

# CONCEPTS & CONNECTIONS:

— African American Student Leadership —  
*A Newsletter for Leadership Educators*

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## The African American Student Leader of the New Millennium: *Rising to the Challenge*

by Greer Dawson Wilson

Historically, African American students acquired leadership skills and developed their leadership abilities through their involvement in church, sororities, fraternities and other organizations that primarily served the African American community. At historically Black Colleges and Universities, the opportunities and experiences provided student leaders allowed them to practice and to develop their lead-

ership skills and gain the tools they needed to be successful in the world of work as well as to serve as leaders of the global community. Historic figures and well-known African American leaders often attributed their success to the leadership opportunities and experiences they received while matriculating at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

As African American students began to matriculate at predominantly White colleges and universities, those that became involved in student activities and organizations often found themselves in one of three situations: (1) choosing to be in a leadership position, or (2) being thrust into a leadership position, or (3) being "crowned" a student leader because of their visibility.

As leadership educators, we began to recognize that African American student leaders, like their fellow student leader counterparts, needed a knowledge base and specific skills in order to be successful. However, what became apparent was that the "traditional" experiences, the "traditional" skills, and the "traditional"

*"African American student leaders often found themselves alone, alienated, excluded, questioning their success as leaders and navigating between their own ethnic group and the majority group - living in two worlds."*

philosophies that leadership educators espoused were insufficient. African American student leaders often found themselves alone, alienated, excluded, questioning their success as leaders and navigating between their own ethnic group and the majority group - living in two worlds.

In the year 2000, at many institutions, it can still be said that, "we just elected our first Black student body president," or "the only Black students involved in our programs are those representing their racial group," or "the Black president of the student body is ready to quit" because she or he cannot seem to develop coalitions or get along with the other officers. If

African American students are to indeed reap the benefits of involvement in campus life, then we as educators must be prepared to address the following questions: What challenges do African American student leaders face that majority students do not face? What strategies and solutions can we as educators employ to insure that the African American student leaders'

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# Connections From The Director

What an exciting time for this issue of *Concepts & Connections* to come out! I have the opportunity to share a fantastic professional development opportunity that will take place this summer. The National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs (NCLP) in collaboration with the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) will host the 11th annual National Leadership Symposium, July 19-22 on the campus of Marquette University. This year's Symposium theme is "Pluralistic Leadership: Intersecting Tensions and Connections". Through the leadership of Co-Chairs Emily Perl, Director of Student Activities and New Student Programs at Goucher College and William Mandicott, Director of the Lane University Center/Campus Activities at Frostburg State University the overall goal of the program is to address how collaborative forms of leadership have the capacity to cultivate an inclusive environment. The Symposium, through its unique Scholars-in-Residence format, will provide delegates the opportunity for intellectual exchange with educators in the field. Intended outcomes of the three-day Symposium are:

- An awareness of how one's identity, positionality and power conditions impact one's leadership beliefs and actions.
- A specific exploration of leadership from gender and racial perspectives.
- The ability to interpret leadership behaviors from a variety of stand points, as well as the ability to cultivate a variety of voices and leadership styles.
- An exploration of ways to negotiate multiple interpretations of leadership.
- Illumination of commonalties between scholars, theories and practitioners as a way of thinking about our roles as educators.
- Applications from pluralistic perspectives as a guide to the

creation of leadership instructional tools for both the academic and co-curricular setting utilizing the case study method.

- Creation of networks developed through book reviews, skill sessions and small group work.

Please consider joining us at Marquette University for this year's National Leadership Symposium. Registration information will be available after March 5th via the web at [www.naca.org](http://www.naca.org) or [www.inform.umd.edu/OCP/NCLP](http://www.inform.umd.edu/OCP/NCLP). You may also call 803-732-6222 (NACA) or 301-314-7174 (NCLP).

Before I focus on introducing our authors for this edition of *Concepts & Connections*, I am please to share a few new member services initiatives we have begun this spring. The NCLP office will now accept credit card payment for all publications and new/renewal memberships. Please be aware that many institutions consider memberships as subscriptions which are often not chargeable items on institution credit card accounts. Additionally, we will now be offering a two-year membership with a discounted rate of \$75.00 effective February 1, 2001. We hope this will meet the needs of many of our members who prefer not to renew every year.

The Clearinghouse staff is preparing to administer our membership needs assessment. We administer this important data collection tool every three years to track members' needs, evaluate NCLP services and track trends in leadership development and education on college and university campuses. We anticipate administering the needs assessment by the end of the spring semester. Thank you in advance for taking the time to respond to this important tracking process.

On a more personal note, I would like to share joyous news, our own Diane Puls, Coordinator of Membership Services for the Clearinghouse, and her husband Terrance became the proud parents of Ryan Mathew Puls on September

19, 2000. We are thrilled to have Diane back from maternity leave and working with membership services again.

This edition of *Concepts & Connections* examines African American leadership; addressing the challenges we face as leadership educators in moving from traditional leadership methods that generalize leadership concepts and skills to an approach that is more pluralistic in focus. In her lead article, Greer Dawson Wilson, President of the consulting firm Greer & Company, challenges us to "rise above the parochialism of traditional student leadership concepts and theories in an effort to facilitate the success of all students". Walter Earl Fluker, Director of the Leadership Center at Morehouse College, shares how Historically Black Colleges and Universities address the critical task of infusing the ethical dimensions of leadership development in curriculum and training for a more pluralistic focus. Renardo Hall, Director of Housing and Residence Life at Bowie State University, describes the Student Leadership Institute program he designed for NASAP in our program spotlight. This program emphasizes the importance of including students' culture, history and values in the development of their leadership skills.

