

Chapter 5

Shifting Leadership in Black Communities: A Needed Change



Sylvia Willie Burgess, Forrest Toms, William Munn, and Daniel McKelvey

Conceptual Thought: How Do We Navigate This New Normal of Weaponizing Change, Domestic Extremists, and Insurrection Attempts?

The pandemic COVID-19 has changed the face of interaction for American communities. The overwhelming and devastating nature of this pandemic is having a significantly negative impact on marginalized communities which were already struggling to overcome food insecurities, health issues, and a problematic justice system among other ills. Coupled with the outrage across the country with race relations, the greatest transformation ever is occurring in the United States. The pandemic and race relations fallout are calling for a change in African American leadership to further advance community engagement and sustainability of life in Black communities. This current climate raises the question what type of leadership across generations is needed to create the infrastructure for change and sustainability in communities where mainly African Americans live? There is a need for a shift in leaders who are willing to step forward and generate an intersectionality approach to closing the racial and socioeconomic divide that exists for Black communities. It is the lack of a systems approach that further compounds this already aggravated

S. W. Burgess (✉)
One Step at a Time Consulting, Greensboro, NC, USA

F. Toms
NC Research and Engagement (NCREG) Hickory, NC, USA

W. Munn
The Health Advocacy Project, Raleigh, NC, USA

D. McKelvey
Consultant, Durham, NC, USA

situation. The lack of a systems approach is so inherent and ingrained in Black and other disparate communities that a more multifaceted strategy is necessary for new leadership thinking and practices.

In a society where it seems okay to suggest that anything goes, good leadership is even more critical. According to Hall (1999) there is no great human messiah coming to lead us to victory, like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It will take working together to create a new kind of leadership that will carry us forward. A great deal of time is spent focusing on what is happening in Washington, DC, while there appears to be a level of disconnection and disengagement with the changing nature of local power shifts. The impact of this focus weighs on the survivability of people daily, especially in the areas of physical health, mental health, economics, and environmental concerns. The country is deeply ingrained in the power of politics, while at an alarming rate, people are dying from COVID-19, starving because of food insecurities, being evicted, and literally murdered at the hands of those paid to protect them. Yet, when looking at who is leading through these challenging times, it is not necessarily clear who is leading in Black communities or how the chosen leaders are working for the people they represent.

What is called for is a shift in the way leadership is thought about, understood, discussed, and how it is viewed and practiced. Leadership is not necessarily those with the titles, positions, or even the power. Leadership is not resting on our laurels or waiting for “the one” to come and lead us to victory. Nor is it leading by silence. Silent with some believing that their work is the example of their contribution (to racial, social, economic justice), and rightly so on an individual basis, but collectively as a representative of a group in the community, willing or not, the silence is a form of affirmation. What is missing is the ability for African Americans to collectively exercise their voices in the forefront of critical and local issues to demand accountability for themselves and their leaders. Black communities are suffering and need a different approach – a shift. The country is at a moment in time where injustice and technology has come face to face and provided the imagery of the long-standing historical suffering hidden by the veil of systemic racism in our nation. Quoting Michael Eric Dyson – we had a “moment where COVID-19 was introduced to COVID-1619” (Corden, 2012-present) creating a head on collision, particularly for white America. For the first time, many eyes became wide open about systemic racism and the daily realities associated with it.

As a result, there is a need for effective leadership and community engagement in Black communities. This leadership and engagement require building capacity within communities. This capacity is built through trust, spiritual capital, economic/social capital, and learning in public. These constructs are critical precursors to effective leadership. Each construct is a part of the foundation necessary for developing, planning, organizing, and building wealth in Black communities. These constructs are interconnected and each one necessary to create readiness for leadership and engagement (*see section “Constructs for African American Leadership”*). There must be a commitment towards establishing trust, an eagerness to build spiritual and economic/social capital collectively, and a willingness to learn in public

(Toms et al., 2021a, 2021b). This brings into focus the need for a shift in existing leadership in Black communities.

A shift is where the difference can be made. Black communities need people who will exercise integrity, work to develop strategies for the people, have a vision, work holistically, and utilize spiritual and social capital for the good of the communities they represent. Leading and leadership in Black communities cannot be a mirror image of what happens in the mainstream. Black communities are different and emulation is not the approach for survival in these communities. We have tried this, and it has not worked. When thinking about the challenges that face Black communities, it requires thinking about how to create processes, vehicles, and tools to engage and empower the people in local communities. This will require that each of us take responsibility for the change needed in Black communities. Everyone needs to participate in this process. *(Although not part of this chapter's discussion – in small rural communities, liberal/progressive whites must cease their silence and lack of participation in local civic arenas – this lack of participation along with the absence of Black leadership has greatly contributed to landslide wins for far-right candidates on school boards and county commissions).* This has clearly impacted the economic, educational, health outcomes, and cultural well-being of many communities.

