

Jewel Aleshire

DC Leadership Tour

March 26, 2016

### Leadership Reflection

While exploring the city with a history of powerful leadership, Washington DC, we were reminded to consider the various facets of leadership, such as who rises to the role of a leader and



what constitutes leadership. One aspect of leadership that I felt drawn to was the question: who qualifies as worthy to be memorialized in a public space? It is impossible to walk through the streets of Washington DC and overlook the grandeur of towering monuments like the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington monument. Why were these presidents specifically, Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, memorialized in such a majestic manner?

Both Abraham Lincoln and George Washington were extremely committed to practicing a particular type of leadership, servant leadership. Being a

servant leader means first acting as a servant and then, secondly, acting as a leader. A servant leader serves their people by putting the needs of others before their own; a servant leader has a passion to help others. Finally, a servant leader is extremely goal-oriented and cautiously maintains modesty.

For example, as the 16<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln continuously strove to serve the needs of the country before taking care of his own needs. He was motivated to become the president in order to serve the people of the United States, the most notable example being the actions he took in regard to the hotly contended issue of slavery. He was opposed to the ideas his fellow presidential candidate, Stephen Douglas, who favored popular sovereignty, which would essentially break up the nation into many parts. Throughout the Civil War, he continually strove to make compromises that would unify the country, because unification was one of the prime ways he could serve his fellow countrymen. This sense of unity and servitude is conveyed in his Gettysburg Address, delivered after the bloody Gettysburg massacre, in which he describes the government as a “government of the people, by the people” and “for the people”.

Further back in history, George Washington was the first president of the United States and one of the first figures in American history to exemplify servant leadership. Before the presidency, he served his country as a general in the French-Indian Wars and as the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolution. He was even known for aiding in the construction of forts during the Revolutionary War, rather than watching the soldiers complete the work like many other commanders might have done. The fact that George Washington was able to serve alongside his countrymen, as well as lead his countrymen through such trying times, especially leading the country through the revolution, and through a brand new form of

government that had never been tested before, shows his dedication to being both a servant and a leader.

These brilliant men who guided the country using servant leadership were rewarded with these monuments because it was the way the American people could give back, and essentially serve the brave men that had served this country so many years ago. It is important for the country as a whole to look back in remembrance to these selfless leaders that strove for unity and equality,



and these monuments are an excellent reminder of the men who served our country, both as a servant and as a leader simultaneously. Future generations can learn about the enormous impact these men had when they visit these monuments, for they also hold an enormous educational impact on those who have already learned or are currently learning about these leaders. As inscribed on the wall at the Lincoln memorial, these monuments are an elaborate way to make sure these leaders have been “enshrined forever”, both inside of the glory of the monument, and within our hearts.

Mallory Miner

Professor Blanco-Cerda

Washington D.C. Leadership Tour

26 March 2016

### Critically Thinking About Leadership: Reflection Paper

John Quincy Adams once said, “If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more and become more, you are a leader.” Great leaders are often noted for their empathy, consistency, honesty, direction, communication, flexibility, conviction and drive. The Leadership Tour in Washington D.C. opened up many opportunities for growth in my role as a leader. Although there were many bumps in the road, such as miscommunication, the bumps taught me better ways of showing leadership.

Leadership began the morning the group arrived at the airport. By being the first one at the airport, I felt responsible for helping others, via cell phones, find their way to the ticketing checkpoint. It became difficult to help my fellow classmates find their way when I wasn't exactly sure where they were located at that moment. In future situations, it would have been best if I had asked an employee of the airport to help me direct my classmates to the proper location. While going through security, I got to further express leadership by helping direct a classmate on how security works, as this was their first time flying on an airplane. Leadership was already happening and the tour hadn't even started yet.

Arriving in Washington D.C. was extremely exciting and I couldn't wait to get out and explore what it had to offer. The tour began with free time, meaning that our group could go out

and explore, take pictures and videos. There was immediate leadership shown by Haley, my group member, when she pulled up directions to the Martin Luther King Statue and directed us all there. Her leadership made me want to do more as a group member and further helped me by showing me that I could also show the characteristics of a leader in our group. Once we arrived to the Martin Luther King Statue, I was absolutely stunned. The memorial was large and caught



the eyes of all the people that were there. My group

began discussing his leadership through reading

*Letter From Birmingham Jail* by Martin Luther

King, Jr. This letter by Martin Luther King, Jr.

accuses the eight ministers of being cowards and

not being Men of God. Although being persecuted

and imprisoned, Martin Luther King, Jr. maintains

a formal, calm and collect manner throughout his

entire letter indicating outstanding leadership.

Martin Luther King, Jr. discusses the topic of just

and unjust laws. To him, an unjust law is a code

that a majority inflicts upon a minority that does

not bind on itself and a just law is a code that a

majority makes a minority follow, and that it's willing to follow itself. Throughout the entire

letter, Martin Luther King, Jr. shows immense leadership qualities, such as honesty and

conviction, that made me want to become a better leader during my time at Washington D.C..

