



CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

UNDERSTANDING THROUGH THE AFRICAN AMERICAN - JEWISH EXPERIENCE

News and Events of Cultural Leadership - www.culturalleadership.org - Vol. 6 Spring 2010

School Swap

Access to a quality education from K to PhD is one of the civil rights issues of the 21st Century. Over the course of the Cultural Leadership program, we teach our students about issues of privilege, power, oppression, and injustice, and that these issues are born out of societal, institutional, generational, and political forces. We teach them to see these issues in the context of an entire system that maintains the cycle that systematically sustains the power of those with privilege and oppresses those without.

Education is the greatest privilege we can bestow on our children and yet every year, our society fails to educate so many of its children that we have to question the integrity of our educational system.

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Most students are not aware of the disparities and inequities in our educational system. They have no idea that just five or 10 miles away, students are walking into very different buildings and very different learning situations. Most students in low-income underperforming schools are not aware of the magnitude of the educational disparities and the impact they have on their future. These students are walking into a completely different environment, not because they are not every bit as bright and capable, but because of their **zip code**.

Viewing educational statistics or reading about the ongoing inequities in our schools does not sufficiently tell the story. Our students needed an up-close and personal, visceral experience to help them understand the world of those born without privilege. It is these experiences that ultimately instill our students with the passion necessary to fight for social change.

To that end, all Cultural Leadership students were required to spend a day in a school that is very different from theirs. All Class 6 students spent the entire school day (7am – 3pm) Wednes-

day, Feb. 24 at Beaumont, Roosevelt, Sumner, or Vashon High School - all are St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS). Each student had a student escort and went with that escort to every class. Each student had a sheet with several questions that was used as a guide for their learning and observations for that day. A few weeks later, our SLPS students (6) and the escorts (32) spent a day at Clayton, Ladue, or Kirkwood High Schools. This was a day to make observations and form questions that led to thinking about solutions, and finding allies in our work.

Armed with the injustices and inequities they observed at these schools, the students were given an opportunity to speak to members of the SLPS administration. On March 24th, Rick Sullivan, CEO of the SLPS Special Administrative Board, attended the student program and listened as they presented their findings. The students who attend SLPS have been invited to participate in another meeting with administrators to discuss resolutions to the injustices and inequities.

- Jenny Harris, former Program Director, Facilitator for Class 6

Cultural Leadership exists to create a more just and equitable community by educating high school students to recognize and resolve issues of privilege and injustice through the lens of the African American and Jewish experience. Our students develop leadership skills, build relationships, facilitate dialogues and create change in their circles of influence.

When our students see a problem, they grab an ally, or two or three, roll up their sleeves, and get to work.

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From the Chair...

Dear Friend of Cultural Leadership,

Our graduation ceremony for Class 5 this past January was a great celebration of the students' transformation into world changers. Among the graduates were our first students (three) whose ethnic backgrounds were neither Jewish nor African American. This is a testimonial to the fact that we need allies from all walks of life.

We have eight fantastic new Board members who bring a wealth of experience that will help strengthen our organization for years to come. Their wide-ranging knowledge, skills, and abilities are welcome additions, and we are fortunate that they have chosen to volunteer their talents and energies to Cultural Leadership.

We are having our first ever Gala, August 28th. We are very excited and look forward to seeing you there.

As we continue in our sixth year we look forward with great excitement as our students from Class 1 graduate from college and continue their commitment as change agents in their communities and beyond.

Thank you for your belief in our mission to teach young people how to work toward social justice and equality for all, and for your past and continued support. Cultural Leadership wouldn't exist without you.

Many blessings to all,

Sincerely,

James Surgeon





Tyler Adelstein, Parkway Central; **Jarvis Brown**, Gateway IT, Cote Brillante Presbyterian Church; **Akila Bryant**, Metro, West Side MBC; **Daniel Carter**, Ladue, Shaare Emeth; **Devin Gerstein**, Ladue, Shaare Emeth; **Corey Glantz**, Ladue, CRC



Trevor Green, CBC, St. Matthew's; **Laura Jones**, Sumner; **Zoe Krause**, Ladue; **Jestin Kusch**, Cleveland, Shiloh Temple; **DeVante Malone**, CBC, St. Louis Christian Center; **Sonya McCanna**, Nerinx Hall, St. Margaret of Scotland