Each of our authors are interested in getting your feedback and perspectives about the topics they addressed. Please take advantage of the great networking opportunity this newsletter provides. I hope this issue is successful in stimulating thought on how we as leadership educators may teach with a pluralistic perspective and address the specific needs of the diverse populations with which we work.



## The African American Student Leader of the New Millennium

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experiences will be positive, rewarding, developmental and transformational?

In our work with African American student leaders, we must address the following three areas: (1) Racism, (2) The Paradox of 'Them versus Us', and (3) Psychological Stress. These issues represent the primary challenges that confront African American student leaders as they assume leadership positions on campuses where they do not represent the numerical majority.

### **Racism**

While it is true that overt acts of racism are less frequent than they were a few years ago, racism still exists on American college campuses. The African American student leader is constantly bombarded with institutional, cultural and individual racism. These assaults may manifest as com-

*"Integrating anti-racism training into the overall leadership training program can assist majority students in becoming more receptive and sensitive to its central importance as opposed to its mere additive interest."*

ments from (1) peers, (2) faculty members or administrators, (3) editorial comments in the campus newspaper, (4) as well as constant questioning of decisions made and power exercised. For the African American female leader, gender issues are also a part of the equation. Cultural pluralism and diversity issues not withstanding, many of today's African American student leaders have not experienced and/or are not aware of the effect that racism has on them until they are in college and involved in student programs. The shock of experiencing racism for the first time can, and often does have a very devastating effect on the African American student leader's ability to carry out their responsibilities.

Moreover, with the demographic shifts in our colleges and universities, many African American student leaders find themselves confronted with Black and White issues, as well as other diversity issues that they are ill equipped to handle. The student leader's reaction to racism and racist acts, in tandem with their perception that administrators neither understand nor support them, undermines their ability to be effective. Oftentimes, as a result of this dynamic, student leaders lose faith in the leadership process and may eventually resign in real or psychological terms. This experience denies the minority student a valuable learning opportunity.

### **The Paradox**

African American student leaders involved in majority environment leadership experiences frequently find themselves in a true paradoxical circumstance. Specifically, other Black students expect them to represent "their point of view or position" and when the

leader does not, he or she runs the risk of being labeled and ostracized from their own peer group or the "I can't win for losing" syndrome. The pressure can be enormous as the leader tries to please everyone. This pressure is exemplified by the dilemma of a young woman, who was the first African American Student Body president at a historically White institution. She was overheard saying:

"I stopped eating in the cafeteria because the Black students wanted me to eat with them and the White students wanted me to eat with them. Therefore, no matter who ever I ate with, the other group would have a problem."

Another African American student leader shared this story:

"In making SGA cabinet appointments, I found myself questioning my own judgment. I wanted to appoint another African American student to a position, but I was afraid to because I didn't want the White students to say I was appointing my friend even though she had the qualifications. On the other hand, if I did not appoint her, the Black students would complain about my not looking out for my own and view me as a "sell-out."

In many instances, African American student leaders are caught between a "rock and a hard place." African American student leaders who represent African American organizations and groups also experience this paradox as they are often denied access and information about the broader context because they are viewed as only capable of addressing issues of their 'own group.' The reality of being required to serve all groups, while only being credited with the ability to lead your own group, can have a devastating effect on African American students in leadership positions.

### **Psychological Stress**

"I'm tired and I have three meetings this afternoon," or "I haven't had time to do my homework because I have five committee meetings this week," or "my grades are suffering

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This newsletter  
is printed on  
recycled paper.

because I don't have time to study," or "I only have time to eat junk food and haven't been to bed in two nights," are some of comments that we hear from the African American student leader. While these comments also are often heard from White student leaders, the lives of minority students are complicated and compounded by racism and the expectations that others have of their performance.

The 'fight or flight syndrome' often emerges and the African American student leader finds their life simply out of control. When African American student leaders reach this point, they experience burnout and feel devalued, unappreciated and misunderstood. Thus, the leadership opportunities on university campuses can only be experienced by a valiant few.

Leadership educators are constantly challenged to find ways to help develop African American student leaders. The critical question becomes, what are the strategies for helping African American student leaders bridge the gap between the two worlds in which they find themselves during their college sojourn?

### Strategies

There are no universally applicable strategies and solutions to the problems African American student leaders experience on college campuses where they are not in the majority. The following three [3] models can be adapted to address the realities of any college or university campus.

- **Assess the Climate and Culture**

It is the responsibility of the leadership educator to assess the campus climate and culture and provide student leaders with their assessments. Methodologies for acquiring these data include: focus groups, questionnaires, surveys, telephone calls, and the use of 360-degree feedback instru-

ments. The following factors are prerequisite to the leadership educator's ability to create an environment conducive to the success and development of African American student leaders:

- information about the student's experiences as a leader;
- the institutional climate, organizational policies and procedures, programs and events;
- formal and informal networks;
- access to delivery of university-wide systems and services that impact their organizations;

- understanding of African American student needs.

