

SECOND EDITION, UPDATED AND EXPANDED

JUANA BORDAS

SALSA, SOUL, AND SPIRIT

LEADERSHIP FOR A MULTICULTURAL AGE

NEW APPROACHES TO LEADERSHIP FROM LATINO,
BLACK, AND AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITIES



An Excerpt From

***Salsa, Soul, and Spirit:
Leadership for a Multicultural Age,
Second Edition***

by Juana Bordas

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Preface

THE RAPIDLY INCREASING cultural and racial diversity of the U.S. workforce, consumer base, and citizenry is challenging leadership to better reflect the values and worldviews inherent in our multicultural society. As the world becomes flatter and globalization creates a world village, leaders must have the cultural flexibility and adaptability to inspire and guide people who represent the whole rainbow of humanity. The central purpose of *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age* is to put forth a leadership model, based on the practices and principles of communities of color, that will move us toward a more pluralistic and equitable society. Authentic diversity will be realized only when the voices, values, and contributions of all Americans are integrated into mainstream leadership.

Since the first edition of this book, a number of transformative events have made multicultural leadership even more crucial. First, the historic election of Barack Obama was not just the symbolic fulfillment of the civil rights dream; it meant that the country's highest leadership position was no longer reserved only for White men. Second, the 2010 Census provided an updated snapshot of the American people and documented that within the next four decades minorities will constitute over 50 percent of the population. Third, the new demographics predict the advent of not only a rainbow nation but also a more youthful one. In just one decade, a majority of Americans under age eighteen will be non-White.¹ A new generation is emerging: the Millennials, who reflect and embrace our great diversity. And fourth, globalization and the growing interdependence of our world community are making the ability to lead and build community with people from very distinct cultures, nationalities, and ethnic groups fundamental to effective leadership.

Finally, along with these four changes, technology—both wired and wireless connectivity and social media—has become ubiquitous. Technology and social networking connect people instantly and allow them to easily share information and ideas. Cell phones, texting, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social networking tools have changed the face of political and social organizing, expanding our ability to share common concerns and take collective action.

These transformative changes underscore the urgency of using leadership principles that respond to our ever-expanding cultural mosaic and changing world. Despite this urgency, however, there are still far too few leadership principles or practices that draw on multicultural approaches. Today's leadership models, although they may differ from person to person and method to method, generally have a common bias toward Western- or European-influenced approaches. Contemporary leadership theories center on the dominant or mainstream culture and exclude the enormous contributions, potential learning, and valuable insights of leaders in diverse communities. Thus, the need for this updated and expanded edition is all too clear.

This new edition responds to these dynamic changes, updates demographics to include 2010 Census data, considers the impact of Obama's leadership, and includes a new principle: the Seventh-Generation Rule: Intergenerational Leadership. It is based on the great law of the Iroquois, which impelled leaders to always consider the impact of their decisions on their children, their children's children, and unto seven generations.² In the past this implied one generation shepherding and guiding the next. Today, for the first time in history, four generations are working side-by-side, requiring an intergenerational approach in which different ages work together compatibly to create a viable future.³

Within this intergenerational context, we will take a closer look at the Millennials, born between 1980 and 2000. The largest generation in the history of our nation, they are becoming the architects of the twenty-first century. Millennials have a predilection for the inclusive, relationship-based, and activist leadership of communities of color.⁴ I hope that they will fulfill the promise of civil rights, infuse American leadership with multicultural practices, and lead our nation to higher ground.

People continue to ask why I, as a Latina, wrote a book on multicultural leadership rather than leadership that springs from the community of my heritage. Although it is informative to look at Latino, or Black, or American Indian leadership separately, such a

focus implies that leadership in each of these communities is pertinent only to that one group and is not relevant or generic enough for widespread application. Latino leadership is commonly seen to be of interest only to people who are involved or work with this population. Black leadership is not regarded as applicable to mainstream organizations. Likewise, American Indian spirituality is not understood as the very essence of their leadership that can enrich all cultures.

Multicultural leadership has broad relevance and application to our diverse world. This culturally integrated leadership model has *greater impact, influence, and scope*. Delving into leadership models from specific communities will certainly enhance a person's ability to relate more effectively with that population, but it will not necessarily be applicable to other groups. A multicultural leadership approach, on the other hand, offers practices and tools that will be effective with many populations.

Furthermore, even though Blacks, Latinos, and American Indians have distinct ways of leading, there are key *points of convergence*—they share a number of core cultural dynamics. Their history as colonized people is a common denominator in engendering leadership that is people-centered, community-focused, and advocacy-oriented. All three cultures center on collective or group welfare, and all three value generosity and reciprocity. By identifying such points of convergence, multicultural leadership that integrates Black, Latino, and American Indian strengths can be brought forth.

These unifying factors lay the foundation for the nine principles presented in this book, which I believe have a universality across many cultures. I have distilled the nine principles from our Black, Latino, and American Indian communities. Voicing these commonalities will cultivate a greater sense of unity among communities of color and encourage them to actively disseminate more culturally inclusive leadership. Focusing on the cultural convergence points that shape multicultural leadership in no way denies the power or importance of leadership within the Black, Latino, or American Indian communities. Recognizing common abilities and celebrating differences are two of the touchstones of diverse leadership.

My own background is multicultural: Central American Indian, Spanish, and French. My grandmother was indigenous—her long braids hung down her back, as she never cut her hair. Coming from the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, I have Black and Latino relatives. Through marriage, my daughters are of Hispanic, Irish, and Norwegian ancestry.

My adopted daughter is African American and Anglo. I have had the enriching experience of living in an integrated neighborhood for over thirty years. The multicultural zenith of our family is my grandson; the rich diversity of his heritage—Black, Latino, Irish, Blackfoot Indian, French, and English heritage—represents our global future.

I also feel uniquely qualified to discuss leadership in Black, Latino, and American Indian communities. I was the first president and CEO of the National Hispana Leadership Institute and have directed Latino organizations for over twenty-five years. Through the Chevron Management Institute, I designed a leadership program that trained ninety Urban League presidents. Spellman College's Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement honored me with their Legacy Award. I was initiated into the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame and presented the Wise Woman Award by the Center for Women's Policy Studies. I also taught at the Center for Creative Leadership in the Leadership Development Program, the most highly utilized corporate training program in the world. The U.S. Peace Corps acknowledged me with the Franklin Williams Award for my lifelong commitment to advancing communities of color. Most important, I have listened to the voices of diverse leaders, many of whom I have worked with closely. This book reflects the composite of our experiences and ways of leading.

In this book, my use of the term *communities of color* refers to African Americans, Latinos, and American Indians. These communities' own preferred terms for themselves have changed over time. I use *Hispanic* as well as *Latino*. For African Americans, *Black* is a descriptor in usages such as Black History Month or the Black community. I refer to *American Indians* in general and indicate tribal membership whenever appropriate; I also use the term *Indian*, a short form accepted within that community, and *Native American*. These terms distinguish people, honor their identity, and highlight their cultural characteristics.

