all of whom work in unique social contexts on behalf of particular issues. True to many qualitative research studies, and case studies in particular, the present research is not designed primarily with external validity in mind. Table 1 describes the study participants.

#### B. *Data Collection*

Following approval from the university's human assurance committee, the first author, who lives in the Coeur d'Alene community, conducted face-to-face interviews with Stewart and the three other informants. Stewart is a former North Idaho College professor of Political Science. With permission, actual names were given for people and places. We determined using real, rather than fictitious, names was appropriate for individuals engaged in public activism, since doing so would enhance the study's internal validity and be useful for future researchers wishing to follow up with research in this area.

Based upon the recommendations of Creswell (2007), we employed several basic procedures in scheduling the interviews. The first author made

Table 1. *Study Participants*

	Age Group	Ethnicity	Gender	Leadership	Role
1 Key participant: Tony Stewart	Over 50	Caucasian	Male	Community College Professor of Political Science	President, Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations
2 Mary Lou Reed	Over 50	Caucasian	Female	Former Idaho State Senator	Past Board President, Human Rights Education Institute
3 Bob Bennett	Over 50	Caucasian	Male	Past President, North Idaho College	Executive Director, Human Rights Education Institute (HREI)
4 Sandi Bloem	Over 50	Caucasian	Female	First female mayor of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho	Human Rights Advocate

personal contacts with the participants, explained the purpose of the study, and scheduled interviews. All interviews were conducted separately, in the participants' work locations, and averaged 60 minutes in length. With permission of the participants, semi-structured, focused interviews were audio recorded.

A predetermined list of questions guided the interviews and created a basic structure and focus. The exact wording and order of the questions remained flexible and allowed participants an opportunity to direct the content. Open-ended questions established some parameters and allowed the participant to elaborate and the interviewer to ask for clarification when needed (Seidman, 1991).

In addition to interviewing Stewart and the participants, we collected documentation in the form of 1) personal records and documents maintained by Stewart, 2) documentaries, including a 10-week PBS television series entitled *The 25 Year History of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations*, 3) a 64-minute video used in conjunction with an exhibit, *Coming face to face with hate: A search for a world beyond hate*, 4) newspaper articles and editorials, and 5) physical artifacts examined at the Aryan

Nations compound site, which is now a peace park. As previously noted, using multiple sources of data facilitated the corroboration and augmentation of evidence obtained from the interviews (Yin, 2003).

### C. *Analysis*

The nature of data collected for this study required a variety of analysis techniques. We viewed the 10-week PBS television series and 64-minute video in their entirety in order to understand the flow and connection of the events that occurred between 1972 and 2000. Next, we viewed each segment of the 10-week program and the 64-minute video a second time. Careful notes were taken about significant events. Data collected from the video productions were organized chronologically. Subsequently, we created a time-ordered matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in order to organize the data. We made a final comparison between the data entered into the matrix and the information presented on the video programs by viewing the tapes one additional time in order to ensure accuracy.

All of the interviews were transcribed and then condensed, and all the extemporaneous, irrelevant comments, phrases, and utterances were removed. We used a pattern-coding analysis (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994) in order to sort the text into categories. Miles and Huberman (1994) maintained that one important function of pattern-coding is to reduce sizable amounts of data into smaller units: "It helps the researcher elaborate a cognitive map, an evolving, more integrated schema for understanding local incidents and interactions" (p. 69). Similar comments were highlighted by hand using different colored pens and placed into labeled file folders (Merriam, 1998). We also reviewed personal records and documents maintained by Stewart and newspaper articles to gain deeper insight. Stake (1995) contended: "Sometimes, we will find significance in a single instance, but usually the important meanings will come from reappearance over and over" (p. 78). Data from the interviews, personal records, documents, newspaper articles, and editorials were compiled into a checklist matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This matrix aided us in presenting the information systematically and in a condensed format so that recurrent themes and patterns could be identified more easily. Next, generalizations were written about the case, being contrasted with the literature. Finally, the case study was written and revised in light of researchers' dialogue and feedback from participants and peer reviewers.

As previously noted, in order to strengthen the credibility, trustworthiness, and dependability of the findings, we used triangulation and member checks (Creswell, 2007). Triangulation strategies in this study were derived from Patton (2002), who recommended data be gathered from more than

one source. In this case study, we collected data from interviews, personal records of Stewart, televised documentaries in the form of videotapes, newspaper articles, editorials, and physical artifacts. Analyzing all of these data sources helped to substantiate similar facts or events that occurred during the rise and downfall of the Aryan Nations and throughout the essence of Stewart's leadership. Member checks revealed all participants appreciated the article and confirmed accuracy of the findings.