- **Provide Anti-Racism Training**

Anti-racism training needs to be provided on a regular and consistent basis. Often, such programs are held at the beginning of the academic school year and then forgotten. Some students and staff believe that a three-hour training session is all that is needed to address this complicated and complex issue. The "fear" of being labeled sometimes causes educators to avoid opportunities to help students unlearn cultural biases and stereotypes about African Americans in general, and student leaders in particular. Integrating anti-racism training into the overall leadership training program can assist majority students in becoming more receptive and sensitive to its central importance as opposed to its mere additive interest.

- **Provide Support Services and Programs for African American Student Leaders**

There is little doubt that support services and programs for student leaders exist on most campuses today. The question however, is how successful are these programs and services in assist-

ing African American student leaders to negotiate a system that may or may not welcome or value them? Support services must include such skill development competencies as: (1) Time Management, (2) Stress Management, (3) Conflict Resolution and Mediation, (4) Mentoring and Coaching, and (5) Dialogues and sessions on "how to deal with racism" and other forms of oppression, to name a few. Majority educators must become more comfortable working with African American student leaders, understanding their culture, their communication styles and their needs.

The literature and professional experience illuminate the necessity and value of student leadership programs for all students. The denial of this opportunity to African American student leaders has an exponentially negative effect on the African American student population and the campus community at-large. The need to value the leadership styles of students who don't fit the mold is apparent. The need to recruit and retain more African American students in leadership positions and organizations is a cry heard daily from leadership educators.

Thus, the challenge to leadership educators is to rise above the parochialism of traditional student leadership concepts and theories in an effort to facilitate the success of all students through effective leadership development for all student leaders. ■

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*"The critical question becomes, what are the strategies for helping African American student leaders bridge the gap ...."*

# Spirituality, Ethics, and Leadership:

## *An HBCU Perspective*

by Walter Earl Fluker

As Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) begin a new century of higher learning, we are faced with a myriad of problems vying for academic space on a rapidly changing playing field. These concerns are mirrored in religion, business, information technology, science, health, education, politics and other venues of public life. According to Robert Fogel, author of *The Fourth Great Awakening*, at the heart of the problem for the new century are three predominate factors: "a new technological revolution, a cultural crisis precipitated by technologically induced change in the structure of the economy, and two powerful social and political movements confronting each other across and an ideological and ethical chasm." (Fogel, 2000) For Fogel, the vast chasm of ideology and ethics is fueled by religiously inspired debates in the public square. Attendant to the challenge posed by the great divide between ideology and values is another crisis, just as formidable and uncompromising—the question of leadership.

There is a crisis in leadership, which extends across the spiritual, social, political, and economic spectrum touching all facets of civil society. Nationally, political scandals, corporate jostling, banking scams, stringent class divisions between the very rich and the very poor, urban decay, educational policies that place the "nation at risk," and other forms of incivility have become the hallmarks of our frightened and confused culture. But the long litany of ills that beset our society is only symptomatic of a deeper, more fundamental fissure in our spiritual and moral foundations. As the sainted Morehouse alumnus, Howard Thurman, stated in 1976, "America (and indeed the world) is in search of its soul."

Beyond American civil society, there is a world crisis in leadership that is often lost in myopic and narrow American nationalistic visions.

Embedded in this condition are the age-old problems of religion, ethnicity, and culture, which threaten world security and community (Huntington, 1996). At a conference in Prague, 60 prominent leaders, including 10 Nobel Peace Prize recipients and eight former heads of state gathered to discuss the future of the world community. While the origins of these problems, both nationally and internationally, are immensely complex and rooted in long historical narratives that are intertwined with a host of social, political, economic and cultural variables, there is consensus that the problem is one of leadership and more fundamentally ethical leadership. Oscar Sanchez, former President of Costa Rica, underscored the central issue of our times. He stated, "Our lack of ethics has led us to apathy, and our inaction is simply immoral." Others present, including Elie Wiesel, Vaclav Havel, and the Dalai Lama agreed that the future of world community hinges on proper attention to our ethical foundations.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities bring a distinctive, perhaps helpful perspective to the critical issues that now confront liberal arts colleges. Broadly speaking, the modern American university is defined by its positivist roots distancing itself in particular from the role of spirituality and ethics in the mission of the institution. Increasingly, smaller colleges have defined themselves in the image of

the larger secular research institutions (Gomes, 1999), placing highest value on research faculty and greatest emphasis on fiscal accountability. Institutional loyalty, in many respects, has been transferred from teachers to accountants and business managers, emphasizing values of fiscal accountability, acquisition of new funding and new buildings.

Among the causalities of this process is the loss of opportunity for both teacher and student to contemplate the social, ethical, and spiritual values that help shape the development of community. The outcome of the managerial predisposition of institutions of higher education is the loss of institutional character, a crisis among faculty who truly wish to be teachers and a real predicament concerning the future of the small college. (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 12 May 2000). Unlike their "elite" counterparts, among HBCU's the appropriateness of spirituality and ethics as viable and essential in the cultivation of

moral character in liberal arts education was not strenuously debated even during the most turbulent and disruptive periods of social change. To the contrary, many of these institutions found in spirituality the very force for the change and social transformation that was occurring.