I decided to put my new form of leadership into action when the group decided to take a bus ride to Georgetown. It became apparent that finding a bus was going to be more difficult than any of us thought it was going to be. There was a limited amount of bus stops that obtained a bus that went directly to Georgetown. In order to find the correct bus stop, I knew that the group was going to have to work together, in a proper manner, in order to accomplish our goal of finding the bus stop. About ten minutes in, I noticed that our group was falling apart due to arguments, miscommunication and no proper leadership. As tensions grew larger, Chris and I asked for everyone to group up and calm down so that we could make a concise decision that would positively benefit us in finding the bus stop. Although some people did not want to listen to what Chris and I had to say, Chris and I knew that if we didn't all get on the same page, it would be impossible for us to make it to Georgetown and could possibly result in cutting the leadership tour short and having to go back to Texas. After several discussions, the group finally got on the same page through positive communication and leadership shown by Chris and I, and we found the bus stop to Georgetown. I enjoyed using some of the same leadership qualities as Martin Luther King, Jr. to help my group accomplish the goal of finding a bus to Georgetown.



The Leadership Tour in Washington D.C. taught me many new characteristics of leadership.

Through the required readings, such as *Letter From Birmingham Jail*, The Declaration of Independence and *The Gettysburg Address*, discussions and observations, I learned many new characteristics of leadership such as flexibility, combination and direction. Through learning this new form of leadership, I was able to help direct my group to locations and further understand the types of leadership shown from the different memorials and monuments. The Leadership Tour in Washington D.C. opened up many opportunities for growth in my role as a leader.

Although there were many bumps in the road, such as miscommunication, the bumps taught me better ways of showing leadership.

Manav Lamichhane

March 17 2015

DC Tour

### Reflection Paper

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader”- John Quincy Adams

Times have changed greatly. We have seen a substantial progress in human civilization, from social liberties to lifestyle, technology and much more. The list can go on, however, one thing that has never ceased is the need for leadership. From Plato's philosopher king to King John's Magna Carta to Declaration of the rights of Man and of the Citizen or Declaration of Independence, all of them revolved around leadership. An omnipresent question perplexes generation after generation: what is leadership and how can one become a better leader?

Leadership is not about a position or a title, it is action, vision and examples. Leaders are those who inspire others to be their best and to achieve a common dream, are willing to say the unsayable, and make the decision that others won't. Washington DC can certainly be called the leadership capital of United States if not the world. It not only abodes the crucial decision-making bodies like Congress and the White House that affects every single person in this nation, but also a huge portion of the American history and its foundation. Washington DC serves as a reminisce for the leaders that served this great nation, the people's future, and strived for changes that have shaped our world the way it is today. Memorials and statues dedicated to leaders like Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Martin Luther King, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and much more involved is a

testament to the above statement. Upon arrival in DC, the eagerness and excitement were running high, as it was a chance for us to connect all the lessons we learned through our leadership studies to see it in action or at least face to face.

The grandeur Washington monument seems to aptly symbolize George Washington's leadership for the country. One of the essential founding father, a great general and first president, set up a standard of presidency and leadership that was unprecedented. His resignation as the president and the commander in chief after a two-year term when congress longed for him to stay as the head, exemplifies his leadership. In a time where a threat of oligarchy or tyranny was at an all time high, his resignation put back the faith in the infant American democracy. His actions taught me a memorable lesson that one must stand their ground and give others a chance. This lesson taught about making decisions that are for greater good, and especially the ones that no one is willing to make. The nobility, distinction, and honor that radiates from the monuments dedicated to Thomas Jefferson, Dr. King, Abraham Lincoln, Vietnam and WWII Veterans simply exhilarated and motivated me. Reading the Birmingham Letter, the Gettysburg Address and Declaration of Independence and seeing such monuments simultaneously, magnified the effect and importance of such readings.

One thing that kept on playing in my head while seeing such monuments is the question that, what really should a leader represent or stand for that a monument or a statue to be dedicated in their honor. There were fifty-six men who played a crucial role in the Declaration of Independence including John Quincy Adams whose oratory played a crucial role in convincing delegates to sign the declaration. There were other men who played a crucial role during the civil rights movements. Why did Malcolm X, also a