Physical and “psychological safe” spaces must be made for representation from different groups which might mean that traditional leadership (methods and processes) is not the only leadership style or strategy expressed and supported. For centuries, the voice in most Black communities was that of clergy and this leadership had impact. However, post 1970’s and 1980’s, the imagery of leadership changed resulting from integration and affirmative action which offered many opportunities for more African Americans to pursue careers that placed them in leadership roles. As a result, many African Americans took flight or the ones who stayed operated from the perspective that their professions were their contribution to the community. Thus, there was limited active participation when critical, social, and economic issues faced the communities. Thus, these African American voices tend to be silenced from personal choice or local political power.

The goal should be to develop leaders who can be visionary, practice integrity, work strategically, show their intellectual and spiritual capacity, develop economic/social capital all with the intention of leading Black communities through critical change. This leadership paradigm shift must include leaders who can inspire and transform communities through their words and actions in a world where economic disparities, unequal justice, and violence is prevalent. The level of engagement in these communities must shift from a focus of power (*illusion of power*) to a focus of creating economic, health, environmental, and justice strategies for African Americans. This leadership strategy must include energizing the communities that African Americans live in through engaging the people in developing the strategies that will drive success and create sustainable change in Black communities.

African American Leadership

In *Lead the Way: Principles and Practices in Community and Civic Engagement*, Toms et al. (2021a, 2021b) ask the following question:

In lieu of the power in the atmosphere and climate how, and in what ways, will leaders and leadership processes and practices in African American communities, from local municipalities to statewide organizations/associations, assess, rethink, plan for, and implement sweeping reforms in how we collectively work to ensure more participation in and engagement of governing bodies and their policies and practices? (p. 236)

To answer this question, it requires taking a closer look at a brief historical review of African American leadership and an underlying conceptual framework for African American leadership. Researchers on African American leadership agree that two studies formed a foundation for examining African American leadership. W. E. B. Du Bois introduced the first in 1903 noting that the “Talented Tenth” had an obligation to provide leadership for most of the race (Battle & Wright, 2002). Secondly, Myrdal (1944) postulated the foundation for examining African American leadership in the monograph, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. Bunche (2005) building from Myrdal’s work structured six typologies of behavior patterns for Negro leadership, which included aggressive, cautious, liaison, symbolic, prestige, and designated. Later, in the 19th and 20th centuries other types of African American leadership styles were identified. The three primary styles were denoted as (1) the accommodationist leadership style from the work of Booker T. Washington, (2) the protest stage (aggressive and often confrontational against segregation), and (3) the third stage involving African American elected officials during the Civil Rights Movement which evolved into increasing numbers of elected offices in the 1970’s (Davis, 2007). Additional literature reviews generally focused on African Americans’ individualized leadership, professional leadership, and the Civil Right Movement leaders, to name a few. (Branch, 1998, 2006; Garrow, 1986; Marble, 1998; Williams, 2009). More recently, Gillespie (2010, 2012) extended this line of research into the historical evolution of Black leadership as she examined post-racial black leadership (2010) and the new black politician (2012).

While the research cited above focused on typologies and styles of leadership associated with African American leadership, central to this chapter’s focus is understanding the psychological complexities of the African American experience and its importance in shifting future leadership. A. Wade Boykin, Howard University, offered a conceptual framework grounded in a descriptive analysis of the African American psychological experience he described as the “Triple Quandary” of the African American experience in America. W.E.B Du Bois (1903) captured the essence of the African American experience and its complexity as he noted there is an inherent complexity to negotiating the African American experience in America. Dubois described this inherent complexity as a ‘twoness’, a ‘double consciousness’, that is, ‘being an American and a Negro’, at the same time. Building on Du Bois’ double consciousness, Boykin asserted that African Americans must negotiate different—and not necessarily interchangeable—realms of psychological experiences

as an ethnic/racial group in the United States. These experiences are the products of the interplay among three realms of experiences: the mainstream, the minority, and the Afro-cultural (Boykin, 1983, 1986; Boykin & Ellison, 1993; Boykin & Toms, 1985).

The mainstream experience in the United States includes participation in work systems, educational systems, the judicial system, consumption systems, bureaucratic systems (both as clients and employees), and by the mass media (Boykin, 1983, 1986; Boykin & Toms, 1985; Young, 1974). The minority experience includes exposure to social, economic, and political oppression resulting from one's minority status in the United States. Boykin (1986) pointed out that, although other groups maintain a minority status in America, this status is not necessarily linked to race. The Afro-cultural experience is rooted in the traditional African ethos and has a culturally indigenous basis, from which African Americans interpret and negotiate social reality.

It is the nature of the minority experience that provides the frame for examining future shifts in leadership in African American communities by better understanding adaptive coping strategies of leaders. Boykin and Toms (1985) shared further insight into the minority experience in terms of three critical axes (1) whether one takes an active or passive role in reacting to racism and oppression, (2) whether one opts for mainstream engagement or system disengagement posture, and (3) whether one's orientation is towards system change or system maintenance. They added another critical factor related to the minority experience for African American leadership which is the concern with image management. It is and will be how we examine and assess leaders in the future based on these critical axes, that is, are they active or passive to racism, equity and justice; are they more about engaging mainstream systems and practices or are they disengaged from the system; and are they more about maintaining things as they are and have been or are, they about systems change.