## II. RESULTS

The following research question was addressed in this study: What does leadership for democracy and social justice look like in a community besieged by a racist hate group? To answer this question, results are reported in two parts. We first present the social and historical context of the formation of the anti-racism task force and then report the formation and work of the task force in the Coeur d'Alene community (1972-2000) using the Tuckman (1965) theory of small group development. Tuckman's situational leadership model of small group development stages provided a framework for understanding the work of social justice leadership. Educational practices included strategic planning and community outreach described in this section. The second part of this article identifies five themes representing how Stewart engaged his community in the fight against hate: 1) vision for equity within democracy, 2) risk taking, 3) tenacity, 4) compassion, and 5) inclusiveness. Stewart's leadership within the context of the community is presented using illustrative and supporting quotes from the leader himself as well as from civic leaders with whom he worked.

### A. *Formation of the Human Relations Task Force*

Results from the data indicate that Stewart's leadership of public education and response via an anti-racism task force reduced and then defeated the Aryan Nation hate group's viability. The context for Stewart's leadership was a community which had provided safe haven for racists by its initial reluctance to confront the racists in its midst. Allport (1954) stated that some people believe that if a phenomenon is ignored, then it will go away. This seemed to be the prevailing opinion in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, from the arrival of an Aryan Nations leader, Richard Butler, in 1973 through 1980. Racists lived alongside non-racists and anti-racists until a series of hate crimes initiated by the Aryan Nations disrupted the community.

The historical roots of the Aryan Nations as an organization in the

2008/09]

## SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

83

United States can be traced to post-Civil War times when individuals assembled in order to protect several hundred years of a culture that embraced slavery based upon racism (Newart, 1999). The federal constitutional amendments that followed the Civil War (Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth) proposed civil rights would not be denied on account of race. The intent of these amendments, especially the Fourteenth, which became known as “the incorporation amendment” because it applied the federal Bill of Rights to state action (Alexander & Alexander, 2009), was theoretically admirable. However, 140 years would have to pass before the manifestation of the ultimate reality—the election in November, 2008, of Senator Barack Obama (D-Illinois) as President of the United States.

Those opposed to the equal rights of the Fourteenth Amendment were powerful groups of citizens with a system of beliefs founded upon a so-called religious doctrine known as “Christian Identity,” which posited that White people were superior as “the only true children of Israel”; all other ethnicities were considered soulless and inferior (Newart, 1999). Vogt (2003) explains that the “Christian Identity” movement continues to have members who are White supremacists. These individuals rely on twisted interpretations of the Bible, rendering basic Christian beliefs unrecognizable. In addition to the Aryan Nations, some of the well-known racist organizations in the United States include the Ku Klux Klan, the Posse Comitatus, the neo Nazis, Identity Movement, The Order, The Order II, the Brotherhood, the Minuteman group, and others.

The 1954 landmark Supreme Court Case *Brown v. Board of Education* and the civil rights movement that followed garnered victories for those who had been racially oppressed. Hatemongers saw a decline in their overall effectiveness in the United States. Some of the more militant members began to look for areas in the nation where they could establish footholds. One of these individuals, Richard Butler, was attracted to Idaho from California. Butler claimed that he had become an admirer of Adolf Hitler while serving in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II (“Aryan Nations Founder Richard Butler Dies at 86,” 2004).

Following a visit to northern Idaho in the early 1970s, Butler purchased 20 acres of forested land with the dream of creating an all-white “Aryan Homeland” (Newart, 1999). The Aryan compound would become part of a greater movement to establish the “Northwest Imperative,” a plan by racists to create an all-White territorial homeland (Vogt, 2003). Idaho, along with Oregon, Washington, Montana, and Wyoming, was identified as a prime location to fulfill their mission.

The land purchased by Butler was situated near Hayden Lake, Idaho, a small community located several miles north of Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. Butler proclaimed the site the “Aryan Nations” and began to preach his intoler-

ant views through his self-proclaimed Church of Jesus Christ Christian. During this time, Butler successfully recruited like-minded individuals, primarily ex-felons, to move into the region and join his cause (Broadbent, DeBarbieri, DeLong, Gissel, Mend, Oliveria et al., 2005). An Aryan Nations recruit was Keith Gilbert, a former member of the Minuteman group. Newart (1999) reported that one of Gilbert's first racist acts in Coeur d'Alene was the distribution of a target shooting practice poster aimed at a human, specifically

a shooting-range style silhouette of a sprinting black man, replete with huge afro and monstrous lips. The highest score listed on the target was on its feet, implying that the figure could take a shot in the head and keep going. (p. 55)

The poster was billboarded in prominent, public places and on community main streets throughout Idaho's panhandle.

