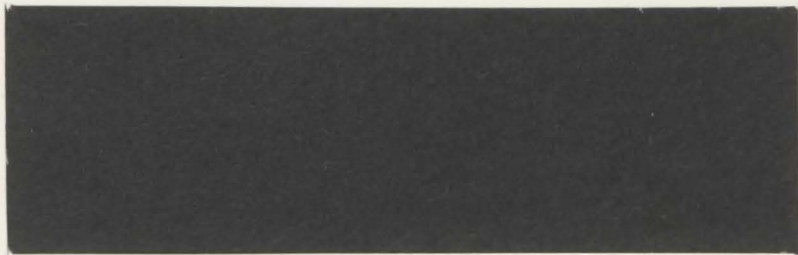


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CENTER FOR URBAN AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS  
FOCUS PAPER

BLACK LEADERSHIP: ON THE DAWN  
OF THE 21ST CENTURY

by  
Vivian Jenkins Nelsen

CURA has supported the work of the author of this report but has not reviewed it for final publication. Its content is solely the responsibility of the author and is not necessarily endorsed by CURA.

November 1988

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## FOREWORD

Many leaders and activists in communities of color have long expressed the concern that there is seldom the opportunity to discuss critical community issues with either their peers in the community or their colleagues in the policy making or funding sector in a setting that encourages reflection and cooperation. Service providers and others interested in community problem-solving also have voiced similar concerns.

Some service providers also lament the difficulty they have in setting aside time for a deliberate, well-thought-out approach to resolving complex community issues in preparation for systematic and applied research. Even when the time to think about these issues is available, the time to research and investigate aspects of a particular issue, prior to "thinking about it," is in short supply. The problem is especially acute for managers in small to medium size nonprofit agencies and in all but the largest policy-oriented governmental agencies.

College faculty members and grantors share a similar concern and in addition worry about the lack of a common ground on which various factions can meet and discuss issues of mutual interest. College faculty, not wanting to conduct their research in a vacuum, feel this need; as can grantors and resource managers who want to base their decisions on the most up-to-date research.

All of the above groups seem to want to be able to meet together to discuss key issues but feel that there is no structure within which this can logically occur.

No one wanted to talk "just to talk" or spend an undue amount of time discussing issues that seem intractable. They were more interested in issues that:

- were researchable,
- lent themselves to a Minnesota-specific analysis,
- had aspects that were resolvable through public policy-making,
- had significantly important consequences or effects for people-of-color, and
- required and could garner community support or commitment to resolve.

In response to these concerns, the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) initiated in 1986, Community/CURA Policy Focus Meetings. The purpose of the focus meetings was to create an opportunity for community activists and leaders, college faculty, community representatives, grantors, policy/decision makers and service providers, to meet in a "hold harmless," non-confrontational environment to discuss key issues that are of interest to all. This was done to counteract forces that work against coalition building, solution sharing, and the continuing development of cross-cultural sensitivity.

Individuals from a cross-section of the community were invited to attend a luncheon or dinner meeting to discuss an issue of importance to one or several of Minnesota's communities-of-color. Prior to the meeting, attendees received a ten to fifteen page paper, including bibliography, written by a faculty member of the University of Minnesota. The content of each paper was primarily national. At the same time, questions were mailed to participants that when answered would help the experts obtain both a better picture of the Minnesota perspective and an enhanced understanding and description of the issue under discussion. In the meetings, discussions were led by the CURA Coordinator of Minority Programs and a faculty

expert. When time permitted, the faculty expert, with assistance from a graduate research assistant, used the discussion to revise the paper. Papers not revised were summarized and mailed to focus meeting participants and non-attending invitees.

Three focus meetings were conducted during the year 1987. Their topics were:

- Black Families, Minority Families, and Public Policy
- Black Leadership and Leadership Development
- Economic Development Policy in Minnesota for Minority Communities

The second focus meeting, Black Leadership and Leadership Development, was held on June 6, 1987. Fifty-five individuals attended. (Please see the list of participants, p. viii.) Presentations were made by Dr. Robert Terry of the Reflective Leadership Program in the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, Vivian Jenkins Nelsen, Administrative Director of the Humphrey Institute, and Yusef Mgeni, Senior Program Officer, Northwest Area Foundation. This focus meeting was more like a mini-conference. All participants met together to listen to the presentations. After listening to the presentations, participants were asked to join one of four groups and to answer questions about African-American leadership. In the discussions, the following points were raised concerning African-American leadership and leadership development:

- The national summary should reflect the trends of divisiveness, a declining economy, and complacency within the African-American community. A discussion of leadership styles was also strongly suggested.
- Current leadership research has not adequately defined African-American leadership (e.g. are they leaders who are African-American, leaders of African-Americans, or both) and places too much emphasis on historical methodology.
- Some discussants felt that African-Americans can no longer develop a leadership cadre in the African-American community because the size of Minnesota's African-American community does not offer enough leadership opportunities. Desegregation was also cited as playing a similarly limiting role in the development of African-American leaders. Other discussants strongly disagreed.
- The above issues were thought to be further complicated by the fact that there are several African-American "communities," each of which seeks leaders who are representative of their communities.
- Although the role of the community in developing leaders has diminished in Minnesota as the sense of community has weakened, focus meeting attendees felt that leadership development must be a joint effort of government, corporations, foundations, schools, community centers, and especially churches and families. The family was deemed especially critical in the development of youth leaders.
- Many in attendance thought that as the numbers of African-American entrepreneurs continue to expand, this group will be an increasing source of strong and effective leadership.