Case of Image Management and Missed Opportunity for Leadership Shift

The following brief case study provides context for a need for shifting leadership and leading in Black communities. It provides insights into the challenges and opportunities facing African leaders and leadership in the future. That is, it provides a broader frame on the scope and scale of the challenges facing Black communities from that of 'getting representative representation' to 'how and in what ways can we get representatives to represent our voices?'. It demonstrates the balancing act that African American leaders and communities must walk daily. This is what Boykin and Toms (1985) meant when they asked are you active or passive in your public stances to racism, injustices and inequality; are you about engaging systems for change or disengaging and not participating; or are you about maintain things as they are, or are you about systems change.

A Case of Image Impression and Missed Opportunity

Rural southeastern and northeastern counties in North Carolina account for a significant percentage of the total African American population and of the Black registered voters in the state (US Census & North Carolina State Board of Elections). Regionally speaking, this theoretically presents opportunities for African American policymakers to deliver for their communities while not having to fear anti-Black backlash electorally in the face of Black progress. The percentage of African Americans dominating these rural communities should set the stage for leadership that is not only representative but that works for the community. However, in many rural communities, Black leaders have clearly failed their constituencies while enjoying relatively safe voting universes within the last decade.

For example, in the fall of 2017, stung by the shocking victory of Donald Trump, the motivated Black electorate of one such city ejected a well-financed incumbent mayor and elected a Black businessman. Following up on that momentum, the city sent several of its Black residents to fill most of the city council seats during the next municipal cycle. With the incredible challenges around income inequality, a Tier 1 economic distress rating, and symbols of white supremacy ripe for removal, many Black residents were hopeful that things would finally change for the better. Instead, the last 24 months have been marred by missteps and wasted opportunities. Despite having near-total control of city council, Black municipal leadership squabbled about how best to address the removal of a white supremacist monument in the city, inexplicably deciding not to follow the lead of other cities. Rather than embrace the tenets propelling the movement against racism and police brutality, the collective local Black leadership largely retreated from the opportunity to push for reform within its own publicly funded law enforcement ranks.

In other cities, primarily governed by Black officials, economic decisions were made that negatively impacted some of the poorest districts in the cities. Instead of recruiting local construction talent, much of the contracting dollars went to White male-owned firms, thus missing an incredible opportunity to pump capital into the heart of the Black community. These are but a few of the distressing examples of how cities, overwhelmingly led by Black municipal leaders, utterly failed to produce for the community that sent them there to make a change. Municipal elections are approaching, and these candidates seeking reelection will turn to a largely dispirited and apathetic electorate for support. Whether they receive it or not remains to be seen.

As you can see from the case, this idea of image management and missed leadership opportunities can be a factor in whether African American leaders are successful even when they get a seat at the decision-making table. Moreover, even when you have a numerical advantage in terms of representatives in the system and at the table, due to historical and systemic local politics/practices, many times Black communities' interest are not met and with no reasonable reason from their representatives. We suggest that a more thorough understanding of the inherent complexities in the African American experience must be posed, queried, and understood before we can develop and offer adequate guidance to address the challenges associated with the need for more sustainable leadership and consistent civic/community engagement.

Thus, there is no broad-brush stroke or prescription to create immediate change in the way African Americans lead. However, there are processes and tools that Black communities can be equipped with, which will allow them to take control of their own outcomes. For decades Black communities have adapted and absorbed the principles of how white America succeeds and tried to emulate this and it has not been successful enough for sustainability and change in the lives of African Americans. To move forward requires a shift in how leadership is viewed, what kind of leadership will work for Black communities, and the development of strategies to shift the existing paradigms. This shift in leadership will require that African Americans act collectively to control their lives and their communities through more intentional, tactical, and systemic community and civic participation.

Intergenerational Leadership

To build participation, there must be an intersectionality of generations. According to Burgess and Martin-Jones (2019), while there are differences in the value-systems of generations, it will require all generations to create the climate and context for future leadership in Black communities. Each generation is important and brings something critical to the process for change. The lessons learned from the silent generation, Jim Crow Era, Civil Rights Movement, Fair Housing Act, Black Power Movement, COVID-19, and Black Lives Matter all play a role in how leaders can move forward in utilizing the right leadership mix to improve the outcomes for Black communities.

Intergenerational dynamics within leadership forces us to view each generation that is of working age. In the 2020s, you have Baby Boomers, Generation X, some may add “Xennials” here, Millennials (Gen Y) and Generation Z, all of working age. We may loosely characterize working age between early 20s through late sixties/seventies, but it is now reported that many Baby Boomers are expecting to work past 65 or not retire at all (Davidson, 2019). For the first time ever there are four (or five, depending on who you speak to) generations in the workforce. To add to this full American problem, when America gets a cold, Black communities have the flu. If this is a problem for everyone, it is only worse for Black communities. The workforce situation is a good indicator of who is in leadership within the community. The leadership within the community is as “bunched together” as our workforce. Natural handoffs are not happening, and bottlenecks are forming within Black communities. This can be indicative of the enormous amounts of new Black-led community organizations. As in the workforce, Millennials and Generation Zers do not have a place in leadership within community organizations. We can follow many of our great Silent Generation and Baby Boomer public leaders entering politics in their twenties (20s) and early thirties (30s). Now in their seventies (70s) and eighties (80s), are still leading in the community. We can simply look at President Biden and the man who saved his campaign in South Carolina, Congressman Jim Clyburn – both started their political careers in their late 20s and both over 75 years old. Millennials

are now reaching the age of 40 and have not received the same upward mobility in political leadership, but clearly it can be derived that Baby Boomers and Generation Xers have also suffered the same fate.