Jasmine McCurry, Cardinal Ritter, CRC; **Davin Minor**, Rosati Kain, Friendly Temple; **Zack Nolan**, Ladue, CRC; **Rachel Porter**, Westminster, Abundant Life Fellowship; **Julisa Powell**, Parkway North; **Helen Rodgers**, John Burroughs, CRC



Drew Rubin, Ladue, CRC; **Brandon Rush**, Kirkwood, All Saints Episcopal; **Erin Schroeder**, Lindbergh, Evangelical; **Kelsey Shannon**, Ladue, Believers Temple; **Nate Shelton**, John Burroughs, First Baptist Church of Chesterfield; **Caroline Stoner**, John Burroughs, CRC



Nastanet Taeme, St. Elizabeth Academy, St. Pius; **Kendall Tyson**, Thomas Jefferson, St. Vincent DePaul; **Jacob Weisman**, Ladue, CRC; **Candace White**, St. Elizabeth Academy, Sts. Teresa and Bridget; **Jeffrey Wilson**, Beaumont, Circle of Life; **Juliana Wishne**, Parkway West, B'nai Amoona



Jessica Young, St. Elizabeth Academy; **Reiko Young**, Carnahan, Faith Miracle Temple

WELCOME, CLASS 6!



School Swap Reveals a Difference of Society

by Nate Shelton (Class 6)



Thanks to Cultural Leadership, I had the opportunity to leave my small, sheltered, private high school and

attend a day at a St. Louis Public School (SLPS).

My escort had a typical schedule: AP English Composition, Respiratory Therapy, Spanish, and Chemistry. The day of my visit, however, we missed her second and third classes to attend career planning and leadership workshops. As we went along our day together, I was able to learn a lot about the differences and similarities between this school and my own.

Each morning, the SLPS students are greeted by angry, yelling “safety officers.” The students are pushed through metal detectors, forced to remove their shoes and jackets, and girls are required to have their purses searched. Finally, they are wanded

and patted down before entering the school.

For the career-planning workshop, a young woman discussed resumes and interviews. However, the speaker never once mentioned using a resume for college admissions, but instead for when “you want to work at a clothing store, or in a restaurant.” Although she had never before met these students, she had decided they would only be working at malls, not walking college campuses to become lawyers or doctors.

Through my visit, I came to some interesting conclusions. The teachers at this school are generally no different from private school teachers. Some truly love their jobs and work hard for every student, while others easily give up on a student. And, the students in SLPS schools are generally no different from private school students. Some could not care less about their education, while others are highly motivated and willing to work against all odds to achieve their goals. The SLPS *society*, however,

is quite different from my school’s. When you are treated like a criminal every morning and fed the idea that you will only amount to a sales clerk at Macy’s, your future seems stifled and limited, and school seems like a waste of time.

According to statistics, many students in SLPS are behind academically. To eliminate this disparity, it would be beneficial to all students if summer and weekend tutoring sessions were available. This would present opportunities for students to meet with their teachers, give higher achieving students a chance to tutor their peers, and allow students from other schools to tutor any student who wants the assistance. This combination of motivated students with caring and concerned individuals would benefit all of those involved. As a change agent, I plan to talk to the school board and some dedicated public school teachers and students to get this program started.

School Swap - A County Student’s Perspective

by Julia Moskowitz (Class 5)

Imagine a building that lacks all motivation. As soon as you walk through the door, a line of people wait to go through metal detectors. Welcome to a St. Louis Public School (SLPS).

During my year with Cultural Leadership, we talked a lot about issues such as the inequalities in our education system. Discussion and statistics are one thing, but when I swapped schools on February 24, I realized what a different environment other students live in.

The drive to this school was much different from the route to my own school. The principal had

warned us that we would need a lock for our steering wheels if we chose to drive. I didn’t drive. As we walked up to the school, it looked old and grand. The interior, however, was dark and worn down – forgotten.

The tardy bell rang at 7:14. My first class was Earth Science, and a student explained that students “trickle in” as the period goes by. We started with four students and ended with 12. The assignment was to read from a textbook and make a brochure. Only one student got to the brochure, while most talked for the full 90-minute class.