All of the ideas that could be supported by readily available research literature on African-American leadership was included in the revised essay.

The essay that follows, *Black Leadership: On the Dawn of the 21st Century*, by Vivian Jenkins Nelsen, former Administrative Director of the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, and currently President of the International Institute for Interracial Interaction Inc./INTER-RACE, is one of two resulting from the focus meetings. Saraswathy Subramony, a graduate research assistant, reviewed many articles for the author of this essay. Most of the administrative details as well as program research were provided by Janet Larsen. Others on CURA's staff, Edward Drury, Chris McKee, Louise Duncan and Judith Weir played key roles in bringing these publications to fruition. Without the able assistance of these individuals the project would not have been as successful.

Edward L. Duren, Jr.  
Coordinator, Minority Programs  
Center for Urban & Regional Affairs



BLACK LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOCUS MEETING

JUNE 6, 1987

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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# BLACK LEADERSHIP: ON THE DAWN OF THE 21ST CENTURY

by  
Vivian Jenkins Nelsen, President  
International Institute for Interracial Interaction Inc./INTER-RACE

## I. INTRODUCTION

The global and local crises facing the United States call for leadership that is credible, creative, ethical, accountable, and visionary. James McGregor Burns, in his seminal work on leadership, states that "One of the most universal cravings of our time is a hunger for compelling and creative leadership...the crisis in leadership is the mediocrity or irresponsibility of so many of the men and women in power."<sup>1</sup> Maulana Karenga, a black nationalist leader and author, asserts, "If a general crisis of leadership plagues the world and U.S. society, it appears more acute in the black community given its oppressed condition and stringent requirements for its liberation."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the social and historical contexts of black leadership must be examined in order to further a discussion on leadership in black America.

The purpose of this essay is to examine the national historical context and sources of black leadership; and to review the current research on leadership, leadership development, and power as it relates to both. The questions addressed in this essay are:

1. How can black leadership be understood in the context of current leadership research?
2. Who are blacks to lead?
3. Can blacks learn to lead non-blacks as a result of skills and experiences gained in leadership roles in black organizations?
4. Who, if anyone, could/should be committed to developing black leadership and how can that be done in the broader community?

## II. AN HISTORICAL LOOK AT BLACK LEADERSHIP

Black leadership in America has a complex and richly textured historical background. Complex because the oppression of slavery and the post-Reconstruction eras thwarted black access to resources, institutions, and power. Textured because of the layering of vastly varied backgrounds--slave and free; urban and plantation; African and Western; landless and landed; lettered and illiterate. Historically, both national and local black leadership has been primarily drawn from religious, educational, fraternal, civic improvement, and civil rights groups. The history of black leadership can be discussed in two periods falling on either side of the peak of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s.

### A. PRE-1920s

#### The Black Church

It has been argued convincingly that Africans brought with them their own organizational and management skills developed in complex village and tribal hierarchies which were ignored by southern slaveowners and northern industrialists. Most blacks were only allowed to utilize these skills in leadership roles in the emerging black church.

Black evangelism efforts began in the 18th century by white slaveowners to reinforce their domination over slaves. Early black churches became the first slave era institution to nurture black leadership. Professor William H. Crogman, in his 1897 book, *The Progress of a Race*, wrote:

(Black religious institutions) formed the substratum of his preliminary training for the larger life that was to be realized under freedom.<sup>3</sup>

The black community of faith reconciled itself early to the inclusion of integrationists, separatists, and revolutionaries. As early as 1787, integration of northern white mainline churches was unsuccessfully attempted by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, and the African Methodist Episcopal Church, a black mainline denomination, was born.<sup>4</sup> J.W.C. Pennington, the theologian who received a D.D. degree from the University of Heidelberg while a fugitive slave, wrote that black emancipators had their roots in the liberation theology of black circuit riders (preachers). An architect of the abolitionist movement, Frederick Douglass, was also an A.M.E. preacher. Many black radicals were spawned in the church during slavery, and one of their number, Harriet Tubman, conspired with John Brown to overthrow the government.

#### Fraternal Orders

Blacks formed their own fraternal and sororal orders when rejected by white Masons, Odd Fellows, and others. Led by individuals like Prince Hall to form the Boston African Lodge as early as 1797, the orders built homes for orphans, cared for the needy and the elderly, and later assisted in the resettlement of families displaced by migration, emancipation or economic depression. Denied other avenues of social intercourse and group mobilization, these orders provided social welfare generations before governmental welfare programs were initiated. Black Masons, Odd Fellows,

Knights of Pythias and other fraternal organizations are credited with forming the foundation of the Negro insurance industry.<sup>5</sup> Both the church and the orders relied upon the artisanship of the skilled crafts in building lodges and churches, the first free-standing independent black institutions.

The first collegiate black fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Society, was organized at Cornell University in 1905. Sigma Pi Phi was organized in Chicago in 1909; its mission was to "bind men of like qualities, tastes and attainments into close, sacred union, that they might know the best of one another." Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, the first surgeon to successfully operate on the human heart, was one of the charter members. Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity was incorporated on May 15, 1911.

In 1907, the first black women's sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, was formed at Howard University and in 1913 Howard undergraduate students founded Delta Sigma Theta.

