

Lawyers: Leading with Integrity

by Stella Rabaut
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Gregory Peck died recently. He came to mind as I started writing about "leading with integrity." Long ago, I decided he was a man of integrity. I made this assumption based on his Atticus Finch portrayal in the film "To Kill a Mockingbird." In those days I did not struggle as much with distinguishing fact from fiction.

In the same month Gregory Peck died, the American Film Institute named Atticus Finch the top screen hero in film in the last 100 years. Being a lawyer, I liked that tip of the hat to a lawyer who influenced the jury toward the good and a better tomorrow. I especially liked the image of a lawyer exercising considerable healing influence in a community of prejudice. And it raised a question for me.

I have been in a sustained conversation with colleagues over these last months, exploring whether we as lawyers are in fact leaders, by the very nature of the role we have in society. Or is leadership a position intentionally taken? I view "leader" in a broad sense—as one who takes initiative and exercises influence, and uses it effectively to contribute to the common good. In this ongoing conversation with colleagues, I have come to a fuller understanding of my own view. Increasingly, I view lawyers as having significant opportunities to exercise leadership:

- Leadership in the way we are present and hold ourselves and define our profession.
- Leadership in the way we form a relationship with each client.
- Leadership in the way we approach other parties in the conflict.
- This leadership calls for both attention and intention.

The challenge before us is this: How can lawyer leadership behavior be encouraged? Can we individually develop ourselves as leaders? What prevents lawyers from being leaders? What has worked in the past?

Can we, as a profession, intentionally nurture and encourage leadership that will influence society for the good and grow the Atticus Finches of the future?

Above all, what, if anything, does integrity have to do with it? What does "leading with integrity" mean?

The fact that I am raising the question gives you a clue. I do believe we can encourage, nurture, and develop lawyer leadership. And it begins with inner personal work, although usually in a relational context. I believe leadership development comes from within—not just from the head, but from the heart and soul.

In January, I spent some days with Parker Palmer. Parker has written about and led retreats on the leader's inner life. Indeed, he focuses on leading from within, emphasizing the co-creation that goes on between our inner and our outer life, between spirit and matter. We are not involuntary victims of our profession. Nor are we helpless. We are co-creators. We can expend energy complaining about our profession or use energy to transform it.

Knowing this can be a source of profound hope for change as well as a source of awesome responsibility. We do have a choice in what we project about our legal work—a spirit of hope or a

spirit of despair. In that choice, I create what is—that is, I create the world I live in. Circumstances will influence the possibilities, but actively or passively the final choice is mine. Parker quotes Vaclav Havel, a leader of considerable integrity. Upon becoming president of Czechoslovakia, Havel noted: "Consciousness precedes being." Through self-awareness we can double back on our experience and consider what we now might become, and where and how we might have influence. The core of our challenge as lawyer leaders is to realize that the current narrative (the way things are) is not as powerful as reflective self-awareness (the vision of what can be).

Speaking of vision, my belief is that we are in the midst of an evolution of a more conscious (self-aware), creative, and collaborative legal profession.

Consciousness: Consciousness, meaning self-awareness, is at the heart of emotional intelligence in Daniel Goleman's definition of it. I like the fact that my former law school teacher, Len Riskin, recently published a commentary in the *Harvard Negotiation Law Review* about the use of mindfulness in the practice of law. Although my own meditation experience supplies sufficient data for me, perhaps this publication gives greater legitimacy to meditation and mindfulness in legal communities. Len Riskin provides data to support his conclusion that mindfulness can help lawyers feel and perform better, derive and deliver more satisfaction in their work, and relieve suffering in themselves and others.

Creativity: I followed with pleasure the writings of Cheryl Niro about law as a healing profession, during her Illinois Bar presidency. The identity shift of lawyers from primarily adversaries to healers, from provocateurs to peacemakers, from entrepreneurs to service providers, is a creative stretch and one that is finding a wider audience. In Michigan, former Notre Dame Dean David Link heads up an institute with the imaginative name International Centre for Healing and the Law.

Collaboration: I have noticed that the conversation started by trial lawyer Stu Webb in Minnesota some years ago about collaborative lawyering is growing into a national movement. More lawyers are crossing the bridge from an adversarial, competitive presence to a more collaborative, problem-solving stance with the other parties in a conflict. Note the text recently written by Pauline Tessier, published by the ABA, titled "Collaborative Law: Achieving Effective Resolution in Divorce without Litigation." Each of these lawyers, Len, Cheryl, and Stu, has raised new possibilities, expanding on the usual way of doing business and leading our profession to consider both additional and alternative relationship-based ways of delivering our services.