In my next class, Career Development, the teacher announced that she was leaving and that another teacher would take over. The stu-

dents were to take out a book and answer five questions. Some did so, but most sat and talked or fell asleep. Looking around, I saw that the classroom was formerly a FACS room with kitchen counters and a fridge. The laminate counters were falling apart, and the walls were bare. Twenty unsupervised minutes later, a teacher arrived to babysit us.

In the next class, College Summit, designed to help prepare graduating seniors for college, I learned the most. Not so much academically, but socially. Since I was visiting, we digressed for the first 30 minutes of class and had an honest conversation



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

Brian Hamilton (Class 1) will be a youth leader for the Kaufmann Scholars Residential Experience at Miz-zou.

Melissa Garcia (Class 3) led a 50-student vigil protesting the closing of Wesley Foundation, a Methodist ministry at Fisk University. She also hosted an awards dinner called Leaders Recognizing Leaders.

Ashaki Hall (Class 5) won first place in the Black History Month Oratorical Competition at the St. Louis County Public Library Headquarters.

Aaron Johnson (Class 5) won the Archbishop May Service Award presented annually to a senior from the Catholic secondary schools in the archdiocese.

Hayley Levy (Class 5) is a new Cultural Leadership Board Member.

Hannah Rosenthal (Class 5) received the Princeton Prize in Race Relations and attended a Symposium on Race Relations at Princeton. **Kristen Ingram (Class 5)** was runner up to the Princeton Prize in Race Relations. Hannah also won a scholarship (Israel Teen Fellows) to visit Israel this summer for three weeks.

Carlton Wilcoxson (Class 5) and **Julia Moskowitz (Class 5)** were awarded Ladue High School's Ram Pride Award for academic success and service.

Zoe Krause (Class 6) hosted a meeting to raise awareness among high school students about the prevention and stigma of HIV/AIDS.

Candace White (Class 6) was awarded the Youth of the Year from St. Charles Lwanga

"...I learned that we are not the worst but not close to the best, but we can't sit around and just keep ourselves in the status quo and accept it, we must fix what we see for educational equality." Jestin Kusch

Cultural Leadership in Action

by **Carlton Wilcoxson, Class 5**



In early March, track season was just starting and we had a lot of newcomers and freshmen. A lot of the seniors were shocked at the foul language used in practice by these new teammates. Not only were they cursing, they were calling each other fags, and using the n-word. Not only is it disrespectful, offensive and immature, but foul language can disqualify you at a track meet. With the sensitivity and never-let-a-disrespectful-word-go-without-correction attitude I learned in Cultural Leadership, we devised a new system. Every time someone uses a foul or disrespectful word, that person has to drop and instantly do 10 push-ups. At first, freshmen saw it as a joke, until their arms began to hurt. Then we bumped up the punishment to 20 push-ups. We haven't had any problems with foul language since.

THANK YOU TO:

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

St. Louis's own local activists, Frankie Freeman, Percy Green, Rev. Rose Hudson, Lily Kurland, Carrie Marsh, and Eric Vickers, for allowing our Class 5 students to interview them in our "Learning from the Local Activist" program last December.

Tripp Frohlichstein for teaching our students "How to Use the Media to Bring about Social Change."

Dr. Katrina Thompson and Dr. Stefan Bradley for presenting thought-provoking programs on African American History.

Gene Dobbs Bradford, jazz musician extraordinaire, for sharing his incredible talent.

Rabbis Susan Talve and Randy Fleisher for sharing their extensive knowledge of Jewish history and culture.

Fawn Chapel and the Student-to-Student representatives, **Hannah Webber (Class 5)**, Joseph Dardick, and Sara Efrig, for sharing Jewish culture from a teen's perspective.

Rachel Armoza for her continued sharing of Israeli dance with our students.