### Early Educational Movements

Although a limited number of both slave and freed individuals were privately educated during the slave era, education for the black masses came only on the heels of the Civil War. Black institutions of higher learning blossomed at this time and were founded by both blacks and whites and funded by both independent black churches and mainline denominations. One of the most widely known of these was Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. The major debate surrounding the direction of education for newly freed blacks was framed by Tuskegee's founder, Booker T. Washington, and his adversary, W.E.B. DuBois. DuBois was born and raised in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Washington was born on a farm near Hale's Ford, Virginia and entered Hampton Institute at the age of sixteen. DuBois was educated at Fisk, Harvard, and Berlin universities and credited their different childhood environments with their profoundly opposing world views.

Washington believed and stated publicly that blacks would not be ready for full social and political integration until they had mastered both literacy and vocational skills (although recent scholarship suggests that he held more radical private views).<sup>6</sup>

DuBois contended that classical higher education should be available to all and that mastery of vocational and technical skills should not take precedence over broad access to the full spectrum of both black and white institutions of higher learning and should not be requisite to full participation.

In order to press his position, DuBois presided over an ingathering of black intellectuals in 1905 called the Niagara Movement that later helped form the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Washington also established several organizations including the National Business League, a reborn Afro-American League, and others.

The broad perspectives of the debate DuBois and Washington submitted in the early 20th century remain in the black community today.

## Civic Improvement

Although black civic improvement groups were formed as early as the 1780s, they came to full flower during the Reconstruction era. These groups sprang up in both the North and South, creating both community and economic leadership.

A typical group was the Village Improvement Society of Oakland, Texas, led by a Mr. R.L. Smith, "a young man with only one arm, a school teacher, practical farmer, and member of the state legislature."<sup>7</sup> Smith said,

About five years ago I began to look into the condition of my people. I found them making good crops, from one and a half to two bales of cotton per acre. But their homes were small and the influences surrounding them bad. I started a society called the 'Village Improvement Society.' We have fifty-six members in a village of two hundred people. In five years fifteen families have spent \$10,000 in improvements. The surrounding country has been helped by our work. Our smallest house now has four rooms in it and some have eight rooms.

Last year we extended the order and called it 'The Farmers Improvement Society,' with about seven hundred members. We have five purposes: to get out of debt, and keep out, to adopt improved methods of farming, to cooperate in buying and selling, to get homes and to improve them. One result of our efforts has been a marked change in the treatment we have received from the white people.<sup>8</sup>

These burgeoning farmers' associations later formed an important link with the populist movement.

## Black Women

Although often segregated by sex, black women played a vital role in community improvement. According to Crogman, in "one community the wives have an organization by which to reduce home expenses; instead of buying on credit at greatly increased prices, they bring together their butter, eggs, chickens and the like, till enough is collected to purchase one hundred pounds of meat for cash at half the price they formerly paid. This meat they divide among themselves and save money; 1,300 pounds have thus been bought."<sup>9</sup>

The women's club movement, led by crusading journalist Ida Wells Barnett, urged "colored women to do something concrete about the slaughter of their husbands and sons."<sup>10</sup> "A group of Washington, D.C. women organized in 1893 as the Colored Women's League of Washington, Mrs. Helen Appo Cook was the President."<sup>11</sup> A Mrs. Ruffing called the Boston Meeting in late July, 1895 and the following December, a Congress of Colored Women met at the Atlanta Exposition. The National Federation of Afro-American Women and the National League of Colored Women merged in 1896 as the National Association of Colored Women. The Association had 10,000 members by its second year of operation in 1896 and adopted the motto, "Lifting as we climb." Leaders of this movement included Frederick Douglass' daughter, a Mrs. Sprague, and Mary Church Terrell. The organization's mission was to improve black home life, education and working conditions for black girls, build schools for girls, promote temperance, and abolish the convict lease system.<sup>12</sup>

## Civil Rights

Commonly but erroneously associated with the 1960s, the civil rights movement had its beginnings in the 1780s with the Boston African Society.

W.E.B. DuBois' and William Trotter's broadly-based Niagara Movement, which began in 1905, was the foundation of the contemporary civil rights movement. Its leadership included both black nationalists and integrationists. Thus, Niagara Movement leadership also helped form the NAACP. In 1917, the demonstration by 10,000 blacks in silent protest against lynchings was a precursor of the later non-violent demonstrations.<sup>13</sup>

The summer of 1919 was known as the Red Summer because of twenty-six race riots led by white mobs across the country. The sadism of the lynchings reached an unbelievable level and blacks began to fight back.<sup>14</sup> Into this milieu of black despair strode Marcus Mozhiah Garvey with a plan for an organization and a new country in Africa. Garvey built the first mass movement among American blacks and recruited hundreds of thousands of black Americans to form an African republic. "Always alert to the drama of his cause, Garvey established a chain of cooperative enterprises (grocery stores, laundries, restaurants, hotels, and factories). His biggest coup, however, was the establishment of a steamship company called the Black Star Line."<sup>15</sup> Convicted on a charge of mail fraud, Garvey was deported to his native Jamaica and later died in London.