In community forums and across dinner tables, the question is asked, “Why are Millennials (GenY) so different and will they be up to the test?” The question should be, “How are we co-creating the necessary future with the next generation?” Intergenerational leadership must take all four to five (4–5) generations to work together. During our adolescent years, we develop our reasoning skills, morals and logical thinking (WHO, 2020). This means in the Black community, in our four generations vying for leadership have had their logical thinking and reasoning skills shaped by the murder of Black leaders like MLK and Malcolm X in the midst of the 2nd Civil Rights movement, the beginning of the ability for Black people to vote and the crack epidemic, the rise in internet/big data and War on Drugs, recessions among two foreign attacks on US soil and the first Black president, and finally more recessions with folks thinking we are past color to saying the name of many Black murders that were amplified by the phenomenon of social media. To make it simpler, we have one side of the room, a leader with a flip phone ready to run a phone tree and the other side creating a Tik Tok video to market the cause. Fortunately, both of those expressions of their value-systems can live in the same place.

How we must move forward is simple, plant seeds and give flowers early. In Black communities, there has always been a survivalist mentality. This mentality can produce leaders who are protective of the community. It is just like a parent who is not ready to teach their kids how to drive, never feels exactly comfortable sitting in the passenger seat while their kids are driving, and afraid of the economic implications of getting their child a car and the insurance. Rather, using this same analogy, we should be seeking to teach our kids how to drive early so they are prepared and understand the importance of driving. We should realize that more people driving, means more places to go or means more time for you to do other things. Lastly, investing in our future is necessary for our future to be successful and when we produce good stewards, with full confidence, it is not a big risk. This is an example of planting seeds early. Our community must seek to plant seeds early and often, provide sustainable opportunities for leaders to succeed in their twenties (20s), rather than seeing that they must find their own way. Additionally, we must give flowers early. The saying goes that we only give flowers when people pass away. In our communities, younger generations must give our elder generations their flowers early. We should be giving our leaders in their forties (40s), early and often, because as community leaders hand off their responsibilities, they must be there as frequent counsel.

The goal in Black intergenerational leadership must be collaborative, but also simple. Each generation brings different experiences to the table, with logical and moral thinking shaped by completely different Americas. The different realities are real, but for true community progression, it will take leaders of all generations to step outside their reality to see others. This uncomfortable practice must be done openly and honestly.

Shifting Leadership

There are multiple shifts necessary to build leadership capacity in Black communities. These shifts must occur in thoughts, assumptions, programs, processes, and relationships. The following areas are deemed as critical components to be examined for the shifting to take place. Each of these shifts require intentional collaborative thinking and doing.

1. Shift in thinking about how we view and adapt to change.
2. Shift in thinking about how we engage and lead in Black communities.
3. Shift in the urgency to intentionally think through and plan for intergenerationality in community-based leadership.
4. Shift in notions of leadership from *our way works good for us* to *what ways works best for communities*.
5. Shift to more capacity-competent leadership.
6. Shift in methods, procedures, and processes of how and in which ways we engage – work collectively inside and tactically outside.
7. Shift in the imagery of no leadership to known impactful leadership.
8. Shift in identifying, developing, and using talent within the community.

The first shift involves how change is viewed. How we shift our thinking about how we view and adapt to change requires first that we recognize that things do need to change in a real way and that change is a constant. Black communities no longer have the luxury of waiting for change to come. The change must come with movement from the inside and then from the outside. When focusing on leading change that ensures racial equity, social justice and inclusion, the old myths must be debunked about how one arrives at success.

One myth is about individualism where white American culture denotes that individuals control their own fate no matter what social position you are in and that one's personal behavior and choice determine how you succeed in life (Stacia, 2020). This speaks to the old American adage if you work hard you will succeed. *How many people do you know that have worked hard all their life and still have not succeeded?* Another myth is about meritocracy which implies that resources and opportunities are distributed based on one's talent and effort (merit). *How can it be true that networks, information, resources, and access does not matter* (Stacia, 2020)? The myth is that regardless of what community you live in you can pull yourself up by your bootstraps and do what is necessary for you to get ahead. Without access to resources, information, and networks there is no equal opportunity readily available to everyone. According to Toms et al. (2021a, 2021b), "African American history, intergenerational differences, self-efficacy and attitude, access to and participation in decision-making bodies affects a community's propensity to think and act as a global and local dynamism" (p.71).