Other groups, such as Asian Americans, may wonder why they are not included here. There are several reasons. Asian Americans, for instance, come from many countries with numerous languages, customs, and nationalities: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Pacific Islanders, Cambodians, and East Indians and other South Asians—groups with such distinct histories, philosophies, and cultural attributes that it would be difficult to integrate their leadership approaches into the model proposed in this book. This complexity

and scope merits separate volumes on Asian leadership experiences and styles. It is also beyond the capacity and length of this book to do justice to their rich contributions, and my limited experience with these cultures would not allow me to be an authentic voice.

My hope is that this book will start a dialogue on multicultural leadership with the Asian American community and others who will widen the conversation. Creating authentic multicultural leadership is an ongoing and organic process. The principles articulated in this book provide a solid foundation from which other writers can expand and develop additional work on diverse leadership practices.

Finally, I want to speak of our elders. In communities of color, age is venerated and respected. The leaders interviewed for this book are largely elders and stand as beacons who have guided their communities. Most grew up in the civil rights era and thus incorporate a social responsibility aimed at building the good and just society. Studies on the Millennials indicate that they look to older generations for guidance.⁵ I hope that this new edition will promote intergenerational leadership, a timeless tradition in communities of color that ensures continuity.

Each principle section starts with a story from my life, adding my voice to those of the other leaders who have graciously shared their wisdom. The first part of my life, for instance, mirrors many of the experiences that shaped leaders of the civil rights movement. Each section ends with suggestions and exercises for practical uses of the principle. These have been particularly useful in classrooms and leadership programs and offer a creative way to learn collectively and to put multicultural leadership into practice.

Acknowledgments—*Gracias*

IN THE LEADERSHIP FIELD, there are practitioners and scholars. Practitioners design, implement, and teach in leadership programs, as I have done for the past twenty-five years. Scholars research and formulate leadership theories and models, then write books on their findings. As an author with many years of practical experience, I am a crossover. However, I had not thought about writing until Dr. Lorraine Matusak, the past director of the Kellogg National Fellows Program, invited me to become a Leadership Scholar. Exchanging ideas with authors such as Bernie Bass, James

MacGregor Burns, Ron Heifetz, Barbara Kellerman, Dick Cuoto, and Gill Hickman gave me a new perspective on how influential leadership books could be. They encouraged me to write about my experiences and perspectives in communities of color, as a needed addition to the leadership field.

It is impossible to thank all the people who have helped me with this venture. However, a few folks warrant special appreciation. Let me start with my *familia*, who have supported me in being a Latina maverick who strayed from traditional roles, and my multitude of *comadres* across the country with whom I have shared my life's path. This second edition is possible only because of the many people who have used my book in classrooms, leadership programs, and community work. Thank you for honoring the leadership practices in communities of color.

A special *gracias* to David Perkins, Arnie Langberg, Lynette Murphy, Eric Fransen, and Rich Chavez for guidance on the manuscript. To Lillian Jimenez, director of the Latino Educational Media Center, thank you for helping me capture the wisdom of Dr. Antonia Pantoja. To Steve Piersanti, the best editor in the world, and to the staff at Berrett-Koehler, thank you for your brilliance in shaping this work.

All of you have been my muses. I am blessed with an extended family like this and am forever grateful. In starting this second edition, the inspiration of President Obama reenergized my work: "We will need to remind ourselves, despite all our differences, just how much we share: common hope, common dreams, a bond that will not break."⁶

Juana Bordas
Denver, Colorado
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Special Contributions: Profiles of Leaders

SINCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, there has been a virtual renaissance in the leadership of communities of color. Leaders have stepped forward in unprecedented numbers and answered the call to serve, and they are guiding their communities with a deep sense of purpose. Yet these leaders, their incredible leadership journeys, and the many lessons they offer are relatively unknown outside of their communities, particularly in mainstream America. I believe these leaders hold up a lantern of hope that can guide us over the troubled waters of the twenty-first century. Their integrity and deep compassion for humanity can help to shape a more caring and responsible world.

It has been my privilege to interview the outstanding and visionary leaders profiled here and to draw from their wisdom and experience in writing this book. I hope that this book brings their inspiring stories to a wider audience and integrates their contributions into a new direction for leadership. (Unless otherwise noted, all the quotations from these special contributors that appear in this book come from personal interviews conducted with them, which were transcribed verbatim and then coded for common themes and patterns.)

African American Leaders

Dr. Jim Joseph has served four U.S. presidents. President Clinton appointed him chairman of the Corporation for National Service and U.S. ambassador to South Africa. He was the only American ambassador to present his credentials to President Nelson Mandela. In 1999, President Thabo Mbeki awarded him the Order of Good Hope, the highest honor the Republic of South Africa bestows on a citizen of another country. Dr. Joseph was formerly president and CEO of the Council on Foundations, and currently he is Emeritus Professor of the Practice of Public Policy as well as Director, United States–Southern Africa Center for Leadership and Public Values, both at Duke University. An ordained minister, he taught at Yale Divinity School and the Claremont Colleges. His writings include “Promoting Peace and Diplomacy” in *Nelson Mandela: From Freedom to the Future*; and *Remaking America: How the Benevolent Traditions of Many Cultures Are Transforming Our National Life*.

Dr. Lea E. Williams currently serves as the associate vice chancellor of academic affairs at North Carolina A&T State University. She is the former executive director of the National African-American Women’s Leadership Institute, Inc. (NAAWLI), a leadership program for women that helps them discover their leadership talents and use these in community service. Dr. Williams began her career in higher education at the United Negro College Fund. She authored *Servants of the People: The 1960s Legacy of African American Leadership*, documenting the tradition of Black Americans as dedicated servant leaders.

Andrew Young was a top aide to Martin Luther King Jr. and a frontrunner in the civil rights movement. As vice president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, he was instrumental in crafting the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. Young was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and later served as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations under President Carter. As a two-term mayor of Atlanta, he led an economic rebirth. An ordained minister, Young was the head of the National Council of Churches and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He has authored two books, *A Way Out of No Way* and *An Easy Burden*.

American Indian Leaders

Ada Deer was the first woman to head the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs. Under her leadership, tribal sovereignty was advanced to 180 additional tribes. As the first woman elected chair of the Menominee Nation, she led the movement for federal recognition of her tribe. Deer directed the American Indian Studies Program in the School of Social Work at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. During her tenure, she cofounded Milwaukee's Indian Community School and created the first program to provide social work training on Native American reservations. Deer was the first Indian woman to run for the U.S. Congress in Wisconsin.

John Echohawk is a cofounder and executive director of the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) and has been with the organization since its founding in 1977. A member of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma, he was one of the first graduates of the University of New Mexico's special program to train Indian lawyers and a founding member of the American Indian Law Students Association. Echohawk has worked to correct centuries-old injustices for Indian tribes for over forty years. Since 1988 he has been recognized by the *National Law Journal* as one of the one hundred most influential lawyers in America and has received numerous service awards for his leadership in the field of Indian law.

LaDonna Harris, Comanche, is one of the most influential, inspired, and determined Native Americans in politics. Since 1970, she has served as president of Americans for Indian Opportunity, which catalyzes and facilitates culturally appropriate initiatives that enrich the lives of indigenous peoples. Harris was instrumental in helping the Taos Pueblo regain control of Blue Lake, and helped the Menominee gain federal recognition after their tribe had been terminated by the U.S. federal government. Her publications include *To Govern or Be Governed: Indian Tribes at a Crossroads* and her autobiography, *LaDonna Harris: A Comanche Life*.