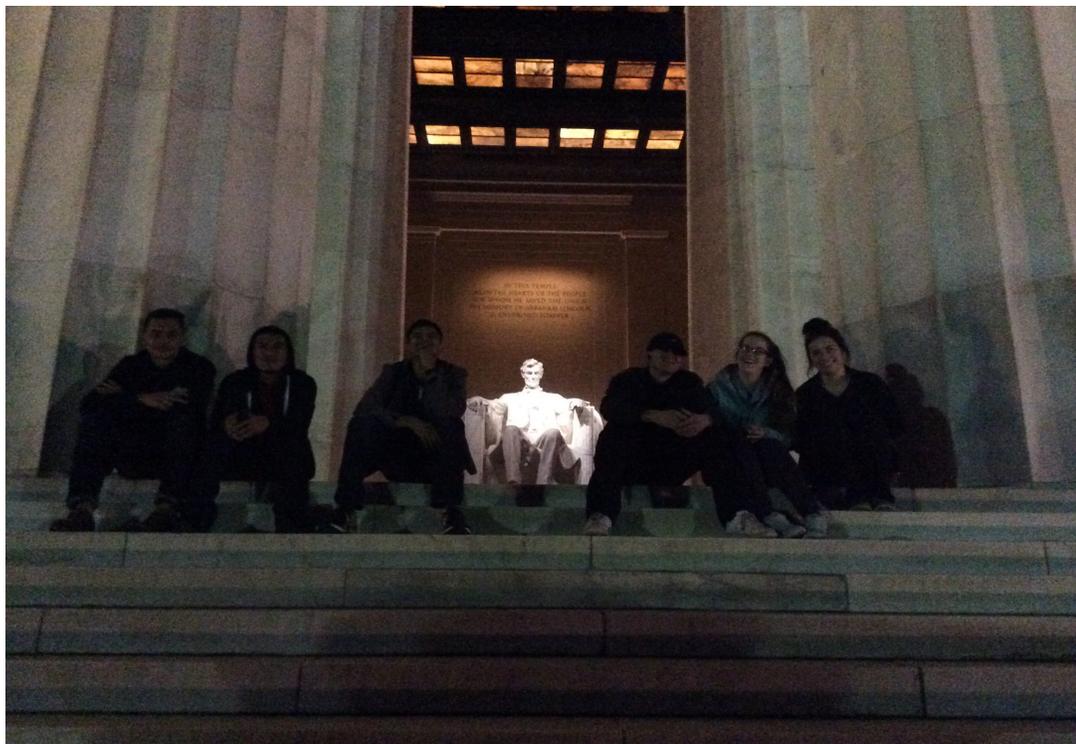
famous African American leader advocating a similar liberation for African American not deserve a statue at the heart of the capital like Dr. King? What set these men apart?

I am proud and intrigued by the lessons that I have learned through this trip. The trip aim was to learn the lesson from the great charismatic leaders of America from Washington to Lincoln, from Luther king to Obama and the great history of United States. In the presence of such site of amazing grace and historical importance, I learned a lesson that played a crucial part in how I should shape myself into a better human being and a better leader.

However, amidst unexpected and unforeseen events my moral philosophy and my leadership skills were shaped during my time in DC. Although the visit to the holocaust museum was planned, an unexpected interview with a holocaust survivor of the WWII proved to be the highlight of my trip. Fanny Aizenberg, a gentle hearted woman with an amazing personality even at 99 years of age, survived the gruesome Nazi brutality during WWII. Hearing her life story and the suffering was chilling yet motivating. But her actions, the leadership that she along with her inmates and many others including the church that safeguarded many Jewish kids, illustrated was simply inspiring. When Germany invaded Belgium where fanny resided at the time, she had to make an agonizing and harrowing choice of hiding her 3-year old daughter Josiane, with a strong possibility of never seeing her daughter again. Fanny herself had to go into hiding and was also part of Belgian resistance movement. She was not given the information about where Josiane would be hidden. The resilience and hope one can show, to keep on going through such a traumatizing experience is amazing. The hopefulness that she had, that one day she would again get a chance to see her husband and her daughter, can be seen as

a fool's paradise at the time. Nonetheless, she never lost that glimmer of hope. In her interview, she mentions that it was her hope that she would be reunited with her daughter that kept her going through the atrocities of German including the death march. However her simple yet staunch message, “ We may not be able to love another, but we can surely respect each other, ” reminded me an important value that we all must possess in all of our lives. In the leadership roles that we all hope to be in, we are going to face people with passionate differences and opinions like Abraham Lincoln or Dr. King did. They were not always loved, but they were surely respected. This can be seen in the letter from Birmingham jail by Dr. King with his respectful yet strong message. There were also lessons learned from my peers, our conflicts, time together as a unit, and most importantly as a team that shaped me to be better and a functional leader.

This trip certainly emboldened my moral philosophy of humility and respect. It taught me lessons that I can use in my day-to-day life as to become a better leader. There were some questions that were unanswered like what must a leader do to be in public memory? Or where does leadership start? Nevertheless, it was a trip that made me reflect upon my practices and the lessons that we all need to be learning [constantly] so to be better leaders, and most importantly better human beings.



Haley Berry

Professor Blanco-Cerda

D.C. Leadership Trip

March 26, 2016

### Reflection Paper

Some people may think that leadership is an easy thing to understand, I know that I did. After class discussions and readings I realized that is not true; though I do feel that after this trip I have a better understanding of the term leadership. There is not only one right way to be a leader, or one form of leadership. You can find leadership in almost anything, but noticing what makes it good leadership is the tricky part. One example of poor leadership that I witnessed in D.C. was when the train station closed down for a whole day. They closed down because there were issues on the train that needed to be repaired but Congress was angry because they shouldn't have had to shut down at all. The train company gets enough money to maintain the train so that it doesn't have any unexpected problems, so Congress was wondering where the money was really going. I am going to talk about the memorials I got to visit and why those people were good enough leaders to have their own memorial.

Thomas Jefferson, a very important leader in our history, has his own memorial in Washington, D.C. National Mall. His memorial is a big building with large white pillars holding up and a statue of him is in the middle. Jefferson was one of the Founding Fathers, a supporter of democracy, one of the Declaration of Independence authors, and the third President of the United States. But what made him a good leader, made

him qualify to have his own memorial building? Jefferson wrote in a letter in 1800, "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." After that he became President in 1801, that statement shows that he was for the people. He did not believe in any form of cruel or dominating government, and that people are entitled to their freedom. Even before that he proved that he supported the voice of people by being a spokesman for democracy and also the work he contributed to the Declaration of Independence.