Another black separatist group, the Black Muslims, emerged during the 1930s, led by Elijah Muhammad. Reminiscent of the Marcus Garvey crusade, Muhammad established temples in Detroit, Chicago, and other northern centers. "The Muslims called for total separation of black and white Americans and indicated their disdain for white civilization by dropping their 'slave' names and substituting the letter 'X'."<sup>16</sup>

## B. THE CONTEMPORARY LEADERSHIP LEGACY

The black church, civic groups, civil rights groups, and fraternal orders have all nurtured contemporary black leadership. Often these categories crossed each other with persons holding major leadership roles in two or more groups, e.g., Dr. Benjamin E. Mays was a major theologian and president of Morehouse College. Mays was the collegiate mentor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### The Black Church

"Counselor of the Universe, the friend of the unfortunate, the social welfare organizer, and the interpreter of the signs of the times"...describes the black church leader.<sup>17</sup> According to DuBois, the preacher was a "most unique personality" in black society, "a leader, politician, orator, boss, intriguer and idealist." Dennis Forsythe asserts that the "basis of the functionality of black preachers was the fact that he was supported by the black community." Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once stated, "The Negro minister is the freest man in the Negro community--not like school-teachers, because his salary is paid by Negroes. Whoever pays the leader defines the role."<sup>18</sup> Forsythe holds the view that the secularism of the black church is part of the dynamic relationship between the Church and the black community and is shaped by the needs of the community. Dr. King preached: "Any religion that professes to be concerned

about the souls of men and ignores social and economic conditions that cripple the soul is a spiritually moribund and dead religion."<sup>19</sup>

In the early 1960s, black churches under Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership became the coalescing point of the civil rights movement both including and stimulating a diverse coalition of civil rights, student, and labor groups. Black church leaders from King's organization (the Southern Christian Leadership Conference) now form the core of black political leadership in the Congress (e.g., Reverend William Gray III), state legislatures, and local governments (e.g. Reverend Andrew Young). The movement even helped groom a future presidential candidate in Reverend Jesse Jackson.

### Civic Groups

The Reverend A.D. Williams, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s maternal grandfather, after the Atlanta race riot in 1906, became a charter member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

When an inflammatory white newspaper attacked Atlanta Negroes as 'dirty and ignorant,' Dr. Williams helped lead a boycott that eventually closed the paper down. In addition, he was one of the leaders of a Negro citizens group that pressured Atlanta into building Booker T. Washington High School, the city's only high school for blacks. By the 1920's, Dr. Williams was a visible member of Atlanta's black elite, an eloquent and elegant man who refused to let segregation cow him.<sup>20</sup>

Fifty years later, the Montgomery Improvement Association was established to manage the boycott and future racial issues under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., its president and Rosa Parks, its secretary.

Community groups in black neighborhoods were given a significant boost by the "War on Poverty" under the Johnson administration as this was the delivery system for many economic, housing, and community education programs. Many black self-help programs mushroomed under the leadership of black clergy, such as Operation P.U.S.H. (People United to Save Humanity) founded by Reverend Jesse Jackson, and O.I.C. (Opportunities Industrialization Centers) headed by Reverend Leon Sullivan. Heavily funded by the federal government, there are now more than seventy OICs around the country.

Also during this period, rural associations developed similarly to those that emerged during the Reconstruction period in the late 19th century.

The South West Alabama Farmers' Cooperative Association, formed in 1966, received \$400,000 from the Office of Economic Opportunity. Comprising one thousand families, this farmers' organization produced and marketed their crops--cotton, okra, cucumbers, and peas--through their own cooperatives. Help from the federal government, like help from other quarters, stemmed in part from the ghetto outbreaks. But government help to Negroes also reflected the political power wielded by black voters, particularly those in the northern cities.<sup>21</sup>

## The Fraternal Orders

Black fraternal orders have a solid base in both the black community and campuses around the nation. Solidly committed to black education and community development, a number of these organizations have become politically active, establishing voter registration drives. Many groups have formed large scholarship funds, others have established and run Job Corps centers, and still others have built hospitals and orphanages. Unlike the white orders of Shriners and Masons, the black fraternal and sororal organizations continue to demonstrate their viability by ever increasing numbers of young members.

## Education

The activity of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s paved the way for desegregation of elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools. It has been suggested by many that integration has been a mixed blessing since a number of administrative and teaching jobs held by blacks were lost when white and black schools were combined.

The dwindling enrollment and retention of black students in colleges, universities, and professional schools is a serious problem. Historian Benjamin Quarles writes that black enrollments were down; black dropout rates were high because of poor academic preparation, not enough income to match the steadily rising tuition fees and a reduction in federal, state and local financial aid.<sup>22</sup>

During the 1980s, predominantly black colleges are in competition with white colleges and universities for black students. The number of black students attending black schools has declined significantly and when added to the chronic underfunding of black colleges, private as well as public, a number of colleges are facing closure or extinction.

## Civil Rights Organizations

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), after having faced the murderous brutality of southern segregationists, philosophically divorced itself from the Church and became the forefront of a new wave of black nationalism. Marked by the leadership of Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, Angela Davis, Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, Black Muslims, Black Panthers, and others, a new social and cultural consciousness was created under the rhetoric of "black power."

