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ILA Members publish on the topic of leadership from a variety of perspectives. We are pleased to feature a selection of these publications in this newsletter and our Web site.

In the *Member Connector*, authors take you behind the scenes, sharing their perspectives on the work, how the work informs contemporary issues, and highlighting points of interest to ILA members.

Thanks to ILA board member Juana Bordas and ILA member Dick Couto for contributing to this issue. Login to the ILA Members Only Web site (<http://www.ila-net.org/Members/index.asp>) and download the "Introduction" and "Leadership Styles in Communities of Color."

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Featured Publication

by Juana Bordas

Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age



This month, ILA member Richard Couto continues in his role as a special guest interviewer for this feature. Richard Couto helped found the Antioch

Ph.D. program in Leadership and Change as well as the Jepson School of Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond, Virginia. His recent books focus on community leadership, To Give Their Gifts; democratic theory and practice, Making Democracy Work Better; and higher education, Courses in Courage.



Juana Bordas is president of Mestiza Leadership International in Denver and vice president of the board of the Greenleaf Center on Servant Leadership. She also serves on the board of the ILA. She is a founder of Mi Casa Women's

Center and founding President/ CEO of the National Hispana Leadership. Juana was initiated into the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame and honored as a Wise Woman by the National Center for Women's Policy Studies. She recently served as advisor to Harvard's Hispanic Journal on Public Policy and the Kellogg National Fellows Program. A former Peace Corps volunteer, Juana received the Franklin Miller Award from the US Peace Corps for her life long commitment to advance communities of color and the Leadership Legacy Award from Spellman's College Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement. Salsa, Soul and Spirit – Leadership for a Multicultural Age is her first book and has received compelling endorsements from experts in the leadership field and from Latino, Black, and American Indian leaders.

Richard Couto: Your publisher, Berrett-Koehler, intends to publish books that make a difference. It wants to change the world. How do you think your book is going to make a difference?

Juana Bordas: Well, the majority of books that are being written in leadership today have a business orientation and a Western and Eurocentric point of view. My book, for example, like all leadership books, is listed under business --that's how close leadership is tied to the bottom line in this country. Leadership in business is just a very small aspect of what leadership in a country needs to be.

The leadership forms that I'm talking about pre-date the Western colonization of this hemisphere. They are tried and true forms of leadership that have served well the people who have been excluded from the mainstream and have had obstacles—obstacles like slavery or being put on reservations or being the lowest paid work group in America (the Hispanics). Yet through all of that not only did these leadership forms hold them in good stead but also kept

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their values and their spiritual core intact. So, there are some lessons to be learned from these communities that in the face of incredible obstacles not only are able to forgive and to reconcile but be ready to celebrate life and to work at partnerships with other people in securing a better future.

So that's part of your intention in changing the world. In going about this book, did you find that writing the book changed you?

Well it certainly gave me a lot more respect for people who publish information. One of my mentors is David Campbell at the Center for Creative Leadership who is a writer and also is the designer of the Campbell Inventory. He is in his 70s and told me, "Juana, if you really want to change the world and have influence, you have to write. You have to do something where people who don't know you have access to your thoughts and what you're trying to do."

So that's the reason I was so adamant about doing this book which will help integrate principles from communities of color into American leadership. In this way, American leadership will represent the best practices of all of its people, the history of all of its people rather than just one perspective.

It was very difficult for a social activist who's involved in the community to withdraw for as much time and energy as the book took to write. But I truly believe that the book can help change the world because it will be in the hands of more people and begin a different dialogue about what the purpose of leadership is. I just got a call from Western Illinois

University that's using it; Denver University here is using it in the Social Work school; John Berkhardt is going to use it in his classes at the University of Michigan. My big push in the next month will be trying to contact ethnic studies programs and leadership programs in universities and business schools to see if they'll use the book.

That's terrific. Well, in addition to imparting insights to others, did you find that you gained insights in the process of writing this book?

