



CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

UNDERSTANDING THROUGH THE AFRICAN AMERICAN - JEWISH EXPERIENCE

News and Events of Cultural Leadership - www.culturalleadership.org - Vol. 7 Fall 2010

Cultural Leadership's First-Ever Gala Celebration a Huge Success!

by **Ilene Joseph, Board Member**

On August 28, 2010, Cultural Leadership held its first fundraising Gala, The Faces of Cultural Leadership: Celebrating Six Years of Mutual Understanding. The sold out event was held at Soulard Preservation Hall and was a night to remember for all. Over 220 guests and many alumni students celebrated with a dinner of Brisket and BBQ, sipped on "Diversitinis" and enjoyed fabulous entertainment and an inspirational video, highlighting 6½ years of life changing programming.

The evening included music by local treasure, Gene Dobbs Bradford and the Blues Inquisition, and a moving Slam Poetry presentation by Aaron Levy Samuels and the Washington University Slam Poetry Team.

Honorary Chairs, Rabbi Susan Talve and Frankie Muse Freeman, set the tone for this unique gathering of past, present and future change agents. Class 1 alum, Clarissa Polk, gave an inspirational speech about why Cultural Leadership is so important to St. Louis.

Founder Karen Kalish was presented with a proclamation honoring her work. Rabbi Talve lauded her many accomplishments in the community and said that she is a great example of a "troublemaker of the best kind." Karen shared her vision for a better St. Louis and her insight that "change is messy," but these are the future leaders and together they can make change happen. All gala participants felt they were, indeed, a part of the solution.

Lead Sponsors included Nancy and Aaron Novack, who generously donated their Soulard Preservation Hall, Karen Kalish, Peggy and Lee Kaplan, Maxine Clark and Robert N. Fox Foundation, and Washington University. Many generous donors made it possible for this event to raise close to \$40,000.



Cultural Leadership Gala on August 28, 2010 raised nearly \$40,000

A student-run art auction led by Class 6 Helen Rodgers brought in close to \$1,000 and showcased the many talents of our current and alumni participants. Student hosts, in addition to Class 1 Clarissa Polk, were Rachel Winston, Dustin Goldberger, Mia Harlan, Sean Scott, Emily Menendez, Hannah Novack, Ethan Joseph, Meredith Stoner, Martilla Davis, Drake Hall, Hannah Rosenthal, Drew Rubin and Sonya McCanna.

The planning committee, chaired by Ilene Joseph, alumni parent and board member, worked for months to bring together a truly inspirational evening. Thank you to all our supporters who helped make this event a huge success!

For a list of Gala Sponsors, turn to page 3.

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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 Founder

Dear Cultural Leadership Friends and Families,

I would like to share with you the speech I made at our first-ever gala in August to sum up where we are with Cultural Leadership and who we are. As you can see, I used the letters in Cultural Leadership!

- C**hange and change agents – change is dirty and messy and no one wants it, and we need change agents to bring it about
- U**ncomfortable – what we want our young people to be because it takes being out of your comfort zone to bring about change
- L**isten with the intent to learn – something we teach our young people, not listen with the intent to get in their two cents, or only listen to those you agree with
- T**roublemakers of the best kind—coined by Letty Cottin Pogrebin, what we want our young people to be
- U**nique – there is no program like Cultural Leadership
- R**acism – that insidious problem that holds St. Louis and this nation back
- A**ctivists – another word for change agents, what we want our young people to be
- L**ife-changing – what our students and their parents say Cultural Leadership is!

- L**ittle Rock – one of the 10 cities we visit on our transformation journey that includes NYC, DC, Atlanta, Whitwell TN, all over Alabama and Mississippi, Little Rock and Memphis
- E**quality – one of our three core values that includes Inclusion and Justice for all
- A**llies – one of our mantras is ...”when you see a problem, you are to grab an ally or two or three, roll up your sleeves and get to work”
- D**ifferent eyes and ears – what our students and their parents get after a year in Cultural Leadership
- E**ducating high school students – what we do
- R**acism eradicators – what we are building
- S**tand up, speak out and take action – what we teach our young people to do whenever they see injustice
- H**istory – of the US and social justice movements nationally and internationally, part of our rich curriculum
- I**nclusion – another of our core values
- P**arents – a key part of our award-winning program

Prejudice is replaced with facts, ignorance with knowledge, and suspicion with friendship as these young people roll up their sleeves and work together to make our communities more inclusive and socially just.