The summer of 1964 was reminiscent of the racial disturbances of 1919. Urban centers exploded with racial rebellions as blacks took to the streets to express their discontent with racism. Malcolm X responded to this new mood by urging political action. Born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska on May 19, 1925, he was the son of a Baptist preacher who was an outspoken supporter and organizer of Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association. In his autobiography, Malcolm X describes the night in 1931 when his father died:

My mother was taken by the police to the hospital, and she wouldn't look, she was afraid to look. Probably it was wise that she didn't. My father's skull, on one side, was crushed in, I was told later. Negroes in



Lansing have always whispered that he was attacked, and then laid across some tracks for a streetcar to run over him. His body was cut almost in half.<sup>23</sup>

Mrs. Little was soon committed to a mental institution and Malcolm left school after the eighth grade. He soon entered a life of crime and while in prison was converted to the Black Muslim sect headed by Elijah Muhammad. He quickly became the best-known defender of Muslim doctrines and following a religious pilgrimage to Mecca, he left the Nation of Islam and formed the Organization for Afro-American Unity. "Malcolm X called for a socioeconomic program of self-defense and self-assertion in concert with the emerging nations of Africa. He also projected a vision of black control of black communities. While organizing this new vision, he was assassinated by black gunmen in full view of hundreds of his followers at the Audubon Ballroom in New York on February 21, 1965."<sup>24</sup>

"With the exception of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, perhaps the most dynamic leader to emerge during the decade of the 1960s was Whitney M. Young."<sup>25</sup> During his nine-year tenure as executive director of the National Urban League (1961-1970), Young brought about a needed expansion and revitalization in the:

"...work, power, and influence of the league. In 1969 the national headquarters and individual chapters expended a total of some thirty-five million dollars. There were autonomous chapters of the League in ninety-seven cities throughout the country. Under Young...the League became one of the most powerful and prestigious private organizations in the country, black or white."<sup>26</sup>

Young died by drowning while in Lagos, Nigeria where he had been attending a conference.

Roy Wilkins became executive director of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in 1955. Wilkins was able to win a number of legal battles, including the Civil Rights Act of 1968. Both Wilkins and Ralph Bunche, first black ambassador to the United Nations and Nobel Laureate, worked effectively within the system to bring about systemic change.

Jesse Jackson has been credited with being the "single person most responsible for raising the political consciousness of blacks. Well-informed, articulate and dynamic, a spellbinder among spellbinders, Jackson shared the belief that the church should concern itself about social issues."<sup>27</sup> Jackson announced in November 1983 that he was a candidate for the office of president. Using an integrationalist approach, Jackson built a viable political organization in his "rainbow coalition" of blacks, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, American Indians, Asian-Americans, and whites.

### Black Women

Black women's organizations have continued to provide leadership, most notably in the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), the successor to the women's club movement of the 1890s. The NCNW was founded in 1935 by Mary McLeod Bethune, founder-president of Bethune-Cookman College and Director of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration. The first black woman to receive a major appointment from the federal government, Bethune held the NCNW post until January 1944. Her

successor, Dr. Dorothy Height, has led the organization in its growing influence in both political and international development arenas.

The first black woman to be seated in the Congress and to mount a bid for the presidency, Shirley Chisholm, was preceded by her reputation as an unpredictable and uncontrollable black woman. Chisholm's maiden speech in Congress late in March (1969) did little to dispel this notion. "The major themes of her campaign included jobs, job training, equality education, adequate housing, enforcement of antidiscrimination laws, support for day care centers, and the end of the Vietnam War...The development and implementation of human service programs for women, minorities, and the poor are hallmarks of Chisholm's legislative tenure."<sup>28</sup> In 1971 Chisholm was appointed to the House Education and Labor Committee. During her six-year tenure on this committee she led many valiant policy fights on behalf of working-class whites, minorities, and women. A number of other black women followed Chisholm to the House of Representatives, including Barbara Jordan of Texas who distinguished herself during the congressional hearings on the Watergate scandal.

### Sports

Sports have long been an avenue for black achievement and leadership when other fields were closed. Though limited to boxing, track, and, to a lesser extent, football and basketball in the early 20th century, to this day black athletes (because of their high visibility and perceived value as role models) are often accorded significant leadership roles. Among those who have used their athletic prowess as a springboard to leadership roles are Muhammad Ali, Dr. Harry Edwards, Wilma Rudolph, Jesse Owens, and, to a lesser extent while still in college, Jesse Jackson.

### III. DEFINING BLACK LEADERSHIP, LITERATURE TRENDS

The unique history of black leaders and how they developed is seldom explored in leadership literature even though this history contextualized black leaders, their development, style, and use of power.

David W. Johnson, noted social psychology researcher and theorist, writes that there are four major approaches to leadership theory: trait, position, style, and distributed functions.<sup>29</sup> In early philosophical thought, the leader was felt to be someone who had unique, inborn leadership traits. Aristotle, for example, states that, "From the hour of their birth some are marked out for subjugation, and others for command." Johnson says that one way to study leadership is "to examine the traits or personal characteristics that may make leaders different from nonleaders. This is the 'great woman' or 'great man' theory of leadership; it implies that leaders are born, not made, and, therefore, that leaders are discovered, not trained."<sup>30</sup>

Persons holding high authority positions within organizations have also been described as leaders, or positional leaders. Organizational leadership according to the research "...begins with the formal role system (president, vice-president, manager, supervisor, foreman, worker), which, among other things, defines the authority hierarchy. Authority is legitimate power, power vested in a particular position to ensure that persons in lesser positions meet the requirements of their organizational role."<sup>31</sup>

In a classic work on leadership research Johnson writes:

Based upon an experiment by Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939), three leadership styles were examined: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. In the autocratic style the leader determines all policy and gives orders to the group members. In the democratic style the policies are set through group discussion and decision, with the leader encouraging and helping the group to interact. In the laissez-faire style there is very little participation by the leader. Most of the research indicated that the democratic style is the most effective, but it also became evident that different styles are effective under different conditions. Certain conditions existed, for example, under which autocratic leadership seemed most effective (such as when an urgent decision had to be made). Other conditions suggested that a democratic style would be most effective (when a great deal of membership commitment to the implementation of a decision needed to be built). There were even conditions under which the laissez-faire style seemed best (when the group was committed to a decision, had the resources to implement it, and needed a minimum of interference to work effectively). Because different leadership styles seemed to be required in different situations, even with the same group, the attention of social psychologists moved to the distributed-functions approach to leadership.

