



CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

UNDERSTANDING THROUGH THE AFRICAN AMERICAN - JEWISH EXPERIENCE

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STUDENTS TRANSFORMED ON SUMMER JOURNEY

On June 8, an airplane left Lambert Airport carrying the students of Cultural Leadership Class 3 bound for New York City. On July 4, a bus rolled into the parking lot of Temple Emanuel, bringing the students back home.

During the 27 days in between, our students met 67 speakers and visited 45 museums, historical sites, churches, synagogues, and other institutions. They saw the horrors of the Holocaust at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. They marvelled at the courage of civil rights activists in the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. They walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama and across Israeli soil at the Israeli embassy. They shook hands with former mayor of New York Ed Koch and with Congressman John Lewis of Georgia. They spoke with Ruth Messinger of the American Jewish World Service and attended Al Sharpton's National Action Network rally. They ate lunch with Marc Morial, President of the National Urban League, and with Jerry Mitchell, the reporter whose investigations



Class 3 students among statues of the Little Rock Nine

reopened the case of murdered civil rights activists Mickey Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman.

In the places where history was made, they spoke with the people who made it. These are towering icons and unsung foot soldiers, historical heroes and contemporary change agents, serious scholars and flamboyant personalities. Meeting these people and visiting these places was bound to be informative.

More than simply bumping into this experience, however, our students embraced it. Speaker after speaker told us what an amazing group of young men and women we have. Of course, they were respectful and attentive, but more impressive - *they were curious!* They asked questions: good questions, smart questions, insightful questions. They

talked about their experiences and hashed out differences. And, they decided they had to do something.

On the trip, the students laid the groundwork for several social action programs that they will continue to develop for the rest of the year, and beyond. (You can read brief summaries of these on page 4.) It was their reactions to this opportunity - their questions, their discussions, their thoughts, and their actions - that made the trip truly transformative.

For each of our students, somewhere in the 27 days of the journey - no one knows exactly where, or when, or how - something happened within them to ensure that the parents who hugged their children "Goodbye" in June would be hugging very different people "Hello" in July.

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Cultural Leadership
225 Linden Ave.
St. Louis MO 63105

T 314-725-3222
F 314-727-1122
programdirector@culturalleadership.com

www.culturalleadership.com

FROM THE PRESIDENT...

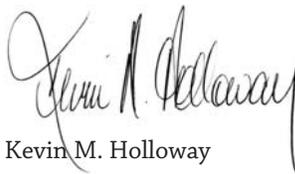
It is with great excitement that I have started my second year as President of the Cultural Leadership Board. One of my most rewarding experiences is to reflect on comments students make which validate the strength of our program. The following is one example, "Cultural Leadership has encouraged me to think about the things I say and listen critically to the things that others say. I have tried to correct my own and the thinking of my friends to be more socially accepting to all peoples."

Many of us would trade places with today's teenagers because of cooler toys, electronics, personal telephones, iPod's etc. However, with the numerous advancements in some areas, our culture continues to struggle with racial tolerance and the leaders who can bring about change. We can't wait to, or hope that someone else will, make a change or do something to make it better. So, my participation in Cultural Leadership is a responsible way to give back. I enjoy seeing the growth of class members as they share cultural experiences, build friendships, and fill in the blanks bridging from A to Z. I only regret that not everyone can get to the same place and make St. Louis a better place to live.

The next year will be another challenge similar to the last with more emphasis placed on a long-term strategic plan for the organization. In August, we started this process and will dedicate a major portion of our time for completion and implementation.

As always, I thank you for this opportunity and privilege to serve Cultural Leadership and look forward to your continued support of this organization.

Sincerely,



Kevin M. Holloway



Our Class 3 Students...

(from top left to bottom right)



Candice Bassett, Parkway North High School
TJ Brooks, North Technical High School
Princetta Brown, Ladue Horton Watkins High School
Cece Campbell, Nerinx Hall High School
Ola Coker, Parkway Central High School
Anna Dardick, Parkway Central High School
Richie Gallant, Whitfield School
Melissa Garcia, Incarnate Word Academy
Alyssa Hadzima, , Parkway West High School
LaParis Hawkins, Hazelwood East High School
Elliott Kleiman, Metro Academic & Classical High School
Ebony Moore, Pattonville High School
Tyjuan Morrow, Beaumont High School
Michael Naclerio, John Burroughs School
Jayce Reese, Whitfield School
Adam Rosen, Whitfield School
Cydney Ross, Villa Duchesne Oak Hill School



Cultural Leadership is a nonprofit youth leadership development organization that teaches high-school students to recognize and resolve critical issues facing society while building and using a diverse network of allies. Cultural Leadership begins by tackling the central issues of racism and discrimination in St. Louis while providing skills required for making any change in any area of society.