Benny Shendo Jr., a native of the Jemez Pueblo, was appointed by Governor Bill Richardson as cabinet secretary of the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. Secretary Shendo was the senior manager of Native American Programs for the University of New Mexico and director of the American Indian and Alaskan Native program at Stanford University. He serves on the National Institute for Native Leadership in Higher Education and cofounded the Riverside School in Jemez Pueblo—the first charter school on an Indian reservation. In 2008 he made a bid for the third congressional district seat in New Mexico.

Latino Leaders

Anna Escobedo Cabral held the office of Treasurer of the United States until 2008. Previously, she directed the Smithsonian Institution’s Center for Latino Initiatives. Cabral also served as president and CEO of the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility, a coalition of the sixteen largest Hispanic nonprofits that advance Hispanic representation in corporate America. From 1993 to 1999, she was deputy staff director for the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee under Chairman Orrin G. Hatch and executive staff director of the Senate Republican Task Force on Hispanic Affairs. Currently Anna holds a leadership position at the Inter-America Development Bank that supports economic development throughout South America and the Caribbean.

Dr. Antonia Pantoja, the first lady of the Puerto Rican civil rights movement, described herself as an “institution builder.” Though she passed away in 2002, her profound legacy continues shaping Puerto Rican youth through ASPIRA (to aspire), which instills cultural pride, leadership, and motivation. Dr. Pantoja was the first Puerto Rican woman to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the John W. Gardner Leadership Award. It was my honor to work with her on the curriculum for the National Hispana Leadership Institute and to review interviews for a film on her life—*Antonia Pantoja: Abriendo Caminos* (Opening Pathways, 2006). Her autobiography, *Memoir of a Visionary*, was published by Arte Publico Press in 2002.

Federico Peña served as cochair of the historic 2008 Barack Obama campaign, assisting with the phenomenal increase in voting by communities of color. He was elected mayor of Denver in 1983 and 1987, the first Latino mayor of a city with a minority Hispanic population. He revitalized Denver's economic health by initiating projects such as the Denver International Airport, a new convention center, and the Coors Baseball Stadium. A civil rights lawyer, Peña served in the Colorado House of Representatives and as U.S. Secretary of Transportation and U.S. Secretary of Energy during the Clinton administration. Peña is currently the managing director for Vestar Capital Partners.

Raul Yzaguirre served as cochair of Hillary Clinton's valiant bid for the presidency in 2008. He was president of the National Council of La Raza for more than thirty years, building it into the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in America. He is a founder of the Hispanic Association for Corporate Responsibility, the New American Alliance, and the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda. Recognized as one of the most influential Hispanic leaders of the twentieth century, Yzaguirre was the first Hispanic to receive a Rockefeller Award for Outstanding Public Service from the trustees of Princeton University and the John W. Gardner Leadership Award. He was appointed the ambassador to the Dominican Republic by President Obama in 2010.

INTRODUCTION



Diversity is Transforming Leadership

MY MOTHER, FOUR BROTHERS, MY SISTER, AND I stood at the ship's rail watching the image of our beloved Nicaragua become smaller and smaller and then finally disappear into the Caribbean Sea. In the hull of a banana boat, we rocked and swayed, across *El Golfo de Mexico*. The voyage was as endless as the torrential rains of the hurricanes that had erased the coastline of *Cabo Gracias a Dios* where my family had lived for generations. We docked in Tampa, Florida, and fell into the welcoming arms of *mi Papa*. He had arrived earlier, earning money to bring his *familia* to America so his children could have a better life.

This immigrant dream has been the promise of America and the wellsprings of its greatness. "You should always be thankful you are here," my father would remind me.

My parents were relentless about unlocking the doors of opportunity for their children. The key, they knew, was education. Like the majority of Hispanics, we were devout Catholics. My mother knew just where to look for help. With her soulful eyes and broken English, she approached the parish priest: “I can cook, clean, and take care of children. Can you give me a job to help my family?” How could he refuse a pure and selfless soul like that? Cooking and cleaning in the school cafeteria, she got her children tuition scholarships so they could get *una buena educación*.


When I became a teenager, there was no Catholic school on the outskirts of Tampa where we lived, but this did not deter my parents. My mother boarded a bus with me in tow and journeyed across town. Humbly, she entreated the nuns at the Academy of Holy Names to give her daughter a scholarship. Every Sunday we would go together to babysit children during services at Christ the King Church so I could earn the remaining part of my tuition. It took me a while to realize that many of my school classmates were going to college. I would never have thought of that, but, hey, my parents told me we came here so I could get a good education. College sounded like a great idea to me.

I could hardly speak, I was so excited. “*Mama y Papá*, I got accepted to college!” Their response shook my world. “Where did this idea come from?” My mother, with her fifth-grade education, thought a high school diploma was *una buena educación*. The University of Florida was 120 miles away—to my parents, this was as far as their distant homeland. And how could I travel there—a girl, alone? In the old country, I would have been chaperoned or lived with family. My father lamented, “Shouldn’t it be your brothers who go to college?” But seeing my determination, my parents in their loving and humble way gave me their blessing.

I worked my way through college, and the land of opportunity made good on its promise. My parents’ vision, faith, perseverance, and selfless service were an endless source of inspiration and strength. They were the greatest leaders any young person could hope to emulate and the source of all the goodness in my life.

During my forty-five years of working in communities of color, I have listened to thousands of such life stories, and I know mine is not unique. Our stories are a collective journey, small streams forming a powerful river, a dynamic force that is restructuring our country into a multicultural society—and transforming American leadership.

The Movements of Our Time

 ON A HOT, HUMID DAY IN MAY 1963, I was sitting outside my dormitory when I saw my political science professor, Dr. Kantor, in a long line of people walking toward the administration building. I ran up and asked, “What are you doing?” He responded solemnly, “We are marching to integrate the University of Florida.” I jumped into the line and joined a whole generation of people who believed that America should live up to its founding values.

Just as I was the first in my family to go to college, young people from communities of color across the country did likewise. Universities were being desegregated, and attaining a college degree was finally a possibility for us. For the first time in history, we could become educated at universities and learn how to operate effectively in dominant cultural systems. A great illustration is John Echohawk; the long-time director of the Native American Rights Fund was part of the first cadre of Indian lawyers who interpreted the old treaties and won sovereign rights for their people.

The civil rights movement was a training ground for leaders, empowering communities of color to establish their identity and to seek their birthright as full and equal citizens. Black, Latino, and American Indian organizations flourished and developed culturally effective leadership models based on the values embedded in these communities—models that can inform and inspire multicultural leadership today.

As an immigrant Latina, I am also part of the demographic revolution that has altered our nation’s complexion. Population growth in minority communities is so rapid that the 2010 Census revealed they composed 35 percent of the U.S. population.¹ The first wave of American immigrants was Euro-American; today, immigrants look more like my family and represent the diverse spectrum of the world’s people. In the spirit of ensuring that history is accurately depicted, we must remember that American Indians are indigenous to this land and that most of the ancestors of African Americans arrived shackled on slave ships.

