



## *Whole Person Leadership Model*

### *The Center for Asian Pacific American Women*

#### *Introduction*

The Whole Person Leadership Model, presented by The Center for Asian Pacific American (APA) Women (The Center) guides participants through three levels of leadership that impact their daily experiences at work and in their communities: individual, interpersonal and institutional. Whole Person Leadership offers a new, more integrated way to contribute more of themselves in boardrooms, courtrooms, academic or family halls, government or community settings, resulting in greater satisfaction in one's work and greater results in today's increasingly complex and diverse workplace.

## Whole Person Leadership

Whole Person Leadership is a way of leading and a way of being. It offers a new approach essential for dealing with the increasing complexity of our global marketplace, workplaces and communities. Whole Person Leadership draws upon our values, intentions, wisdom and intuition to produce extraordinary results amidst chaos and change. It requires a broad awareness of one's environment and a deep awareness of one's self. It embraces the value of leading from one's center with genuineness, generosity and trust in one's self, and draws upon one's entire repertoire of talents, whether managing a diverse team, pursuing strategic thinking for a community project, or motivating one's family.

Whole Person Leadership recognizes the importance of self-monitoring, self-correcting, self-tuning, and relationship with others. By engaging at the interpersonal level, there is an increased ability to learn from those around you and to coach and teach oneself. Whole Person Leadership development is about enhancing leadership at the individual, interpersonal and institutional levels.

In 2009, Catalyst Inc., a leading nonprofit organization working globally to build inclusive workplaces and expand opportunities for women in business, issued a report entitled "Women of Color in U.S. Law Firms," which documents how women of color face particular obstacles that may significantly decrease their job satisfaction and increase the likelihood of their departure from their current firms. The study examines how the "intersectionality," or the combined impact of marginalization based on the dual status of being both

female and of color, puts women of color at a unique disadvantage in the workplace. Despite the widespread existence of systems created to develop and advance women of color, research has shown that more than 75 percent of these women will leave their current employer within five years, costing these firms the tremendous loss that employee turnover inevitably entails and leaving these women to seek new employment situations where they may, in fact, face these same obstacles once again.<sup>i</sup>

While female attorneys of color are continuing to make inroads and career advances, an examination of the upper echelon of women in the legal profession quickly reveals that racial inequities still exist. The 2009 roster of top women legal officers of Fortune 500 companies consists of 75 white/Caucasians (non-Hispanic), 6 African Americans, 2 Hispanics, and 1 Asian Pacific American.

The 2009 Catalyst report identifies a number of these challenges unique to women of color working in the legal profession as:

- A greater sense of “outsider status” and limited growth opportunities
- Racial and gender stereotyping and more reported feelings of sexism in the workplace compared to white women
- Lack of access to high-profile client assignments and important client engagements
- Missed opportunities for candid feedback
- Women of color were more also likely than their white colleagues to have a more expansive definition of family (i.e. more people to whom they had personal commitments to fulfill) and a stronger commitment to religious and cultural activities.

These challenges emphasize the importance for

## *The Individual Level*

Whole Person Leadership focuses on self-awareness and self-reflection in several key areas:

- “Who am I at my core or center?” is the central question asked of each leader. What is the cultural context in which I have grown up and continue to develop? Through self-awareness, self-reflection and cultural competency, we start to gain greater clarity in who we are at our most fundamental human level as well as who we are as leaders in our families, communities, government or company.
- How is my personality a reflection (or not) of my True Self?
- What gifts do I wish to bring forward in addition to my gifts of intelligence, ability to analyze, and my quick mind? What is ego-based and what is whole person-based?
- What parts of my Self may be buried, unrecognized or obscured from view but essential for my Whole Person Leadership stance to develop and grow?

At the individual level, Whole Person Leadership fosters effective performance and management, successful self coaching and mentoring, while being accountable for your own mental, physical and emotional balance.

the type of individual and institutional exploration and development that Whole Person Leadership offers and the necessity of recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach to tackling workplace issues cannot meet the needs of an increasingly diverse talent pool. The report recommends the following strategies for attracting and retaining a talent pool of diverse employees:

### *The Interpersonal Level*

Whole Person Leadership at the interpersonal level explores how who we are influences how we relate to others.

