

**Black & Female Leadership Initiative  
Overview and Design  
January 2013 – December 2017**

**LEADERSHIP IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY**

The leadership development field abounds with theories, models, techniques and tools designed to nurture and prepare individuals to lead. Many of these approaches to preparing today's leaders are based upon the social, economic, cultural and community standards of earlier times. The reality is that twenty-first century leaders face new challenges and opportunities as our communities are more complex and more interconnected.<sup>1</sup>

Social justice activists and diverse communities are re-imagining and redefining what leadership means and which faces are at the forefront. Late in the 20th century, scholarship emerged describing new leadership as a collective, shared process that evolves with participants and prioritizes relationship-building.<sup>2</sup>

Collective leadership occurs when people come together and mobilize resources in ways that improve their communities. It is an intrinsically inclusive approach to leadership because it requires individuals to cross boundaries of all types –such as race, gender, class, age, religion and culture – as they commit to cooperative learning, joint action, shared responsibility and mutual accountability. Competencies include the capacity to develop oneself and to cross many boundaries: those between individuals and groups, those among organizations and those fostered by issues that divide. It also involves challenging assumptions; expanding perspectives from an emphasis on the “I” to accentuating both “I” and “We;” and bringing people together to address conflicts.<sup>3</sup>

An even more recent innovation in leadership theory is to posit race analysis as central to effective leadership that can exercise power in social justice movement building.<sup>4</sup> Even so, leadership within the social justice movement or more broadly, continues to be defined within a framework that assumes white males are the default leaders and a “leader and follower”

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<sup>1</sup> *The Collective Leadership Framework: A Workbook for Cultivating and Sustaining Community Change*, a publication of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2007), [www.iel.org/pubs/collective\\_leadership\\_framework\\_workbook.pdf](http://www.iel.org/pubs/collective_leadership_framework_workbook.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *A Framework for 21st Century Leadership*, <http://www.joe.org/joe/1995december/a1.php>  
*A Review of Leadership Theory and Competency Frameworks*, <http://www2.fcsh.unl.pt/docentes/luisrodrigues/textos/Lideran%C3%A7a.pdf>  
*The Holistic Leader: A Developmental Systemic Approach to Leadership*, [http://www.julieorlovconsulting.com/docs/holistic\\_leader\\_article.pdf](http://www.julieorlovconsulting.com/docs/holistic_leader_article.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> W.K. Kellogg Foundation, loc.cit.

<sup>4</sup> *Weaving Color Lines: Race, Ethnicity, and the Work of Leadership in Social Change Organizations*, <http://lea.sagepub.com/content/5/2/131.full.pdf>

dichotomy is the natural order. Even today, when our President of the United States is an African American man, the most recent study of diversity in the charitable sector<sup>5</sup> reveals that white men are overwhelmingly in the top leadership positions.

Additionally, there is minimal scholarship available on the role of Black women's leadership in modern social justice movement theory and practice.<sup>6</sup> Be Present, Inc.'s *Black & Female Leadership Initiative* was launched in January 2013 in honor of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Black & Female: What is the Reality?* to definitively add to the field of leadership theory, the academic lexicon of leadership studies and the demonstrated evolution of social justice movement building practice.

## **BLACK & FEMALE LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE**

Be Present, Inc.'s roots emerge from nationally recognized trainer and activist Lillie P. Allen's *Black & Female: What is the Reality?*<sup>®</sup> workshop at the *First National Conference on Black Women's Health Issues* held at Spelman College in 1983 in Atlanta, GA. This conference birthed the *National Black Women's Health Project* (now the *Black Women's Health Imperative*). In 1988, a group of Black women trained by Ms. Allen as self-help group facilitators invited other women of color and white women activists to participate in *Sisters & Allies*<sup>®</sup>. This leadership initiative formed the foundation for Be Present which incorporated as a nonprofit in 1992. Diverse men and boys have been participating in all aspects of the organization since 2008.

Be Present, Inc.'s work grows out of 40+ years of experience in developing sustainable leadership for social justice. We support individuals to be more effective leaders in creating well being within themselves as well as in their families, organizations and communities. This mission is accomplished through:

- Teaching the Be Present Empowerment Model<sup>®</sup> to strengthen individuals' self knowledge and capacity to consciously listen and act;
- Providing training and systems of support to sustain collective leadership knowledge and skills;
- Sustaining a diverse national network of locally organized activists to enhance capacity for movement building; and
- Creating alliances with other nonprofits dedicated to creating a more just world.