Another memorial that stood out to me is the Lincoln Memorial; Lincoln Memorial is located right at the end of the reflection pond, on the opposite side of the Washington Monument. There are many stairs that you have to climb to get up there, which makes the memorial seem that is above everything else around it. Lincoln was our sixteenth President, and he made huge impacts on the United States during his presidency by writing the Gettysburg Address in honor of those who sacrificed their lives during the Civil War. Also he issued the Emancipation Proclamation freeing all slaves. Lincoln was a leader that fought for others, by freeing slaves he showed his value in equality for everyone.

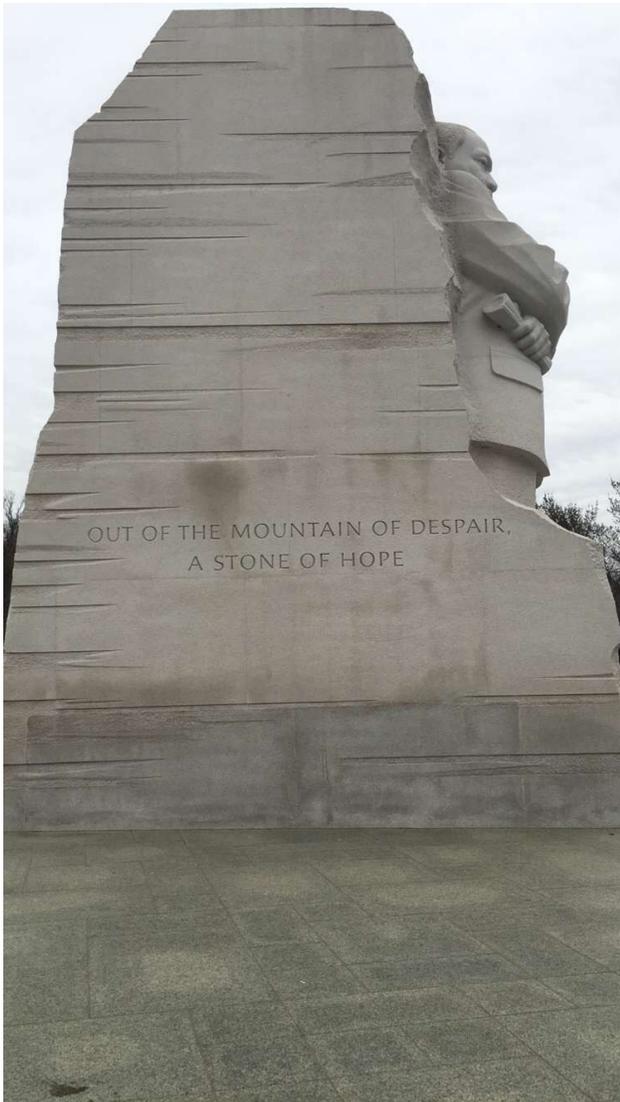
In Lincoln's Gettysburg Address he shows that he believes we should always be fighting to become better, that there is always something for us to still be dedicated to finishing. "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced." Though he is referring to those who fought in the Civil War, I believe this still applies now because there are always men and women who are risking their lives for a cause that they might not be able to see to the ending. It is up to us "the living" to complete what they have started.

Lincoln as a leader understood that there is always more things to accomplish and finish in our nation.

The last memorial that interested me was the Martin Luther King Memorial. It wasn't like the other two I have listed, it didn't have all these stairs leading up to it or any huge pillars holding it up. It was two stone walls with an opening in the middle, a little more forward was this huge stone that had the figure of Mr. King Jr. coming out of it and he was facing the water. Him coming out of the stone made it seem almost like the memorial wasn't finished, but if you think about it MLK's mission wasn't finished. MLK had a big picture he wanted to accomplish, and he was working hard to accomplish it but he was killed before he could see his dream come true. He was big on nonviolent demonstrations and protests. One example of how MLK worked to accomplish goals is his Letter from Birmingham Jail. In his letter he brings up a public concern and he does not sugar coat it at all, because one thing about leadership is you have to be able to say what others can't or don't want to hear.

As he points out where all the cruelty and racism is happening he uses repetition. He takes one example of racism and says it in many different ways to get his point across. As well, to catch the attention of others he uses great formality and wording, "There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice....I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience." In this he basically says how could you not see why men are upset and resisting the law when they are being treated so horribly.

The one thing that stands out the most in MLK's letter is that he doesn't just point out the issues and leave it at that, he gives solutions. A good leader always has a plan before they bring forward an issue.



## Work Cited

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King Jr, Martin Luther. "Letter From Birmingham Jail"

Nora Sommerville

Professor Blanco-Cerda

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### Leadership Tour Reflection

Before going on our trip to Washington D.C, my views on leadership were fairly limited. I knew about important leaders in history such as all of the U.S. presidents, leaders in society, and then leaders in my personal life, for example, my amazing mom. I always thought of leadership as represented by one main person telling everyone else what to do. I took this tour so that I could broaden those views and that's just exactly what I did. As a result of personal experiences and visiting specific monuments of leaders, and walking through the halls of our famous government buildings, throughout this trip, I learned about necessary leadership qualities, and also that sometimes you have to fail as a leader first in order to succeed.