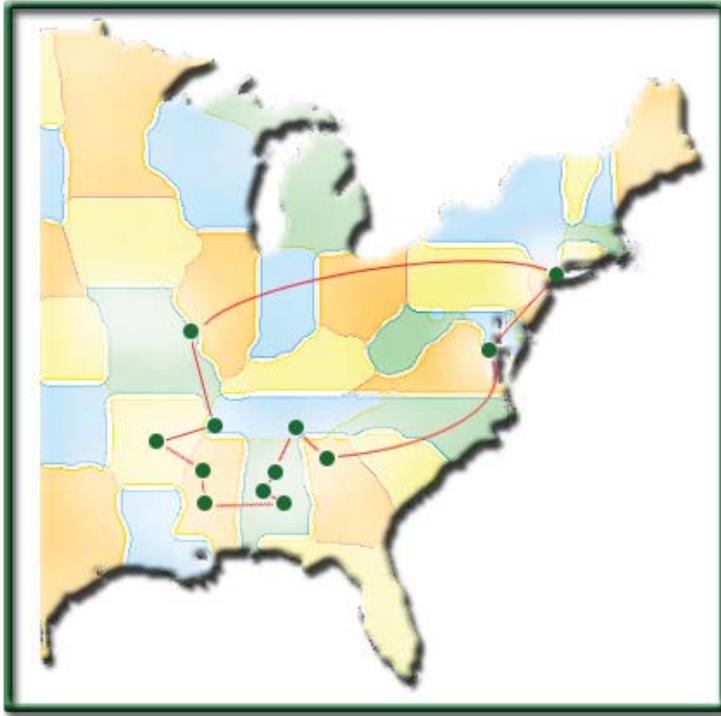
Donna Rogers-Beard's presentation on "What Do We Teach Our Children about the Black Experience," to Class 6 parents.

Eddie Caumiant for teaching our students community organizing skills.

All the families who hosted for Passover and Palm Sunday/Easter celebrations.

We thank the following parents for providing delicious snacks and dinners during our programs: Class 5 parents Ellen Binder, Chris Jacobs, Janetta Roberts, Peggy Kaplan, and Angela Yancy. Class 6 parents Elizabeth Nolan and Debi Purvis, Leslie Wright and Brad Stoner, Barbara and Curt Schroeder, Toni Williams, Jane and Jim Rubin, Tanya and Jerry Carter, Janet and Lee Rodgers, Veronica and Latour Winston, Lori and Joel Wishne, Evette Minor, Jettie and David Bryant, Denise Porter, Darlene Henderson and Benjamin Shannon, Kari McAvoy and John Williams, Sheri and Barry Glantz, Dietrice and Steffen White, Neil Westbrooks, Melissa and Paxson Krause, Linda Kokker, Tara Adelstein, Margy and Doug Weisman, Jo Gerstein, and Larry Gerstein.





**Transformational Journey
2010**

The road to transformation this year will take us to New York NY, Washington DC, Atlanta GA, Whitwell TN, Birmingham AL, Tuskegee AL, Montgomery AL, Selma AL, Jackson MS, the MS Delta, Little Rock AR, and Memphis TN

The Empty Nest

Presenting our recent graduates who have been accepted to college. Congratulations to all of them!

- Thomas Bullock - Yale University
- Loren Cahill - Wellesley College
- Martilla Davis - Columbia College
- ReNeaSha Ford - University of Minnesota
- Camille Foster - University of Missouri
- Terrell Gilkey - Brandeis University (Transitional Year Program)
- Jen Golden - University of Virginia
- Ashaki Hall - Beloit College
- Winnie Hawker - Earlham College
- Stephanie Holzbauer - George Washington University
- Aaron Johnson - Truman State University
- Keilah Johnson - St. Louis University
- David Kalishman - University of Indiana
- Hayley Levy - Washington University
- Julia Moskowitz - Smith College
- Candice Nichols - University of Missouri-Kansas City
- Nina Oblerman - Williams College
- Eliana Parnas - University of Iowa
- Shayna Rosen - Truman State University
- Nate Seeskin - American University
- Joshua Simpson - St. Charles Community College
- Jessica Swopshire - Truman State University
- Hannah Weber - Wellesley College
- Carlton Wilcoxson - Earlham College
- Jordan Williams - University of Missouri

“County Perspective” continued from page 4

about teen pregnancy, drug use, and racism.

Then, the teacher asked us to close our eyes and imagine walking out our front door. We were to write one word on a poster board describing what we saw. Words like “ghetto,” “slum,” “crack house,” and “crowded” overwhelmed the space. My “suburbia” seemed to fade away.

Finally, we were to find a word or image that described what we wanted our future communities to look like. Everyone had the same vision: equality, community building, peace. Meanwhile, I noticed that not many students had backpacks or books. Students constantly asked for paper and pencils. Homework was not assigned in any of my classes. It was also hard not to notice the number of pregnancies. Many girls were either currently pregnant or had just come back from having a baby.