Throughout the early 1980s and continuing well into the 1990s, a series of hate crimes was committed. Newart (1999) documented several of these incidents, including: 1) African American families living in Coeur d'Alene receiving notes in the mail saying, "N . . . , don't let the sun set on your head in the Aryan Nations" (p. 60); 2) the spray-painting of Nazi graffiti comprised of the words "Jew swine" (p. 60) and swastikas on a locally owned Jewish restaurant, on a Baptist church, and on a printing business; 3) a young Coeur d'Alene man enduring a series of hate-filled racist threats from a neighbor who attended Aryan Nation meetings. At one point, the boy's mother received a poster warning that "race traitors, those guilty of fratining [*sic*] socially or sexually with blacks, now stand warned that their identities are being catalogued. . . . Miscegenation is race treason, race treason is a capitol [*sic*] offence; it will be by death" (p. 60); 4) the verbal and physical accosting of a young couple near a Coeur d'Alene bowling alley; 5) cross burnings on the lawns of two different Coeur d'Alene families; 6) the 1986 bombing of the home of Father Bill Wassmuth, at the time the leader of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations; and 7) the bombings of several commercial and governmental properties in and around Coeur d'Alene. The "idyllic" lakeside community of Coeur d'Alene and Hayden Lake, Idaho, had become hostage to a hate group, the Aryan Nations, in its midst.

A small group of citizens formed the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations as a strategic effort to answer the hate messages with anti-racism education. Wassmuth and Bryant (2001) created the working motto, "Saying yes to justice is the best way to say no to racism" (p. 115). The task force was created following a process similar to Tuckman's (1965) classic

2008/09]

## SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

85

situational leadership model of forming, storming, norming, and performing. Tuckman's model provided a simplistic yet powerful agenda for understanding a social justice response.

*Forming.* Formation of the task force took place shortly after the spray-painting of graffiti on a Jewish-owned restaurant. Several local citizens—five local members of the Jewish community, two Protestant ministers, the Kootenai County prosecutor, the undersheriff-elect, and the sheriff-elect—met with the restaurant owner. They offered him their unqualified support, an act that initiated the development of a social justice community agenda.

The primary goal of the task force during its infancy was to provide support for individuals who became victims of hate crimes. Four objectives were defined: 1) to be an ally to those who were verbally or physically abused because of race, creed, or ethnic origin; 2) to act as agents to prevent abuse in the community; 3) to educate the community on the effects of racism; and 4) to provide a forum for those who desired to verbalize their concerns regarding racism and its effects on the community (Broadbent et al., 2005). When asked about his social justice leadership and the formation of the task force, Stewart recalled:

I would say at the top of that list would be responding to two incidents in 1980. The first one was when Sid Rosen's restaurant in Hayden Lake was targeted by the Nazis and, in December, 1980, 15 very special people went out that evening to give him great support. And then there was a biracial couple/family; her first son was from a Caucasian marriage, and her second marriage with two children was biracial, and they were targeted. And so a member of the Jewish community called me, and we organized a meeting in the first week of February, 1981, to create the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations.

Although the task force had clear objectives, individual roles and responsibilities remained unclear. The group loosely structured itself with five core members. They agreed to meet every six weeks in order to brainstorm ideas and programs that would motivate, educate, and involve others. Role clarity and responsibilities began to emerge.

*Storming.* The task force entered the storming stage shortly after its formation. During this period, clarity of purpose increases, but many uncertainties persist (Tuckman, 1965). Broadbent et al. (2005) indicated that members were divided on how noticeable they should be in the community. Some wanted no visibility; others wanted to organize rallies and actively seek anti-malicious harassment legislation. Still others pushed for publicly confronting racists who sought power and control by imposing fear on citizens. Many, including local government officials, still held mistakenly to

the belief that, if a phenomenon was ignored, then it would go away (Broadbent et al., 2005). Stewart explained:

Sometimes there are officials elected to office that are bigoted and advocate prejudice of different types. I particularly think that is true in relation to sexual orientation. We have some individuals elected in Idaho who have played on that issue and even introduced legislation or have tried to use this form of prejudice to win, and that's a real disappointment when they are successful.

Stewart asserted that society should possess an inclusive agenda and pass legislation that promotes pluristic values.

Reed concurred with Broadbent et al. (2005):

Back before the task force was even founded, the existence of the Aryan Nations was one that was distressing to the community; but we would run into that "live and let live" philosophy that seems to be our undoing here in the west. The first approach to the Aryan Nations was, if we ignore them, they will go away; we really don't want to get involved in the confrontation.

Despite the conflicting community views about how best to address the presence of the Aryan Nations, the task force stayed focused on its mission.

*Norming.* As the task force moved toward the norming stage, it launched into many debates on how best to proceed. A consensus was finally reached: it would go public with a strong social justice message. Roles and responsibilities were more clearly defined and accepted although, during this time period, the task force's approach was often one of trial and error (Broadbent et al., 2005). Nevertheless, the task force agreed that it needed to become more visible and active in the community, and it soon moved into the performing stage. Tuckman (1965) theorized that teams of individuals in this stage become more strategically aware of what they are doing and how to achieve mutual goals. Stewart commented regarding the group's development: "I've always been amazed how many times that we were at a crisis point or we needed to act, and I have been humbled and amazed at how many times we've called people into action and they have turned out." According to Stewart, the media played a major role in the public emergence of the task force:

I can never overemphasize the importance that the media has played in our causes. Both live and printed media have given us so much coverage prior to things happening and then after they happened. If you are going to communicate with the general population, unless you have lots of money, which we do not have, the media was our window to the public.