Once we arrived in D.C, our adventure began. The first two days were slightly rocky for everyone. We were in a new place (which was exactly the opposite of a Texas town), and some of us have never traveled before, so we were forced to cooperate with one another while also all trying to be individual leaders. To be a good leader, one must communicate effectively and negotiate with others. For the most part, all students had differing opinions on what to do and how to do it. For example, we had to decide whether we were going to walk to a monument or take the train. We had to communicate with each other and also Professors B.C and Thompson about the places that we strived to visit, and how we were going to get there. In Texas, everyone generally relies on his or

her own cars. But in D.C., we had to get used to either walking over ten miles a day, or struggling to find a bus or train while in the city. To be honest, this caused many arguments among the Cornerstone students. Some wanted to walk, while others didn't. Some didn't want to go to the monuments or memorials that everyone else wanted to go to. This is where negotiation comes in. All of us were forced to talk with one another and make plans as to where everyone was going, so everyone was happy, which is very hard to do. I think some individuals became frustrated just because we were in a new environment trying to do something most of us had never done before. However, after the second day, everyone finally got into the gist of the busy city and learned to work together. We all realized that leadership just isn't about one individual person delegating rules and plans. It's also about working together, communicating, and bonding as a group. We were able to compromise and make plans about where we would go each day, making sure no one was left out.

Another good leadership quality is, in fact, bravery. At multiple times, Haley would step up to the plate when necessary and call the bus company to receive times or Elier and Wade would ask other bus drivers which bus we needed to get on in order to make it to our destination, without having the fear of looking lost or like a "dumb tourist." Sometimes in leadership it is okay to take charge, but it doesn't have to be constantly or done spitefully. A further act of bravery in leadership was taken by Congress. While we were there, the metro system did not work very well. The schedule was confusing and unorganized, and the subway station looked completely dead. One train actually caught on fire and broke down, causing the train system to shut down completely. This was a huge inconvenience to everyone in Washington D.C, considering

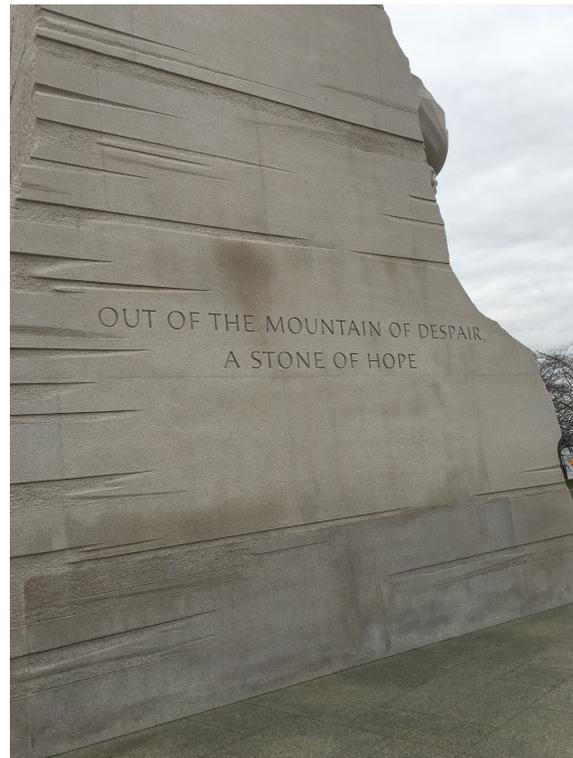
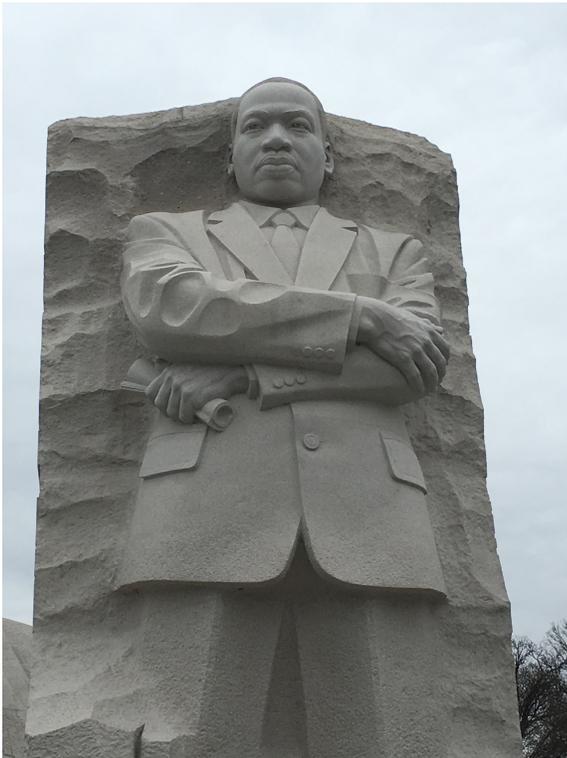
the trains are a main source of transportation for most people going to work into the city every day. Plenty of financial support has been given to the Metro station to keep the trains intact, but it is evident that they were not managed well. When they shut down for a sudden, massive inspection, Congress chewed out the metro company, and sure enough the trains were up and running right away on Thursday morning, as promised. Sometimes it is obligatory to be strict in order to receive results, but as a leader, one must decide the times to be demanding and the times to be more lenient.