CLASS 1 & 2 STUDENTS HELP PEERS UNDERSTAND RACIAL ISSUES

By Jeremy Cropf, Class 2

Class 2 Graduation was over. My year of Cultural Leadership had ended and with it came the inevitable sadness of saying goodbye to one of the most amazing experiences of my life. I was afraid that we would begin to lose everything that we had gained the year we were together. I would go back to school and continue to face the day-to-day racism and segregation that exists at Ladue High School, around my friends, and basically everywhere around me. I didn't want to admit it but I was in Cultural Leadership withdrawal.

I would do my part in speaking out against acts of intolerance wherever I saw it, but as the days and weeks after graduation went by, I had to wonder if I would be able to truly make a difference. It was some time after graduation that Dominique Bullock, a fellow Class 2 graduate, and I sat down and discussed bringing what we had learned from Cultural Leadership to our school. Speaking with Dominique helped convince me that I wasn't alone in my

need to do something about the constant separation between white students and people of color at Ladue.

After speaking to a few of our teachers, we gained support for a student-led discussion about race and discrimination. Soon after, a date was set. Finally, we would get a chance to facilitate actual conversations between students of different races at our school. It wasn't something that happened often, so we couldn't blame the teachers for showing a little trepidation. But we had motivation and incentive on our side. In addition, we enlisted the help of fellow Cultural Leadership alumnus and Ladue senior, Ron Bronstein, to help us with our facilitation. He was more than willing to help.

Before we knew it, the week of our presentations had arrived. We had a pretty good idea of what we were going to say, how we would bring the words and ideas of Cultural Leadership to a whole new group of students. We entered the first class and started talking about the different stereotypes that everyone at our school had heard at least once during their high school career. It started off slow, and it seemed like no one was willing to openly admit to any racist thoughts or opinions. And who could blame them? It's not exactly cafeteria table conversation at Ladue - or any other school for that matter. But then we began the fishbowl exercise with the students in the class. One girl began to speak about the race card and her frustrated feelings about how students use it to avoid responsibility for their actions. I looked at Ron and Dominique and I knew that we had hit something. In this girl's eyes, there was an honesty and openness that we had been striving for all period.

She wasn't holding back her feelings, which she had been doing the entire time leading up to this sudden outburst of candor. Our two presentations the next day continued the pattern of continual openness and honesty from the students involved. Another Cultural Leadership Class 2 member, Mia Harlan, joined us for these presentations and she only made our facilitation efforts stronger.

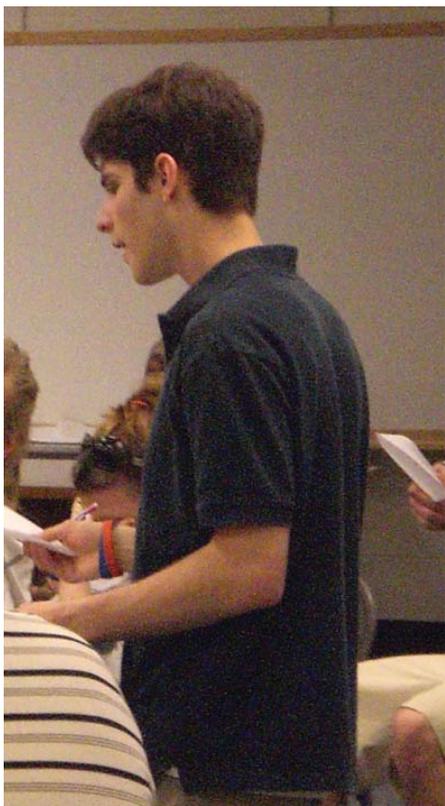
Each time we presented, we gained a new confidence and willingness to really get people talking. We heard students talk about things that they might never have felt comfortable discussing before. We were already making a difference.

That's when it hit us: *This is what Cultural Leadership is.* It doesn't end after graduation. It doesn't end after high school or after college. For everyone involved, it will be an everlasting thing. It is up to us to spread the ideas that our year in Cultural Leadership taught us: to go to our schools and speak to students as Ron, Dominique, Mia and I did; to awaken people to the prejudice and racism which is still prevalent in our society.

It may appear a daunting task, but if we give up the fight after just one year, how much did we really learn? As Maya Angelou once said "people may forget what you said, people may forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Through our fishbowl facilitations, we brought a new feeling of awareness and understanding to students at Ladue, and while some students may have already forgotten the words we said, I know that a part of them will always remember how we made them feel for those few hours.