Seasons and struggles change. HBCU's are threatened at the core because of the tensions surrounding public and private morality and "the

*"The challenge before HBCU's is precisely and empathetically this one: the incredible historical burden of providing ethical leadership in a postmodernist quagmire where many voices and many visions are lost in politics of difference and cultural aggravation."*

culture of disbelief" as Stephen Carter calls it. Our issues run the gamut from spurious spiritualities that exist alongside traditional institutional forms and religious beliefs to what is becoming more and more a disturbing silence surrounding the appropriateness of religious belief and moral character in the intellectual and spiritual development of students. *How then might we begin to rethink, as Gomes has done in general for American elite residential liberal arts colleges, the place of spirituality and ethics in our specific historical context?* Can HBCU's learn from their lessons of the past, that is, how do we excavate our traditions, habits, and practices for answers to the questions of post-modernity and even serve as guides to an anemic, faltering morally bereft vision of "the elite residential liberal arts college" to which Gomes refers? The challenge before HBCU's is precisely and empathetically this one: the

## The Leadership Center at Morehouse College

According to its webpage, "The Leadership Center at Morehouse College, established in 1995 with a generous grant from The Coca-Cola Foundation, was created to reflect the ideal of the "Beloved Community" embraced by former Morehouse College President Benjamin E. Mays, Howard Thurman, Martin Luther King Jr. and other distinguished Morehouse alumni. "Beloved Community" provides the context for the cultivation of compassion, integrity and courage as primary values in the development of leaders." The Leadership Center offers education, research, and training and consultation programs. To find out more, look them up at [www.morehouse.edu/leadership-center](http://www.morehouse.edu/leadership-center) or call 404-614-8565.

incredible historical burden of providing ethical leadership in a postmodernist quagmire where many voices and many visions are lost in politics of difference and cultural aggravation.

The development of curricula, programs, and training of a new generation of leaders who are spiritually disciplined, intellectually astute and morally anchored is a challenging venture that requires a thorough analysis of the social realities facing this critical endeavor. Leaders of the new century must not only be aware of the environmental realities that shape public life and practices. Sophisticated public awareness must be wedded to critical analysis of complex, multiple social circumstances that impede human development and moral flourishing. Questions of race, ethnicity, gender, and class must be engaged frontally and systematically. But most importantly, it will be the critical task of educators to infuse the ethical dimension into a postmodernist paradigm so that objective, historical and subjective questions are systematically explored in leadership curriculum and the training of students. 🏠

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*Dr. Fluker is the director of the Leadership Center and professor of Philosophy and Religion at Morehouse College and visiting professor of African American Religious Traditions at Harvard Divinity School. He is an ordained Baptist minister with ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ and the author of [They Looked for a City: A Comparative Analysis of the Ideal Community in the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)*

# Call for Session Proposals

International Leadership Association Annual Conference

November 1-3, 2001

Hyatt Regency, Miami, Florida, USA

<http://www.academy.umd.edu/ila/2001meeting/cfp.html>

**Submission deadline:**  
**April 30, 2001**

ILA invites session proposals on a broad variety of leadership topics and approaches. We encourage submissions from graduate students, scholars, practitioners and professionals in the field of leadership (e.g. elected and appointed officials, community leaders, business leaders, organizational consultants, trainers, and leadership developers), and leadership educators.

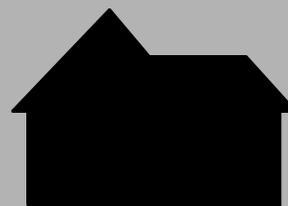
*Please direct questions to*

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# Sankofa Leadership Experience

## *An African American Student Leadership Program*

by Renardo A. Hall

The Student Leadership Institute (SLI), the Sankofa Leadership Experience, is a leadership program that was specifically developed for African American students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) and Equal Opportunity Institutions (EOI's) throughout the United States. Newly elected student leaders from student government organizations, fraternities and sororities are selected to attend the Institute. Each HBCU and EOI that decides to send a student delegation selects the student leaders based on their individual motivation and commitment to making a positive difference on their particular campus. These student leaders from HBCU's and EOI's must be dedicated to uplifting themselves, their organizations, their universities and the society at large in order to attend the Institute.

SLI is a demanding seven-day program with a rigorous schedule that requires the focused attention of each participant. Each day commences with a keynote speaker. This individual or panel focuses on the theme for that particular day. Each of the seven days has a different focus that ties directly into the overall theme of the Institute. There are usually three to four sessions each day with three to four concurrent workshops during each session.

These concurrent sessions are led and facilitated by leadership authorities actively involved in the field. Some of the facilitators are faculty from leadership studies and higher education programs and others are community leaders and activists. College presidents, college student personnel professionals, and former and current student leaders also facilitate the interactive and engaged sessions.

One day of the weeklong program is devoted entirely to service learning/ community outreach. All participants receive articles that speak to service learning or community serv-

ice. The purpose for the day relates directly to the Nguzo Saba principles and the Social Change Model of Leadership Development on which the Student Leadership Institute is based. In the past, student leaders from the Institute have been assigned to participate at elementary and middle schools within the District of Columbia and in Maryland. They cleaned up playgrounds, painted murals on the walls and added new equipment to recreation centers. The most meaningful experiences came when they worked directly with the children from the various schools. In the evening of the service project day, the student leaders reflected on their experiences. Most of the participants shared in their reflections that they saw working for the benefit of others as one of the true purposes of leadership.

The final day of the Institute begins with all participants coming together in fellowship through worship, connecting them with their spiritual leadership. The closing program brought the groups together in celebration: celebration of what they had learned, celebration of their skill development, celebration of the groups' growth and collaborative efforts, celebration of the relationships developed and the fellowship experienced, and celebration of the unanimity of thought but diversity of ideas. These student leaders experienced and felt empowerment.