If communities are to recognize that a change in strategy for success of its members is critical to the survival and sustainability of Black communities, the common myths must be rethought. A change approach for building community, obtaining

individual and collective wealth, and having better health outcomes is essential for Black communities. While change can create fear because of not always knowing where to start, collective leadership in communities can drive out this fear. Working together to harness knowledge and information will be essential in the change process and in reducing the fears associated with change.

Secondly, Black communities need to think about how engagement and leadership happens in communities. The question that must be answered is in what ways will leaders and leadership processes and practices occur in Black communities? The focus is on shifting how Black communities assess, rethink, plan, decide, and implement change within communities (Toms et al., 2021a, 2021b). This shift must go beyond electing officials who look like members of Black communities to being more intentional about who has the capacity to lead both inside and outside the communities. Individualism in leadership has failed Black communities time after time. The shift must account for the fact that just because you look like us does not mean you care about us, our issues, or our communities. Communities must shift to holding local, state, and national leaders accountable for the outcomes of its people.

Another shift that must occur is in the urgency to intentionally think through and plan for intergenerationality in community-based leadership. Often, when Black communities come together around a cause, there is the absence of a multigenerational coalition. Can we assume that they are absent because of lack of interest or some assumed antagonism between generational leaders? Absolutely not! What has failed to happen in Black communities is making room at the table for different individuals with different ways of thinking, working, and decision-making skills. Bottomley and Burgess (2018) noted it seems the traditional thinking is that leadership is about having the most experience. This has become a caveat for good leadership; however, this is old and archaic thinking. Yet, this remains a spoken and unspoken yardstick for who has the credibility to lead in Black communities (*both inside and outside within the mainstream*). The fact that Millennials have stepped into leadership roles and are practicing learning by doing as a new model for leading is seemingly creating barriers for cross-generational leadership. However, if one reflects ancestrally, Black generations always found ways to work collaboratively with elders and the young. It has been a tradition for children to be engaged in the learning process and to lead at a young age alongside their elders. As much as everyone likes to place the mantle of the Civil Rights Movement on the shoulders of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he did not accomplish what he did without the help and support of multiple generations working side-by-side to succeed. John Lewis, The Birmingham Children's Crusade, Claudette Colvin, Diane Nash, The Tougaloo Nine, Mississippi Civil Rights Workers, Greensboro Four, The Little Rock Nine, and Ruby Nell Bridges Hall are just some examples of young minds that were critically influential during this era.

The next shift that should occur results in shifting from the notion that *our way works good for us* to *what ways work best for communities*. Historically, much attention has been paid to the dialogues about a lack of visibility and participation among African Americans in civic engagement and what does preparation look like for African American citizens to engage consistently and persistently in

decision-making that affects Black communities. The talk has not resulted in much action to change leadership and engagement. Primarily, many African American leaders appear to be satisfied with the status quo if they are benefiting politically and economically. This is particularly the case in small and rural communities where one or two African Americans serve in leadership positions, and generally maintain those positions for 15–20 years. When the focus changes to what works best for the community, attention should be on the accountability of leaders because the activities they engage in with mainstream politics influence the policies and resource distribution in Black communities. Toms et al. (2021a, 2021b) posited that:

At the community level, many citizens believe that this lack of representation and participation in the civic process directly affects the consistent and mounting disparities in Black communities. These disparities are most evident in data reflecting early educational achievement and performance, health-care outcomes, employment compensation and access, gaps in employment with livable compensation, and, ultimately, in the desperately declining individual economic net worth and collective access to capital. (p. 216)

There are more African American elected officials today than there has been historically, although there remain gaps in many political areas, such as governors. Considering this trajectory, there is less community participation on both the local and state levels. At the local level, this lack of involvement contributes to policies and resource distribution that neglects and negatively impacts Black communities. Toms et al. (2021a, 2021b) shared, “At the very least, the lack of policy development and resource distribution compounds the already historic disparities affecting African American communities” (p. 216).

A further shift involves creating capacity-competent leaders. Capacity competent leadership as described by Toms et al. (2014; 2021) is leadership which demonstrates skills in planning, developing, and implementing a shared vision. Capacity-competent leadership requires leaders to be willing to accept shared responsibility for the workload and shared recognition for accomplishments. There are several components associated with these leaders (a) readiness and preparedness to lead, (b) building strong relationships based on trust and inclusion, (c) system level thinking and planning, (d) flexibility in engaging with others, (e) consistency and persistency in action, (f) having a presence, (g) saturation and maturation of leadership engagement processes, and (h) accountability for self, leadership group, and community. The readiness and starting point for capacity-competent leaders will vary depending on their skills to plan, develop, and implement a shared vision for the community. These leaders will communicate and embrace sound decision making by exhibiting psychosocial maturity and the skill sets to lead (Toms et al., 2021a, 2021b).

Still another shift must occur in our methods, procedures, processes of engagement, and how we work collectively inside and tactically outside of communities. This involves utilizing an inside/out and outside/in approach. This inside out/outside in approach requires that communities examine themselves first as a community. This examination involves examining what the needs of the people are, how people want to be engaged, what contributions do community members bring, and identifying those who are willing to step into a leadership role. When communities

have a better understanding of who they are then they can experience the community collectively and utilize the unique talents that exist within the community. At this point, communities can be empowered to make changes and to build from their strengths and make improvements in their weaknesses (Toms & Toms, 2014; 2021).