Yeah, I really did. When I first started writing this book, my publisher said, "Why can't you just write a book on Latino leadership? That's your expertise and you've been in this community for forty years." I said, "Because if I wrote that, only Latino's would read it." I did a review of black leadership literature, and there are twenty books out on black leadership, two I would highly recommend. One of them is very scholarly by [ILA member] Ron Walters, but nobody in the mainstream reads those really; unless you are very interested in diversity which would be .01 percent, you know, or you work with a large black population or you're black.

So, the big learning for me was the fact that when you take groups that have had similar experiences in this country, they were all called minorities. They had different ways of being oppressed, different ways of being excluded. With blacks it's a lot about skin color. But all of us are dealing with the same kind of economic/social issues, the same kind of exclusion, and the same type of dominance that the white culture was imposing on us. What was happening was happening to other communities.

So what I also learned is that these

communities have this common core of the way they survived, thrived, and led their people. You have to be a leader that is chosen by your community because you're a leader of people. You have to be a type of a leader that inspires, the type of a leader that keeps people going on against tremendous obstacles, you have to be the kind of a leader who promotes community leadership, the kind of a leader that people can identify with, you know that walks your talk and that emulates the values you want your community to have—leadership has to be around social capital because it's all we've got.

What I began to find out was that these streams of dominance have forged a common form of leadership that run across our community. I began to see one of the main connections is that all three cultures basically center around collective identity and where the collective comes before the individual. This completely turns around the Western, Eurocentric type of leadership. But it also now connects with where Western leadership is going—into a team, collaborative, and participatory form. So even the mainstream culture is learning that dominance and hierarchy doesn't work in the type of environments we're facing today. So there's this real convergence.

I learned a lot about how communities of color have come out of this 500 year period, and as I said at the end of my book the 500 years of Euro-dominance is over, it's over. I mean hopefully it will leave us enough resources that we can do something in the future, but it is changing. By 2010, 3 years from now, 35 percent of our population will reflect these communities that I'm writing about. And that change is coming. The whole world is a different population today and we know that demography is destiny. It will happen, particularly

since today's leaders in communities of color are educated, have experience, and able to maneuver the mainstream culture.

Well, I think that's the most marvelous thing about the book—it integrates three different cultures, and it identifies eight principles that are suggestive of ways of improving the leadership of every group. So could you talk a little bit about the three areas, or three tendencies, and then the eight principles?

Steve [Piersanti founder and editor of Berret-Koehler] said to me, "I want somebody to be able to open the book and learn something just from the Table of Contents, even if they don't read anything." So I spent a year integrating the information into eight principles that jump out in the table of contents.

But I also talked him into something. I said, "Look, you know, I can sit here and say, 'Here's another way of leading.' But I think I have to explain why we're stuck in this other form and need another way." I convinced him that the information needs a context. I mean, what is it about our history, how did it happen that we became this, how did we get more Eurocentric than Europeans. I mean, Europeans learn different languages, they talk across cultures, but the American experience made it such that we developed this Eurocentric macho way; my country, love it or leave it."

I think it's because people had to give

up their languages, their culture, their history, and meld into this melting pot. I did it, so everybody else has to do it! I'm also very aware from being Latina and working with African American communities and Indian communities how important our history is to us and the sustenance, nourishment, and strength we get from that. The connection that we have to our ancestors is very strong. It's a whole different perspective of time. My mother immigrated here to make my life better, and her grandchildren's better. Her last grandchild,

...if you're going to have this kind of leadership where everybody is equal and people are focused on activism and public values, then you have to grow a community of leaders and you have to serve your community. And there's five ways that is done: encouraging participation and building consensus, creating a community of leaders, making sure people have a shared vision, using culturally effective communication, and weaving partnerships and connections

my daughter, graduated from college Saturday. My mother had left money for that twenty years ago before she died and she was a poor woman. But she wanted every one of her grandchildren to know that she was going to be there supporting their education. So it's a long term perspective. I think John Echohawk talks about that best when he says, "You know, we're guarding this land for generations. He is speaking about the seventh generation rule where every decision a leader makes should consider the consequences for their children, their children's children and unto seven generations.