The movements of the last half of the twentieth century—continued immigration, civil rights, demographic shifts, and educational opportunity—made their mark on my early life and the lives of a whole generation in communities of color. These movements spawned a diverse leadership core that reflected the history, challenges, and cultural

values of their communities. This book provides practical insights that incorporate these dynamics into an inclusive leadership model for effectively leading our diverse society.

Diversity Is Destiny

The realization of full democracy includes the vision of a pluralistic society. Our democracy is fashioned on the principle of inclusive governance originally used by the Iroquois Indians. Yet when the Constitution was written, only free men were allowed to vote. Black men, as slaves, were counted as only *three-fifths of a person*, and women were not allowed to vote until the passage of the nineteenth amendment in 1920.² The discrepancy between the vision of democracy and the reality of racial and cultural segregation has caused a continuing tension in U.S. society. These inconsistencies are most apparent in leadership that

is not reflective of our multicultural nation.



The realization of full democracy contains within it the vision of a pluralistic society. Our democracy is fashioned on the principle of inclusive governance originally used by the Iroquois Indians.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. believed that America had a date with destiny. America's destiny was to fulfill the democratic principles inherent in our country's founding and become a society that established equality and domestic tranquility for all people and for generations to come. Leadership in communities of color reflects democratic values such as justice and promoting the common welfare, and it uses practical approaches that engage and empower people. This participatory form of leadership can replenish American

democracy right at a time when there is an urgent need for civic engagement.

There is also an economic engine driving the need for inclusive leadership. Businesses today desire access to the fast-paced growth and lucrative markets in communities of color. According to Jeff Humphreys, author of "The Multicultural Economy: Minority Buying Power in the New Century," in 2010, the combined buying power of African Americans, Asian Americans and Native Americans exceeded \$1.6 trillion, more than triple the 1990 level of \$454 billion.³

Women today comprise the majority of the labor force and a quarter of all managers. By the middle of this century, Latinos will be the majority of workers.⁴ As the fastest

growing demographic group, one whose members are on average thirteen years younger than the Anglo population, Latinos have accounted for half the U.S. labor market growth since 2004.⁵ To be viable, businesses must tap the potential of the changing American workforce and this requires diverse approaches.

As noted, globalization is also fueling diversity. The world is fast becoming a virtual community, where a technological network connects us like next-door neighbors. In today's global environment, in which people from widely varying backgrounds live and work side by side, leaders need cultural flexibility and adaptability. Frances Hesselbein, former president and CEO of the National Girl Scouts, speaks to this urgency: "Perhaps the biggest question in today's world is 'How do we help people deal with their deepest differences?' Governance amid diversity is the world's greatest challenge."⁶ Similar to King's vision, it is time for America to embrace her great diversity and to fulfill her destiny as a democratic nation.

The dynamics shaping leadership into a multicultural form are both historic and current. Historic events consist of

- America's democratic traditions.
- Immigration.
- The legacy of the civil rights movement.

Current dynamics influencing leadership include

- Demographic changes leading to a diversified workforce, consumer markets, and citizenry.
- Globalization and the emerging interdependent world community.
- The education of leaders from diverse communities.
- The development of leadership models in communities of color.

All together, these dynamics have transformed our nation from a White homogeneous society to one in which our growing diversity is represented by the TV anchors on our nightly news, football players, students on college campuses, film stars and performers, and an increasing number of political and business leaders. One additional dynamic has evolved over fifty years of social change in America: a mandate (sometimes

disparaged as “political correctness”) that inclusion and fostering of diversity be seen as a social responsibility, a key function of leadership, and culturally desirable. Today, young people in particular are embracing an interracial and global culture. They are in tune with the creativity, excitement, and learning that cultural interchange offers. For them, mixed cultural groups and activities are hip or *sweet* —the *in thing*.

Promoting social and economic equity is in tune with our values, religious traditions, and historical foundation. As a result, leadership is challenged to be culturally relevant and incorporate inclusive values and principles. The multicultural model for evolving leadership offered here invites leaders to be in step with the dynamic changes that are transforming our country.

The Global Connection

Although my emphasis is on Black, Latino, and American Indian communities in the United States, the multicultural principles apply to other communities such as Asian Americans, and the many countries in which leaders address the challenges of a diverse society. Even in countries such as the former Soviet Union, whose populations are distinct from those in the United States, the process used for identifying multicultural principles can be a model for fashioning their own diverse forms of leadership. Furthermore, Black, Latino, and American Indians have historical antecedents and current-day connections across the globe.

Latinos, for instance, are linked to twenty-three countries where Spanish is the primary language and are related to the Portuguese and the Italians, who share their Mediterranean ancestry. These cultures center on the extended family, have traditionally espoused the Catholic faith, and value the emotional or feeling aspects of human nature. In addition, the Moors, who occupied Spain for over eight hundred years, left their cultural imprint on music, architecture, and philosophy, and this cultural cross-pollination with Northern Africa is still evident; for example, fully one-quarter of all Spanish words are of Arab origin.⁷

It is estimated that during the African diaspora twelve million people were taken to the western hemisphere.⁸ African culture was embedded in many countries, including Barbados, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and, of course, Brazil. The racial heterogeneity in Brazil birthed a diverse, rhythmic, and unique culture whose

population is 39 percent mixed race and 45 percent Black. Brazil—the fifth largest country in the world, with the fifth largest population—is one of the best examples of a multicultural nation combining Black, indigenous, and European influences. The principles presented here offer a rich resource for countries like Brazil that are addressing their own multicultural challenges, as well as others across Latin America for which population statistics indicate 27 percent mixed African ancestry.⁹

Through the dark night of slavery, African slaves fashioned a unique culture that sang of their tribal ancestry and the collective values of their homeland. Not only did their spirit of community survive, but new forms and meanings evolved from their African heritage. The leadership forms cultivated by Blacks in America are rooted in the African soil and offer contemporary models on leading from an Afro perspective. Certainly, the South African movement that ended apartheid grew out of King's and Gandhi's work and is indicative of how leadership in one country can flow from another's freedom movement. When the Berlin Wall fell, the Germans were singing "We Shall Overcome."

American Indians are kin to indigenous people in the western hemisphere and on every continent. They often share similar worldviews, a nature-based spirituality, and communal values whereby the good of the tribe supersedes the individual. The pre-Columbian western hemisphere, as will be explored, was resplendent with thousands of unique indigenous cultures. Mexico today is still 30 percent indigenous, and 60 percent identify as mestizo or mixtures of European, predominately Spanish, and Indian.¹⁰ Across Latin America, the native or indigenous population is estimated at 12 percent, with 23 percent mestizos.¹¹

The western hemisphere, then, is a rich jambalaya of African, Spanish, and indigenous cultures. The nine multicultural leadership principles apply directly to the many countries with multicultural populations, where leading diversity is a critical issue. For example, England, which historically was predominately Anglo-Saxon, now has significant Black and East Indian populations and could benefit from using inclusive leadership principles.



The western hemisphere is a rich jambalaya of African, Spanish, and indigenous cultures. The nine multicultural leadership principles apply directly to the many countries with multicultural populations, where leading diversity is a critical issue.

