

Ignatian Questions Journal #1 –

ORGL 600 was honestly a perspective shifting and (surprisingly) heart opening experience that has completely redefined how I think of leadership and see my role as a leader in general. What I learned in the most basic and abstract sense is that leadership starts from within -- from the ability to lead one's own self down the path that best represents his or her leadership style, morals, goals, and philosophies.

The work that stands most present from the class were the ideas that challenged my initial, and somewhat hackneyed, understandings of leadership. That is to say: how I viewed my leaders, in both past and present contexts; how I viewed my own leadership style and my potential to change, improve or redefine what that looks like; and most importantly, for me, how I more clearly identify and offset the high cost of improper power dynamics and toxic leadership in an organization.

The modules were set up in a way that resonated with my learning style and followed a progression that was seemingly natural. What stands out to me from the class was that I was able to determine what I don't want in a leader and what I do want in a leader, then what I need to do to get there and how do I self-reflect on who I will I be when I arrive there?

Certainly, I was expecting to be challenged intellectually but perhaps not so much on a spiritual level. I did not expect the texts and interactions that I had during this course to affect me emotionally as much it they did. The connection between head and heart was something that stands out to me, as well. From my view today, it makes perfect sense, but initially I was caught off guard. The acknowledgement that love can be a guiding principle in leadership is something that seemed quite earth-shattering to me. In retrospect, this eye-opening journey speaks volumes about the leaders and leadership styles that I have witnessed and followed for much of my professional life. And it also speaks volumes about me.

In terms of how this class has affirmed and/or challenged my understand of leadership, I have mixed emotions in reporting that the latter occurred in excess. The affirmations came in very general assertions about leaders attaining specific goals and mobilizing followers to work in lockstep with that vision. Parker Palmer reinforced a lot of common truths that drive and develop those educating or leading. I felt Carey and Northouse both encouraged me find my own leadership style and made clear that pros and cons exist in any scenario. It's the artful leader who navigates his philosophy of leadership through those pitfalls to achieve success.

Northouse's discussions about toxic leadership, Freire's entire text and Carey's elaboration on the Political Frame really served to affirm that ideas that I had been conditioned/oppressed to view as normal or expected leadership behavior, were in fact, unacceptable. I took to heart some of Freire's cautionary observations about becoming a victim or co-oppressor in an oppressive reality that absorbs those within it. To lead successfully, one must understand the needs and realities of those he or she is leading. As a result, the concept of achieving an

unembedded view of an organization is one that highlights the importance of understanding the different view and reality of each worker or department.

The ideas presented in the four films also shared a progression of leadership styles and very much enriched the readings. Witnessing the effects of oppression via *Strictly Ballroom*; viewing the Five Frames with *A Man for All Seasons*; most impactfully viewing Freire's assertions as well as Adaptive and Servant-Leadership via the lens of *Norma Rae*; and better understanding Wheatley via *Mindwalk* were unexpectedly on point and enriching. They all challenged my view of leadership and provided a deeper insight into different leadership styles, byproducts of toxic leadership and the value of interconnectedness in leading a community of learning and mutual understanding.