I begin the book by explaining the history of America. I have to explain why individualism doesn't work and to encourage people to accept a new social covenant. The individualistic covenant says you have to protect yourself and people are based on self-

interest, and survival of the fittest. I don't believe that. I don't believe that's human nature. I think that was an imposed construct that brought on capitalism and our materialistic and individualist society. I wanted to explain why materialism is a dead end street. Communities of color value sharing and believe that you should have more than your share at the expense of the collective. You can have more, but not if it is going to mean that you take more than your share and other people are actually suffering.

The first part of the book is really saying: here's why we have to change, here's why our current leadership structure is not a good philosophy for the long run. This is why it doesn't fit with what is going on today. I felt if I didn't put that mental construct together, people would say, well, they've got some good ways of leading but why should I incorporate that? Why should I change? Why is that important? So the first part of the book really deals with the idea that if you read it then you can say, "Yeah maybe I should take a look at different ways; no Americans aren't very happy, look at what it says, you know, we're 14th in the world in happiness, and we haven't gotten happier as we have gotten more things." And so I was trying to put that philosophy into the book and not just a list of new principles for leadership that a table of contents would summarize.

And what are the three principals within the new social covenant, the first part of the book?

Sankofa, "learn from the past." It comes out of West Africa and African Americans, especially intellectuals, they revere that whole idea. Sankofa is a bird that is facing forward but looking at the past and saying "inte-

grate the past, learn from the past, build on the past, remember the past, get strength from the past.” This is important because Americans have cultural amnesia about the past. They think this was a pristine land and we know that isn’t true. We can only construct a multicultural society if it is based on the history of all the people –not just one version of the past.

The second one is I to We --the whole idea of moving from individualism to collectivism. The third one is *mi casa su casa*, developing a spirit of generosity which is really asking people to look at the fact that this ongoing materialism that we have in our society is not good for them as well as does not build the kind of society that we need to move forward.

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Your book moves on to a second section about leadership styles with three principles, can you tell us a little about them?

Right, well, the first principle is called a leader among equals. A leader among equals really means that everybody has leadership potential. Benny Shendo, who started the first school on an Indian reservation that taught in the native language, was the youngest person I interviewed for the book. He was made part of his Jemez Pueblo council when he was only thirty-one which is almost unheard of. In the Anglo culture, if a thirty one year old makes it, you know, they kind of feel like maybe they are special. But Benny says, “First of all I’m not special because everything I am and everything I have is the result of other people, their investment in me. But second of all I’ll serve my term, people respect me now because I’m

on the council but when my term is over I return to being an ordinary person again. I’m just another tribal member, and then I’ll do what other people tell me to do. So I am a leader among equals.”

There is this whole idea that leadership is a shared responsibility and it kind of connects to some of the other principles. For example, leadership in communities in color is conferred upon you. In the Anglo community there is this personal ambition. A person can say -- “I am a leader,” “I want to run for Congress,” “I want to become a manager or a CEO,” or “I want to become a professor.” It’s more or less about your individual ambition. In communities of color leadership has to be conferred on you because you are a leader of people, a leader of a community, and people will follow you because of your example, because of the way you live your life, because you have some talent to contribute, and because they respect you.

When I went to visit Benny at the Jemez Pueblo, for example, he was showing me the school, and the janitor was in the hall with all these kids standing around talking to him. And I said, “Benny what’s going on over there?” And he said, “Oh, he is someone the kids really love, they like to talk with him and share their stories.”

So that evening I hosted a dinner for the tribal leaders and I said, “In the tradition of your culture, can we start with a prayer?” Everyone turned to the janitor. He was the most respected person in the tribe. And it’s the same thing with Latinos. If you have a job and you can support your fam-

ily you have dignity. We value work; we believe that work brings dignity. I mean sure they want to have more money and not work as hard. But the fact that you’re working is a dignified thing. It is not about position or material possessions, it is about the respect people have for you and what kind of a person are you? Do you contribute to the well-being of others in the community?