*"The Student Leadership Institute (SLI) encompassed the students' cultural history, values and development. The training and development received by the student leaders was predominantly based on Afro-centric principles."*

The Student Leadership Institute (SLI) encompassed the students' cultural history, values and development. The training and development received by the student leaders was predominantly based on Afro-centric principles. The readings provided were primarily from African American authors. The unfortunate fact is that there are few leadership theorists who are African American and who are researching primarily African American leadership development. This student leadership program attempts to add to that limited body of knowledge from mainly an African American perspective.

As the theoretical basis for the Institute, the Nguzo Saba principles were taught, coupled directly with the Social Change Model of Leadership. Using the model and the principles helped student leaders make a connection to the concepts of leadership theory and their development. African American student leadership programs like the Student Leadership Institute should always be based on Afro-centric principles and values. The cultural norms and values of African Americans are the products of the culture of Africa, a slave history, and a Euro-centric world-view (Madhubuti, 1990).

In the Institute these values and principles are incorporated into the fabric of the structure. Each year the total group that has assembled is called a Village. The Village is broken into smaller units called Tribes. Each

Tribe is given the unit name of one of the Nguzo Saba Principles. The tribe in addition, names themselves with a family name. Finally, the elders of the Village are the advisors, students leaders selected from each tribe, representatives from the National Association of Student Affairs Professionals' (NASAP) National Association of Student Government Officers and the coordinators of the Institute. This group forms the Council of Elders.

The roots of the African American value system come from the African cultural influence. This African cultural influence or African worldview is a holistic humanistic philosophy, (Akbar, 1989; Nobles, 1972; White, 1984). Everything is interrelated. In the African culture there is a sense of aliveness and emotionalism is prevalent. The basic unit is not the individual as in the European world-view, but the tribe. Cooperation is valued over competition and individualism. People are linked together by the "talking drums" of Africa, in other words, oral traditions. Elders are valued because they have accumulated the wisdom of life. These are the values on which SLI's foundation is built. The student leaders who actively participate in the Institute receive these values throughout their weeklong experience.

### Conclusion

Student leadership models that are utilized on college campuses must become more culturally relevant. These models should emphasize the importance of the students' culture, history, and values to become more effective at impacting

*"Student leadership models that are utilized on college campuses must become more culturally relevant. These models should emphasize the importance of the students' culture, history, and values to become more effective at impacting the leadership development of African American students."*

the leadership development of African American students.

The NASAP Student Leadership Institute has been in existence for over four years; the author of this article developed the concept. The program was proposed to NASAP in 1995 and approved in February 1996. NASAP, a professional organization for student affairs professionals, began at Howard University in 1954. At that time, other professional organizations did not readily accept Black and other professionals of color into their associations. NASAP is the premier organization for African Americans and other professionals in student affairs sensitive to the needs of students of color, especially Black students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

With the strong support of the NASAP leadership, Sharon Whitaker, William Kean, Jacqueline Pollard, Reverend James Coleman, Rosell Caswell and others, the

first Student Leadership Institute was held at Bowie State University May 26-31, 1997. Bowie State University, founded in 1865 and the oldest HBCU in Maryland, has been designated as the permanent site for the Institute. The fifth annual NASAP Student Leadership Institute will be held on May 27-June 5, 2001 at Bowie State University. ■

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## Nguzo Saba Principles

Each principle of the Nguzo Saba establishes the importance of serving others. They speak of being a benefit to the community, not just to oneself. Everyone has a role to play in building the family, community, and society, no matter what talents one possesses. Dr. Maulena (Ron) Karenga researched and developed these principles.

**Umoja** (Unity)

**Kujichagulia**  
(Self-Determination)

**Ujima** (Collective Work and Responsibility)

**Ujamaa**  
(Cooperative Economics)

**Nia** (Purpose)

**Kuumba** (Creativity)

**Imani** (Faith)

# From the Student's Perspective:

## The Carroll F. S. Hardy Black Student Leadership Conference

by Nina Harris and Clayton Walton

On January 4, 2001, 32 student participants of the Nyumburu Cultural Center Ubele-Uongozi Leadership Series traveled to Richmond Virginia to participate in The Carroll F.S. Hardy Leadership Conference. The Ubele-Uongozi Leadership Series at the University of Maryland, was constructed in 1999 to provide students with an opportunity to explore concepts of leadership in relation to Black culture. The program hosts 30 to 40 registered students one Saturday a month. Each session consists of four components:

- Leadership from a theoretical perspective,
- Identity development theory,
- Black history as it relates to leadership,
- Experiential learning.

The primary sessions are developed from James Kouzes and Barry Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership, and from Black historical figures and their style or approach to leadership. Issues concerning the challenges of Black Student Leadership on and off campus are examined via dialogues and workshops facilitated by the program coordinator. This year long program educates its participants on leadership, provides opportunities for experiential learning about leadership, and facilitates a program calendar. This program calendar provides an opportunity for each participant to apply the skills and concepts that they learn during the academic year.

*"Attended by 1,300 black student leaders from around the country, the conference provides an opportunity for students to network while gaining a wealth of information about leadership."*

The trip to the Carroll F.S. Hardy Black Student Leadership Conference is one of two experiential learning trips that challenge participants to engage the concept of leadership development firsthand. Attended by 1,300 Black student leaders from around the country, the conference provides an opportunity for students to network while gaining a wealth of information about leadership. Throughout the conference, University of Maryland students are challenged to fully engage in the learning process. At the conclusion of each conference day, students participate in a reflection/processing /planning sessions with their University of Maryland advisors.