And I know that they will remember that feeling the next time they encounter racism at home, at school, or even in their own minds.

Jeremy Cropf is a freshman at Tisch School of the Arts at New York University.



Class 2 student Jeremy Cropf facilitates a discussion among fellow students at Ladue High School.

A wonderful thing happened to us in Greenville, MS. We were all swimming in the motel pool when an elderly white lady asked me how we all knew each other. This was one of the many times one of us explained Cultural Leadership to a curious bystander. When I finished she said: "It is so ironic that that's what you're doing, because I looked at you all laughing and having fun and said to myself: 'Why can't the world be like that swimming pool?'"

Blake Harris, Class 1



*Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts
forth a tiny ripple of hope and crossing each other from a million different
centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of
oppression and resistance. - Robert Kennedy*

RIPPLES

to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

Candice Bassett, Class 3, is working to raise awareness of the Jena 6 at Parkway North by making posters, participating in a silent protest, and creating PA announcements.

TJ Brooks, Class 3, volunteers for the Youth Mentoring Program at the Bishop L.M. Wooten Family Life Center.

Cece Campbell, Class 3, is organizing an assembly about diversity and tolerance at Nerinx Hall.

Ola Coker, Class 3, has started a Gay-Straight Alliance chapter at Parkway Central High School.

Jeremy Crof, Class 2, is involved with the Students Taking Action Now: Darfur (STAND) chapter at NYU and is publicity director citywide for *24 Hours for Darfur*, a video project to raise awareness about the crisis there.

Anna Dardick, Class 3, is working with the Parkway School District to publish nutrition information about school lunches. She has a broader goal of making this mandatory statewide.

Scott Friedman, Class 1, volunteers for the Latino Empowerment Team (LET) at Washington University. Among other services, LET provides assistance with college applications to high-school students.

Richie Gallant and Tyjuan Morrow, Class 3, have begun Students Working for a Purpose (SWAP) - a peer-to-peer mentoring program. Gallant has just been awarded a \$1000 grant from Ashoka's Youth Venture for the program. The pair have also embarked on a speaker's series to talk about their experience trading schools (Beaumont and Whitfield) for a day (see *School Swap*, p. 5).

Melissa Garcia, Class 3, and a friend have collaborated to create and donate blankets to area hospitals.

Alyssa Hadzima and Adam Rosen, Class 3, will create a website to connect and lend support to new students at their high schools, Parkway West and Whitfield.

LaParis Hawkins, Class 3, is working to create and implement

an African-American Studies Course as part of the curriculum at Hazelwood East High School.

Elliott Kleiman, Class 3, will lead diversity workshops at Solomon Schechter Day School and the United Synagogue Youth chapter at Congregation B'nai Amoona.

Ebony Moore, Class 3, is working to implement Ending Racism And Catapulting Equality (ERACE) - a diversity organization - at Pattonville High School.

Michael Naclerio, Class 3, gives public talks about, and advocates politically for, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

Clarissa Polk, Class 1, belongs to the Colgate Jewish Union (affiliated with Hillel) and is active with the Hindu Student Association at Colgate University.

Jayce Reese, Class 3, is organizing Voting Is Power (VIP) to promote voter registration and education.

Cydney Ross, Class 3, has started a diversity club at Villa Duchesne Oak Hill School.

Tony Westbrook, Class 1, serves on several committees at UMKC, working with the Deputy Chancellor for Diversity, Access, and Equity. As the Educational Chairman-elect for The African-American Student Union (TAASU), he ensures that ALL students receive correct information about academic advising, scholarships, and other academic programs. He also helped organize a "Peaceful Protest" of Ward Connerly and his Missouri Civil Rights Proposal and a campaign to educate the UMKC campus community about the Jena Six case.

Holt St. Baptist Church

by Maayan Simckes, Class 1

*I can hear them,
The footsteps.
The voices,
Echoing through the decades.
Like the pounding steady beat of
a heart.
The core of the movement.
People's thoughts and dreams;
Rushing through the rafters.
Pews creaking,
Shrieking with the memories.
Aching to have the life
Returned to them.
Like in that time of Unity
Pride
Evolution
Words of strength
Once graced this hall.
Now flaking and breaking,
Crumbling
Under the weight
The weight of history
Once a place of refuge;
The nervous system of it all.
Now it shatters and shakes,
And all we can do is
Refuse to forget.*



Maayan Simckes (left) and classmate Reggie Jones.

THANK YOU

Cultural Leadership would like to thank the following people for their generous donations of time and talent...