The inside/out approach is accompanied by the outside/in approach. The outside/in approach allows communities to look at systems that impact Black communities that need changing and to strategize on how to make the changes happen. This approach requires collaboration between communities and systems to create and influence strategies designated to change the lives of the people within the communities (Toms et al., 2021a, 2021b). The methodology is intentional and aims to have communities focus on what is vital to its members. The inside/out and outside/in approach will help communities understand that there are multiple ways to get things accomplished. This strategy allows for tolerance and open-mindedness to new and different approaches to old problems. This tactic helps communities and the inhabitants to evolve into more collaborative ways of addressing problems and implementing change.

A shift in the imagery of no leadership to known impactful leadership requires a focus on intentionality. There is a need to understand intentionality in leadership and the impact it can have on the imagery of leadership in Black communities. Most often intentionality is associated with leaders who are decisive or assertive (Burgess & Martin-Jones, 2020). Intentional and impactful leadership can be expanded to encompass the use of one's role to change interactions, systems, and processes to ensure equity, justice, and inclusion. When leaders take an intentional approach to working in communities it must be personal and include being committed to the outcomes. John Lewis (1998) noted that working in communities as leaders is personal work and intentional work. The personal commitment sets leaders up to be responsible leaders. This type of leadership ensures that collectively people are heard and included in the decision-making process. The impact can be seen across communities. To add to intentional leadership, Bryan Stevenson (2018) went further and indicated that there is a need for people to proximate – meaning that you live outside of your safe bubble. It requires that you be willing to understand the pain and loss of those in the community. The goal is to work to build relationships and trust and this is a pathway to change. Further, this type of leadership removes the need for individuation in leadership for power and moves towards thinking collaboratively and collectively.

Without an intentional focus on leading in Black communities, the impact will be the same, an attempt to approximate what is happening in mainstream communities. An intentional approach to leadership in Black communities allows for the creation of a sense of community and belonging that is vital for human survivability and growth. Using an intentional approach to leadership helps create vision and experiences within the community that are lasting and sustainable and permits others to take part in building community with a sense of purpose and ownership for the outcomes. It sends a message that everyone in the community matters and can contribute to their future. This means that leaders and followers are contributing to building the community and setting the community up for leadership to be

maintained and to flourish. What results is an attitude that all the members of a community contribute to the continuity of leadership and engagement. An unintended and positive consequence is that leaders can then come from anywhere in the community. Leadership is removed from the “titled” and positioned as the only way that things can happen (Burgess & Martin-Jones, 2020).

Last, but not the least in importance is shifting how we identify, develop, and use talent within the community. The first step requires recognizing that communities are filled with bright, capable, and willing individuals to build up their communities when provided with an opportunity to participate in the discussion and the work. Identifying talent requires an intentional approach to look for the talent. There must be a goal to find leaders with the capacity to lead and follow, span boundaries, and work collaboratively to impact the outcomes of Black communities. Thus, this intentionality requires that communities become more proficient at distinguishing between talkers, dreamers, thinkers, and doers.

Further, Toms et al. (2021a, 2021b) noted that when working to build leadership capacity, it is important not to miss the gaps, because everyone has something to offer. It is critical to understand that in communities there are people who have skills and ability but are often overlooked because they do not look the part of leadership. Most often, if these people can get connected, they are loyal, committed, and responsible. A commitment to finding community talent can result in an increase in the power of relationships. Remember, what we give attention to matters and will grow if it is nurtured. Finding and nurturing talent in Black communities will help people define what they are going to stand for and how they will decide to deliver what they stand for. The newfound leadership will not quit working until the collaborative milestones have been met and the work is done according to the community’s value-system. Good leadership is a behavior and not a title.

The Constructs for African American Leadership

As noted earlier, leadership requires a continuous process of growth and change in building relational trust, building spiritual capital, building economic/social capital, and understanding how to learn in public. These constructs must be in place to manage the shift that is necessary for a change in Black communities. To establish an intentionally focused effort to develop and implement comprehensive shifts in leadership in Black communities requires a firm grasp of who is leading in these communities, understanding the readiness of those to accept a leadership role during this time of tense race relations coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, and creating strategies for a comprehensive model for developing community capacity and sustainability. This will include developing strategies to increase engagement in communities, on the local, state, and national level to impact policy and resource development and distribution.

The first step in making the constructs work is accepting that leaders do and can come from anywhere in the community. That is why talent identification is critical

to the success of Black communities. We must step beyond the old imagery of leadership – born traits – proven success – experience – resource hoarders – to a more open-minded philosophy that leaders can be developed, success can be obtained by collective efforts – experience is a steppingstone to bringing others along – new resources must be developed and managed for the good of all. Again, planting seeds and giving flowers.