The migration, expansion, and settlement of societies is a phenomenon as old as human history; it has led to the intertwining of many cultures. Going way back, all of us have indigenous antecedents. The principles gleaned from Black, Latino, and American Indian cultures come from these ancient traditions that emphasized humanity's common bonds and counsel us to look out for one another. Multicultural leadership principles are rooted in these traditions and offer the potential to cultivate a strong sense of world community that transcends ethnocentric biases.

Crafting a Multicultural Leadership Model

ETHNOCENTRICITY IS SEEING THE WORLD FROM ONE CULTURAL orientation and believing it to be the universal standard—or even superior to all others. American leadership, which has been culled largely from White male perspectives, centers on mainstream cultural values and thus reflects an ethnocentric orientation.

A multicultural leadership orientation, on the other hand, incorporates many cultural perspectives, appreciates differences, values unique contributions of diverse groups, and

promotes learning from many orientations. People are encouraged to maintain their cultural identity while at the same time participating in the diversity of the larger society.

Multicultural leadership is uniquely suited to our mosaic world because it incorporates the influences, practices, and values of a variety of cultures in a respectful and productive manner. It encourages an inclusive and adaptable style that cultivates the ability to bring out the best in our diverse workforce and to fashion a sense of community with people from many parts of the globe. This inclusive form of leadership



Multicultural Leadership is . . .

An inclusive approach and philosophy that incorporates the influences, practices, and values of diverse cultures in a respectful and productive manner. Multicultural leadership resonates with many cultures and encourages diverse people to actively engage, contribute, and tap their potential.

enables a wide spectrum of people to actively engage and contribute. Multicultural leadership is a commitment to advance people who reflect the vitality, values, and voices of our diversity to all levels of organizations and society.

When people respect each other and value differences, they can work together more amicably—and more productively. Multicultural leadership encourages synergy, innovation, and resourcefulness. Our future depends on our ability to develop the potential of our culturally diverse world. To that end, the nine principles described here integrate the practices of communities of color into an inclusive and democratic leadership model—a knowledge base to inspire a core of multicultural leaders who recognize that diversity and inclusiveness are intrinsic to an authentic and equitable democracy. These principles apply particularly to the Millennial Generation, as more than 40 percent of them are Black, Latino, Asian, or American Indian, and many identify as mixed race.¹²

Some readers may be wondering why we need to develop a multicultural leadership model. Didn't we just point out that diversity is politically correct and culturally desirable? Isn't America already a multicultural nation? On any given day, a person might have enchiladas for lunch, listen to jazz or hip hop, wear exquisite Navajo jewelry, watch *Oprah* reruns on TV, and cap the evening off with a margarita. It is true that culturally, communities of color have greatly enriched America and that many gains were achieved by the civil rights movement. Today, we live in a smorgasbord society in which many enjoy the fruits of a cultural cornucopia. Despite this kaleidoscope of diversity, mainstream American leadership has not integrated the rich practices of communities of color. Until a more inclusive form of leadership embodies our diverse society, we will not be a truly multicultural society.

Infusing Salsa, Soul, and Spirit into American Leadership

THE CHALLENGE NOW IS TO SPARK PEOPLE'S INTEREST in transforming leadership into an inclusive and multicultural form. We can ignite this by recognizing the vibrant flavors and gifts that American Indians, Latinos, and African Americans bring to leadership and by emphasizing multicultural leadership as a strategic advantage in our global community.

In the Hispanic tradition, someone embarking on a journey, a new venture, or a new stage of life asks for a *bendición* or blessing from her grandmother or other respected person. American Indians burn sage to purify the person with smoke. African Americans might sing a traditional hymn, followed by a communal prayer, and a collective, heartfelt *amen!* A coach's motivational talk to players, which gets them psyched up and ready to perform at their optimum, is intended, in a similar way, to prepare them for a good outcome. Let our journey begin in an inspirational way by highlighting the energy, spiritual insights, experience, and leadership that American Indians, Blacks, and Latinos bring to America.

Pass the Salsa

As far back as I can remember, I would be lifted in my father's arms dancing to the salsa beats of quick, quick, pause; quick, quick, pause. Seven beats in all, because when it is repeated there is an empty space, like the zero that my Indian ancestors from Central America discovered. The salsa beat was a magnet. I could never resist the fusion music that blends African drums, American Indian rattles (maracas), Spanish guitars, Moorish sounds, and Caribbean rhythms. It is no coincidence that salsa is also the spicy, hot condiment giving food flavor and bringing zing to the palate. Salsa adds a little variety to the rice and beans that are an everyday staple in Latino cuisine.

Salsa is a great metaphor for diversity. Just as no two individuals are alike, every batch of salsa is *unico*. Each cook makes salsa in a particular way, with a little of this and a



Salsa is a great metaphor for diversity. Just like no two individuals are alike, every batch of salsa is unico.

little of that. Traditional Latino cookbooks include in their recipes a guideline called *a gusto* (to your liking or taste), reflecting that you must be flexible and adaptable to tend to people's needs and preferences. This is one of diversity's golden rules.

Besides the fact that every salsa maker has a personal recipe, the size of the tomatoes and the strength of the onion, herbs, and spices change the taste. But the real wild card is the jalapeño peppers. Latinos know you approach jalapeños with *respeto*. You take a teensy little bite to determine whether

it is mild, hot, or “*Ay Chihuahua!*” Just as no jalapeños are the same, each individual is unique, a one-of-a-kind design.

Salsa is now one of America’s favorite condiments, having passed the more homogenized and sugar-laced ketchup in the early nineties. Salsa dance has swept the nation in the twenty-first century, as young and old discover the pleasure of moving to the Latin beat. But salsa is more than a dance or a racy condiment. Salsa is a way of life. *Tener salsa en la vida* is to fully enjoy life, by treasuring family, relationships, work, and community. Salsa is the spice of life—the, energy, vitality, and *gusto!* *Salsa en la vida* has been a key ingredient enabling Latinos to sustain themselves through the past five hundred years since the conquest of this hemisphere.

Putting the Gusto into Leadership

Latinos are invigorating American leadership. They have the highest participation in the labor market of any group tracked by the U.S. Census and are the fastest growing small business sector.¹³ Their core values include faith, family, hard work, honesty, sharing, inclusion, and cooperation. It could well be that Latinos will make their most significant contribution in the realignment of America’s values. As Raul Yzaguirre surmises, “Latinos live America’s core values of family and hard work. Instead of asking us to change our name and culture and to assimilate, Latinos should be saying, ‘You should become more like us.’ We espouse an America that lives up to its values. America is the best country in the world—but it cannot become a true world leader unless it embraces all people. *America will become more American* when Latinos are fully integrated at all levels of our country.”¹⁴



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—Raul Yzaguirre

In Thomas Friedman’s book *The World Is Flat*, he surmises that the twenty-first century will be “more and more driven by a more diverse—non-Western, non-white—group of individuals . . . You are going to see every color of the human rainbow take

part.”¹⁵ As a fusion culture and not a race, Latinos are a rainbow people: white, red, black, brown, yellow, and all the mixtures in between. Almost 80 percent speak some Spanish at home (Spanish is the language spoken in the greatest number of countries in the world). Connected by language to twenty-three countries, they are a springboard to our global community.¹⁶

