

**The Art of Inclusion:
Success Stories of African Americans
in the Nonprofit Sector**

by

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ISBN: 1-58112-307-8

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Boca Raton, Florida
USA • 2006

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DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to my first-born son Makari Jamous Dorsey. To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, you are my best friend. I also dedicate this dissertation to the Dorsey family. The family support, unity, and strength were always with me on this journey. In the words of the Dorsey family,
“Aghee Bom Bah, Hey! Hey!”*

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Foreword

The United States is constantly evolving due to population growth, cultural diversity, shifts in political party control, drugs, disease, education, employment, and the list can continue.

Cultural diversity is a dominant force in the United States. It is important, because cultural diversity is a way of being and knowing. An individual has to know and feel comfortable with who they are from an individual perspective, as well as from a racial/ethnic group perspective.

The initial question asked of the individual is “Who am I?” and “How do I fit within my group?” Moreover, the individual must make themselves available to know and learn about other cultures in order to become culturally aware and/or proficient.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said that “Intelligence plus character...that is the goal of true education.” When I examine leadership, the equation is Vision + Goal Setting + Humility + Team Organization + X = Leadership. “X” represents you--the unknown factor. It is the effort one places within themselves and their organization. Leadership is doing the right thing, even when no one is looking.

This book that Dr. Dorsey has written allows the reader to examine leadership from an African American perspective. More importantly, Dorsey chooses to cover African American leadership from a positive perspective. Research and studies rarely focus upon the successes of African American Men in leadership positions. We know of the late Reginald Lewis, Robert Johnson, and Earvin “Magic” Johnson to name a few. However all of these men are in the private sector.

Dorsey has decided to investigate career success of African-American males who lead select nonprofit organizations in Los Angeles County and to draw upon their experiences, perceptions, and leadership skills as President/CEO. This investigation is significant to use as

a guide and source of motivation of those males who want to be leaders in nonprofit or for-profit organizations.

John P. Hamilton, Ed.D

Hamilton & Associates

Introduction

Why I Launched This Study

I launched my study of this topic to investigate the career success of African-American males who lead nonprofit organizations and to draw upon their experiences, perceptions, and leadership skills as President/CEO.

I used six African-American male leaders of nonprofit organizations in Los Angeles County. The African American leaders far exceeded the occupational and educational accomplishments of their parents. They grew up with a sense of responsibility and self-confidence. Each participant concentrated on tasks such as planning, work ethic and performance. All six participants were strongly influenced by advice from their mothers and other positive role model/mentors in the early years.

As an African-American male, what I found was quite encouraging. My study suggested that:

1. Most African-American men are highly motivated by the desire to "make a difference," and to "help the community."
2. African Americans are looking to carry the torch as today's leaders in for-profit and nonprofit organizations.
3. The participants in this study indicate that their success has come from the nonprofit sector.
4. African-American male President/CEO are middle age, have impressive educational credentials, and display a commitment to strong work ethic.

This study is only a beginning. There are other aspects to non-profit leadership that should be examined.

For example, future studies should:

1. Include women and/or other ethnic groups, i.e., Chinese, Korean, Hispanics, to determine perceived barriers and strategies that lead to President/CEO of nonprofit organizations.

2. Examine a broader swatch of African-American male Presidents/CEOs outside of Los Angeles County.
3. Extend to retired African-American President/CEO of nonprofit organizations and founders of nonprofit organizations.
4. Examine African-American financial success vs. hierarchical success.
5. Review career satisfaction of African Americans in nonprofit organizations.

Problem Statement

In “Cracking The Corporate Code...,” Price M. Cobbs and Judith L. Turnock state that Black corporate executives have earned positions of leadership. They have used their success to create a legacy of diversity. In addition to their own groundbreaking achievements, they are determined to see that new generations of African-American executives will never be alone as they once were.

Richard Majors and Janet Billson (“Cool Pose: The Dilemma of Black Manhood In America”) argue that many African-American males are successful; however, not enough of these success stories are studied. Research and literature specific to leadership in nonprofit organizations is plentiful. However, the research does not indicate to what extent African-American male leaders contribute to a nonprofit organization's success.