The conference is part of the experiential learning component of the program, providing students an opportunity to learn directly from known leaders and from their peers from around the country. The leadership series takes it a step further in that students are charged with creatively executing programs or initiatives on the University of Maryland campus as a way of sharing what they have learned. The following are some comments from students who are participating in this year's experience. If you have any questions about the program please contact Clayton L. Walton, Coordinator of Student Involvement and Leadership at (301) 314-1485

*"It was interesting going with a bunch of Maryland students. Even though we were all a part of our individual organizations, there was a signifi-*

*cant amount of group unity going on. That really added to our experience of being there amongst students from other schools. I thought we benefited a lot by meeting other students who were just as motivated as we were. In some of the individual workshops, some students were even motivated to the point of tears. Sharing that experience was inspiring. The passion about the whole experience was inspiring."*

**Gislaine Fertullien,**  
NAACP

Sophomore Communication Major

*"Many of the workshops were interesting and informative. I think what really added to this aspect of the conference is the fact that the speakers were so motivational. They really helped us focus our energies on positive things, as opposed to always focusing on the bad things that go on around you. Being with such a large group from Maryland was a good experience. We all got along well and by the end of the weekend, were equally connected to those who we did not know that well before leaving. As for the workshops, I did learn some specific leadership skills that I'm sure I'll be able to incorporate into my role as a leader on campus."*

**Tiffany Alexander**  
Sophomore Journalism Major

*"The conference gave me an opportunity to meet people who were in leadership positions like me at other schools. It provided us with a "spark" that we could bring back to Maryland. Now that we are back, the challenge is on us to fan that spark and keep the excitement of what we gained going. The spark is a combination of everything we learned, in and out of the workshops. It is a combination of specific leadership skills and the fellowship and inspiration that came from the speakers. When it comes to the programs we all have to plan for the rest of the year, the challenge is on us to cultivate that flame. We realize that we not only are faced with marketing our programs, but with marketing our*

organizations and ourselves. We know that we have to figure out ways to effectively bring about change. That's a part of what we have learned all year that was reinforced for us at the conference."

**Mazi Belcher (Mutafa)**

Senior English Major  
President of the Black Student Union

Nina P. Harris, Ed.D. is Assistant to the Dean for Special Projects in the Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Studies at the University of Maryland. Her email address is [nharris@deans.umd.edu](mailto:nharris@deans.umd.edu). Clayton L. Walton is the Coordinator of Student Involvement and Leadership at the Nyumburu Cultural Center, University of Maryland. His work focuses on the impact of experiential learning, leadership development and identity development on the Black undergraduate experience. He can be reached at (301) 314-1485 or at [cwalton@deans.umd.edu](mailto:cwalton@deans.umd.edu).

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# Scholarship and Research Updates

## African American Students and Leadership

by Susan R. Komives

Much of the general literature on leadership and African Americans centers on public leadership and social movements (notably the civil rights movement) with interesting literature on the community leadership role of the Black church. Those seeking to design leadership courses will find rich material in the biographies of such African American leaders as Fannie Lou Hammer, Henry Gates, and of course, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Greenwood Press recently published one of the best compilations of literature on the subject, the *Bibliography of African American Leadership: An Annotated Guide* by Dr. Ron Walters and Cedric Johnson. (Go to the Academy of Leadership's web site <[www.academy.umd.edu/publications](http://www.academy.umd.edu/publications)> for a detailed description of this publication.) This valuable resource contains sections on critical studies and appraisals, local leadership studies, ideologies and social movements, selected bibliographical materials, selected leadership organizations and audio and visual media resources. Also check out the Academy's African American Leadership Institute web site <[www.academy.umd.edu/scholarship/ali](http://www.academy.umd.edu/scholarship/ali)> for links to other resources on African American leadership like the *Western Journal of Black Studies* which is now searchable on line.

Studies on African American college student leadership have focused largely on student involvement and participation practices in student organizations. It is encouraging that several of these studies have found that leadership within African American student groups (e.g. fraternities) is a gateway to these students becoming active as student leaders in other campus organizations (e.g. Kimbrough, 1995; Kimbrough & Hurcheson, 1998; LaVant & Terrell, 1994; Sutton & Terrell 1997). Sutton and Terrell (1997) discuss this finding and its relationship to racial identity development and encourage the use of

various kinds of minority support and involvement groups to develop leadership. The full text of this chapter can be viewed in HTML through Firstsearch.

Friedrich Kustaam's 1993 dissertation on six African American student leaders at the University of New Mexico developed a grounded theory on leadership. The key hypothesis that emerged from these interviews was that those students who had leadership experiences in high school were more likely to become campus leaders when they perceived a gap or lack of leadership in campus organizations.

Those looking for research projects would find a wonderful opportunity to explore projects about leadership development for these college students. Much more scholarship is needed to understand the bi-cultural nature of inter-group and intra-group African American student leadership. Based on the body of literature that intra-group experiences are proven to be successful for the development of leadership efficacy, leadership educators still need to understand the translation and transference of those skills to inter-group settings. All of this work needs to be informed about possible gender differences as well.