The person that really helped me with principle number two, Leaders as guardians of public values, is Dr. Jim Joseph. He’s in his 70s and the former ambassador to South Africa. He has this incredible fountain of knowledge. What he taught me was to, “Look at the dominant society, they’re so inter-

ested in the individual’s values – what people should or shouldn’t do—and meanwhile, nobody is protecting the public values on which our country was founded. Values like equity, justice, the common good and prosperity for people. Jim Joseph looks at the role of the leader as being concerned with social values and social structures.

African American leaders have had to be concerned with the large picture, not just with an individual, but how is society structure that prevents access to certain people. What are the systems that are in place, such as white privilege, that keeps inequity going? African-American leaders have always had a tradition of activism and active citizenship because they are trying to change the status quo -- to bring the status quo in alignment with the values this country was founded on. Consequently leadership in communities of color if you look at it, if you look at Cesar Chavez in the last century, and Martin Luther King, they

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were leaders of people who were actively involved in transforming American society.

The leader as community steward talks about the fact that if you're going to have this kind of leadership where everybody is equal and people are focused on activism and public values, then you have to grow a community of leaders and you have to serve your community. And

there's five ways that is done: encouraging participation and building consensus, creating a community of leaders, making sure people have a shared vision, using culturally effective communication, and weaving partnerships and connections. Part of the role of a leader in communities of color is to be a broker within their community, to be an interpreter, a translator, and to be an ambassador that reaches out to the mainstream community, brings back resources and then builds partnerships. This is what they do in order to move their communities forward.

The last two principles really illustrate how communities of color have been able to do have this kind of leadership and to emerge with their values and faith intact. The whole system of communities of color is based not just on this idea of collectivism but it includes a deep seated philosophy of the universal connections that people have. Dr. Jim Joseph calls it the cosmology of connectedness. And so "all my relatives"—which is the 7th

principle—reflects the Latino culture's huge extended family and deep sense of inclusiveness. People can "become Latino" by accepting our values. Latinos have an elastic sense of family that includes *madrinas*, *madrinos*, *tías*, *tíos*, *comarades*, *compadres*. We have a very inclusive sense of what it means to be Latino and be part of the family which is almost a tribal concept.

Acculturate means I know I'm Latina, but I also know how to function in another culture, the white culture in America. And I can function in numerous cultures. I'm culturally fluid because I know my core... Acculturation is what we need for our multicultural future... It's just interesting to me because as a person of color I've had to learn all of this in order to be successful. At this point it makes me more adaptable and more culturally flexible, and more able to lead in a diverse world. So the very things that I had to learn and that people of color had to learn are now becoming the skills you need in this new world.

It goes all the way back to the very beginnings of all three cultures, whether you're talking about the African experience, even during slave times it didn't matter whether that child was related to you. It took the village to raise that child and because families were torn apart during slavery. African Americans developed this whole idea that we're all relatives. And that's exactly how the Cherokee and the Lakota greet each other. So the last two principles, I guess, you would call them almost spiritual principles that cut across communities of color that have held them together through all this time.

It is this idea that

we're all related.

The second one is the whole idea of our spiritual core; that leadership is spiritual responsibility towards others. And so that principle is called *gracias*: gratitude, hope, forgiveness. Reconciliation, which is one of the most significant things African Americans brought, is part of this.

We saw it really working in South Africa. The whole idea that through all these trials and tribulations, through all of what communities of color have been through, they have reconciled and forgiven their oppressors or the people that have done them wrong. That is one of the greatest gifts these cultures are contributing to the development of the world, really. Raul Yzaguirre, the great Hispanic civil rights leaders, grew up in Texas when there were signs, "No Mexicans, no dogs." Yet today, he invites people to be part of partnership society. He has reconciled the past and is looking towards the future.

In terms of insights, did you start with the 8 principles, or did the 8 principles evolve from the interviews?