2008/09]

## SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

87

In short, Stewart recognized the critical role and willingness of media to cover the work of the task force.

*Performing.* In addition to the valuable work of providing support to victims of racism, the task force concentrated on passing anti-malicious harassment legislation. In 1983, the task force was successful in shepherding the passage of Idaho's first Anti-Malicious Harassment Act. One other significant achievement in 1983 was the conviction of Keith Gilbert for verbally assaulting a young man from a biracial family.

Following passage of the Malicious Harassment Act (18 Idaho Code § 7901) and the pronouncement of a guilty judgment against Keith Gilbert, the Coeur d'Alene community saw a reduction in graffiti displays, incidents of racial harassment being reported, and the widespread distribution of hate material. Nevertheless, Broadbent et al. (2005) reported a crime spree that engulfed the Pacific Northwest, California, and Colorado, illustrating that extremist hate groups were flourishing in the wider area.

Members of the task force rallied and identified the importance of the *visible* work of its leaders and community members. The first order of business for the task force was to outline the current problems. Among those identified were 1) the community image was being destroyed, 2) minorities were being discouraged from moving into the area, 3) racists were being encouraged to move into the area, 4) the quality of life for area citizens was being adversely affected, and 5) economic and social problems were evident. Six action committees were created: a victim's support committee, community response committee, education committee, legislative committee, legal committee, and public affairs/speakers bureau. Each committee had designated tasks and assignments. This new structure was the foundation upon which all future task force work was built.

The task force's legislative committee shepherded through the Idaho state legislature five pieces of legislation that were designed to promote human rights, including: 1) a domestic terrorist control act (18 Idaho Code § 8101) that limited the paramilitary training practices of hate groups; 2) the proclamation of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday as a commemorative holiday; 3) a civil remedies amendment to the malicious harassment legislation of 1983 (18 Idaho Code § 7901) that allowed victims to file for civil remedies if they were attacked; 4) a uniform bias crime reporting act in 1989 (67 Idaho Code § 3001); and 5) the establishment of a Hispanic Commission (67 Idaho Code § 7201) to represent the largest minority group in the state.

In the summer of 1998, the Aryan Nations staged a 100-man flag parade down the main street of Coeur d'Alene. In response, the task force, with Stewart's leadership, sponsored an event called Lemons to Lemonade. Community members pledged a certain number of dollars for every minute

the Aryans marched. Therefore, the slower and longer they walked, the more money was raised. The Aryan march lasted 27 minutes and netted nearly \$35,000 for the anti-racism work of the task force. The proceeds were used to purchase a variety of educational programs and materials for local schools.

Task force strategy was always to ensure that leaders from both political parties at every level of government were involved in all anti-racist public events. Elected officials, including governors, mayors, legislators, county commissioners, prosecuting attorneys, city council members, school board members, and others, were given the opportunity to speak. The integrated, comprehensive civic response reached deeply into the community psyche and established a grass roots improvement in the community.

The turn of the century brought an end to the Aryan Nations compound in northern Idaho. The group had tarnished the image of a community, tried to intimidate many, and committed over 100 crimes from 1983 to 2000. Ultimately, the Aryan Nations was named as a defendant in the case *Keenan v. Aryan Nations* (District Court of the First Judicial District, Idaho, Kootenai County [CV-99-441]). In 2000, the jury returned a \$6.2 million judgment against Richard Butler and the Aryan Nations. In order to avoid paying the full damages, Butler declared bankruptcy. His property was confiscated by the federal court and awarded to the Keenans. Today it is used as a public peace park. In 2003, Butler ran for Mayor of Hayden Lake and lost. It represented one of the largest voter turnouts for an election in the city's history. Butler died in 2004.

Although the community's response in creating the task force and the action committees was important in the fight against hate, individuals such as Stewart also were highly instrumental in achieving success. During its nearly 30-year history, eight people served as president of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations. Although no single president can take credit for the overall success, Stewart is considered the emotional and intellectual impetus that has kept the task force active (N. Gissel, personal communication, September 24, 2007).

### B. *The Work of Tony Stewart, Social Justice Leader*

Analysis of Stewart's leadership revealed the following dispositions: 1) vision for equity within democracy, 2) risk taking, 3) tenacity, 4) compassion, and 5) inclusiveness. The present article describes these personal dispositions of Stewart in light of his leadership for democracy and social justice.