### Other leadership items of interest:

Check out *Change* magazine (Nov/Dec 2000) reporting on initial results from the Collegiate Results Instrument (CRI) - a national project on studying college alumni. This is a project of the Institute for Research on Higher Education (IRHE) for the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI). Results from this first study are from 33,000 graduates and include their behaviors and attitudes toward civic engagement. A tentative observation from this study is that "civic engagement most often comes from those who have a strong attachment to a social cause, who are female, who are

employed in a teaching profession, or who majored in one of the helping professions while in college." (p. 55).

Paul Arsenault, business faculty member at Westchester State University, is working on a project for the Burns Academy of Leadership to consider the future of leadership assessment instruments. We will keep you posted on this project.

James Madison University is one of the few (perhaps even the only) Center for Service and Leadership with a professional staff member dedicated to assessment. They are currently developing a portfolio assessment for a new leadership program. Other projects include research using Tyree's Socially Responsible Leadership Instrument, Kouzes and Posner's Student Leadership Practices Inventory, and the SSLI (developed by their own Steve Grande and Cindy Olney). For more information, contact current Assistant Director for

*The key hypothesis that emerged from these interviews was that those students who had leadership experiences in high school were more likely to become campus leaders when they perceived a gap or lack of leadership in campus organizations."*

Learning and Assessment, Kristen Vogt, at 540-801-0651 or [vogtke@jmu.edu](mailto:vogtke@jmu.edu).

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Practicing what you preach: Gauging the civic engagement of college graduates. (2000, November/December). *Change*, 32(6).

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**Here's a sample of the James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership's African American Leadership Institute's links to African American leadership resources (at [www.academy.umd.edu/scholarship/aali/links.htm](http://www.academy.umd.edu/scholarship/aali/links.htm)).**

**The African American Leadership Association**  
[www.utm.edu/research/aala/aala.htm](http://www.utm.edu/research/aala/aala.htm)

**Emerging Leaders Institute**  
[www.icomm.ca/eli](http://www.icomm.ca/eli)

**The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture**  
[www.nypl.org/research/sc/sc.html](http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/sc.html)

**The Universal Black Pages**  
[www.ubp.com/History](http://www.ubp.com/History)

# The Leadership Bookshelf

## African American Leadership

Ronald W. Walters and Robert C. Smith

Reviewed by Brandon Dula

**A***frican American Leadership* (SUNY Press, 1999) by Ronald Walters and Robert C. Smith is a much welcome and much needed text in the field of leadership studies. While a number of books have been published recently on aspects of African American leadership, this book is a comprehensive examination of the topic and deals cogently with the racial construct of our society. This book more than any other I know illustrates that the study of leadership must be interdisciplinary in scope. *African American Leadership* offers a panoramic view of history, issues, culture, politics, leaders, institutions, movements and ideology within the Black community.

In the first part of the book, Walters and Smith begin by examining leadership from a cultural/historical perspective. They define and review aspects of Negro and Black leadership and chronicle the evolution between the two. They introduce readers to a host of leadership theorists including Gunnar Myrdal, Daniel C. Thompson, and Harold Cruse. In the second half of the book they focus on the how Black leadership functions under the dual realities and constraints of the Black community and the larger society.

I would recommend *African American Leadership* for all leadership educators and for teachers and administrators who are serious about studying and addressing issues of diversity

*"I would recommend African American Leadership for all leadership educators and for teachers and administrators who are serious about studying and addressing issues of diversity on more than a superficial level."*

on more than a superficial level. Because of its breadth and scope, I would recommend that the book only be used in an upper level course where students have completed introductory prerequisites in leadership and African American Studies. Leadership educators and administrators may also need to supplement the text with further readings. This would be helpful because the authors reference numerous events and movements of which all may not be familiar. Further readings may also aid some in fully understanding the racial context in which the authors frame leadership.

I have used *African American Leadership* in classes that I teach on Leadership and Ethnicity. The book provides many theoretical examples and case studies that can be used to spur students to think deeply in terms of race and leadership. The

authors speak of leadership legitimacy, de-racialized leadership and state rhetorically that General Collin Powell is not a Black leader. The strong discussions that can result from such assertions allow students to go beyond simplistic notions of diversity. Such discussions can evoke serious questions and help students to truly view the world from another's perspective.

While the book is comprehensive, those looking for a step-by-step guide to teach students how to be leaders may not be satisfied. The book may not help practitioners advise their

Black Student Union but may give them deeper insight into the African American psyche and experience. It can help administrators understand the differences between those Black students who view the world from a cultural nationalist perspective from those who may view the world from an integrationist perspective. Such insight may help administrators wade through and address the paradoxical challenges posed by diversity.

How does one create campus community while valuing multicultural enclaves? Why are all the \_\_\_\_\_ sitting together? These are topical and important questions that we will continue to address in an age of increasing cultural change. Books such as Walters and Smith's *African American Leadership* will assist us with our answers. ■

*Brandon Dula is Assistant Director of Student Involvement and Community Advocacy for the Office of Campus Programs at the University of Maryland. He has been teaching the course, Leadership & Ethnicity, for the past five years. He can be reached at [bdula@union.umd.edu](mailto:bdula@union.umd.edu).*

## Also By Ron Walters

***Bibliography of African American Leadership: An Annotated Guide***

by R. Walters and Cedric Johnson  
Greenwood Press, 2000

***Black Presidential Politics in America: A Strategic Approach***

SUNY Press, 1988

# Leadership Experiences of Students of Color: *Implications From a Student Leadership Research Project*

by Kevin Kruger and Sandra Carter

This article first appeared in *Concepts & Connections* Volume 2, Issue 1 (1993).