Until now, little emphasis has been placed on the inner life of lawyer leaders. Most of the leadership training that I have participated in has focused on skills—communication, conflict resolution, listening—some of the important "stuff" of everyday practice. These worthy skills are essential, and help to manage the external world. But they alone aren't enough. Managing the external world well presupposes managing the self well.

What, then, of the inner journey? The demands and rigors of lawyer leadership roles often work against inner awareness. The natural tendency of people in leadership is toward extroversion, and the external world for leadership is by definition extroverted and outer focused. This can block out the inner consciousness and disregard or discount the inner life. This is not "leading with integrity," for that means, ultimately, leading with the self. Better not to partner with a stranger!

Legal training routinely emphasizes rationality as dominant, and by implication encourages emotional dissociation. Exactness is of the essence in applying the law, mostly in the service of "winning." Time and client demands, and the constant pressure of billable hours, do little to support

reflection, mindfulness, or a meditative practice. Presently, legal training and the culture of subsequent legal practice do not provide fertile soil for the growing and encouragement of reflective, visionary, and conscious leaders. Because of this, the growing of leaders who have clarity of values is not often a natural byproduct in the contemporary legal community. But attempts are being made to recapture the lost art of mentoring.

Ron Heifetz, a Harvard professor and leadership consultant, speaks of the need for leaders to "find a sanctuary," to have a place to hear themselves think, to restore their sense of purpose, and regain courage and heart. This is the route to integrity. And so the title of this article is "Lawyers: Leading with Integrity."

Integrity comes from integer, a Latin word meaning "wholeness." When I speak of leading with integrity or being a person of integrity, I mean being a whole person, a complete person, a person not split and divided by contradiction, ambiguity, and compromise. As humans we are body, mind, and spirit. Regrettably, since Descartes, our tradition of dualism and reductionism in Western thinking underestimates the relationship of each to the other. Integrity requires a consistency of moral values both in the practice of law and in the life outside the practice.

Lawyers will certainly continue to hold and demonstrate the superb rational and logical skills of the head. But they can also, at the same time, demonstrate the reflective, imaginative, and relational skills of the heart that are crucial to effective leadership in these times of unparalleled and frightening speed of change and uncertainty about the future.

But integrating these two—the skills of rational analysis on the one hand and intuition or "feeling understanding," which assumes an intimate and open relationship with the self on the other hand—is an extraordinary challenge. We are educated for the former but not for the latter, that which I am referring to here as the "inner life." Integrating the head and the heart, the rational and the intuitive, and therefore integrating the shadow side of self, is the core of integrity. This then is what I mean by "leading with integrity." Leadership and leadership education both require but are about much more than simply the acquisition of knowledge and technical skills. They are also about the development of character. Ultimately this makes it a matter of the spirit and the heart. That awareness may be uncomfortable for some, but that is where we live—and die.

Perhaps some new behaviors are called for: establishing times for reflection, pursuing clarity about underlying values, constantly reassessing one's actions and one's deeper purpose, taking greater risks and making greater sacrifices, collaborating and connecting more, and being less isolated.

When both the children I helped raise selected law as their life's work, I was pleased. Tracy, my stepdaughter, attended Northeastern Law School, magnetized by her commitment to public-policy law; and I became acquainted with Dean David Hall. His recent comments at a conference in Portland resonate for me. He said, "If in years to come you see lawyers meditating . . . don't be alarmed. If you see them performing miracles in the courtroom with their heads and with their hearts, don't object. If you see them mounting up on the wings to transform communities as they serve their clients, know that they are not leaning on their legal expertise alone. Know that they are resting on the majestic and divine wings of justice; being propelled by the power of partnerships, and the winds of a loving, healed and whole client community. And the only question they will ask of you is, do you want to come along for the ride? Please join them for it is a beautiful ride and a powerful partnership for justice." (Hall, April 2003.)

At a WSBA conference in November, this conversation will continue as we further explore the complexities of lawyer leadership. If this idea sparks your interest—and perhaps you'd like to earn some CLE credits—come join us. Read this both as an invitation and as an opportunity.

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