2008/09]

SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

89

*1. Vision for Equity Within Democracy*

Stewart notes that each individual must look inside at a relatively young age and make decisions about individual core values. Stewart's personal core values include his vision and commitment to equity within democracy. In Mayor Bloem's words:

He knows his vision, sticks to it, and compels other people to be involved because he is so clear where he's going. When he and others started in their quest to shut down the Aryans, they were not fondly looked at by many; but he didn't allow that to stop him.

Stewart was described as a man of strong principles and guided by determined values. When asked what challenges he faced today, Stewart responded:

There are three main challenges. First, a percentage of the population worldwide is still steeped in bigotry and prejudice and, in many cases, hate. Sometimes it is based on race, sometimes religion, and sometimes sexual orientation, age, gender, and disability. A second challenge is economic: the number of people in the world that are in poverty, hunger, disease. It is unacceptable in a rich country to have 40 million people who have no health care, including children. It is unacceptable that corporations are paying their CEOs a hundred, two hundred million a year and yet other workers earn minimum wage and have no health care or retirement. Every child should have a quality education—it changes their life. The third challenge is political ideology. What is dangerous is when a particular group will decide that God speaks only to them. They want to mandate that everyone has to live that way, which is a violation of democracy.

Bennis and Goldsmith (2003) viewed leaders as the kind of people who draw others to them because they have a vision. They are able to critique the status quo and realize a new possibility. Stewart explained his vision:

You have to have a desire to be active in social justice—a commitment to the cause. Because when you are in the public arena of schools you oppose [racism and discrimination] and you have to have a backbone and courage. You absolutely stand up for what you believe in. You just have to have that. It just has to be there. And as you do those first two [vision and courage], you have to continually communicate with others.

Clearly, Stewart's vision guided his actions and communication with others.

## 2. *Risk Taking*

Risk taking is a foundational characteristic for the formation of any successful initiation. Overcoming obstacles that might potentially lead to failure is a key element for successful leadership. Bob Bennett, former president of both the Human Rights Education Institute and North Idaho College, commented about Stewart's ability to take risks:

Not only will he speak to human rights, but he will take risks. In fact, on more than one occasion when things were real tense between the school and the Aryan Nations, I was concerned not only about Tony, but I was concerned about the school. I urged him on more than one occasion to get a bodyguard or get someone that would be sensitive to his safety. I don't think he was as careful about that as he probably should have been. He is very brave. He's willing to get out there on the end of that stick and take a swing.

Daft (2002) presented courage in the context of leaders who "step through these learned fears to accept responsibility, take risks, make changes, speak their minds, and fight for what they believe" (pp. 219, 220).

Stewart reflected on a time when courage was demonstrated:

[At] the big rally we had on behalf of Bill Wassmuth, he made a very important statement. He said, "I want to live a long life. And I was afraid, but I refuse to live a life of fright and being afraid. I will stand for what I believe in. I just will not, I refuse to give in." I think that's how we have to proceed. ("Leadership Dialogues," 2007)

Similarly, Rapp (2002) noted that social justice leaders must be willing to take risks, to innovate and experiment: "to leave the comforts and confines of professional codes and state mandates for the riskier water of higher moral callings" (p. 233).

## 3. *Tenacity*

We found it was not necessarily humility, but rather tenacity, that proved to be a defining role of Stewart's leadership. Stewart himself had earlier noted the importance of humility in leadership: "There should be a lot of humility in leadership" ("Leadership Dialogues," 2007). However, leaders close to Tony describe him instead as a tenacious individual. In the words of Reed, a former Idaho Senator, Stewart was like a "Lone Ranger" with tremendous perseverance:

[His leadership is defined by] his incredible tenacity. He says, "If we

2008/09]

## SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

91

don't do it my way, I'm going to quit." It is probably one of the secrets of his success, his not straying from his position until he feels that justice has been accomplished. His direct approach makes him sort of a Lone Ranger.

It appears that Stewart possessed a set of personal leadership characteristics that he could make work when the crisis of discrimination called him to do so. Staying focused in the midst of diversity was part of the skill set.

Bennett further explained the tenacity and moral certitude of Stewart's leadership:

He's unbelievably tenacious. Once he sets his goal, he doesn't waver; he stays there. He's very nice about asking people, but he never backs away. If he believes in it, he continues to pursue it. He knows clearly what he's about. Once he gets focused, even though he tries to see other people's opinions, if he's successful with what he's doing, he doesn't vary much from what he thinks is correct.

Although humility is an admirable quality for social justice leadership, tenacity appears to be fundamental vis-à-vis seeing the accomplishment of challenging objectives fulfilled.

#### 4. *Compassion*

Stewart noted the importance of compassion as a leadership characteristic for social justice. He discussed three points. First, he stressed:

I think compassion is essential. How can you be supportive of these principles we're talking about, such as equality and dignity to all persons, if you don't have compassion? You have to connect with people and feel warmth.

Stewart asserted that the human dynamic could not be ignored when seeking to accomplish significant social aims. People must implement social policies, so bringing them along in the process is part of achieving success.