The functional theory of leadership tries to discover what actions are necessary for a group to achieve its goals under various conditions and how different group members should take part in these group actions. Leadership is defined as the performance of acts that help the group reach its goals, maintain itself in good working order, and adapt to changes in the environment, and these acts are group functions. Leader-

ship functions include setting goals, helping the group proceed toward these goals, and providing necessary resources to accomplish the goals.<sup>32</sup>

Unusually democratic in nature:

Any member of a group may become a leader by taking actions that serve group functions, and any leadership function may be fulfilled by different members performing a variety of relevant behaviors. Leadership, therefore, is specific to a particular group in a particular situation.

The functional approach to leadership assumes that leadership is a learned set of skills that anyone with certain minimal requirements can acquire. From this theoretical point of view, responsible membership is the same thing as responsible leadership. A skilled member or leader, therefore, has to have diagnostic skills in order to be aware that a given function is needed in the group, and he must be sufficiently adaptable to provide the diverse types of behaviors needed for different conditions.<sup>33</sup>

James McGregor Burns identifies three major types of leadership (transactional, transforming, and transcending):

The relations of most leaders and followers are transactional--leaders approach followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another: jobs for votes, or subsidies for campaign contributions. Such transactions comprise the bulk of the relationships among leaders and followers, especially in groups, legislatures, and parties. Transforming leadership, while more complex, is more potent.

Transforming leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Various names are used for such leadership, some of them derisive: elevating, mobilizing, inspiring, exalting, uplifting, preaching, exhorting, evangelizing. The relationship can be moralistic, of course. But transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both.

The transforming leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower. But, beyond that, the transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents.

This last concept, moral leadership (means), first, that leaders and led have a relationship not only of power but of mutual needs, aspirations, and values; second, that in responding to leaders, followers have adequate knowledge of alternative leaders and programs and the capacity to choose among those alternatives; and, third, that leaders take responsibility for their commitments--if they promise certain kinds of economic, social, and political change, they assume leadership in the bringing about of that

change. Moral leadership is not mere preaching, or the uttering of pieties, or the insistence on social conformity. Moral leadership emerges from, and always returns to, the fundamental wants and needs, aspirations, and values of the followers. I mean the kind of leadership that can produce social change that will satisfy followers' authentic needs."<sup>34</sup>

According to Burns, transcending leadership is dynamic leadership in the sense that the leaders throw themselves into a relationship with followers who will feel "elevated" by it and often become more active themselves, thereby creating new cadres of leaders.<sup>35</sup>

Burns further defines a type of leadership as heroic, which "means belief in leaders because of their personage alone, aside from their tested capacities, experience, or stand on issues; faith in the leaders' capacity to overcome obstacles and crises; readiness to grant to leaders the powers to handle crises; mass support for such leaders expressed directly--through votes, applause, letters, shaking hands--rather than through intermediaries or institutions."<sup>36</sup>

Burns is unique in his "...insistence that leadership is inherently ethical. Leadership, he contends, must be ethical on two counts: the character of the leader-follower relationship and its vision of human need."<sup>37</sup> For Burns, the test of the leader-follower relationship is how the leader exercises power. A leader, on the other hand, engages in dialogue and conflict with followers. He or she affirms the followers as independent energy centers not simply objects to be acted upon."<sup>38</sup>

In his examination of studies on black leadership, Maulana Karenga complains that a major problem with theorists such as Burns and others is:

...the problem of definition. This is expressed by an inadequate understanding and delineation of the role and responsibility of a leader. This problem of definition plagues not only those who assume the status and manner of leaders, but also is found in the confusion in the black community as to what constitutes or ought to constitute the criteria for leadership. *The criteria for leadership which should be based on the quality of vision, values and practice is often reduced to style by some and status and visibility by others. Even social scientists who study black leadership have fallen into this definitional trap and contributed to this overall confusion.*<sup>39</sup> (emphasis added)

Burns describes civil rights leadership, in general, and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership, in particular, as charismatic and personalistic, while describing Mahatma Ghandhi as a true transformational, transcendent, and ethical leader.<sup>40</sup> John E. Jacob counters,

Often, we find a conflict in the minds of some over the question of whether charismatic or pragmatic leadership is most valuable. This is a false dichotomy--both are needed, and black history demonstrates that each reinforces the other.

Charismatic leadership is most often centered on protest, and galvanizes the energies of the people. Pragmatic leadership is more often found within the institutional settings of the black community, is often more involved with substantive issues, and is often more willing to adjust to shifting circumstances.<sup>41</sup>

Burns, in asserting that King's "personalistic" leadership was not transferable, ignores the fact that Ghandhi left no successor as well-known in the non-violent protest tradition as King, who studied Ghandhi's methods in India. The chilling effect of King's assassination on the civil rights movement must be seen in the context of the murders of popular President John F. Kennedy, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and civil rights leader Medgar Evers, and not merely the result of King's *personalismo*.