They actually evolved. Although if you read my early articles on Latino leadership some of the same principles are there. When I first wrote the book and I interviewed the leaders in the different communities, I actually had a chapter on Latino leadership, on Native American leadership, on Black leadership. I started to write about Asians, and luckily for me my publisher said, don't go there. It is too complex and I have little experience in this area. I'm encouraging Asian scholars to do that. I knew in my heart of hearts that I was going to have to integrate this information about how the principles that cut across Black, Latino, and Indian communities, but I was hoping that I could get away with not doing it. It really was a lot of weaving, integrating, and looking at commonalities. My publisher said, "No, you have to do that work. You have to go through these and find the unifying principles," so I did and it really was another way of serving these com-

munities.

For example, when I talk about culturally effective communications, to a Native American that means listening and that you are kind of the center point sitting there learning, integrating, and weaving the basket or bringing the consensus. You don't speak till everybody is done. You're simply the receiver and the receptacle and the integrator.

John Echohawk says when he's with Anglo leaders they don't think he's a leader because he's sitting there watching and listening. But it's a really high level of awareness.

In many other communities that was the role of the chief. The chief wasn't there to tell you what to do; the chief was there to make sure that he was the mirror of the collective heart of the community. African Americans have a much more assertive style. And then with Latinos, we have a very, you know, we're much more of a feeling-oriented culture, where charisma, and passion and connection with people is what makes you a good communicator.

In all the cultures, telling stories is a way to communicate, so there's some difference based on cultural roots but there are many more similarities. I learned a lot about that but I am also hoping communities of color will find some unity from this book, because it's only by us coming together and seeing our similarities that we're going to be able to have the kind of impact that we need to have in the future.

The analogy that I used is the jazz group. My individuality, which is very strong, is also here to enhance the collective. This is different than me being a strong individual that stands out from the collective be-

cause I'm smarter, brighter, have a better degree, a better position, hence I'm a leader. No! We dig your individuality and that you are special because now you can now contribute to the collective.

What I find really remarkable about the book is the way it goes beyond some of the politics of identity. It not only recognizes the differences and assets of a group but integrates them with assets of other groups.

Well, there's a spiritual message in the book. I really believe that the core of what we need to do today is to bring back our spiritual essence and the reliance on something better, something good in the world. It's about finding the positives. It's about finding the connections. It's about inspiring people and getting people to go beyond differences to find that universal core that connects all of us. Because what we're trying to do is build a future for our children who are going to define themselves as multi-cultural. They are going to define that new world and we need to do what we can do to begin weaving that connection between all of us. So my book is being accepted as a spiritual book in the sense that I am encouraging people to integrate their social and political action, their leadership, with the whole idea in the Bible that we're supposed to take care of each other.

You make a distinction between acculturation and assimilation and you explain that it's a continuum, not a dichotomy. Can you talk a little about the difference between those two terms and the choices they provide?

Well if we honor Sankofa we know what happened with this American experiment. When America first started, people had to assimilate. It's

especially unfortunate because there was almost no core to assimilate to. I mean sometimes when people look at the Anglo culture they say Anglos don't even realize they're individualistic because they don't have a cultural definition. Nobody goes around saying, "I'm white," you know? So they don't have that same kind of cultural identity. When everybody had to go into the melting pot and assimilate well, that isn't useful in the multicultural world. People are not going to adapt to one style. They're not going to assimilate. There was just a study showing that Muslim youth are identifying with their culture and their religion at a greater percentage than their parents. And the same thing is happening with Latinos: Latino youth are identifying with being Latino. We're actually moving towards a different kind of process, which is acculturation. Again, I'm hoping that my book will help people see people in communities of color not only as bringing gifts but as being leaders in this new paradigm because we had to acculturate just as all Americans need to do now.

Acculturate means that I know I'm Latina but I also know how to function in another culture, the white culture in America. And I can function in numerous cultures. I'm culturally fluid because I know my core. I know who I am. But I'm open to learning and adding on to my cultural repertoire. Acculturation is what we need in our multicultural future.

