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Leadership for Transformation

JoAnn Danelo Barbour

Gill Robinson Hickman

University of Richmond, ghickman@richmond.edu

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Leadership for Transformation

Edited by
JoAnn Danelo Barbour
Gill Robinson Hickman

A Volume in the International Leadership Series
Building Leadership Bridges



International Leadership Association

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Introduction

JoAnn Danelo Barbour and Gill Robinson Hickman

Leaders and participants can transform from many processes and ascribe a variety of interpretations to the meaning of a transformation, as in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. In biology, we are all familiar with caterpillars turning into butterflies or tadpoles into frogs, those same frogs that, in folklore, shape shift into princes by enchantment. In folklore, additionally, one can be born a shape shifter and be transformed by natural forces, or shape shifters can be sorcerers or witches who have the ability to change at will (Yolen, 1986). In twenty-first-century reality television, for example, we see stars shape shift into dancers, "ugly ducklings" change into "swans," and common singers transform into idols. As we see evidence or allusions or illusions of transformation all around us, we hold that leadership for transformation is especially important. As Burns notes, "To transform something is to cause a metamorphosis in form or structure, a change in the very condition or nature of a thing, a change into another substance, a radical change in outward form or inner character" (Burns, 2003, p. 24).

When we posed several questions in the call for submissions for this first volume of *Building Leadership Bridges*, we wanted to know—since transformative change does not occur as the result of any one action by any one person and is the result of many acts, both large and small, carried out by many individuals in many locales—what are those acts, who are the actors, what is

the process of leadership for transformation, and where and how does the process occur? We received ninety responses to the call, including transcripts of various Prague panels from the ILA's 2009 Global Conference. This volume, *Leadership for Transformation*, is an opportunity to share and learn about new research, effective leadership practices and proven teaching methods, and creative works that support the many faces of transformation. The authors in this volume present chapters from the arts to science, from qualitative to quantitative thinking, and about the leader transforming self to leaders for transformation. In this vein, we organize the chapters into theories or philosophies and worldviews, followed by practices or applications of transformation.

We begin the first set of chapters, Theory and Philosophy for Transformation, with a poem by Mark Nepo, one of five Nepo poems or brief meditations chosen for this volume. It is apropos that we begin a section of theory and philosophy with a reflective piece titled "The Practice before the Practice," since one has to think about his or her philosophy, worldview, values, and beliefs before leading for transformation. Next, Gilda Warden uses the philosophy of Hannah Arendt and the concept of natality to focus on leadership for transformation as innovative and full of potentiality. About beginnings, natality is a viable orientation for influencing change, according to Warden, who connects and explains natality with quantum leadership theory, healthy and toxic leadership, and renewal. A modern rethink of Taoist philosophy is discussed by Caroline Fu and Richard Bergeon, who describe how the Tao philosophy as a concept enables rethinking leadership and offers a process for assessing and guiding transformation. Because during a transformation, complexity and moments of aberration often cause digressions from intended outcomes, Fu and Bergeon offer the Tao Model as useful in navigating the perplexity. They present components of the Tao Model and translate those components to leadership for transformation. We transition from the Tao to fractals, as Tim Harle continues

the theme of tensions and contradictions between individual and corporate, large and small, and local and global within a transformation process as he explores a framework that enables leaders to approach possible dualities using the concept of fractals from complexity theory. Harle holds, as does Warden, that the Newtonian worldview is not always the most appropriate model for leadership for transformation; he suggests that self-organization and emergence concepts of fractal leadership offer several implications for leadership practice.

A leader who has reflected upon philosophies and worldviews will begin to take action, and from the perspective of several authors, that action for transformation ought to be artistically grounded. We begin this section of the volume, *Transformation Through Artistry*, with a poem by Nepo, "Where No One Stays a Statue," and then continue philosophical grounding in the arts with lessons for leaders from improvisational theater. Because leaders are often creating, learning, and adapting as they go along, James Mohr holds that leaders ought to study improvisational theater to learn a deeper understanding of how to tap into one's creative, emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual cores to become better decision makers and more successful leaders during times of transformation. In his chapter, he shares six improvisational principles. Michael Jones, who provides a multi-artistic perspective, holds that in the future leaders will be remembered for their wisdom, empathy, presence, intuition, and artistry; thus, they need to be good artists who need to listen deeply to be attuned to the unheard melody emerging in the space between the musical notes. Jones discusses artistry from the perspective of the myths by which leaders live and suggests changing the light to develop a new set of guiding myths that he unfolds in his chapter. Leadership, continues Rick Warm, can be a developmental process about meaning and transcendence that is clearly a transformational journey. In his chapter, he explores the connection between the development of leaders and the hero's journey and argues that leadership requires personal

transformation that will ultimately allow “leadership for transformation,” a heroic journey that involves a quest for understanding and the search for meaning, a journey of change and transformation.