Within the U.S. the Latino landscape is also varied, containing a wealth of histories, backgrounds, and counties of origin. Sixty-three percent of Latinos are of Mexican descent. Puerto Ricans form the second largest group, comprising 9 percent. Cuban Americans are 4 percent. Latino diversity continues to expand. In the 2010 Census, 10 percent were of Central and South American descent.¹⁷ Interestingly, almost four million people living in mainland Puerto Rico are not included in the Census, even though they are U.S. citizens. Puerto Rico was invaded by the United States during the Spanish-American War in 1898 and has remained a commonwealth. Despite over one hundred years of strong U.S. influence, Puerto Ricans are proud of their distinct culture, history, and language, enriched by the mixture of aboriginal, Spanish, and African peoples. Today, there are more Puerto Ricans in the continental United States than on their beloved island.¹⁸

As shown in the sections on the nine principles, Latino values and worldview align with those of cultures emphasizing collectivism, generosity, mutual help, extended family, and the common good. Latino leadership reflects a social and celebratory nature, a community-oriented approach, and a people-centered process that are becoming valued traits of twenty-first-century leadership. Latinos only emerged as an identifiable group in the last forty years. As a budding force their influence and flavor have just begun putting the salsa into American leadership.

The African American Soul Sings

SOUL HAS BEEN DEPICTED AS THE IMMATERIAL ESSENCE or substance, the animating principle or actuating cause of life. Soul represents the immortal and permanent, the spirit, life, and vitality. The atrocities and dehumanization of slavery were rationalized, in part, by propagating the belief that Africans did not have a soul and were therefore less than human. This was reinforced by the Constitution’s designa-

tion of the Black man as three-fifths of a person.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the African soul was resilient, rooted in a spiritual tradition birthed in ancient times on the continent where humans first evolved. Like the tradition of the indigenous people of the Americas, it is nature based and sustained by community ritual, song, and dance. *The struggle of African slaves is the struggle of a people who were literally fighting for the recognition of their souls.*

W. E. B. Du Bois, the first African American awarded a Ph.D. from Harvard, explored the philosophical, spiritual, and cultural dimensions of Black people's religion in his classic book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, written in 1903. Du Bois wove the sacred and the secular together, setting the stage for the advent of African American leadership, which would spring out of a spiritual foundation and address social injustice.²⁰

The Black church had become the social, intellectual, and economic anchor of community life. A distinctive religion developed in which emotional release, communal refuge, and wailing against injustice were found. Out of the pain of slavery a unique spiritual music was born, which Du Bois called the "sorrow songs," designating them as "the greatest gift of the Negro people" and the only distinct "American music" form. Sorrow songs were the voice of an oppressed people, and yet they are prayers that breathe hope, faith, and renewal. This vigorous spiritual musical tradition incorporated African aesthetics through call and response, melodic riffs, repetition and revision, and the integration of song and dance through foot stomping and clapping. It would evolve into a new gospel sound, eventually become rhythm and blues, and then be transmuted into soul music. These sounds are the lifeblood of much popular music today—jazz, rock and roll, and rap all spring from the gospel tradition.

Soul, which some attempted to deny to Black people, bloomed into one of their essential cultural features. Soul reflects a deep well of resilient hope, a spiritual family bonded by common hardship, and an emotional connection that forges community consciousness. Even physical



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sustenance became soul food—a delicious masterpiece born of adversity. Scraps from the slave master’s table became tasty dishes of black-eyed peas, cornbread, sweet potato pie, catfish, or turnip greens seasoned with pigs’ feet or ham hocks. The resilient and creative impulse that engendered soul food fed the spirit, not just the body.

Soul music, soul food, soul brother—the concept of *soul* permeates African American culture. Soul represents a deep understanding that their spiritual wellspring sustained Black people through the trials and tribulations of slavery, racism, and oppression. When gospel music sang out about freedom, it was about liberty not only in heaven but also on the earth. The infusion of soul into all facets of life brought forth a unique form of spiritual activism in which leadership was ignited from the pulpits in the sermons of ministers. This tradition blossomed during the civil rights movement, infusing American leadership with a new moral fiber.

Furthermore, the African American adage “if it doesn’t kill you, it will make you stronger” reflects a biological reality. Those who made it across the Atlantic and withstood the hardship of slavery had a vitality, resilience, and spiritual strength. Combined with the mutual support of the slave quarters community, this strength enabled people to survive the traumas of their history and evolved into an unshakable sense of community, which continues to be the basis for African American progress and leadership.

The Soul of Leadership

Dr. Jim Joseph, former U.S. ambassador to South Africa, explains the power of this form of leadership: “The initial group of African American leaders in the fifties and sixties were ministers. They were totally independent and had the freedom to act on the basis of their social conscience, without the threat of being terminated by some white-controlled structure. Their source of livelihood came from Black people and Black churches.” The most prophetic voice to arise from the Black churches in the last century was that of Martin Luther King Jr. He poignantly challenged the materialistic and racist bent of the American culture: “We are prone to judge success by the index of our salaries or the size of our automobiles, rather than by the quality of our service and relationship to humanity.”²¹

King believed that Black spirituality and faith would bring a moral reawakening that would restore economic justice and social responsibility, and affirm the sacredness of life.

He built on a pervasive spiritual tradition that had nourished Black people for generations, allowing them to shed the residues of slavery and oppression without destructive bitterness or anger. King cultivated a scope of leadership that had, at its core, redemption and forgiveness. These may be said to represent the higher qualities of human consciousness or soul. It is ironic that the very soul qualities once denied Black people constitute one of the great legacies they bring to American leadership.

American Indian Leadership— Being in Right Relationship

AS THE SUN COMES UP EACH MORNING AND as it sets in its resting place in the evening, the native peoples of the Americas give praise to the Great Spirit. They believe that all life flows from this one source—the *unifying life force*—that is present everywhere. The rivers, rocks, earth, plants, animals, and all people are made of this same spiritual essence. All life is related and sacred. Benny Shendo Jr., a young Jemez Pueblo leader who was also New Mexico’s Secretary for Indian Affairs, reflects on this way of life: “I was taught we are spiritual people living in a spiritual world, walking the spiritual path, and there is a higher power.”

This core spiritual belief defines the nature of relationships: human beings belong to one spiritual family. In the Lakota tradition, when people meet, they say *mitakuye oyasin* or “all my relatives.” This ancient way of acknowledging each other, which is also followed by the Cherokee or Tsalagi people, contains the idea of kinship—of being family and thereby being responsible for one another.²² The Mayan golden rule “I am another yourself” represents another universal way of reflecting the oneness of humanity. Within these traditions, everyone must be treated with the respect due a family member.

Seeing human relations in this way is based on a circular view of the universe. Giving and sharing provide a way to nourish and regenerate oneself. In many tribes, people are respected not for how much they have, but for their generosity, how much they share and give away. This extends to sharing ideas, stories, and life experience, giving of one’s time, and contributing one’s talents to the well-being of individuals and the community.