Second, he explained:

The other thing that I've tried to do personally is to think of those individuals, particularly young people like racist skinheads, who have been brought into it. A lot of times Aryan Nations are families, might have been in jail, and I think of them as tragic figures; because if they refuse to exchange ideas and experience with different cultures, they're robbed of that richness, and I look at them again as tragic figures.

Part of the secret of Stewart's success may have been his ability to see the world through the lenses of those whom he opposed. By seeking first to understand others, he was better prepared to lead needed social change.

Stewart concluded:

You really focus at the point, make sure you don't allow things to creep in that are destructive of what you really believe in—your compassion—and then you direct your attention toward victims. The hours we spend with victims have been so revealing, and it gives you real determination, because you see that they are permanently oftentimes affected. ("Leadership Dialogues," 2007)

Some readers might question how Stewart could work to defeat racism and at the same time view the racists as redeemable humans. Stewart's approach was to have the courage to stand up publicly against racism and racists. At the same time, Stewart expressed the opinion that a view of all people as humans capable of redemption, salvation, and forgiveness is the only way to overcome hate. Another social justice leader, Nelson Mandela (1995), similarly held a compassionate approach toward his jailers, which included learning their language to communicate with them (Mandela, 1995; Stengel, n.d.).

##### 5. *Inclusiveness*

Stewart demonstrated inclusiveness in his relationships with others. Mayor Bloem commented: "I never saw him angry. The way he came across was bringing people in and not judging them." When asked what dispositions future social justice leaders need, Stewart responded that he had been successful because of his ability to bring others together:

It was a very, very long journey. Part of that journey was converting a lot of people to human rights. A lot of people were on the sidelines, and then they saw the hate; so it was easier to convince them to become part of the solution against the hate throughout the Northwest. There are not many places in this country where there is more sensitivity about prejudice, bigotry, civil rights, and human rights because of all the crimes, and all the doctrines that were taught, and all the events that took place, and the counter-events. And different constituencies have come aboard. The first constituencies were in the area of education, the public schools, North Idaho College, and religious leaders. Over time, other constituencies—the business community, youth groups, senior citizens, labor, and all kinds of groups—have become supportive. The support has broadened to a lot of constituencies, very much like a political campaign.

2008/09]

## SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

93

Stewart recognized the importance of inclusion; the dangers of complacency, silence, and inaction as insidious forms of racism; and the importance of community engagement.

Similarly, in the 1960s, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership highlighted essential work to be accomplished by Whites, in particular, regarding the issue of racism. King (1963) suggested it was not necessarily the extreme racists who were the primary hindrances in the civil rights movement, but the moderate Whites. Since the moderates were more concerned with achieving a (so-called) "peace" than they were in demanding justice, these individuals tacitly were supporting and perpetuating racism and inequality.

Stewart summarized his views about the demanding urgency of the ongoing work of social justice:

Dr. King gave his life; Gandhi gave his life. If this world is ever going to be what it should be and can be, we must eradicate hatred, bigotry, and prejudice. It's destructive to the individual who hates. It imprisons them [*sic*] in their chains of bigotry and hatred. It also has denied a lot of people [the opportunity] to contribute to society in an incredible way because they were denied the right; women for so long, African Americans, Native Americans, and others. All society is poorer because of the sin of bigotry and prejudice. Dante said it best one time—I'm paraphrasing—that the hottest spots in hell are reserved for those who sit on the sidelines in time of crisis and do not take a stand.

Data from the present research study suggests that in order for a community to be successful in its fight against racism, leadership must be inclusive to be transformative. Transformative social justice leadership goes beyond forming, storming, norming, and performing to the next level of education and engaging community members in social action (Banks, 2007; Capper & Young, 2007). In transformative social justice leadership, all are involved; there are no bystanders, there is no silence. It becomes the community's response, not only the leader's initiative. In this context, Stewart emphasized the role of educators in activism and social justice work by outlining a four-step process:

Faculty should become role models for social justice and activism. Educators can be really helpful, particularly at the high school and college levels, in teaching young people in the four steps. First, sit down with the students and say, "Where at this moment are you in your life on this issue?" What this means is that there are two kinds of inner relationships for each person in social responsibility and citizenship. "How effective are you in one-on-one interpersonal relationships? How effective are you with social responsibility and citizenship with institutions/organiza-

tions?" Step two is to teach people to go out and gather information to broaden that understanding and activism. And it's a lifetime involvement that they need to continue to gather that information. Step number three is you should evolve a very clear philosophy of life; and once that is so well developed, it will determine how you stand on issues in society. Fourth is to become an activist.

Involving students and others in social justice leadership work was central to Stewart's success.

