

Lesson 2:

Activity: What is Leadership?

Overview: To teach the youth about the importance of what it means to be a good leader and to instill these characteristics in the group

Objectives:

- Define “leadership,” characteristics of a leader, and tasks
- Instill students with the need for leaders to possess certain qualities, including listening to different points of view, balancing conflicts, and giving back to the community as a whole

Timing: half session-one session

Suggested Class Schedule:

5 minutes

ice breaker

20 minutes

smaller group discussion of leadership qualities

30 minutes

report back/class discussion

look at quotes

OR

20-30 minutes

discussion of leadership qualities/read article

Selected Resources:

****Quotes list.** Review the quote list and discuss what you believe in. Who fits with your ideas of leadership and who does not match

****Article**

- “Multiculturalism in the Year of Columbus and Rodney King,” Martín Espada

Suggested Activities:

- Break club into smaller groups and allow each group to answer what is leadership, what skills must a leader have, and what should be the tasks of a Latin@ leader. Have a recorder report the smaller groups’ responses to the entire group. Facilitator should engage in a group discussion of what it means to be a leader. This could come as
 1. Discussion of leadership styles
 2. Role plays

3. Writing a personal action plan- list responsibilities and goals of leaders, and how they will achieve these goals
- Read article. What does multiculturalism have to do with leadership? (This is a fundamental doctrine of how this curriculum was made and what issues it focuses on. In order to build specifically Latin@ leaders and individuals that can address this complicated world, a multiculturalist approach must be taken for leadership)

Questions to Prompt:

- What is leadership? What are the characteristics/tasks of a leader?
- Does the definition of leadership change depending on a situation? Culture? Age of the individual?
- Has the U.S. as a country managed leadership effectively?

Journal Prompt: Name someone you define as a good leader. Why did this person succeed? Do you feel you are a leader? Why or why not?

Supplement: Philosophy on Leadership

We operate from the perspective that everyone possesses leadership potential. While certain personality traits may distinguish individuals as extraordinary, we believe that all people must become community leaders in order to enact change. This is especially true for oppressed communities, because we operate in conditions of deficit. In order to reach equality everyone must take part. We must also change the popularized definition of a leader as someone who sits above his constituents. In order for the Latin@ community to thrive our leaders need to see a connection with the group's condition as a whole. Since youth are the leaders of tomorrow, we are mandated to pass down our values to the younger generation.

Traits of a Good Leader:

- Knowledge of one's self (strengths and weaknesses)
- Accountability to one's constituents
- Commitment to developing the welfare of the group as a whole
- Stimulates the ideas and vision of the rest of the group and younger generations to come
- Ability to step back when needed
- Ability to listen

- Self-confidence and poise
- Ability to articulate something in many different terms so that everyone understands
- The interest of the group before the interest of the self
- Charisma to influence others (does not overwhelm them)
- A clear understanding of the issues of the group as a whole
- A clear vision for the future that does not waver but evolves with the situation
- An ability to locate one's self in other people's shoes
- Sense of personal power in a non-hierarchical way

Skills:

- Communication
- Public speaking
- Conflict resolution
- Research
- Synthesis
- Planning for the future
- Charisma
- Group project skills

Quotes

Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.

~ Dwight Eisenhower

Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results.

~ George S. Patton

A community is like a ship; everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm.

~ Henrik Ibsen

The price of greatness is responsibility

~ Winston Churchill

Dra. Antonia Pantoja's Mission: Dra. Antonia Pantoja believed that the path out of poverty was achieved through education. Therefore, education does not mean solely academic success but rather a combination of academic and social education. This means that Dra. Antonia Pantoja wanted to create individuals in the Puerto Rican and Latin@ community who were successful as individuals but lead the community out of poverty as well.

A leader is best when people barely know he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worse when they despise him....But of a good leader who talks little when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say, "We did it ourselves."

~Lao Tzu

I am a leader by default, only because nature does not allow a vacuum.

~ Bishop Desmond Tutu

We must become the change we want to see.

~ Mahatma Gandhi

Leadership has a harder job to do than just choose sides. It must bring sides together.

~ Jesse Jackson

Zapata's Disciple
Martín Zapata

South End Press
Cambridge MA 1998

Multiculturalism
in the Year of Columbus
and Rodney King

~ ~

Few words of recent coinage in our contemporary vocabulary are so praised and damned, so powerful yet misunderstood, as "multiculturalism." In 1992, this perspective challenged one event—the celebration of Columbus and the 500th anniversary of his encounter with the New World—and faced a challenge from another: the Los Angeles riots which followed the acquittal of the police officers who brutalized African-American motorist Rodney King. In the whirlpool of these struggles, we must stop swirling long enough to question and commit. The invigorated principle of multiculturalism becomes essential.