King, unlike Ghandhi, was a trained ethicist and left a significant body of writing on the ethics of human liberation. Further, King's protegeses such as Andrew Young, Jesse Jackson, Maya Angelou and C.T. Vivian have carried on his work in a variety of highly visible arenas. Although Burns bases a significant amount of his work on the theory and research of Lawrence Kohlberg's six levels of moral development in defining ethical and therefore real leadership, he departs from Kohlberg in his assessment of King's leadership. Kohlberg places King at the highest (sixth) level of moral development together with Ghandhi and others.<sup>42</sup> Burns gives King's leadership short shrift as merely charismatic, while Kohlberg describes King as both charismatic and ethical and cites the following passage of King's "Letter from the Birmingham City Jail" as classic stage judgement:

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws. One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with Saint Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all."

Now what is the difference between the two? How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust.<sup>43</sup>

Wilson (1960),<sup>44</sup> Ladd (1969),<sup>45</sup> and Thompson (1963)<sup>46</sup> categorize black leadership as being "militant" or "moderate" in style. Cox (1965), for example, uses attitudinal patterns to describe black leadership such as protest, conservatism, compromise, nationalism and revolt.<sup>47</sup> Bardolph (1961)<sup>48</sup> and Allen (1971)<sup>49</sup> on the other hand, equate leadership with status and visibility, according the word "leader" to any person making a substantial achievement.<sup>50</sup> Charles Henry (1981), like Bardolph, identifies individuals of high achievement as black leaders but tempers such a strict equation with the caveat about leaders' *real* power or ability to make decisions.<sup>51</sup>

Karenga (1982), Walters (1985), and Smith (1983) all point to the lack of a functional definition of black leadership. In reviewing the literature, several major questions remain unanswered. Is leadership a generic term and are the definitions proffered by Burns and others sufficient to describe black leaders? Where will new black leaders be developed outside of black organizations? Are white-run leadership

programs able to equip blacks who wish to work in primarily black organizations? Is there a danger that leadership programs will merely equip whites to further repress blacks, and must ethical leadership education, that is shared power with blacks and other groups of color, be intentionally anti-racist and anti-sexist? Are blacks to only lead blacks? Edward Jones Jr., a former division manager for New York Telephone Company describes the dilemma facing black leaders in the white corporate arena:

It means being smart but not too smart. Being strong but not too strong. Being confident but not egotistical to the point of alienation. Being the butt of prejudice and not being unpleasant or abrasive. Being intelligent but not arrogant. Being honest but not paranoid. Being confident yet modest. It means seeking the trust and respect of fellow blacks and acceptance by whites. Speaking out on issues affecting blacks but not being perceived as a self-appointed missionary or a unifacted manager expert only on black subjects. Being courageous but not too courageous in areas threatening to whites.

It means being a person who is black but not losing one's individuality by submersion into a class of "all blacks," as perceived by whites. Defining one's self while not contradicting the myriad definitions imposed by white colleagues. Being accepted as a leader for whites and not being seen as an Uncle Tom by blacks. Being a person who is black but also a person who is an authentic human being.<sup>52</sup>

Clearly there are major negative psychological consequences for black leaders who become "psychic contortionists struggling to play by the rules of this game."<sup>53</sup> Such struggling portends the important issue of the availability of emotional help and support for black leaders.

#### A. IS THERE A CRISIS IN BLACK LEADERSHIP?

Many writers are of a mind that black leadership is in crisis because of its inability to change with social and political conditions and with the sophistry of their followers. Walters suggests that there have been distinct periods of "strategy-shift," the first being the press toward the civil rights movement (1957-60), the second was the Black Liberation/Pan African movement (1966-67), and the third was the election of black political leaders (1970-72).<sup>54</sup> Two of these three periods, according to Walters, are linked by the 1965 Voting Rights Act, a civil rights victory facilitating the now-large numbers of black elected officials.<sup>55</sup> A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin urged this shift from "protest to politics." It was their goal to be able to broker power within the Democratic Party.<sup>56</sup>

Walters says that black leadership is always slow to make shifts and black elected officials have realized that they cannot control major resources but only broker them. Walters quickly adds that such a quagmire does not reflect upon the abilities of black mayors and others, but rather suggests that the powerful white institutions restrict their influence to "deliver" certain economic, social, and political relief to their black constituents.<sup>57</sup> Whereas a number of writers (Jones, Holden) argue that black leadership is weakened by its dependence on white liberal benevolence, Smith contends that liberal ideology is the problem and that the liberal establishment is unable--rather than unwilling--to deliver on progressive racial policies, such as affirmative action and improved social welfare.<sup>58</sup>

Almost without exception, Karenga, Smith, and Forsythe (1972) point to the inability of black leaders to exercise power within the majority society and that the current black leadership largely fails to connect with the black community. These writers also point out that black leadership must be understood within the context of the larger society with its constricting racism and classism.