Leaders Can Be Anyone

This model differs from typical leadership models in that in communities leaders can be anyone. Talent is identified as more people come to the forefront to participate and engage with what is happening in the community (See Toms et al., 2011 *Practical Matters* article & Toms et al., 2021a)). When identifying community leaders, do not overlook people who may not seem obvious as leaders, because everyone has something to contribute. Also, the role of leaders can evolve over time and often is shared and passed on to others when deemed necessary. Leaders in communities are willing to take some shared responsibility for the outcomes. The challenge for many communities is that they come to the table with preconceived notions about who should lead. The educated and polished are often the immediately chosen ones for the roles of leaders because they look the part. Do not be mistaken, there are leaders among the group that may appear unpolished but have much knowledge and talent to bring to the community. Often the same people tend to step forward and self-select themselves into the role of leader. We argue that while this is sometimes necessary, space should be made for others to participate and that oftentimes leaders should move in and out of roles to make room for others.

Building Relational Trust

Relational trust relates to the interpersonal social exchanges between groups of people. Relational trust has a strong impact on community interactions. It is essential that relational trust be established or if broken, then reestablished in communities. Our relationships within Black communities appear to be becoming more siloed. As a result, our ability to work with and relate to each other around critical community needs are limited and, in many cases, predictable. As a result, this predictability in behavior and attitudes among elected and self-selected leaders has stifled trust among communities. The lack of strong relational context upon which to plan, work, and implement change thus results in periodic and sometimes massive exodus, complacency, and non-movement – for extended periods of time. Relational trust is most often found as missing in Black communities, for too many reasons to outline. Broken trust leads to disengagement, revenge, and betrayal. Broken trust can have some irreversible consequences in communities if not dealt with.

The goal is to work on building relational trust. This begins with understanding the past experiences within communities, removing any known barriers for participation, and developing elements of a common language among community members. Climate, context, and communication plays a significant role in establishing relational trust. The climate is important because people who have historically been oppressed will require a space in which they can be without feeling that repercussions are evident. The context in which you approach and ask for help will matter when reestablishing relational trust. Communications must be clear, true, and consistent. When relational trust is established it can remove barriers and create a bridge for collective collaboration within communities.

Building Spiritual Capital

In transforming Black communities, typically religious institutions are involved. These institutions have been the backbone of many Black communities for decades. However, it is now not enough to just engage the leaders of religious institutions as the voice of Black communities, but to engage around the experiences that communities have had with these institutions. Burgess and Ellison (2021) and Lloyd (2010) “define spiritual capital as an individual’s intrinsic values that include trust, culture, and a deep commitment to building relationships, to better serve society and satisfy the internal human need to serve or engage” (p. 144). Lloyd (2010) noted that spiritual capital is not a religious construct, but it represents a relational construct that reaches beyond the logical and contractual agreements but connects our faith in each other. This construct goes beyond just working together but having the faith in one another that perpetuates a consistent and persistent, yet sustainable place for engagement.

Burgess (2011) noted that all individuals possess spiritual capital to some degree. Each person has an intrinsic value system that allows them to choose to engage or not engage. The capital that exists between leaders, representatives, and other community members can be utilized to bring about change in communities and present opportunities for anyone to participate. The goal is to recognize one’s capital, use it to build relationships, consider spiritual capital as a personal investment of trust and faith with others, and use spiritual capital as a resource.

Building Economic/Social Capital

Social capital involves using social trust to influence interpersonal relationships at different levels, individually and collectively. For community building having social trust is essential. For Black communities building social capital is critical for addressing insidious disparities and injustice. Toms et al. (2021a, 2021b) stated that social capital is a must if communities are to engage in changing policy, gaining

access to resources, and distributing those resources for the good of the community. It is also important in engaging those who develop and make policy decisions that impact Black communities.

In addition to building social capital, economic capital is essential for Black communities to survive and thrive. The ability for Black communities to wield economic capital is the bedrock of self-determination. This self-determination allows Black business leaders to self-fund their own dreams and desires, whether it be opening a franchise or investing in the campaign of an up-and-coming Black political superstars.

Learning in Public

Toms et al. (2021a, 2021b) define Learning in Public (LIP) as the “ability to innovate and learn collectively within trusting relationships to develop new skills, knowledge, and capacity” (p.70). LIP requires that communities, organizations, and individuals become adept at social learning. LIP only happens when all the agents involved recognize and value the knowledge, skills, and ability of all the participants. This is different from the historical perspective that appointed leaders have the knowledge and choose to share based on their own disposition. The foundation of LIP rests with the individuals, communities, and organizations who will and can learn from each other and intentionally do so in collaborative environments.

There are two real national moments/issues that we can point to in recognizing LIP. In 2020, we saw unprecedented leadership within the Black community in Georgia. After almost electing the first Black governor, rather than folding, leaders learned from lessons and only organized greater to ensure their voice was heard, electing the first Black United States Senator from Georgia. This community leadership came under immense pressure being under national spotlight after the 2018 election and with state officials threatening inquiries in their actions. Alternatively, we look at the issue of trends in highly Black populated areas across the nation after the election of our first Black president. After reaching the greatest percentage of Black voters in 2012, many communities have only declined in voting percentages since then. While we can argue that there was not a Black president, which directly correlates to the increased vote, there is a real conversation about how community leaders must sustain progress in our communities. It can be argued that electing the first Black president was not only about the historic occasion, but more of the historic symbol. Our communities must begin to ensure we are learning in public and creating the symbols necessary for our communities to succeed.