In summary, the findings of this case study indicated that organized forceful opposition to racism produced an effective model in countering the actions of a hate group. When combined with legal action, activism reduced the hate group's viability. These assertions align with Tuckman's (1965) group development theory that culminates with the *performing* stage. Stewart's leadership was characterized by a vision for equity within democracy. His vision of the Coeur d'Alene community being free of bigotry and prejudice propelled him to stand up and forcefully oppose any form of discrimination. For Stewart, the alternative of taking no action was unacceptable, even if it meant taking personal risks that sometimes placed him in harm's way. Stewart's tenacity is evident from his nearly 35-year commitment to human rights. Stewart not only showed compassion for the victims, but also believed racists could be redeemed. Finally, Stewart's desire to involve others in the social justice movement produced powerful results by mobilizing a community in the fight against hate. The study revealed social justice steps of the task force and one leader that can be replicated and transferred by educators and community leaders to similar situations.

### III. DISCUSSION

A policy and leadership application from this study is that educational practices, in the form of strategic planning and community outreach as described in this case study, were a powerful response to the Aryan Nations' organization. Stewart was able to successfully provide leadership to defeat the Aryan Nations as a force in the community. Others were involved, including a Catholic priest, Father Bill Wassmuth, the community members interviewed for this study, Norm Gissel, Morris Dees, and the Southern Poverty Law Center. However, an individual with a strong moral cause galvanized the community in the fight against hate. Stewart refused to stay silent in the wake of racism, bigotry, and hate. He also knew the importance of building a constituency such as the task force and all those they worked with because it takes the entire community to fight against hate. Dozier (2002) notes that various social victories can be won; but societies

2008/09]

SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

95

should not be lulled into complacency, because hate is extraordinarily difficult and dangerous to overcome.

Another policy and leadership lesson is that the work must be ongoing. Although the Aryan Nations as a viable organization in Coeur d'Alene was defeated, the Southern Poverty Law Center (2007) lists eight current hate groups operating in Idaho. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and local police continue to monitor the Aryan Nations. In 2007, Aryan protesters interrupted a speech given by Stewart at a meeting of the Human Rights Education Institute ("Aryan Protesters Interrupt Speech," 2007). In Moscow, Idaho, near Coeur d'Alene, a gunman linked to the Aryan Nations killed himself, his wife, a police officer, and a Presbyterian church sexton ("Shooter Linked to Aryans," 2007).

Ponterotto and Pederson (1993) argue that a new form of racism is emerging: "The modern racist believes that discrimination no longer exists and that minority groups are violating cherished values and making unwarranted demands for changing the status quo" (p. 18). The current threat to social justice in Idaho and elsewhere may be apathy and a belief that the work has been accomplished. Community engagement, as Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna and Slamet (2008) noted, is the "integration of service with teaching and research related and applied to identified community development priorities" (p. 61). School administrators and teachers must be educated in anti-racism, civic engagement, and social justice leadership; there is much work still to be done on national and local levels. As university professors in educational leadership, a priority for us is an ongoing need for a social justice agenda through our teaching and outreach efforts. As educators, we must assert leadership.

#### IV. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The individuals in this study were unique, and the findings cannot aptly be generalized to other social justice leaders and communities. Additional interviews with a wider range of participants, including victims of racism and those he sought to enlighten through education, would have generated additional depth on the leadership of Stewart. Nevertheless, the educational strategies and the task force actions described in this article, which were analyzed in light of the Tuckman (1965) model, are instructive and could have transferability to other settings.

Philosophical and constitutional considerations regarding American free speech were beyond the scope of the present article. We adopted the position that although hate speech is constitutionally protected, we believe such speech to be vile, and certainly hate crimes are not constitutionally protected. We acknowledge the salience of this fundamental issue and

believe that the matter deserves focused attention in a different journal article.

Recommendations for further study, including a comparative case study of community responses to hate groups in other areas, would add additional knowledge. Stanton (2008) himself argues that new scholarship relevant to communities is needed. Community-wide surveys assessing current perceptions of racism in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, or any other community, also would be useful. Further studies conducting interviews with victims of hate crimes about their experiences would serve to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken by the task force.

Finally, we recommend that studies focusing on social justice leaders in other communities be undertaken. The Tuckman (1965) approach to group formation informed by transformational leadership for community engagement needs to be further examined as a possible model for leadership. We desire that the present research article will motivate or inspire others toward social justice leadership and/or provide them with knowledge about successful methods previously used to confront racism. This will increase the chance that educators and community leaders will have in diminishing the destructive effects that hate groups have on humanity.