At its best, multiculturalism is not only an *approach*, but also a *movement*, with an impact on many realms of life: literature, the arts, social science, education, politics. The multicultural viewpoint recognizes that this society is

pluralistic, not monocultural, that we cannot all be measured by the same narrowly elite experience, a yardstick that would have a few of us sharply dressed and most of us wearing suits with sleeves that slap us and cuffs that trip us.

Progressive multiculturalism rejects the assimilationist model for society, one that insists on unity through the surrender of identity, that perpetuates the romantic fiction of a past when the nation was one with itself. A multicultural perspective transcends mere "tolerance" of diversity—an odd choice of words, given that "tolerance" implies a barely repressed repugnance—and instead revels in that diversity.

Multiculturalism as a way of critical seeing explodes the myth of meritocracy, focusing on the reality that no institution, no matter how intellectually or artistically endowed, is immune from the social forces that surround it, and that therefore the liberal arts college as well as the erudite literary magazine may have to confront their own bigotries.

Multiculturalism ideally expresses the potential for solidarity between very different groups of people who share in common their marginality and the need to move from the margin to the rest of the page. Multiculturalism is thus driven by a democratizing impulse, which is by nature inclusive, embracing not only people of color, but broadening to include a spectrum of cultures: other ethnic groups, gays and lesbians, and so on. The literatures of these diverse people then cross-pollinate. Sheila Packa, a poet I read with in Saint Paul, Minnesota, was inspired to use the Finnish language of her ancestors in her poems after reading the bilingual (Spanish-English) poetry of Puerto Rican Víctor Hernández Cruz.

In its most progressive form, multiculturalism is about change. Eduardo Galeano writes for "those who have been standing on line for centuries to get into history." Viewed

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from the perspective of centuries, the demands of multiculturalism are reasonable indeed. But demands they remain: for new pedagogy, new books, new analysis of racial dynamics, new cultural values, new history, and new opportunity. And demands they must be. Frederick Douglass understood this when he said: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will." If words and ideas matter—and those in power are well aware that words and ideas matter—then multiculturalism matters, which serves to explain in part the right-wing backlash against the movement.

Multicultural perspectives have been criticized as "political correctness," either trivialized as a new set of manners and mores designed not to offend, or demonized as the New McCarthyism, a wave of censorship soaking the nation's campuses in silence. This is the stuff of *Time* magazine, making its millions by scaring the middle class, which is cowed into believing that the tuition paid on behalf of its sons and daughters is diverted to courses on Swahili rather than Shakespeare, or worse, Shakespeare in Swahili. A false dichotomy is created between diversity and quality.

Dealing with the avalanche of criticism becomes overwhelming for the advocates of multiculturalism. People who have never read a book based on this approach have heard of multiculturalism and its evil twin, political correctness, and have been led to believe that this is indeed the New McCarthyism, the most insidious charge of all. Yet, as Camilo Pérez-Bustillo puts it: "Name one person whose life was ruined by multiculturalism. Name one person who has gone to jail. Name one person put on a blacklist, who had to write under a pseudonym. Name one person who could not

leave the country, or who could not return, because of multiculturalism." Even the term "political correctness" is a misnomer, for what could be more politically correct than holding political power, or identifying with those who do?

The conservative criticism of the multiculturalist movement takes on an almost hallucinogenic quality. The marrow of multiculturalism is dissent, and yet this dissent supposedly stifles dissent. The call for debate is heard as a cry for censorship. An institution or individual confronted with a charge of racism may well be smothered in sympathy. Hang a Confederate flag from a Harvard dorm window, as one student did, to become a courageous defender of the First Amendment (which never applied to the slaves laboring beneath the Stars and Bars). The racist substance of what is said is never examined in the rush to defend the right to say it. The assumption here: It is worse to be called a racist than to actually be one.

The backlash exists for a multiplicity of reasons. The paranoia of the powerful is a factor. In a right-wing age, multiculturalism is that rare progressive movement which appears all the more threatening due to the vacuum which surrounds it. Though, in absolute terms, its impact is still modest—hardly in control of the cafeteria, much less the campus—there is more multicultural activity, involving a broader spectrum of people, on campuses and elsewhere, than ever, offending the guardians of the status quo. This increased presence also implies a new accountability: People of color, for example, are less likely to countenance blatant prejudice or discrimination than before.

There is also the deniability factor. U.S. educational and political systems have always denied the history and literature of those outside the narrow mainstream, especially with respect to race, the way a family might deny its

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own darkest sibling. In general, there is the usual head-
 banging struggle against change. Johnnetta Cole, an African-
 American administrator charged with curriculum reform at
 the University of Massachusetts, and now the head of Spel-
 man College, commented that, "to ask a faculty to change its
 curriculum is like asking someone to move a graveyard."