The problem is that literature and research fail to include the experiences of successful African-American men to be coupled with the qualitatively derived predictor factors. There is a need to identify and examine specific strategies that African-American males use in their role as leaders. There is also a need to identify and describe experiences that successful African-American males use to overcome barriers.

Little research data identify reasons why some African-American men lead nonprofit organizations. What life experiences were the factors that enabled some African-American men to succeed? How did these successful African-American men defeat the odds that research deems are overwhelmingly against them? The

identification of African-American males as leaders of nonprofit organizations can provide insight as to career decisions made that led to their positions as Presidents/CEOs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate career success of African-American males who lead select nonprofit organizations in Los Angeles County and to draw upon their experiences, perceptions, and leadership skills as President/CEO.

Research Questions

The following questions were addressed in this study:

1. What personal and background experiences of the President/CEO contribute to career success in a nonprofit?

2. What leadership characteristics and perceptions (if any) of the President/CEO contribute to career success in a nonprofit?

3. What are the perceived barriers that African-American males encounter as President/CEO?

4. What specific strategies do African-American males use to overcome the perceived barriers in order to become President/CEO?

Significance of the Study

Today's young African-American executives have grown up with greater opportunity, although many barriers remain. The generation of African Americans who entered the corporate world in the 1960s laid the groundwork for this generation. The percentage of African-American males who are President/CEO in nonprofit organizations is lower than the percentage of other ethnic groups . However, the number of African Americans in positions of power is growing.

The identification of strategies used to overcome the barriers may inspire more African-American males to

secure leadership positions in nonprofit organizations. The findings of this study could help nonprofit boards identify, groom, and promote qualified African-American males to the positions of President/CEO. In addition, the study could provide young African-American males with direction and more positive role models to emulate.

Definitions of Terms

The following section are definitions of terms which are used throughout this study:

African American. Refers to Americans of African descent (Monk 1998). The term is used interchangeably with "Black."

Career Success. Defined as the positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievements one has accumulated as a result of one's work experiences.

CEO. Chief Executive Officer of a corporation.

Charity. An organization that helps the needy and gives relief to the underserved.

The Community Foundation. A public grant-making organization in which individuals, families and businesses pool money and award grants to individuals and groups for a variety of philanthropic and charitable purposes.

501(c)(3). Section of the Internal Revenue Service Code that designates an organization as charitable, tax-exempt and nonprofit. Organizations qualifying under the code include religious, education, charitable, amateur athletic, scientific or literary groups; organizations testing for public safety; or organizations involved in prevention of cruelty to children or animals.

Individual philanthropists. Individuals and families who contribute funds to and often are volunteers in nonprofits.

Level 5 Leadership. Refers to the highest level in a hierarchy of executive capabilities.

Nonprofit Organizations. Representatives included volunteers, board members and staff. Nonprofit organization means an organization that does not give out a profit, but does generate revenue. The purpose of a nonprofit organization is to provide one or more needs

in a community. Each nonprofit organization generally explains its general intention in a mission statement.

Organizational Success. Defined as three to five years of operational performance and longevity of the President/CEO.

Private foundations. Grant-making organizations that provide private funding to nonprofit organizations, usually for particular purposes defined by the foundations (IRS 2005).

Successful. Longevity of the President/CEO of a nonprofit organization.

Successful leadership. Defined as the ability to create and communicate an organizational vision and to inspire, motivate, and empower followers to strive for achievement of this mutual goal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many individuals to whom I am grateful for assistance and for ongoing support, encouragement and personal care in pursuit of my doctorate.

I wish to thank my committee, Dr. Barbara Poling, Dr. Elizabeth Nash, and Dr. Charlotte Forte-Parnell. Dr. Poling has been the guiding force and the person who believed I could produce a high-quality scholarly product.

Special thanks to my wife, Cellekque Errica Dorsey--you deserve all the credit for completion of my dissertation. Without you by my side all the way, I would not have been able to finish. Thank you for being patient through this process. I know it was a long three years and tougher on you than it was on me.