Many of us, including myself, also had to act as mediators at times so feelings between fellow students would not get hurt. I believe another great leadership quality I learned through experiences among classmates, but also by visiting the MLK Memorial, is using the correct word choices and tone. While visiting this beautiful memorial, I read *The Letter from Birmingham Jail* written by Martin Luther King Jr. In this writing, MLK Jr., who was in Birmingham Jail at the time, formally replies to eight clergymen. He basically calls them out for being cowards, but does so in a graceful, thorough way. MLK displays true leadership through the respect he imparts to his readers within his writing. He says the unsayable, which is another good leadership quality. One can infer from the context that MLK is angry with the clergymen, but contrastingly, he gets his point across without an ounce of hostility. Martin Luther King Jr. addresses the racism and violence that takes place during this time period, and talks hopeful of achieving peace and brotherhood. Reading this letter helped me realize that leadership roles can be done in calm, yet firm, ways. If you give respect, you will receive respect.

Another piece of writing that altered my thoughts on leadership is the Constitution. I read the draft and final Constitution before the trip, but was also able to

see the original Constitution at the National Archives Museum. Seeing all of the Amendments added to the Constitution, in their original drafts, helped me realize that leadership is not always going to be perfect. It takes time, and failure is sometimes necessary for one to learn from their mistakes in order to gain great leadership qualities.

I learned a lot on this trip. I learned of the culture and how people live in D.C, I learned more about my classmates, and I also learned about leadership. Throughout this tour I absorbed leadership qualities through the monuments and buildings I toured, and also through personal experiences with others on this trip. I now know more about leadership and can apply my findings into my daily life whether it be as a toddler daycare teacher or an honors student.





Cristian Villegas

Dr. Blanco-Cerda, Professor. Mina Thompson

Study Abroad D.C. Leadership Reflection

26 March 2016

*Ducto-Principium: A Reflection Upon Leadership*

What makes a leader? We have definitions, we have understanding, and now we have experience, but as some of my colleagues have noted, leadership is a *complicated* thing. Dr. Ron Jason said that, “You need to inspire others!” Professor Hollinger shouted that, “You need to have a vision for the future.” And as Ms. Mallory Miner noted, “*flexibility...*” But there’s something else, I can feel it. I will not deny that I’ve had some experience leading others, as well as following, but in all my years I’ve never truly understood it. This trip was an opportunity for me to expand my experiences and relationships to those I study side-by-side with, but I could never have imagined the importance this endeavor would bring upon myself. As said in an earlier draft of this reflection, “Very seldom in a person’s life do ventures such as these pervade so deeply into the mind and soul of a living being, as to mark them forever.” But how does this connect to what makes a leader? I think it is the pinnacle of such discussion, to which I will clarify as best I can throughout this reflection.

So what makes a leader? I’ve already addressed the importance of vision, the power to inspire, and the mindset to be flexible, and there are so many more elements, but these elements ultimately tie into a particular style of leadership, and that is not what I wish to delve into. What I want to address, and explain, is what at the **core** makes a leader. I did not know that answer before we set sail into the clouds for the city of pride and promises. All I knew was what I’d done and learned from my masters and my books. But I cannot go about beating this dead horse any longer, so without pietism or poetics I will simply say what seems to be the case; at the core

of leadership is the will for someone to lead him or herself into action, and to stand steadfast to his or her action despite various forms of opposition. **This**, is what makes a leader. You see, leadership is not a commodity, nor is it a product to be sold to the highest bidder. Leadership can be taught, and leadership can be learned, but ultimately it is something I now believe is only for the few to bear as true as the wind and the rain. There are good leaders, and there are bad leaders, but we do not fully know what makes one leader good and the other bad. How can we? By using previous events as examples? It's a coin, a strict vision can be one leader's downfall, and another's victory. So at the core of leadership is the will to begin it all! To lead yourself into action, and in that action maybe or maybe not become a leader of others. I say this because it is the truth, and it is self-evident in everything we do. Before Lincoln was a leader of men and the Union, he led himself through his education, through his military career, and through his political youth. Others guided him of course, and others taught him, but it was Abraham Lincoln's will to learn, and his action in learning that led him to the top. Anyone can be pushed and pleaded to act, anyone can be inspired or intrigued to do, but it will always be **nothing** unless the person him or herself decides to act, and decides to do. The example I will use is what brought me to this revelation; left behind within the Library of Congress I had two options, to leave the building and find those who'd left me, or stay and seek out that which I'd aimed to help them enter. Both choices would be an act of self-leadership, but only one would mean something, and I chose, and I chose wisely. Though persistence, luck, and a humor in the willingness to take a risk, I saw more than I could have imagined, and in the holiest of moments I touched and read a book so bright that I will love it forever. It was in leaving that building **alone**, but accomplished, that I first began to reflect and realize where leadership really begins. You don't need to reserve a right to enter the library, you just need to act, and in learning that by acting alone, I now bore the

knowledge to lead others within and without. Being left behind hurt, but that loss was the greatest gift I could have been given!