Cheryl Adelstein, for making sure our day in the computer lab was a success
Dr. Niya Coker, for directing our upcoming graduation
Maxine Goldstein, for her public relations support
Stewart Halperin, for taking such wonderful pictures

Gary Kodner, for his graphic design work
Tonya Ogden, for chaperoning our students at the October retreat
Todd Weinstein, for photographing our students and hosting them in New York
Miriam Wilhelm, for her financial management services.



STUDENTS 'WALK A MILE' DURING SCHOOL SWAP

By Richie Gallant, Class 3

Beaumont High School, in North St. Louis, is one of 17 St. Louis Public High Schools. Whitfield, a private school in Creve Coeur, MO, has the highest tuition in St. Louis. While 1200 students attend 9th through 12th grade at, Whitfield consists of roughly 450 students in 6th through 12th grade. In April, my Cultural Leadership classmate, Tyjuan Morrow, and I executed a "school-exchange." Tyjuan visited Whitfield, and I spent a day at Beaumont. Our experiences were life-changing.

The differences were apparent even before entering the schools. About to walk through a metal detector to enter Beaumont, I was stopped by one of the many security officers on duty. "We have one white student at this school and you are not him. You may not enter!"

We encountered no such obstacles at Whitfield, where we were greeted at the front circle by the president of the school.

Once inside, as we walked through the halls of Whitfield, Tyjuan could not help but notice the paintings, sculptures, and photographs on the walls. Whitfield proudly displays the achievements and talents of its students on a daily basis. Walking the (humid, non-air-conditioned) halls of Beaumont, Tyjuan pointed out some of its students' artwork: gang symbols, graffiti, and stenciled profanity.

Another difference was the bathrooms. After visiting a Whitfield



Tyjuan Morrow (left) and Richie Gallant, Class 3

bathroom (without even having to ask permission), Tyjuan exited incredulous at the cleanliness. Conversely, I had to take Tyjuan's word that Beaumont bathrooms are disgusting because I never even saw one. They are locked and cannot be used without teacher supervision.

A further difference was lunch. A Whitfield brochure states, "Our lunches are legendary. Enough said." Freshmen sit with juniors and white and black students happily sit next to each other eating salads and deli meat with real silverware. In the Beaumont cafeteria, freshmen self-segregate from seniors because of a genuine fear of getting beaten up, and the majority of students receive free or reduced lunch. The only thing I worry about at Whitfield is whether the soup will be chicken and wild rice or broccoli cheddar. At Beaumont, my main concern was whether or not I was sitting next to a Blood or a Crip.

Artwork, bathrooms, and lunch, though, could be considered incidental. Not so, with academics. Here, the differences are truly alarming. Whitfield provides me with a world-class education. Beaumont cannot say the same for Tyjuan.

At the beginning of each August, I go to Whitfield to pick up my books. The privilege that comes with paying for them is that I get to own them and use them however and whenever I need to. At Beaumont, each student is assigned a number, which corresponds with the book to use in each class. In most classes, students cannot take books home with them,

see *School Swap*, p. 6

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE NEGEV

By Nick Desloge, Class 2

When I first tried to board the El-Al airplane to Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport, I was asked several questions.

"What are you doing in Israel?" (working at a day camp)

"For how long?" (six weeks)

"Are you Jewish?" (yes)

"What is your Hebrew name?" (Nacham)

"What synagogue are you a member at?" (United Hebrew)

"Can you recite any of your torah portion?" (That was five years ago!)

"What do you eat on Rosh Hashanah?" (apples and honey)

Even after all of these precautionary questions, nothing could prepare me for what I would experience in the next six weeks.

I spent much of this past summer in Israel volunteering for an Israeli day camp in St. Louis's sister city, Yoqneam. The sights, sounds, smells, and tastes were truly foreign to me, as this was my first trip outside of North America. Once the plane landed, I was taken to the home of a friend of Karen Kalish, Ilana Belmaker, who helped me settle in. After a couple days of touring, I proceeded toward the northern section of Israel into Yoqneam. Shortly after, I began my summer work in the local day camp and became fully immersed into Israeli society. Through

the knowledge I gained in Cultural Leadership, I was able to break down prejudices and develop deep friendships with the locals that have lasted until now.

There were several differences between Israel and the United States apart from the usual changes you see in a different country like weather (which is gorgeous), the size, and economic differences. In Israel, I felt like I was walking on sacred ground. Almost everywhere I went, I found a reference to the Bible. Socially, there is a dramatic separation between the Jews and the Arabs in the area, and every person between the ages of 18 and 21 is in the army. Most importantly, it felt safe. I didn't feel threatened for a single minute while I was working in Israel.