I wish to acknowledge the Los Angeles cluster and faculty, specifically Dr. John P. Hamilton for setting the bar so high. John, you are a genius, and you motivated me to achieve more and to expect less.

I have to make mention of the Reach More Foundation. This organization operates thanklessly and

gives its time unconditionally, asking for nothing in return. You are the reason I decided to go for it.

Finally, I wish to thank my great family. Grandma, I love you. Makari, you are the chosen one. Salley and Tamah, never stop dreaming, but understand reality. The Los Angeles family, bless you all. The Chicago family, we did it. The across the nation family, reach out and touch someone. To my deceased family, see yah soon.

Dr. Norris Rashe Dorsey

CHAPTER One

Overview of Non profit Leadership

“My challenge to the young people is to pick up where this generation has left off to create a world where every man, woman and child is not limited, except by their own capabilities.”

--Colin Powell

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell was a professional soldier for thirty-five years, during which time he held myriad command and staff positions while rising to the rank of four-star General. Now retired, Colin Powell is an example of an African-American male who achieved career success working for the United States of America. For many African Americans, the compulsion to work twice as hard and to be twice as good, no matter how physically and emotionally exhausting, is how they

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make their mark. Furthermore, for many African Americans, knowing the corporate elite is essential, because the most influential forces in the United States are those who control the largest corporations.

In "Leaders Who Make A Difference," Burt Nanus and Dobbs state: "A leader of a nonprofit organization is a person who marshals the people, capital, and intellectual resources of the organization to move it in the right direction." Moreover, leaders of nonprofit organizations prefer flexibility and change over predictability and control.

Nanus and Dobbs further state that leaders embrace complexity and uncertainty because change often provides new opportunities for service and may suggest innovative directions for future growth and development.

Executive Career Success

"In the space program, I've had the opportunity to learn about a number of different fields, to be

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involved in technology that's right on the edge, pushing to see where it can go."

--Mae C. Jemison

Dr. Mae C. Jemison is an example of an African-American woman who has achieved career success. Dr. Jemison is a scientist, astronaut, physician, author, chemical engineer, professor, and philanthropist. She is the founder and president of two technology companies. Dr. Jemison is an example of someone beating the odds, but her career success answers the following important question: What factors lead some executives to be more successful in their careers than others? This interesting and important question has been only partially answered through existing research and literature. In fact, examination of the relevant literature reveals that knowledge of executive career success can be enhanced in several ways.

First, researchers have predicted career success primarily by using a few variables (i.e., job satisfaction and/or compensation) in a piecemeal fashion, without considering the relative effects of manifold sets of

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theoretically based variables. Second, although executive career success has generated considerable interest in the business press, little rigorous empirical research is available. Third, little research has examined executives' satisfaction with their careers, and research that is available often has relied exclusively on common-method, self-report data. Finally, almost no research has simultaneously examined both the objective (e.g., compensation) and subjective (e.g., career satisfaction) aspects of career success, although both appear to be essential to a complete study of this issue.

M. London and S.A. Stumpf studied career success and define it as the positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievements one has accumulated as a result of one's work experiences.

Career success is an evaluative concept, so judgments of career success depend on who does the judging. The individual pursuing the career can also judge career success. And, the demography of an organization's members may influence many behavioral patterns and outcomes, including promotions and salary attainment. Thus, demographic variables need to be

taken into account when investigating the predictors of career success.

Past studies have found that compared to White managers, minority managers receive lower evaluations in terms of estimated job qualifications, performance ratings, and pay and promotions. A considerable amount of research on gender differences in career progression has revealed similar findings in terms of pay, performance ratings, and promotions. Conversely, some research suggests that in certain situations (demographic) women and minorities receive more favorable treatment with respect to promotions and pay raises than White men.

Evidence suggests that women and minorities are treated differently (and sometimes more favorably) than their White male counterparts. However, when levels of career attainment are evaluated—as opposed to the outcomes of specific personnel decisions—the evidence is also fairly clear that women and minorities have lower levels of career success than White men.

In the *Journal of Human Resources*, G.Psacharopoulos asserts that African-American