This leads to the second portion of my revelation; leadership is the will to stand steadfast to your action, despite whatever forms of opposition may challenge you! **This** does not imply being inflexible, nor does this imply being cruel or rigid to a certain vision or objective. What this means, is doing what you know and feel and believe is right, even if the losses seem dire, or the pains absurd. Steve Jobs stood steadfast to his actions, and although he was removed from Apple, he grew, he learned, and he became a legend that only years later would save the very company that'd abandoned him to the fray! Leadership is a process, it is not immediate, and no title or position will ever **justify** real leaders. Steve Jobs lost his title, but he did not lose himself, and that is what made him a leader, even if he had no one following him. SELF-LEADERSHIP. Now how does this tie into standing by your actions? Simple, you stand by what you've done, and you deal with the consequences. When I was alone in that library, half-way into my journey I began to doubt, and not only doubt but fear as well. I feared if I was ascertained, my credibility would be ruined; I would have had to fully pay for my trip, as well as hold a record for intrusion. I doubted my abilities to get into the sacred chamber, and being alone I started to recall the **mandatory requirement** to always be with a *buddy* [the buddy-system]. These subjects of damnation began to cloud my judgement and make me weak, but a rational mind must always prevail! I paused in the tunnels, I looked within myself, and I whispered one sentence... "Doubt leads to failure." In that moment, the moment that would conceive my revelation, I chose to stand steadfast to my action, **EVEN** if it bore the risks my fellow team members would never dare take; **EVEN** if it bore the fears my colleagues would not wish to embrace. I felt alive, I felt like I'd changed, and as I picked up that book on Morals and Ethics in that chamber of only seven other souls, I felt like a leader! Not just someone with experience, or someone with a title,

or even someone with a vision, but like a real leader! A leader who has no followers, yet, and knows his or her fate is undefined and beckoning! As I walked out of that building, the only evidence of my actions was an ID I'd been granted, and the feeling of change I'd acquired. But it did not matter if no one believed me and my journey, for all that matters to a leader is if they get the job done.

So what is leadership? What makes a leader? I do not know. How could I? I have so much to learn, and so much to see and do and taste and become! But now I know where it begins... It begins with you! It begins with your willingness to act! Your willingness to do! Your willingness to take those risks, make those enemies, challenge those *acclaimed* leaders, and stand steadfast! Not always will our actions prevail, and not always will our ambitions be just, or justified, but this is life we're talking about. How often is everything just or justified? So yes, there is much to learn if one wishes to make it to the top as among the best of the world's leaders, but at the heart, at the core is you, and your willingness to stick to your guns. For me, personally, this does not imply naivety, or rigidness, it simply means I am willing, that I will commit to doing something I feel and believe and know is right in my own mind. Mark Zuckerberg is a billion-dollar leader, but before he was that leader, he had to be a leader of himself... Even if it meant getting into some trouble with Harvard a couple of times.

*Photo: Teepee & Northern Lights – By Kevin Schafer*

Image taken inside the Museum of Natural History – “The Revelation from Within...”



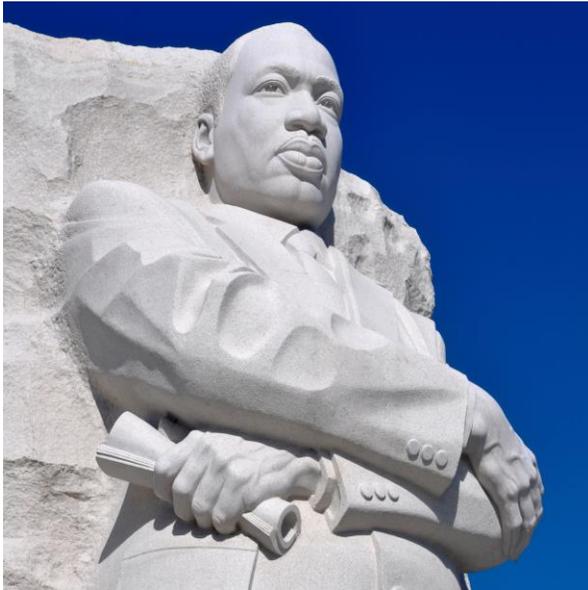
**Washington D.C. Leadership Reflective Essay**

**Elier Gonzalez**

**Cornerstone Honors Program**

**March 24, 2016**

Washington D.C. Reflective Essay



“The only thing to fear is fear itself”-FDR.

This world is a cold one, full of inequality and injustice, but why? Where does all this hostility come from? There are many theories that suggest and claim to answer that question, but non-truly do. There is always something that is left in the mist, left hidden in the shadows, but of course never forgotten. To start a fire all it takes is a

spark, and that small spark is capable of igniting a full forest on fire, causing every critter to crawl out from within the shadows. It is the same thing with humans. Throughout history, many men and women have taken the first step forward in attempt to come out of their shells to promote the things for what they believe is right. To walk out of the darkness in attempt to give hope to those unfortunate soles, knowing that there is no clear victory at the end of the path, requires a man to be confident, committed, determined, creative, insightful, intuitive, approachable, and most importantly inspiring to keep the dream alive.