My last class was African American Literature. The opening exercise was to look up “empowerment” in the dictionary and write four personal examples that related to it. It was a good assignment, but there was no follow up discussion, making it useless.

So much for feeling empowered. For the rest of the class, students talked while “The Jeffersons” played in the background.

Visiting this SLPS opened my eyes. In a student body of 600, only 62 seniors are graduating (at the beginning of the year, there were 170). I realized how much I took for granted at my school (Ladue): our brand new computers, cafeteria food, three gyms, our library, and its books. Students in my school believed they could do anything – become a doctor, an astronaut, you name it. But looking at a low-income area with crack dealers and underperforming schools, it’s no wonder students grow up with different mentalities. Still, there is some effort to motivate students at the SLPS. Those attending college have their pictures on a Wall of Fame. But what happens when they get to college? Students graduate here with the equivalent of an eighth-grade education. How can we expect them to succeed when the education system is so poorly preparing them?

We’ve been ignoring the problem for far too long. These kids are just like all kids. If we want to improve anything, we have to work together.

There are people who would tell me that I can’t change the world, and they may be right. I can’t. Not alone, but that’s what’s different here – I’m not alone.” Zoe Krause



Notable News

Scott Friedman (Class 1) will graduate from Washington University in St. Louis with an A.B. in French and Political Science. He's off to law school.

Reginald Jones (Class 1) is a financial service consultant at First Community Credit Union and will complete his Bachelors in Finance from UMSL in 2011.

LaParis Phillips (Class 1) is graduating from Stephens College and is off to New York City.

Clarissa Polk (Class 1) is graduating from Colgate University and is off to law school.

Tony Westbrook (Class 1) and **Cece Campbell (Class 3)** both transferred to Fontbonne University.

Rachel Winston (Class 1) is graduating from Davidson College and has been accepted to CORO Leadership in St. Louis.

Jeremy Cropf (Class 2) worked on "The Last Survivor" film project, a documentary about survivors of various genocides, which won a Jury award for Best Documentary and

Best Overall Film at the Oxford Film Festival. His next project is planning a memorial for civil war victims in the Congo.

Nick Desloge (Class 2), a junior at Syracuse University, has been studying in Hong Kong.

Dustin Goldberger (Class 2), a junior at Carlton College, was selected to participate in the Gilder Lehrman Weeklong History scholars program in New York. This is a highly selective program and is among the most competitive and prestigious history research opportunities in the country.

Sean Scott (Class 2) is graduating from SLU one year early and entering SLU School of Business.

Melissa Garcia (Class 3) was inducted into the W.E.B. DuBois Honors Program at Fisk University. "I'm glad I paid attention in Cultural Leadership because you never know what will be in the next question. I feel so knowledgeable at an HBCU, and I've been where the Black history books are reporting about. When the information is limited, I expand on it."

Elliott Kleiman (Class 3), freshman at the University of Southern

California, was recently hired as an RA for next year.

Emalie Jacobs (Class 4) earned two As and a B at Knox and is determined to get all As for spring term!

Meredith Stoner (Class 4) is finishing her freshman year at Wellesley and has been accepted to Birthright Israel for this summer.

Bobby Ingram (Class 5) won first place and will represent the eastern district of Missouri in a national debate tournament in Kansas City in June.

Nina Oberman (Class 5) was named a semifinalist in the 2010 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. She was selected on the basis of superior achievements, leadership qualities, personal character, and involvement in community and school activities. Nina was the national winner for In-Depth Team and sweepstakes winner for Column Writing in the American Society of Newspaper Editors/Quill and Scroll International Writing Contest.

Juliana Wishne, Erin Schroeder, Sonja McCann, Daniel Carter and Jarvis Brown (Class 6) have been inducted into the National Honors Society.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author, columnist, and journalist Tom Friedman speaks with supporters of Cultural Leadership at a fundraising tea on April 7.

Mr. Friedman's daughter participated in Operation Understanding DC, an organization Karen Kalish founded 16 years ago in Washington DC.

Karen and Tom met again a few years ago when both spoke at an Operation Understanding DC event. When Karen heard that Tom was coming to St. Louis for the Speaker Series, she asked him if he would meet with a few folks.

He said "Yes!"

A great time was had by all.



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