Certain writers of color have calculated the profit of be-
 ing right-wing in a right-wing age, and have peeled off their
 skin in a striptease for the applause of white politicians and
 academics who two centuries ago would have rationalized
 their enslavement. Thus, these sages condemn bilingual
 education, reject affirmative action, or rail against multicul-
 turalism on campus, all apparently indifferent to being
 wielded as weapons against their own communities.

Yet, the movement for multiculturalism launched a seri-
 ous challenge to a historical icon in 1992: Christopher Co-
 lumbus. Even those defenders of the admiral who shook
 with indignation at the egging of their hero had to admit
 that the vandals were at the gates, smacking Columbus
 with the occasional egg fastball. This admission was itself a
 victory of sorts; the multicultural perspective was irrevoca-
 bly part of the debate. Consider this: The left had a far
 greater impact on the Columbus debate than on the debate
 over the war with Iraq.

The salvo against Columbus was multiculturalism at
 its source. How can we respect African-American and Na-
 tive-American people without recognizing their history of
 slavery and genocide in the Americas, as it began 500 years
 ago? We cannot respect that history, and kowtow to Colum-
 bus too. The defenders of Columbus argued that the bene-

fits of the conquest outweighed the costs. But slavery and genocide cannot be so weighed. The scale breaks.

Others argued that Columbus must be separated from the historical consequences of his actions, which were unintended and unforeseeable, a chain reaction over which he had no control. This argument was demolished by books such as *The Conquest of Paradise* by Kirkpatrick Sale. Here we find Columbus the slaver, who first ordered "seven head" of indigenous people kidnapped and brought to his ship, then enslaved thousands of others; Columbus the plunderer, so obsessed with gold that he referred to the precious metal more than 180 times in the journal for the first voyage; and Columbus the tyrant, who, as governor of Española in 1495, initiated a tribute system whereby "Indians" brought gold dust to the Spanish, or had their hands cut off. During his administration, indigenous people were hanged by the Spanish in groups of thirteen, in honor of Christ and the Twelve Apostles.

If the movement for multiculturalism often finds itself doing battle over curriculum, even at the grade-school level, then the battle over Columbus was no different. I recently found a book about Columbus at a daycare center, with a cover depicting the admiral trading beads for parrots with the "Indians," leaving the impression that the conquest was a combination craft fair and exotic bird show. Left unsaid: that the indigenous population of Española evaporated in the steam of its own blood, "*from eight million to twenty-eight thousand in just over twenty years,*" according to Sale (his italics).

The only inheritance of the conquest worth saving is multicultural. The historian Hans Koning points out the creation of a new people in Latin America: "That race, as it now exists, of mixed Spanish and Indian and African stock..."

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These children of conquerors and slaves are the only
achievement of the conquest, the only wealth it produced."

And Columbus? He will continue to be lauded as what
Nancy Murray calls "the first European immigrant," the first
pioneer, the first entrepreneur, confirming "self-celebratory
myths" about this America. Thus the Knights of Columbus,
defending the icon, condemned all criticism of the admiral
as "neo-Marxist." But the Knights were too late. Eduardo
Galeano saw the anniversary as an opportunity: "Not to
confirm the world ... but to denounce and change it. For
that we shall have to celebrate the vanquished, not the vic-
tors." The advocates of multiculturalism seized this oppor-
tunity, ranging in 1992 from a huge gathering of
Native-American writers in Norman, Oklahoma, to a camp
of Latino poets, artists, and musicians assembled at Co-
lumbus, New Mexico—the site of Pancho Villa's famous
raid—to a small cultural event in Worcester, Massachu-
setts, where I read with African-American, Lebanese, and
Abenaki Indian poets, all against Columbus.

The racism espoused by Columbus to justify conquest,
slavery, and plunder is still with us. The swords used to
slash Tainos who had never seen steel have become billy
clubs. Those billy clubs battered Rodney King relentlessly
after the African-American motorist was stopped by police
in Los Angeles for a traffic violation. The notorious videotape
was not enough for a jury that believed in the gospel of racism
with more fervor than they believed in their own sense of
sight. This was too much for los olvidados, the forgotten
ones of that city, and their combustible rage exploded. Even
the victims of the legal system must believe that the court-
room is just. When that illusion disappears, then only the
stink of gasoline is left in the air.

If the demystification of Columbus in 1992 meant progress for the forces of subversive multiculturalism, then the Rodney King affair and the Los Angeles riots presented major challenges. How relevant is a multicultural curriculum at the moment that Rodney King bleeds on asphalt, symbolizing the power of the state to enforce racism through legalized violence? What impact could multiculturalism possibly have on the rioters, who had nothing, and now have less? Does multiculturalism have any chance whatsoever of converting the white suburbanites who glared at the television during the days of the riot, as all their stereotypes of the Dark Other were confirmed, or who bought handguns anticipating that the Dark Other would charge through the patio door?