The recent resurgence of the radical right has reminded Americans that racism is still a fundamental problem in this country and poses a particularly severe problem for black leadership," according to Karenga.<sup>59</sup> On the national front, one sees increasing unemployment among blacks, especially black teenagers, increasing distrust of government officials, low political participation, a crisis in moral integrity among political figures and demands on the radical right for a tightening of governmental assistance. This scenario is seen against a backdrop of individual materialism and loss of traditional liberal support for the poor, ethnic, and aged. Racism has created a dependence on governmental support to relieve the political, social, and economic problems of blacks and, thus, the situation has worsened during the Reagan cutbacks and "cutoffs."<sup>60</sup>

## B. POWER AND LEADERSHIP

In discussing how power is developed and used, many behavioral scientists have given particular attention to its sources or bases (French and Raven, 1959; Raven and Kruglanski, 1970). According to their formulations, there are six possible bases of a person's power: his ability to reward and to coerce, his legal position, his capacity as a referent, his expertise, and his information.<sup>61</sup>

A person has reward power over other group members if she has the ability to deliver positive consequences or remove negative consequences in response to their behavior. Her power will be greater the more the group members value the reward, the more they believe that she can dispense the reward, and the less their chances appear of getting the reward from someone else.<sup>62</sup>

Power can also be described as coercive and legitimate,

A person has coercive power over other group members if she can mete out negative consequences or remove positive consequences in response to the behavior of group members. When a person has legitimate power, group members believe he ought to have influence over them because of his position in the group or organization (such as an employer), or because of his special role responsibilities (such as those of a policeman). Group members invariably believe it their duty to follow the commands of a person with legitimate power, or perform a limited set of behaviors. When a person has referent power, group members identify with or want to be like him and therefore do what he wants out of respect, liking, and wanting to be liked. Generally, the more the person is liked, the more the group members will identify with him.

When a person has expert power, group members see her as having some special knowledge or skill and as being trustworthy. The group members believe she is not trying to deceive them for selfish purposes. When a person has informational power, group members believe that he has re-



sources of information that will be useful in accomplishing the goal and which are not available anywhere else. This power is based upon the logic of a person's arguments or the superiority of his demonstrated knowledge; it has effects similar to those that result from the use of expert power.<sup>63</sup>

Janet O. Hagberg (a training and management consultant), in her book *Real Power*, describes personal power as the "extent to which one is able to link the outer capacity for action (external power) with the inner capacity for reflection (internal power). Personal power at the highest stage *includes* the power derived from external sources represented by organizational and political positions, expertise, titles, degrees, control, material goods, responsibility, and authority, *but combines* with the power that can be derived only from within. Inner power develops from introspection, personal struggles, the gradual evolution of the life purpose, and from accepting and valuing yourself.<sup>64</sup> Hagberg's model of personal power includes six distinct stages, occurring sequentially:

Stage One:	Powerlessness	
Stage Two:	Power by Association	
Stage Three:	Power by Symbols	
Stage Four:	Power by Reflection	
Stage Five:	Power by Purpose	
Stage Six:	Power by Gestalt	65

Although Hagberg's model is informed by the female experience, it lacks a contextual framework to deal with racism.

A great deal of research has been done on leadership and the use of power, but little research has been done on black leaders and even less on how leadership works inside black organizations. Several writers have pointed to the changing sophistry of black followers, a change which is not evident in white descriptions of the "magnetic," "charismatic," power of black leaders in black organizations.

### C. FACING THE FUTURE

What are the issues that the literature suggests that black leadership in the nation must face? One of the very first is the possibility of a reformulation of leadership and followship. Some writers say that one can predict a resurgence of a black movement characterized by protest, confrontation, economic pressure, and an independent cadre of transformational leadership.<sup>66</sup> Conditions suggest that the new black movement will focus on securing economic rights, access, and employment.<sup>67</sup>

On the matter of black followship, Olsen and Buckley postulate that there is a schism between black leaders and their followers.<sup>68</sup> Davis says that the inequities that have historically caused black social change movements continue. The form of these inequities has changed: they are less overt while remaining pernicious. New and younger leaders need to be found, as many traditional leaders are now dead. Walters concurs, but goes further to say that blacks must themselves create local and national collective institutions to make effective contributions. One such place to begin is the formation of collective leadership organizations which cut across organizational interests and, thus, resource lines.<sup>69</sup>

An economic development institution is an urgent priority, and it should go beyond the previous frontiers of technical assistance to small businesses to the development of sizable venture capital to enable the initiation of large-scale enterprises which would support substantial employment.

Political institutions controlled by blacks must come into existence at a local, state and national level to supplement the individual organization of political leaders. Political organizations should exist which capitalize upon the substantial voting power of the black community and turn it into a leverage force for economic and social objectives. The formation of an institution that is able to field candidates for office, provide technical assistance and funds, and provide a structure for projecting policy issues and keeping officials accountable, is a logical direction of political development.<sup>70</sup>

Clearly the long list of needs facing the black community (and, therefore, its leadership) such as poverty, health and education issues, unemployment and the changing workplace, teen pregnancy and family structure, defy the ability of a single leader or organization to address effectively. Black organizations face a chronic inability to generate the kind of data and studies needed to address such complex issues as the impact of computer technology on black workers. It is increasingly evident that black "think tanks" are a needed tool to aid black leadership.

A knotty issue that must be resolved is the primarily male character of black leadership and the prevailing notion that black female leadership diminishes black male status. Implicit in this assumption is that leadership is a finite resource and that female leadership does not enrich the community. Is the black community utilizing only half of its available talent? To paraphrase a popular commercial, "A (black woman's) mind is a terrible thing to waste." Outside of black women's organizations, how will young black women be mentored into leadership positions?

Finally, black leaders have enriched the American experience by providing both moral and ideological leadership. The future must nurture new ways of bridging organizations, building viable coalitions, and equipping blacks to lead both blacks and non-blacks on the path toward ethical leadership.

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