The past fifteen years have seen a significant increase in leadership development/education initiatives in higher education. Concurrent with this increased emphasis on leadership development has been an emphasis on diversity and how to meet the needs of students who are not White males (Smith, 1989). While these two issues have simultaneously received increased attention, the intersection of leadership development with an increasingly diverse student population has only begun to be researched.

Earlier examination of leadership development models with women found that many of the theories used in leadership education may not be as valid for women (Rosener 1990, Helgesen, 1990). This would suggest that similar problems may exist for members of different racial groups. However, the literature regarding the applicability of current leadership models for students of color is limited. In light of the lack of research in this area, a qualitative research study was conducted at a public, research institution to investigate the leadership experiences of students of color and to determine whether they deviated from experiences upon which traditional leadership models are built. The study attempted to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do students of color describe their leadership experiences?;
- 2) Are the leadership experiences of students of color different in predominately White groups than in their same race organizations?;
- 3) How do students of color conceptualize organizational dynamics, such as communication and conflict?

## Sample

The sample consisted of 21 undergraduate students. The participants were identified by the researchers as experienced leaders who had held more than one leadership role. Sixteen of the students were African American, four Asian American, and one Hispanic.

## Results and Discussion

Themes emerged in three key areas:

- a) Communication styles,
- b) Leadership styles, and
- c) Organizational structure and dynamics.

In the area of communication styles, assertiveness emerged as a major theme. This was particularly true of the African American students. The emphasis on assertiveness led to more open and direct communication in their organizational meetings. However, the students also indicated that they felt compelled to alter their style of communicating and dealing with conflict when they were involved in predominately White groups. "When I'm in White groups, I have to tone down my style because they think I'm angry if I'm direct like I am in my Black groups. They seem intimidated so I try not to be as direct," shared one student. The focus on assertiveness and altering their communication styles in predominately White groups is supported in part by

Jackson, and Jackson (1990). They found that successful Black

*"The findings of this study indicate that many of our traditional leadership development programs may be contradicting the way students of color describe their leadership styles."*

students used different interaction styles in predominately White groups than when in predominately Black ones. In this study the students found that by altering their communication style in White groups the White students were less intimidated. Sue and Sue (1990) state, "Black styles of communication are often high-keyed, animated, heated, interpersonal, and confrontational" (p. 64). Many of the African American students, with an awareness of this, indicated that they sometimes knowingly used their more direct style to ensure being heard in predominately White groups.

A strong theme in the area of leadership styles was the participants' focus on delegation. The students

described a style of delegation involving not only delegating tasks, but also delegating authority and responsibility. The students also spoke of the value of input, communication, and involvement from the group members.

In the third area, organizational structure and dynamics, it was found that the distinctions among official roles (president, vice-president, etc.) were often seamless or blurred. Everyone seemed involved in all aspects of the running of the organization. "We are like a big family, working together, getting things done," shared one student. Another key theme centered around the manner in which meetings were run. The participants described their meetings as more relaxed and

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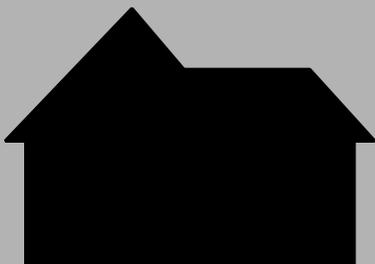
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less controlled by traditional meeting rules (i.e. Robert's Rules of Order). Communication occurred in a less formal way and business was conducted in a more fluid manner. This fluidity allowed the leaders to attend to the social and emotional needs of the group members as well as to attend to formal business.

The findings regarding leadership styles and organizational structure may be tied to developmental issues. McEwen, Roper, and Langa (1990) identified "Fulfilling Affiliation Needs" as a key developmental issue for African American students. On a predominately White campus, one of the main ways of fulfilling this need for Black students is through participation in Black organizations. Students may choose to use more inclusive styles of leadership to encourage as many students as possible to get involved. This might also explain why the students in this study described their meetings as attending to social and emotional needs of the members as well as attending to business. The goals of these organizations and their leaders appear to be broader than the goals traditionally addressed by leadership development programs.

## **Implications**

The findings of this study indicate that many of our traditional leadership development programs may be contradicting the way students of color describe their leadership styles. The students in this study consistently spoke of leadership techniques and organizational dynamics that favor characteristics of transformational leadership theories. This suggests a need to incorporate more of the emerging theories into our leadership programs.

The traditional theories of conflict management, power and meeting management offered in many leadership programs may be communicating a valued or preferred style of leadership that contradicts the styles discussed by these students. Leadership educators may need to broaden their theory base in these areas when working with students of color. In particular, educators need to work with all students to help them understand and accept different

styles of communicating and dealing with conflict.

This study opens the door to future research on the leadership experiences of students of color. Further study is needed to determine to what extent these themes vary in the various racial/ethnic groups and how these differences can be taught and validated in our leadership development programs. ■

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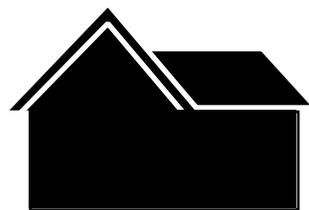
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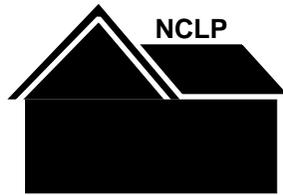
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