Sincerely,

Karen

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.



Gala Sponsors

Following is the list of generous sponsors who helped make Cultural Leadership's first-ever gala such a rousing success, **raising nearly \$40,000!**

THANK YOU!

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Susan, Henry, Ellie (Class 1) and Jake
(Class 5) Warshaw
Hank Webber and Dr. Christine Jacobs

“What Is My Child Getting Herself Into?”

by **Barb Schroeder, parent of Erin Schroeder (Class 6)**

Just about a year ago, I was sitting in a synagogue overwhelmed by the information about Cultural Leadership. I was way outside my comfort zone. Was Karen's passion along with the rules and discipline something my free thinker daughter could grow with; or would it be too much and turn her off? I was thinking, “If she's accepted, what is my little girl getting herself into?”

Erin has grown and learned more than I expected. Not only about the history of the Civil Rights Movement or the Holocaust, but about becoming the change she wants to see in the world.

She has learned about education inequities in the St Louis region, and how to ask questions and not have all the answers. She became a vegetarian on the trip, and now her parents are also. She is finding her passions and giving them her time and talents. A few hundred words are not enough to express my gratitude to Cultural Leadership, so let me just say “Thank you!”

Transformational Journey 2010

Once again, we met scores of speakers on this year's Transformational Journey. Here are some of those who had the greatest impact on our students:

Colman McCarthy – pacifist, Washington DC
G. Douglas Jones – attorney, Birmingham AL
Rabbi Brad Hirschfield – CLAL, New York City
Myrna and JD Jackson – civil rights activists, Birmingham AL
Jerry Mitchell – journalist, Jackson TN
Rev. Samuel “Billy” Kyles- Memphis TN
Cong. John Lewis – Washington DC
Carroll Gibbs – Black history expert, Washington DC
Sen. Claire McCaskill – Washington DC and St. Louis MO
Dabney Montgomery – Tuskegee airman, New York City
Rev. Al Sharpton - New York City
Linda Hooper – Paperclips, Whitwell TN
Sybil Jordan Hampton – student at Central HS, Little Rock AR, 1959
Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg – Supreme Court, Washington DC



Cultural Leadership Students Confront St. Louis Issues

by **Cheryl Adelstein**, Board Member

Over 100 students, alumni, parents and friends of Cultural Leadership gathered at the Urban League on July 18 to receive a status report on pressing issues facing the City of St. Louis from three featured speakers. The program was facilitated by Cultural Leadership board member Cheryl Polk.

The first speaker was William Siedhoff, Director of the Department of Human Services for the City of St. Louis, who spoke about the current state of

homeless in the City. He discussed the work of the Homeless Services Network and described the “continuum of care model,” which works to assess the needs of each individual and move them from immediate shelters to transitional housing and finally to a permanent housing arrangement.

The second speaker was Dr. William Danforth. For many years, Dr. Danforth has served on advisory panels that have made recommendations to improve the quality of urban K-12 education and St. Louis Public Schools. Dr. Danforth discussed the role of the Special Administrative Board that assumed management of the district several years ago. He also discussed current challenges as the district seeks to regain accreditation from the State of Missouri.

The final speaker was Bill Laskowsky, a representative from McEagle Properties, who presented the company’s vision for the redevelopment of North St. Louis. The \$5.4 billion vision redevelops nearly 500 acres of north St. Louis over 15 years and includes new retail and office spaces, homes and parks, and thousands of new jobs. Public discussion of the plan, considered visionary by some and controversial by others, often includes protests and angry words. About a dozen opponents of the plan attended the meeting and were disruptive.

Overall, the event was a great learning experience for the Cultural Leadership students and parents in attendance as they come to grips with the problems facing their communities and negotiate the obstacles in the way of solutions.