The world is a dangerous beauty and in some instances it might require the use of force to tame the beasts that roam and haunt those unfortunate individuals, but in most cases violence is never the true answer. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) lived in a time period where blacks and whites were separated, where blacks were treated as second-class citizens, and ultimately treated as the inferior race. But did MLK respond in a violent way to make the aggressors visualize what

they were doing to his people? MLK insisted and encouraged the people he had given hope to not fall in temptation and not fight with their fists because that would only worsen the situation. MLK was not the first man to get up and speak up for his rights, especially in the peaceful manner in which he conducted the situation. MLK was just another unique sole that comes once in a blue moon. MLK followed the footsteps of the pioneers who came before him, like those of Gandhi. Gandhi born in India lived in similar times full of racism and discrimination by the superior white race. Despite all those thorns in his back, he urged the suppressed people to hold back on their actions and allow for the peaceful resistance to do the talking. Gandhi lime every human being underwent several trials because not always the first one is sufficient. Gandhi did not give up after his first peaceful protest, instead, he kept coming back and each time the movement and hope for equality grew stronger.

“Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, it must be demanded by the oppressed,” as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. mentions in his letters from Birmingham jail. MLK understood that the oppressor wouldn’t simply stop with the racism, therefore, he had to somehow gain the attention of the nation to expose the cruelty African Americans were going through. MLK was able to successfully gain that attention through peaceful protests. But why peaceful, if the African Americans were treated basically as animals? Well MLK also understood a key philosophy that was thought by the philosopher Thomas Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas promoted the idea that we cannot expect people to see what we see by shouting at them to accept something that is completely foreign to them. Aquinas’s philosophy goes as follows: In order to make them see what we see, we have to put ourselves in their place in order to experience what they are going to go through in order to see what we see. We have to be generous enough to

guide them and hold their hand in order for them to grasp the message we see. If the message is forcefully communicated, it will be taken the wrong way, thus creating a bad reputation and causing them to not view what we view. To get them to see the same thing as we see, we have to treat them as a blind person who needs to get to the same destination as us in order to convey a positive message to the rest. Kindness is the key for a peaceful conversion. And that is the beauty of MLK. In his letters he urged his followers to show respect despite the hate, to be the better person and take a stance and prove the oppressor that they were equal in qualities.

MLK never envisioned to be portrayed as a hero in the future. He was doing everything he did not only because it affected him and his family but also a multitude of people as well. Who would've thought that years after his death, in this nation where his race was discriminated against, a statue was going to be built to honor his memory? A statue that is massive in size and also placed in the capital of the nation where many more memorials exist who have witnessed this great nation mature. At first sight, the massive figure displays a sign of power. A type of power that was not demanded but instead earned by all the small voices that looked up to him to deliver their message. MLK was the man who was able to take all the small voices who lived within the shadows and bring them together as one to make them major. His facial expression does not seem happy but instead looks serious. His arms are crossed over and his hands are portrayed with great detail, to perhaps show his fury and passion that he held for what he believed in. His left-hand holds a piece of paper, to convey his weapon of choice. A weapon that does not kill nor destroy but instead only allows for him to convey the true reality of this world, and that is his voice. He is facing the pond, a mass of water, and also towards the direction of Lincoln's

memorial. The statue remains serious because, despite change and some progress, the hate and discrimination still lays among us.

War is not the first choice, but when left with no other option it becomes our only hope. Abraham Lincoln was the 16<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, and while in office he witnessed one of America's top horrors, where blood was shed between brothers and sisters, and all simply because they had different views about the world. Millions of brothers and sisters died during his term, and during the Gettysburg Address, he proclaimed the civil war as a struggle for the preservation of the Union sundered by the secession crisis, with a new birth of freedom that would bring true equality to all of its citizens. Lincoln also declared the civil war as a struggle not just for the union, but also for the principle of human equality. A man to be under such pressure were whether the states become divided or all remain united as one lays on his hands, requires him to be at a whole other level of mankind. Lincoln's choices and opinions to make and pick were many, but he chose to give those a voice who previously lived chained and with no true free will, despite all the opposition. Lincoln picked those, not because others forced him but because that's what he believed was right. His courage and determination not only allowed the nation to remain united as one but also lead to the freedom of millions and opened the door for them to reach equality.

A temple-like structure is where the massive Lincoln statue sits in. To reach Lincoln, one must first go up several steps that seem eternal. Once above, at first glance, Lincoln looks like a god sitting on a throne. The statue faces the Washington monument and a body of water. Lincoln

just like MLK did not envision himself in a huge memorial. Lincoln did not do what he did because he was going to be remembered but because at the time he had the opportunity to set the nation towards the right path and end slavery.

It is the actions like those of Lincoln and MLK that deserve a memorial which can be appreciated. Structures not to portray them both as gods but instead to remember what they fought for. No statue or memorial is just built for the heck of it, the person must have had impacted a multitude of people and off course those actions might go unnoticeable, but years down the road people are going to stop and reflect on those actions and finally figure out their true importance. This world despite progress in our society still remains a long way from perfection. Nothing is perfect in this world and we cannot expect every human being to like each other, but like MLK preached, we must expect to at least respect each other.

Bibliography

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