The belief in the pervasiveness and continuity of spirit unfolds a way of life that is collectively rather than individually oriented. Even the names of many tribes translate into the people—meaning that everyone belongs.

The belief in the pervasiveness and continuity of spirit also unfolds a way of life that is collectively rather than individually oriented. Even the names of many tribes translate into *the people*—meaning that everyone belongs.²³ Central to Indian culture is the collective welfare and the need to ensure that the tribe continues for posterity. Their leadership forms, which have been on the earth for many generations, flow from this orientation.

The Spirit of Leadership

An eagle feather lifts the sweet grass smoke into the sky. A prayer of gratitude is offered. People ask for guidance and good outcomes. First, there is silence as people gather themselves and connect with the spiritual force that unites them. Then the meeting begins. Prayers, rituals, celebrations, and ceremonies are ways that Indian leaders make the *spirit visible in everyday life* and bring a higher dimension to community endeavors. By acknowledging that everything comes from and is unified by the one life source, leaders remind people of their responsibility to one another. Offering a prayer to begin any endeavor, and expressing gratitude for all that has been given, reinforces this bond.

American Indian culture impels a leadership form that centers on communal responsibility, a concern for the welfare of the tribe, and stewardship for all life. As Benny Shendo describes, “In the other society, when a person is elected to office, he is responsible in a sense to the people who voted for him. But the eagles don’t vote, the trees don’t vote, the buffalo don’t vote, the waters don’t vote, the stars don’t vote, so in the other society people don’t understand the broader concept of what our overall responsibility in this world means. The only responsibility is to you as a voter, because you can vote me out tomorrow. The Jemez leader has to be responsible for the community, for the future, and for the natural world in which all people live.” John Echohawk emphasizes this responsibility: “Native American leadership is based on time-honored traditions, cultures, and religious beliefs, including an understanding of the relationships between human beings and the larger world. Tribes have a long-term view of things.”

Many authors today emphasize the spiritual dimension of leadership. Often, this refers to “working on oneself,” developing better habits, or becoming a better person. This reflects the individualist orientation of the dominant culture in which spirituality is a personal focus and endeavor. In the Indian tradition, spirituality is the unifying factor infusing all aspects of one’s life—one’s relationships, responsibilities, community obligations, and connection to the natural world. American Indian spirituality demonstrates how centering on *collective* rather than *individual* advancement can lay the foundation for a society that places the community’s welfare above individual gain. Like the Great Spirit—which is pervasive, life-generating, and timeless—American Indian leadership brings a spiritual foundation, which respects and benefits all life and ensures the continuity of future generations.

Clearly, Latinos, Blacks, and Native Americans are bringing wisdom, vitality, and vision to American leadership. So let us begin our journey to infuse American leadership with *salsa, soul, and spirit*. The next section offers an overview of the nine principles that can be used as guideposts for leading from a multicultural orientation.



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—John Echohawk

Nine Principles of Multicultural Leadership— An Overview

THE FIRST STEP IN INTEGRATING THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES of communities of color into an inclusive and multicultural form is exploring a number of core values that are keystones for these cultures. Values, explains Burt Nanus in *Visionary Leadership*, shape our assumptions about the future, provide the context within which issues and goals are identified, and set standards for people’s behavior and actions.²⁴ Values also define the range of people’s choices, identify what is good and desirable, and give definition to a society’s culture. Leadership, therefore, reflects cultural values and societal norms.

Part One, *A New Social Covenant*, describes the value changes that are necessary to create an environment in which inclusive and multicultural leadership can thrive. These three principles are:

- Principle 1: *Sankofa*—Learn from the past
- Principle 2: *I to We*—From individualism to collective identity
- Principle 3: *Mi Casa es su Casa*—Developing a spirit of generosity

Many African Americans honor the symbol of *Sankofa*, a mythical bird with its feet firmly planted forward and its head turned to look backward. Coming from their West African ancestors, *Sankofa* means “Return, go back, seek, and retrieve.” *Sankofa* urges us to reflect on and learn from the past.²⁵ To expand leadership into a multicultural form, we must understand how Eurocentric and hierarchical leadership became dominant in the first place. We must look beyond the traditional version of the settling of America, which denies the historical contributions of communities of color, to discover the leadership practices of the diverse groups that shaped our country—some of which existed before Columbus landed in this hemisphere.

Building a pluralistic and equitable society requires a shift from today’s emphasis on individualism to one in which people’s mutual welfare and the social good come first. This change from an *I* to a *We* reference alters our orientation: the collective welfare becomes central to each of us. Blacks, Latinos, and American Indians consider the family, tribe, or community before individual advancement. Today, many young people are following this tradition through a collective identity and a commitment to the greater good over individual gain.²⁶

A *We* perspective nourishes the spirit of generosity as people understand that a collective approach is the foundation of a society that takes care of its people. *Mi casa es su casa*—“my house is your house”—denotes the generosity found in communities of color, which is reciprocal, circular, and a way to nurture oneself and others. Generosity and sharing enabled these communities to survive when faced with scarcity and oppression. Generosity is an expected leadership trait that is equated with integrity and garners respect.

Part Two, *Leadership Styles in Communities of Color*, speaks to three primary roles and functions that American Indian, Latino, and African American leaders assume:

- Principle 4: *A Leader Among Equals*—Community-conferred leadership
- Principle 5: *Leaders as Guardians of Public Values*—A tradition of activism
- Principle 6: *Leaders as Community Steward*—Working for the common good

A leader among equals comes from the Indian tradition in which leadership was rotated and shared. This principle levels the playing field and supports a distributed and circular form of leadership, which topples hierarchy and privilege. In these communities, leaders' influence and authority come from being part of and sanctioned by their people. Conversely, being perceived as someone who puts oneself above others will destroy one's credibility.

Because leaders from communities of color represent people with unequal access to opportunities and benefit, they are responsible for addressing issues and institutions that bar full participation. By articulating values such as pluralism, justice, and equality, leaders beckon our society to live up to the *public values* on which our democracy was founded. During the civil rights movement, Black Americans brought leaders as guardians of the equitable society to the foreground and inspired people to collective action.

As builders and guardians of community progress, *leaders as community stewards* nurture a network or legacy that continues to advance people. Community stewards foster group consensus, create a shared community vision, weave partnerships, and use culturally effective communication. Community Servanthood redefines servant leadership as social responsibility and addressing the common welfare.

Part Three, *Creating the Circle of Leadership*, reflects the expansive view of people's relationships that is integral to Black, Latino, and Indian cultures. They understand that the community's continued growth and development can be accomplished only if subsequent generations are prepared to lead. Three principles embody these tendencies:

- Principle 7: *The Seventh-Generation Rule*—Intergenerational leadership
- Principle 8: *All My Relatives*—*La familia*, the village, the tribe
- Principle 9: *Gracias*—Gratitude, hope, and forgiveness

Intergenerational leadership is founded on the seventh-generation rule of the Iroquois Indians, which directed leaders to always be cognizant of the impact of their actions on subsequent generations. Preparing young people to assume leadership is essential to sustainability and to building a circle of leadership. Because of the phenomenal age shift in the U.S.—the Millennial Generation, born after 1980, is poised to become the dominant age group—we consider how leadership principles in communities of color and an intergenerational approach can prepare this diverse and socially responsible group to assume the leadership of this century. By 2030 their ages will span from twenty to fifty and they will be in key positions of influence.