Interpersonal development and community building includes learning competencies in these areas, among others:

- Gaining interpersonal cultural understanding, cross-cultural awareness, and the ability to better manage diverse teams;
- Articulating and experiencing the fundamental ways in which we relate to others in the work that we do;
- Understanding our strengths, blind spots and leadership styles to better understand our impact on and relationship with others;
- Identifying the behaviors that align best with fostering team/community goals, identifying rewards and recognition, motivating others, and managing oneself to produce quality results.

- Include senior leaders as active players in building and establishing inclusive workplaces.
- Raise awareness of intersectionality and the varying needs of differing minority groups.
- Create opportunities for dialogue between firm leadership and women of color attorneys.
- Educate all attorneys, especially partners and other supervising attorneys, on how to recognize bias and stereotyping of women of color in the workplace.
- Monitor and track the career development of women of color and hold leaders accountable for their advancement.

These recommendations for employers in the legal field are commendable and specific. The Whole Person Leadership model focuses on both the broader and deeper issue of how practitioners can take charge of their own careers by learning an approach to leadership that will make them both more successful in an increasingly diverse workplace and more fulfilled in their daily lives at work.

The strength of communities is to assist individuals develop personal skills, draw from life experiences and emerge as leaders in their circle of influence, especially as we move from “The Information Age” to what we call “The Age of Relationship.” This new paradigm emphasizes our interconnectedness and calls for a change in how we lead.

# The Process

How do we teach Whole Person Leadership? Through self-awareness and self-reflective exercises, group dialogue, and a myriad of other tools—from martial arts to leadership assessment instruments such as the Strengths Finder and HBDI—we gain greater clarity and focus on our Whole Person Leadership skills. We also help participants discover their true gifts and assets, their connection to self and how to communicate authentically and clearly with others.

This life-changing process reaches beyond the mind to the true essence of the person. Whole Person Leadership is grounded in one's character, commitment and collaboration with others and allows us to leverage our individual gifts and talents to bolster personal and professional development.

Terry Seamon, an organizational development professional, has expressed Whole Person Leadership in the following manner. We have added to his sentiments and are committed to redefining leadership.

## Leadership Requires the Whole Person<sup>ii</sup>

*The heart for loving yourself and others.*

*The stomach for courage to face yourself and outside adversity.*

*The head for critical thinking.*

*The eye for looking within and ahead.*

*The tongue for telling truth to yourself and others.*

*The ears for listening to yourself and others.*

*The hands for applauding your work and the work of others.*

*The arms for embracing yourself and others.*

*The back for lifting yourself and others up.*

*The knees for bending in service to others.*

*The feet for the journey.*

*The soul for going down deep within in search of meaning.*

*The spirit for soaring to the heights of higher purpose.*

Article written by Peggy Nagae

Edited by Rosie Abriam Lee

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<sup>i</sup> While this data is about female attorneys of color, we assume similar statistic across all industries.

<sup>ii</sup> Adapted from Terrence Seamon,

[http://learningvoyager.blogspot.com/2006\\_04\\_01\\_archive.html](http://learningvoyager.blogspot.com/2006_04_01_archive.html)

## *The Institutional Level*

Whole Person Leadership integrates personal development, interpersonal skills, and organizational competencies, whether within a family, community, corporation, law firm, NGO, or government agency. Such leadership goes beyond a title, position, circumstance and structure. Whole Person Leadership entails:

- Leading an organization with vision and values that reflect one's ethics, creativity, and spirit;
- Assessing the organizational structure and its impact on productivity, morale and inclusiveness, so that everyone's talents are leveraged, and issues are addressed with greater ease;
- Recognizing that knowing oneself and building culturally competent relationships with others is essential to "building a beloved community," a valued place in which we can live, work and thrive.