Organizations are limited because they are built around hierarchical pluralism rather than egalitarian pluralism. In the past and particularly since people of color have been educated, they may have been promoted to be vice presidents, CEOs, presidents of universities but they still need to function in this system that has been set up through the white culture and the dominant culture. (And it's called

the dominant culture for a reason, right?) We haven't done the other very often, setting up organizations that reflect the values of the diverse people that make up the organization. This starts with dialogue around what are these differences. If you come from a collective culture, what does that look like in an organization? And if you believe in leaders as equals, how do we treat each other where that can be a reality?

When I taught at the Center for Creative Leadership, I could go there and I could become a teacher but I had to follow the dominant culture rules about what leadership is and how it's structured. That means I had to leave my gifts at the door. That's spelled out in the book, *Leading in Black and White*. Black people walk in the corporate door and they have to leave their gifts outside the door. This is a great loss for corporations, particularly today when we're looking at the birth of a multicultural society. The challenge is to start birthing multicultural organizations. We need to start having dialogues about how we do that. The principles in this book offer a pathway to do this.

It's interesting that this is really a task for Anglo people who haven't had the opportunity to interface with other cultures. They have to say, "I'm going to learn to acculturate; I'm going to actively find myself a diversity mentor. I'm going to actively join organizations like the NAACP (or whatever they want to choose). I'm going to actively put myself in a position to learn about other cultures and to expand my repertoire about how you function in this global economy." And a lot of people have done that, but I would say that there are many people that haven't. So that's the invitation: to learn how to acculturate and to learn how to become part of the multicultural dance.

It's just interesting to me because as a person of color I've had to learn all of this in order to be successful. At this point it makes me more adaptable, more culturally flexible, and more able to be a leader in a diverse world. So the very things that I had to learn and that people of color had to learn are now becoming the skills you need in this new world. It's like the first will be the last and the last will be first.

Just like the environmental movement has reached a tipping point now, I think multiculturalism is going to reach a tipping point. And it's going to bubble up from the youth. Like my Indian-Irish-Latino-Black grandson, who is the multicultural future. It's going to take time, this change in demography, which will then change institutions, which will then change the way we relate to each other as human beings.

One topic I didn't see you touch upon though I think is very important in all of this is conflict. If you're a guardian of public values, people may have honest differences as to what public values are important and how to defend them. Can you talk a little bit about conflict within these three different communities?

I do think that communities of color in some ways, in order to survive, have kind of silo-ed themselves—you know when you're under attacks, you close in the ranks, you bring in the wagons. If you look at the psychology of oppression, one of the ways people have remained oppressed is by division—within their own ranks and with other groups. And so I'm hoping that not only my book but some of the work I'm doing and some of the work I will be doing with leaders in these three communities will help build bridges so that we can get to a place where we basically

have an agenda about what kind of a society we want our children to inherit; so that our differences are good and we respect them—because you have to do that in a multicultural world; so that we remember our many commonalities; and that we get to a place where we are working towards a common vision.

Is this a place where you're inviting those communities that may have differences within them to look to the best in their tradition and also to follow these eight principles in terms of creative resolution of conflict?

Yes, that's exactly right, because like I say-- I'm in search of multicultural excellence, and you don't find Anglo people, you know I've been accused of idealizing our communities and I say, well, you find Anglo people writing about in search of excellence. You find them writing good to great. You find them writing about the best of the best. And that's what I've chosen to do. I've chosen to pick leaders in our communities, who are respected and are holding the beacon of light, leaders who we should emulate. These leaders are saying, "This is what we need to be, this is who we are, this is the best of the best, and this is where we need to be going." I think that will inspire our young people. This book is also a way to rejuvenate our young people's sense of who we are and to say, you know, I'm not assimilating, I'm going to acculturate, I'm going to take the best of my culture with me, and in this way I will make the greatest contribution to the multicultural future.

What a wonderful closing statement! Thank you.

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