The Empty Nest

Thomas Bullock - Yale University

Loren Cahill - Wellesley College

ReNeaSha Ford - University of Minnesota

Camille Foster - University of Missouri

Terrell Gilkey - Brandeis University (TYP)

Jen Golden - University of Virginia

Ashaki Hall - Beloit College

Winnie Hawker - Earlham College

Stephanie Holzbauer - George Washington University

Aaron Johnson - Truman State University

Keliah Johnson - St. Louis University

David Kalishman - Indiana University

Hayley Levy - Washington University

Julia Moskowitz - Smith College

Candice Nichols - University of Missouri - Kansas City

Nina Oberman - Williams College

Eliana Parnas - University of Iowa

Shayna Rosen - Truman State University

Nate Seeskin - American University

Jessica Swopshire - Truman State University

Hannah Webber - Wellesley College

Carlton Wilcoxson - Northwest Missouri State University

Jordan Williams - University of Missouri

Ch- Ch- Ch- Ch- Changes

Maurice Cooksey - enlisted in the Navy

Gus Cotten - transferred to the University of Missouri - St. Louis

Emily Menendez - transferred to St. Louis University

Clarissa Polk - graduated Colgate University with honors, in her first year at Washington University Law School

Tony Westbrook - transferred from the University of Missouri - Kansas City to Fontbonne University



A recent reunion of Class 1 alums: Terry Burstein, Blake Harris, Ron Bronstein, Clarissa Polk, Tony Westbrook, and Rachel Winston

Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts 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. - Robert Kennedy

Ripples

Jeremy Cropf (Class 2) is in his final semester at NYU film school and his senior thesis film is JANE DOE, a true story about a young girl who lost her life to drug addiction.

www.indiegogo.com/Jane-Doe

Scott Friedman (Class 1) graduated from Washington University and entered Case Western Reserve University School of Law, where he has formed a student organization to support asylum seekers.

Mia Harlan (Class 2) is finishing her senior year at the University of Leeds (a partner school with University of Wisconsin) and won a travel scholarship.

Winnie Hawker (Class 5) is majoring in Peace and Global Studies with an emphasis on conflict resolution at Earlham College.

Matt Kleiman (Class 1) graduated from the University of Wisconsin and is now at the Modern Orthodox Beginners Yeshiva in the West Bank of Israel, called HaMivtar.

Hannah Rosenthal (Class 5) received the Princeton Prize in Race Relations, which awarded her \$1000; she gave \$200 back to Cultural Leadership. Thank You Hannah!

Sean Scott (Class 2) graduated from St. Louis University in three years and is now the youngest student in SLU's Business School.

Rachel Winston (Class 1) graduated from Davidson College and is now a Coro Fellow in St. Louis.

Afghan Peace-Seekers Discuss Issues with Cultural Leadership Students

by **Zoe Krause (Class 6)**

On October 1, Cultural Leadership hosted a group of professionals from Afghanistan for a group discussion on the problems facing Afghanistan and the world. The seven traveling teachers, journalists, and government and religious leaders made a stop in St. Louis as part of a tour of the United States organized by the International Visitor Leadership Program of the World Affairs Council. Other stops included Washington DC; an Amish community near Philadelphia; Montgomery, Alabama; and Seattle, Washington.

Cultural Leadership students engaged the visitors in discussions about women's rights, security, and issues of famine and

democracy in Afghanistan. The discussion was interesting and enlightening, particularly because the personal meeting provided faces to humanize the conflict in Afghanistan and illustrated the importance of learning the perspectives of others.

The visitors said they appreciated seeing a program that works to knock down boundaries among young people. Several of the guests cited the need for American troops in Afghanistan to help train local peacekeeping forces, and of the rich history of Afghanistan prior to recent conflicts.

The meeting was a further reminder that, as one person in attendance put it, "it is the unknown that we should try to find the answers to." In searching out such answers, we can break down the barriers to misunderstanding.

Thank You

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

The entire Gala Committee for planning an entertaining and successful evening.

Angie Weidinger and HEC-TV for producing the wonderful informational piece on Cultural Leadership.

Professor Terry Jones, Dr. Bill Danforth and Bill Siedhoff for sharing their perspectives on St. Louis at our July 18 event.

Alan Byrd, Chat Leonard, Hal Deuser, Faith Sandler, Teresa Stock, Kristin Rathje and Jenny Harris for sharing their expertise at our annual College Knowledge Night.