The eighth principle, the Lakota tribe's traditional greeting "All my relatives," conveys the concept of kinship and responsibility towards one another. The belief that we are all connected leads to a collective way of life and repositions a leader's relationship with people as ongoing and reciprocal. Regardless of position, social class, or ranking, people should be treated equally and as valued family members.

Leadership in communities of color is grounded in spiritual responsibility: leaders attend to people's material and social needs, as well as provide inspiration and hope. Spirituality has flourished, despite oppression and economic need, because of several cherished attributes expressed in the ninth and final principle, *Gracias*, which signifies thankfulness, a deep-seated optimism, and the ability to forgive regardless of past transgressions or difficulties. The tradition of *gracias* has very old roots in America, going back to the first multicultural celebration, in which native people joined with settlers to express thanks for their survival. This feast day is a beautiful model that illuminates the benefits of integrating practices from communities of color into mainstream society.

Part Four, Leadership for a Multicultural Age, sounds a call to action: an invitation to join the growing cadre of leaders who are crafting our global future. Like world music, which reflects the melodic creations and the upbeat sounds of our expansive globe, this part invites the reader to make a commitment to become a multicultural leader and to join in the dance of our kaleidoscope world.

Multicultural leadership entails changing organizational structures so that diversity becomes part of the standard way of operating. This requires a transition from *hierarchical pluralism*, which expects people to conform to dominant cultural norms,

to *egalitarian pluralism*, which embraces the values and norms of many cultures. We review practices that promote egalitarian pluralism, comparing acculturation—the process through which people learn how to expand their repertoire and adapt to different cultural perspectives—with assimilation, which negated the cultures, languages, and histories of America’s great diversity.

In a democracy, voting holds the key to a truly representative government. This section discusses both the steps needed to bring about public leadership that mirrors our pluralistic society and the challenges we face in achieving this.

PART ONE



A New Social Covenant

THE UNITED STATES WAS FOUNDED on the values of rugged individualism and competition. In our review of the first three principles we see how these qualities fashioned a society in which people have a greater orientation toward their individual needs and desires than to the collective good. In the spirit of *Sankofa*, which beckons us to reconcile our past with our present, we question the historical belief that human nature is only driven by self-interest, competition, and acquisition. This notion of individualism replaced early collective and cooperative cultures and established a social covenant in which government or society was a safeguard against man's competitive and aggressive nature. In this worldview, leadership was the domain of the enlightened few, was competitively oriented, and focused on power and control.

This view is no longer suited to our world village, in which advances in technology and communication link us intricately together. Lance Secretan, in his book *One: The Art and Practice of Conscious Leadership*, reflects, "We have become aware that the world is smaller, more interdependent, and integrated. Community is growing in importance. The new reality is that we are one."¹

In response to this new environment, the old individualist form of leadership has been shape-shifting from a self-centered orientation to a *We* or *other-centered* orientation, a

cooperative, collaborative, and people-oriented form. This shift is in alignment with leadership in communities of color, which must be other centered because leaders derive their authority from the people they serve. Leaders are sanctioned by their communities by putting the collective welfare above self-interest.

Putting the common good first goes against the grain of individualism—*We* takes precedence over *I* and sustains a deep sense of generosity, sharing, and reciprocity. Leadership in this context is not a vehicle for individual advancement, but instead is based on social responsibility.

Principle 3, *Mi Casa Es Su Casa*, expresses the profuse generosity common in communities of color, in which wealth traditionally meant giving to others and assuming responsibility for community needs. To take more than one's share and to accumulate excessive wealth was a cultural anathema. Generosity encompasses a long-term perspective that includes the sustainability of future generations and the natural environment.

Today's interdependent and fragile world calls for a new social covenant centered not on every man for himself, but on caring for each other. This covenant was envisioned by Martin Luther King Jr., who believed that other-centered men could build a society that would restore “dignity, equality, and freedom for people's spirit”; a society in which “people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds.” King appealed to our morality and conscience: “What self-centered men have torn down, other-centered men can build up.”²

An other-centered society would incorporate the core values of collectivism and generosity that emanate from communities of color. These values are the touchstones for multicultural leadership principles dedicated to building a benevolent and just society that upholds the well-being of all people and nurtures future generations.

In Search of Multicultural Excellence

MAINSTREAM BOOKS ON LEADERSHIP routinely emphasize organizations and companies that represent “the ideal.” Books such as *Good to Great*, *Built to Last*, and *In Search of Excellence* put forth models that illuminate the possibilities when visionary leaders take the helm. Authors do not spend much time on topics such

as “In Search of Mediocrity” or “From Bad to Worse,” although there are plenty of examples of middle-of-the-road organizations and leaders who falter in their commitments. By stressing the ideal—the best of the best—and by having positive models to emulate, leaders and organizations expect to improve and move toward that vision.

Likewise, when Anglo values and cultural norms are discussed, the positive attributes are usually highlighted and even revered. Individualism is rarely discussed as a value that may lead to social isolation and personal discontent as one is constantly comparing oneself to others. Competition is seen as a positive force that brings out the best in people and organizations, not as a stance that sometimes rends the fabric of support in which everyone is valued. Youth is venerated and in alignment with the new and improved mentality of today’s marketplace; the youth cult is not presented as a dead-end street leading to a society with a short-term memory that disregards the wisdom of age and the lessons from the past.

Accordingly, in this book I present African American, Indian, and Latino cultures in light of the *highest standards* of these communities. This is not to deny the inconsistencies and undesirable aspects present in all cultures. In communities of color, however, oppression, slavery, and colonization are historical traumas. Remnants of these difficult circumstances endure in higher rates of poverty, low self-esteem, and low educational levels. We must strive to separate the gifts and positive attributes in these communities from the residues of discrimination and oppression that manifest today as lower economic, educational, and social status.

The leaders whose voices resonate on these pages are some of the most talented and committed people who have guided communities of color in the past decades. They represent the ideal. Their values, approaches, and dedication have laid the foundation for multicultural leadership. Concentrating on the ideal is intended to call forth the best in communities of color and construct a mental model of a desirable future state. As these communities step forward, embracing the leadership principles described in this book, they will embark on a bold and worthy journey to build a world that honors our human potential and celebrates our great diversity.

For mainstream leaders, recognizing this ideal is an opportunity to incorporate the best practices from communities of color into their repertoire and to acknowledge their promise and potential. Young and emerging leaders of color will expand their understanding

of the tremendous contribution our communities bring to America. I hope this inspires them to stay true to the values that have shaped their communities and to realize that their greatest contribution comes from being the architects of our multicultural future.

In 2008, young people voted in droves to elect the first Black U.S. president—an electrifying social transformation and the culmination of a long and arduous civil rights journey. The principle of *Sankofa* can instill in the younger generation an understanding of the historical struggles that led to this watershed event—and the wisdom and experience of the elders profiled in this book can inspire and guide them as they tackle the many social and political challenges of their times.

this material has been excerpted from

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by Juana Bordas

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