#### REFERENCES

- Alexander, K., & Alexander, M. D. (2009). *American public school law* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Aryan Nations founder Richard Butler dies at 86. (2004). *Deseret News Publishing Company*. Retrieved June 13, 2008, from [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qn4188/is\\_20040909/ai\\_n11472835/print](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4188/is_20040909/ai_n11472835/print)
- Aryan protesters interrupt speech. (2007, March 10). *Coeur d'Alene Press*, p. C1.
- Banks, J. A. (2007). *Engaging citizens in a multicultural society* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College.
- Banks, J. A. (2008). *An introduction to multicultural education* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.
- Bennis, W., & Goldsmith, J. (2003). *Learning to lead* (3rd ed.). Reading, MA: Perseus.
- Broadbent, L., DeBarbieri, J., DeLong, J., Gissel, N., Mend, M., Oliveria, D. F., et al. (2005). *The 25 year history of the Kootenai County task force on human relations, 1981-2005*. [CD]. North Idaho College Public Forum. Molstead Library. North Idaho College.
- Brown, K. (2006). Leadership for social justice and equity: Evaluating a transformative framework and andragogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42, 700-745.
- Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 374 U.S. 483 (1954).

2008/09]

SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

97

- Capper, C., & Young, M. (2007). *Educational leaders for social justice*. New York: Teachers College.
- Commission on Hispanic Affairs, 67 Idaho Code § 7201 (2007).
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Criminal History Records and Crime Information, 67 Idaho Code § 3001 (2007).
- Daft, R. L. (2002). *The leadership experience*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers.
- Dozier, R. W., Jr. (2002). *Why we hate: Understanding, curbing, and eliminating hate in ourselves and our world*. Chicago: Contemporary Books.
- Gardiner, M., & Enomoto, E. (2006). Urban school principals and their role as multicultural leaders. *Urban Education, 41*, 560-584.
- Keenan v. Aryan Nations (CV-99-441). District Court of the First Judicial District, Idaho, Kootenai County. Retrieved June 15, 2008, from <http://www.splcenter.org/legal/docket/files.jsp?cdrID=30>
- King, M. L., Jr. (1963). Letter from a Birmingham jail. Retrieved June 17, 2008, from [http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles\\_Gen/Letter\\_Birmingham.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html)
- Lazarus, J., Erasmus, M., Hendricks, D., Nduna, J., & Slamati, J. (2008). Embedding community engagement in South African higher education. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice, 3*, 57-83.
- Leadership Dialogues. (2007, June 10). *Spokesman-Review*. Retrieved April 23, 2007, from <http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2007/jun/10/supporting-each-other-in-the-fight-against-racism/?print-friendly>
- Lee, S., & McKerrow, K. (2005). Advancing social justice: Women's work. *Advancing Women in Leadership Online Journal, 19*, 1-2.
- Malicious Harassment, 18 Idaho Code § 7901 (2007).
- Mandela, N. (1995). *Long walk to freedom: An autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. Boston: Little, Brown & Company.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interpretive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- National Policy Board for Educational Administration. (2002). *Standards for advanced programs in educational leadership*. Retrieved June 13, 2008, from [http://www.npbea.org/ELCC/ELCCStandards%20\\_5-02.pdf](http://www.npbea.org/ELCC/ELCCStandards%20_5-02.pdf)
- Newart, D. A. (1999). *In God's country: The patriot movement and the Pacific Northwest*. Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press.
- Nieto, S., & Bode, P. (2008). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Oliva, M., Anderson, G., & Byng, J. (2010). Dilemmas and lessons: The continuing

- leadership challenge for social justice. In C. Marshall & M. Oliva (Eds.), *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions in education* (2nd ed., pp. 284-314). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ponterotto, J. G., & Pederson, P. B. (1993). *Preventing prejudice: A guide for counselors and educators*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Rapp, D. (2002). Social justice and the importance of rebellious imagination. *Journal of School Leadership, 12*, 226-245.
- Seidman, I. E. (1991). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College.
- Shooter linked to Aryans. (2007, May 23). *Spokesman-Review* (p. 1A).
- Southern Poverty Law Center. (2007). *Hate groups map*. Retrieved June 14, 2008, from <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/map/hate.jsp>
- Stake, R. E. (1995) *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stanton, T. (2008). New times demand new scholarship. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice, 3*, 19-42.
- Stengel, R. (n.d.) *Nelson Mandela interview*. Retrieved June 16, 2008, from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/mandela/interviews/stengel2.html>
- Stewart, T. (2007, June 10). *Spokesman-Review*. Retrieved June 18, 2008, from <http://www.spokesmanreview.com/sections/leadership>
- Terrorist Control Act, 18 Idaho Code § 8101 (2007).
- Theoharis, G. (2007). Social justice educational leaders and resistance: Toward a theory of social justice leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43*, 221-258.
- Tuckman, B. W. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. Retrieved September 15, 2007, from <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/tuckman.htm>
- Vogt, A. (2003). *Common courage: Bill Wassmuth, human rights, and small-town activism*. Moscow Idaho: University of Idaho Press.
- Wassmuth, B., & Bryant, M. J. (2001). Not in our world. *Journal of Hate Studies, 1*, 115.
- Watson, D. (2008). The university in the modern world: Ten lessons in civic and community engagement. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice, 3*, 43-55.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.