These questions are perhaps unanswerable. We must begin by acknowledging the limits of multiculturalism. This is not a panacea. We will not find salvation. We must not exchange one religion for another. Neither can we afford to sanitize multiculturalism, satisfied with the Latin American market on Diversity Day at the local high school. (I actually gave a reading at a high school on "Diversity Day," and was interrupted at noon by the official loudspeaker announcement that "Diversity Day is now over!") There are always the perils of hand-holding sentimentality or sniffing condescension. Tokenism is tokenism, and beware expropriation.

And yet, the answer is more multiculturalism, not less. Hopefully, more multiculturalism will generate more respect among people, whether in the classroom or on television, in the bookstore or the movie theater, at the community center or a street festival. A truly critical multicultural approach to history is vital here: Children who learn the history of lynching in this country could point to the videotape of the Rodney King beating and say, "I read about this

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in school." The presence of multiculturalism in our lives as
 a real, tangible force would mean that Rodney King could
 no longer be regarded as a mere abstraction. He is a human
 being, so reminiscent of other African-American human be-
 ings we know and cherish, that his humiliation becomes
 their humiliation, and ours.

True, the movement for multiculturalism may be too
 late for the most desperate, those who must riot, who must
 speak what Martin Luther King called "the language of the
 unheard." Neither will multiculturalism reach those in love
 with their own racism. But a multicultural point of view
 may well reach the children of the rioters and the racists.

In times of crisis, the state and its corporate media will en-
 deavor to divide us. A multicultural analysis will resist that
 urge to divide, that aggravation of genuine or invented ten-
 sions. During the riots in Los Angeles, African-Americans
 were portrayed as the aggressors. Nothing was said about
 African-American victims of the riots. Koreans protecting
 their businesses with guns were paraded by the media as
 evidence of African-American racism. Nothing was said
 about Asian rioters. A white truck driver was beaten by Afri-
 can-Americans, again on videotape, which served to portray
 whites solely as victims of violence. Nothing was said about
 white rioters, or the lethal retaliation of white police. Latinos
 were rendered invisible, despite the fact that nearly half the
 businesses destroyed and nearly half the people arrested
 were Latino. The media message: The races are hopelessly
 polarized. Lock your doors.

Thus divided from one another, people were less likely
 to notice reports of more than fifty dead in Los Angeles,
 many—no one knows how many—killed by the same police

force whose brutality has been documented by Amnesty International. In this state of distraction, people were unlikely to notice the mass deportation of Latinos back to México and Central America following their arrest for anything from petty theft to a mere curfew violation. The citizenry might forget the name of Lawrence Powell, the police officer who led the beating of Rodney King, "the killer who kills today for five million killers who wish a killing," in the words of Carl Sandburg. Some of us were more likely to accept the bizarre explanation of the riots offered by the Bush administration, that the Great Society social programs of the 1960s were to blame. Multicultural solidarity—slowly taught, slowly learned—strikes at the heart of that imperial dictum: Divide and rule.

Ultimately, the advocates of multiculturalism must organize themselves. There must be national organizations, able to coordinate national action. There must be not one magazine or newsletter, but many. There must be more multicultural daycare centers and art centers and community centers. There must be more truly multicultural literary programs. There must be more multicultural anthologies, but we must write them; there must be more multicultural art exhibits, but we must create them; there must be more courses with a multicultural perspective, but we must teach them. The poet June Jordan said it: "We are the ones we have been waiting for."

Multiculturalism should not be simply a campus phenomenon. To confine multiculturalism to college campuses only would be to cultivate a monastery garden. Let multiculturalism be the language of adult education programs and prison writing workshops, barrio teen centers and inner-city preschools, wherever people gather to teach and be taught.

y has been documented by Amnesty International. In a state of distraction, people were unlikely to resist the deportation of Latinos back to México following their arrest for anything from a curfew violation. The citizenry might have been more likely to accept the actions of Lawrence Powell, the police officer who shot Martin Luther King, "the killer who kills today's innocents who wish a killing," in the words of the poet. If we of us were more likely to accept the actions of the riots offered by the Bush administration, the Great Society social programs of the same name. Multicultural solidarity—slowly and steadily—strikes at the heart of that imperial machine.

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It should not be simply a campus phenomenon. Multiculturalism to college campuses should be like a monastery garden. Let multiculturalism be a garden of adult education programs and community centers, barrio teen centers and inner-city centers. Let people gather to teach and be

I return to a broad definition of multiculturalism: not only an approach, but a movement. As such, we can learn from the history of other movements, whether for civil rights or for women's suffrage or for the rights of labor: the strike, the boycott, the coalition, the raising of consciousness. As Frederick Douglass advised: "Agitate, agitate."