With the next set of chapters, *Transformation in Practice*, the focus turns from reflexivity to application. In these chapters, the authors discuss leadership knowing, the practice of learning the artistry of leadership for transformation, leadership research on transformational projects, or leading, that is, ways of practicing leadership for transformation. We begin the transition with a Nepo piece, “Wu Feng,” a story about making choices. Jay Cone also talks about the importance of making choices: one can practice leadership either as a finite game for the purpose of winning or an infinite game played for the purpose of continuing the play. In his chapter, Cone discusses the different approaches, when, and how those approaches would or could be applied. He notes, for example, the worldview of a finite performer versus an infinite performer and makes some very insightful conclusions. From a research focus in the arts, Skye Burn reports on *The Flow Project*, wherein artists are engaged in a deep inquiry to identify principles of art and artistic practices common to the artistic experience across media. In addition to the mission of the project, to give leaders access to knowledge and experience that artists possess and give artists recognition for the value of their knowledge and experience, Burn discusses the process of this research project and findings, that is, what art can offer leadership.

From scholars observing artists in the studio as classroom, we shift to the academic classroom with Laura Harrison, who draws from her teaching experiences to propose a framework to teach leadership for transformation. She notes that students seemed to grasp the concepts more quickly in organizational theory and seemed to find leadership theory harder to understand at the practical level. Harrison proposes using critical pedagogical constructs to help with student understanding: ideology, hegemony, master narrative, and counter-narrative to study systemic power

and transformational challenges in balancing social justice, political savvy, and self-preservation. From individual classrooms to classrooms within a program, Michael Poutiatine and Dennis Connors suggest that programs to develop school leaders must connect transformative learning theories with leadership practice. These authors discuss the theoretical framework used to teach leadership skills for effective and moral leadership and the will required for effective and socially just leadership, and they apply that theoretical base to a practiced model for preparing school leaders who live and practice social justice. They include a “virtual school” case simulation with debriefing and case analysis discussions.

Mark Nepo builds a bridge to the next section, *Leadership for Transformation*, with “The Work of the Worm,” as we shift from studio and classroom applications of leadership for transformation to research in other arenas. John Blenkinsopp presents a case study of leadership that sought to tackle the problem of homelessness. He shows leadership for transformation, in part, through numerous acts of influence as he examines how leaders worked beyond organizational boundaries, building bridges with other stakeholders to effectively transform the lives of a particular section of society. Blenkinsopp found homelessness to be a multidimensional problem that requires an integration of public, private, and voluntary sectors on national, regional, and local levels.

As leaders communicate and influence others within the real world of the homeless, they must also communicate in the virtual world. Charles Salter, Anne Berre, Charles Torti, Mark Green, and Phyllis Duncan collaborated on a study to test the theoretical proposition that in a virtual environment there is a relationship between followers’ personalities and their effects on followers’ assessments of leadership behavioral style based on the word usage of the leader. They found that language is highly predictive of ratings of how transformational a leader is perceived to be, even when using virtual communication.

From a global perspective, Karen Lokkesmoe reports findings from a study on leadership in Brazil, India, and Nigeria, more specifically the perspectives and strategies that focus on developing countries and on public and nonprofit sectors. After discussing her findings from global leadership data gathered from a variety of grounded theory methods, Lokkesmoe presents an integrated model of global leadership development that consists of four competency domains global leaders must draw upon and an array of contextual factors that influence the conceptualizations and enactment of effective global leadership practice. Exploring leadership for transformation, Tom Beech, Juana Bordas, Prasad Kaipa, and Eliane Ubalijoro participated on a keynote panel at the 2009 ILA Global Conference in Prague, Czech Republic. The chapter in this volume is a written summary of the panel discussion moderated by Beech, who first introduced video segments featuring five world leaders, activists, and scholars. The panelists' discussion occurred within the context of the topics raised by the video clips and biographical work of the world leaders; topics included youthful idealism, indigenous people, Darfur, wisdom of the heart, and compassion. The goal of the session was to explore leadership for transformation from a range of perspectives, raise questions, stimulate conference participants' imaginations, and start conversations that would spill over into the rest of the conference and beyond. We end this volume of *Building Leadership Bridges* with a final reflection by Mark Nepo, "The Friendship of Tung-Shan and Yün-Yen," and with the hope that all readers of this volume of chapters about leadership for transformation find their truth.

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ILA director of membership services, who gently facilitated but strongly supported the process from individually submitted manuscripts to one cohesive volume of essays, and for Joanne Ferguson, a copy editor whose diligence helps transform all our efforts. Both Debra and Joanne make us all look good! Additionally, we thank members from the stewardship team who guided the “leadership for transformation” project over three years: Mark Nepo, Deborah Higgins, and Megan Scribner from the Fetzer Institute; Carol Pearson, Judy Brown, and Michael Jones from the Burns Academy of Leadership; and Cynthia Cherrey and Shelly Wilsey, respectively ILA’s president and director. From the oft-quoted English poet Alexander Pope we sum our thoughts as editors: “The way of the Creative works through change and transformation, so that each thing receives its true nature and destiny and comes into permanent accord with the Great Harmony: this is what furthers and what perseveres” as we say a final thank you to the ILA Board of Directors for their continuing support and encouragement of our attempts to evolve in ways we hope will better serve all who study, practice, teach, and care about leadership in the world.

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