Cultural Leadership opened up my mind to new cultures and gave me a psychological connection to Israel. Karen Kalish was indispensable in ensuring that I was able to make the trip. I will never forget the lessons that I learned and the lives I was able to change. Psalms 137:5 sums up my experience quite nicely, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget her skill."

Nick Desloge is a freshman at Syracuse University. If you want more information about him, his experience, or how you can get involved as well, you can contact him at 314-229-4449 or at ntdesloge@syr.edu.



STUDENT HAS PLAN TO INCREASE VOTER REGISTRATION

by Jayce Reese, Class 3

Throughout school, I had learned about the Civil Rights Movement. I had read all the statistics, all the dates, all the stories about blacks struggling to gain their rights in America. During our transformational journey, we traveled to Selma, Alabama. Miss Joanne Bland was our "tour guide" throughout Selma. Miss Bland truly allowed me to envision how much torture, fear, and injustice blacks had to face to gain their right to vote. I had read about Bloody Sunday in my text books, but I never fully grasped how much pain blacks suffered on that horrific day. She described marching over the Edmund



Pettus Bridge, hand in hand with other marchers, and coming to the top of the bridge to see all the officers lined up with their night sticks in hand, ready to beat them to keep them away from the vote.

I have never understood why many people today do not exercise their right vote – do not take advantage of the gift given them by the martyrs who were brutally beaten and even killed. Learning the history of this struggle from a primary source took me back in time, and allowed me to experience the past so vividly that I was inspired to take action now.

Voting Is Power (VIP) is a voting rights and registration education program I have started that will travel to local high schools in St. Louis and educate young people about the importance of exercising their right to vote. Our main goal is to get more students to register to vote by teaching them both the history of their voting rights and the specifics

of how to register. We are currently developing engaging presentations to educate students about the history, and are exploring ways for students to register to vote the same day we are presenting at their school.

Staying true to Cultural Leadership's values of inclusion and collaboration, I am eager to reach out to students who are not part of Cultural Leadership. In addition to simply informing you of this program, I am also asking for your help. If you know of anyone who may be interested in committing to this program, please have them contact me. We will soon begin meeting to practice and fine-tune the presentation, and will contact schools to set up days and times to present. Thank you!

Jayce Reese is a senior at Whitfield High School. She can be reached at jayce.reese@whitfieldschool.org.

ONE PROGRAM TO GO FOR CLASS 3

The students of Cultural Leadership Class 3 will graduate from the program on January 6, 2008 in a special ceremony at New City School. Of course, everyone is invited to attend. But before then, we still have one more program together.

In September, we focused on leadership. Students explored various aspects of leadership and came to understand the strengths and weakness of their own leadership styles. They also formulated individual Action Plans for social change projects of their own.

Students brought those Action Plans to the October retreat, which included a review of the plans and an examination of how to best implement an action component into the curriculum for future years.

All day Saturday, Cultural Leadership students learned how to facilitate discussions of diversity issues among their own peers. They planned a discussion around a topic of their choosing, and then conducted the discussions with their friends, whom they had invited previously. As in previous years, it was a great success for both Cultural Leadership students and their peers.

In November, we learned about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the grassroots

level. Students explored approaches to conflict resolution and brainstormed ways average citizens on both sides could help build confidence and promote dialogue and understanding.

Concluding in December, several members of the local press will speak to Class 3 about the role of the media in making social change. Our future leaders will learn how the media works in order to use it effectively in their own efforts at change.

Finally, our students will graduate in a ceremony at New City School on Sunday, January 6 (of course, you will all be invited). The class has grown tremendously though the first 10 months of the program, and we're looking forward to their continued growth through the last two programs - and beyond!



Cultural Leadership students and their peers convening after facilitation sessions at the October retreat.

School Swap, continued from p. 5

which makes it difficult for teachers to assign homework. And then there are the classes themselves. My schedule includes Calculus, Spanish V, AP Chemistry, and Latin. Tyjuan also takes AP Chemistry and a foreign language. From the outside, his schedule looks comparable to mine. But when I sat in his classes, I realized I had covered the same material two years prior, as a freshman!

With all of this, what message is the public school system of this city giving to these children? Forcing them to walk through metal detectors, denying them basic school supplies and services, watering down their education, the message is one of mediocrity.

Because of our experience, Tyjuan and I have started a peer-to-peer tutoring program called Students Working for a Purpose (SWAP) that assists with completing college applications, improving standardized test scores, and creating more community interaction. I wish more students could "walk a mile in someone else's shoes." There really are people out there, lost among the masses, stuck in a system of mediocrity. We should all know what that's like, if only for a day.

Richie Gallant is a senior at Whitfield School.



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