Webster University Dean Benjamin Ola Akande and CL board member Jason Grove for presenting at our October Leadership program.

Thank you to the following parents for providing meals and snacks for the student programs: Neil Westbrooks, Julius Powell, Karen Powell, Fred and Lorraine Goffe Rush, Jerry and Tanya Carter, Kelly and Cleveland Tyson, Linda Kokker, Toni Williams, Anita and Fred Shelton, Sheri and Barry Glantz, Margy and Doug Weisman, Jo Gerstein, Larry Gerstein, Dietrice and Steffan White, Jane and Jim Rubin, Lori and Joel Wishne, Denise and Raymond Porter



Know a Student Who Is Perfect for Cultural Leadership?

Cultural Leadership is recruiting the next class of courageous, passionate, curious students. Applications for Class 7 are available NOW on our website at www.culturalleadership.org and are due **October 29th**. Those interested can request an application be mailed by calling **314-725-3222**.

We are looking for sophomores and juniors in high school who have a passion for social justice and are “change-the-world” types. *Applicants can be of any race, religion, or ethnicity.*

Our curriculum is dynamic and extensive and takes the history, successes, failures, and lessons of the African American and Jewish experiences as reference points for making positive change in our world today.



Have our Students Facilitate for your school, house of worship, or other community group. Students can facilitate discussions about critical issues, and also discuss Cultural Leadership and its mission.

To learn more about this opportunity, call **314-725-3222**, visit www.culturalleadership.org, or email programdirector@culturalleadership.org

Our Students Are Ready to Facilitate

by **Chip Meyer**

The whole year has been leading up to this: Cultural Leadership students learning how to facilitate tough discussions about critical issues.

They start off just learning about one another, their similarities, and their

differences. Next, they learn about the most critical issues facing society today... power, privilege, and prejudice. They listen to and learn from others who have given over their lives to making things better.

Then, in September, they learn how to help other people work through these same issues. Our students just finished this climactic retreat and the results are amazing: Every one of the students reports being comfortable and prepared to facilitate conversations on these important issues.

I learned how to handle people and how to engage them properly.

Shop Barnes & Noble Nov. 20 to Support Cultural Leadership


by **Cheryl Adelstein, Board Member**

Barnes & Noble is hosting our third annual Book Fair for Cultural Leadership on Saturday, November 20th. Please come buy books, DVDs, e-readers and accessories, food, coffee, music, journals, etc. to support us. On November 20th, a portion of all proceeds from purchases made by our friends and family will be donated to Cultural Leadership to train teens who will work for inclusion, equality, and social justice.

Also, purchases of most items at www.barnesandnoble.com from November 20 through November 24 will also be credited to Cultural Leadership. Please enter **10325504** in the coupon code at check-out.

At right is the coupon you will need to present at the cash register with your purchases to direct proceeds to Cultural Leadership. This coupon can be used in ANY Barnes & Noble store nationwide. Cultural Leadership students, alums, staff, and board members will be present at the Barnes and Noble at Ladue Crossing (8871 Ladue

Road) on November 20 to meet and greet, and to offer free gift wrapping. Get a head start on your shopping and support Cultural Leadership at the same time!



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Caged

by Drew Rubin, Class 6

Like a “Keep Out” sign in your neighbor’s yard, their eyes reminded me that I didn’t belong. They watched me like they would watch a caged bird, not sure whether to walk away or succumb to their interest. Like this I ascended the carved marble staircase into a whole new world while their eyes continued to burn my skin, prodding me with their insatiable curiosity and contempt. They followed me for that one immeasurable minute as my eyes drifted down passively like a beaten dog with its tail between its legs. Then a few girls began to whistle at me with a primal grimace spreading on their faces, they continued relentlessly. They instantly pierced through my outer skin of assuredness, directly into my dignity. I walked up the entire staircase with the girls whistling behind me, shouting, screeching. Those three sets of voraciously feminine eyes made me into what so many other people in the past century, from blacks to women, had been...an object. Nothing more, nothing less, as much a thing as the yarn a cat plays with. There, with my feline tail cowering between trembling legs, I learned true respect for America’s oppressed. I saw how belittling a whistle or a call could be, I learned true respect for the hardships of women, albeit my experience lasted a minute and theirs lasted a lifetime. In their eyes I saw how painful diversity becomes in solitude; I learned true respect for the hardships of the African-American. Yet even with this respect, I remained solitary. Never before could I have fathomed this situation, yet there I was walking into St. Louis City’s Beaumont High School, white and different. In all my 16 years, not once had I been so drastically and visibly different, yet this day I became that one kid who could never melt into the crowd.