Bringing It All Together

Identifying people who can take communities to the next level with integrity and an openness for participation is essential. These people are willing to groom others and share resources that will make the community better overall. This is critical because

the legacy of communities is important for future growth and development. It is impossible to leave a legacy if all the information dies with the “*leader*”.

Black communities are use to constant change and things not being the same daily. However, we recognize that change is a constant, but the value of being more in control of the changes that are happening in Black communities would be more palatable than waiting for something to occur. When communities act in a deliberate fashion to identify and nurture leaders, they can be strategic in what happens in communities. Developing and selecting leaders that are willing to put others before self and are open to participatory engagement for the betterment of the community are the type of leaders that should be identified. Looking beyond the obvious candidates for leadership allows communities to identify talent that might otherwise be overlooked. This approach expands the reach, scope, and effectiveness of community leadership (Toms et al., 2021a, 2021b).

Identifying the right leadership for any community increases the chances for building partnerships and collaborating inside and outside of the community for the good of the whole. Building relationships and partnerships will increase the effectiveness of communities. Leaders need to be committed to the community and not focused on how to project the imagery of mainstream leadership. Black communities have participated in adaptation for centuries, it is time for a shift in the focus of how Black communities lead themselves to better economic, social justice, and health outcomes for African Americans. There are and have been plans for what African Americans need to do in their communities, this is not new, but what is new and critical is that the context (all systems/organizations have shifted) and climate (post-George Floyd new normal racial unrest) requires it to be done now. That is, some may refer to “a plan to implement the plan”. In this case, part of the plan has to include the community’s assessment of its leaders and how and to what extent, are they oriented, psychologically, in how they represent the voice of citizens. Toms et al. (2014) noted that certain components of Black leadership included leaders who would be the voice of the community, leaders who would go beyond the defined boundaries, leaders who develop intentional communication strategies, and who would learn and engage in using effective decision-making strategies. Toms et al. (2014) further added that these are “leaders who have developed the psychosocial maturity and skill sets to lead themselves and their communities of “place” into a “new era of intentional participatory engagement.”

This intentional engagement will require reaching across generations, genders, socioeconomic statuses, and being purposeful about identifying leadership talent. Our leaders have encountered obstacles, taken many detours, and fought battles locally and statewide. Yet, there remain multiple challenges that must be addressed as we move forward into the future. This effort will require that we must suspend our beliefs in what leadership has been to what it can and has to be.

Key Chapter Takeaways

- The recent COVID pandemic and race relations fallout are calling for a change in African American leadership to further advance community engagement and sustainability of life in Black communities.

- Black communities need people who will exercise integrity, work to develop strategies for the people, have a vision, work holistically, and utilize spiritual and social capital for the good of the communities they represent.
- Physical and ‘psychological safe’ spaces must be made for representation from different groups which might mean that traditional leadership (methods and processes) is not the only leadership style or strategy expressed and supported.
- The nature of the minority experience provides the frame for examining future shifts in leadership in African American communities by better understanding adaptive coping strategies of leaders.
- In many rural communities, Black leaders have failed their constituencies while enjoying relatively safe voting universes within the last decade.
- To build participation, there must be an intersectionality of generations. This will require all generations to create the climate and context for future leadership in Black communities.
- The goal in Black intergenerational leadership must be collaborative, but also simple. Each generation brings different experiences to the table, with logical and moral thinking shaped by completely different Americas. For true community progression, it will take leaders of all generations to step outside their reality to see others. This uncomfortable practice must be done openly and honestly.
- There are multiple shifts necessary to build leadership capacity in Black communities.
- Leadership requires a continuous process of growth and change in building relational trust, building spiritual capital, building economic/social capital, and understanding how to learn in public.
- Relational trust relates to the interpersonal social exchanges between groups of people. Relational trust has a strong impact on community interactions.
- Identifying the right leadership for any community increases the chances for building partnerships and collaborating inside and outside of the community for the good of the whole. Building relationships and partnerships will increase the effectiveness of communities.

Reflective Questions

1. After reading this chapter, please formulate in your own words what type of leadership across generations is needed to create the infrastructure for change and sustainability in communities where mainly African Americans live?
2. Leadership is not necessarily those with the titles, positions, or even the power. What would your parameters be for leaders who can truly make a difference toward equality in contemporary society?
3. The authors claim that, “... in many rural communities, Black leaders have clearly failed their constituencies while enjoying relatively safe voting universes within the last decade”. Based on the chapter, how did this failure happen?
4. It is important to establish or restore relational trust amongst the Black society. Why is it currently not there?
5. Religious institutions have always been instrumental in transforming Black communities. Yet, it is no longer enough to just engage the leaders of religious

institutions as the voice of Black communities, but to engage around the experiences that communities have had with these institutions. How should this transpire?

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