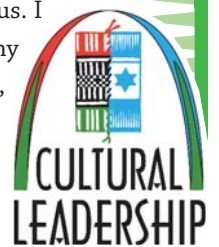
As I passed the majestic columns, and made my way to the wide, double-doors that served as the entrance, I noticed the exquisitely beautiful architecture that created this school. From the easily distinguishable European staircases leading up to the carefully carved arches over the three, beautiful oak double-doors, to the columns on its left side reminiscent of the Coliseum, I was awed. When I stepped inside the building that awe transformed itself into astonishment as two gleaming, silvery metal detectors loomed before me, directly symbolic of the need for them. The kids were forced to remove their shoes and everything in their backpacks, before being callously frisked. I watched this process in confusion before one of the security guards called over to me, “hey you, this way, follow me.” Still confused, I followed him past the metal detectors without even having to go through them. Quite the double standard. Only in America is the majority more powerful even when surrounded and outnumbered by the minority. I brushed off the confusion and continued following the man for a few more steps before he abruptly pointed to a door across the hall and left without a word. From there I met my guide, whom I would follow around throughout the day, and off we went. Constantly fighting that deep sense that I was being watched,



I became dazed. Everywhere we went, every classroom we entered, I remained like a small pearlescent conch shell weathering the tide on a volcanic shore, always discernible during the ebb and flow.

As we entered the cafeteria for lunch, I was engulfed by a sea of people. I became an infinitesimal speck of ivory in a vast sea of ebony, and I became uncomfortable, excruciatingly uncomfortable. To combat the overwhelming sense of loss, I followed my guide like a puppy. As I joined the line for food, I finally got a chance to look over the options, and found the food very similar to the food at my school. I had just decided on the pizza when my guide aggressively surged through the sea of people. I lurched forward, futilely trying to keep up, only to run directly into someone. The man’s 6 foot frame slowly turned around as he looked to see what had disturbed him. His eyes met mine, and I felt his unbridled contempt pour out from him to freeze me in place. He stood between me and my guide, I had two very distinct choices, yet in the moment, when surrounded by a majority, I chose the side of passivity. I didn’t eat lunch that day, but that is a trivial detail. When I chose the side of passivity, I chose not to make a scene. Had I been righteous with a passion and been stronger-willed I could have been like the heroes of the Civil Rights Movement, black and white, whose incredible collective will brought tremendous civil justice to this country. Now I understand how immensely difficult standing up for oneself can become when standing up alone, but more importantly I can now understand why.

Every class I went to, students had to share books, calculators, even supplies as basic as pencils. Everywhere I went, students lacked books and paper, one student didn’t even have a backpack to hold anything. In the chemistry class, the entire class of 20 had to share just a few periodic tables; the sharing part took the entire period. How is it that the all-black public schools are so under resourced where the predominately white public schools are wonderfully resourced? Now, “America the free,” seems a little sick doesn’t it? Ever since its birth, America has been as much a living contradiction as a lactose-intolerant mouse. Espousing freedom in law, yet practicing oppression in the fields. In the years since our country’s founding, we have slowly been caging ourselves with this discrimination, to the point where we have no room to breathe. We may convince ourselves that our society has become better than the contradiction that founded it, but all the while our cage grows smaller. As I became caged by race at Beaumont High School, so has our country. In the years since Martin Luther King Jr., that racism has grown subtle, so ingrained in our society that we can look at it, in the form of the institutionalized educational inequality in St. Louis, and not notice the cage pressing upon us. I can now feel the weight of that cage pressing on my shoulders, and I understand. We are all caged birds, but in this case no outside force dragged us into the cage squawking with fear as the door slammed shut. No, this time we shut the door ourselves.



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