The Be Present Empowerment Model<sup>®</sup> has more than 40 years of practice that illuminates currently recognized best leadership practices, including fully incorporated race, gender, class and power analyses; as well as a fully integrated collective leadership model pioneered by Black

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<sup>5</sup> *A Man's World*, <http://philanthropy.com/article/A-Mans-World/57099/>

<sup>6</sup> *Theorizing African American Women's Leadership Experiences: Socio-Cultural Theoretical Alternatives*, [http://advancingwomen.com/awl/awl\\_wordpress/theorizing-african-american-women%E2%80%99s-leadership-experiences-socio-cultural-theoretical-alternatives/](http://advancingwomen.com/awl/awl_wordpress/theorizing-african-american-women%E2%80%99s-leadership-experiences-socio-cultural-theoretical-alternatives/)

*A Re-articulation of Black Female Community Leadership: Processes, Networks and a Culture of Resistance*, <http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/prba/perspectives/spring1997/ballen.pdf>

women. This Model teaches how groups can come to consensus, make decisions and move social justice agendas *outside* of the distress derived from individuals' current and historical experiences of oppression based on race, gender, class, age, sexual orientation, language, ethnicity and religion, among others. It has a proven track record of successfully transforming individuals, organizations, institutions and communities.

The Black & Female Leadership Initiative addresses an ostensible lack of the voices and visibility of Black women's leadership in the literature, historical record and dialogue on social justice movement-building. It also highlights the process as well as the achievements of using a collective leadership approach in creating a diverse national network of activists successfully moving social justice agendas in the United States. As a result, the Initiative will position the Be Present Empowerment Model within the lexicon of academic research and published writings about collective leadership and specifically the leadership of Black women in partnering with diverse people to create sustainable change that serves everyone in our communities.

Specific goals are:

- Increase the visibility of the vision, perspective, experience and practice of leadership of Black women in various fields including health, midwifery, reproductive rights, criminal justice reform, education, domestic violence, family law, environmental justice, civil rights, philanthropy, immigrant and refugee rights, community organizing, public policy and performing arts, among others.
- Build collective leadership competencies of current and next generation social justice activists, students, policymakers, opinion leaders, service providers and community organizers.
- Document and disseminate best practices via publications (print and audiovisual) with a focus on collective leadership development across issue silos and fields of practice.
- Preserve historical scholarship, collective memory and national identity of Be Present, Inc.'s role in building a diverse movement for social justice by transferring organizational records to The Sofia Smith Collection, Women's History Archives at Smith College. [An agreement is currently in place.]

## **BE PRESENT EMPOWERMENT MODEL®**

Be Present, Inc. believes that it is possible to bridge the chasms of racial differences and its intersection with ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, nationality or disability, to create a society where all people are honored with dignity and the right to thrive and express their full potential. Without examining the connection between and impact of these issues on us, our institutions, families and communities, inequitable policies will continue to slow our progress.



The Be Present Empowerment Model® provides a platform for learning, dialogue and practice to explore the impact of racism, sexism, classism and all forms of oppression upon people’s lives. It explores how history and social contexts of these issues get encoded within us and then externalized through our behaviors. It supports the analysis of how these behaviors are manifested in our relationships, communities and institutions – all of which comprise the systems we live in. It identifies challenges and strategies; and shares best practices and lessons learned on creating inclusive, socially just organizations through systemic change.

This methodology is successful in achieving long-term skills development and organizational learning. It results in individuals, organizations and coalitions being able to dismantle structures of oppression and embrace diversity and inclusion; as well as to create a solid foundation for self-exploration and deeper analysis that leads to transformation and innovation.

The three interrelated leadership realms of the Be Present Empowerment Model® are:

- Know Yourself Outside the Distress of Oppression
- Listen to Others in a Conscious and Present State
- Build Effective Relationships and Sustain True Alliances

The competencies of the Be Present Empowerment Model® include:

- Integrity and Trust
- Collaboration
- Conflict Transformation
- Consensus Building
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Effective Communication
- Facilitation
- Personal Effectiveness
- Interpersonal/Group Skills
- Conscious Listening
- Participatory Decision-making
- Resilience

**Be Present Empowerment Model and Systems of Support  
Build Collective Leadership and Sustainable Partnerships**

- (1) **Traits and Characteristics** – the foundation for learning, the inherent make-up of individuals on which further experiences can be built. Includes: confidence, courage, integrity, decisiveness, justice, initiative, maturity, commitment, creativity, self-discipline, flexibility, empathy/compassion, etc.
- (2) **Skills, Abilities and Knowledge** – developed through learning experiences, broadly defined to include school, work, participation in community affairs, etc.
- (3) **Competencies** – the result of integrative learning experiences in which knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviors interact to insure successful performance. THINK - clearly, critically and creatively, analyze, synthesize, integrate and evaluate; VALUE – make reasoned judgments and responsible commitments; ACT – purposefully, effectively and responsibly; COMMUNICATE – verbally, nonverbally, socially, interpersonally and relationally.
- (4) **Demonstrations** – the results of applying competencies. It is at this level that performance is assessed and lessons learned will be captured.



**DESIGN OF THE BLACK & FEMALE INITIATIVE**

Phase	Scope	Timeframes
Phase I	Planning	January 2013 – December 2013
Phase II	Implementation	January 2014 – December 2016
Phase III	Report Out	Fall 2015 – December 2017

**PHASE I: PLANNING (January 2013 – December 2013)**

**GOALS:**

1. Host *Black & Female: What is the Reality* gatherings and trainings to raise awareness about the Initiative and to create spaces for Black women and girls to reflect, celebrate and discuss leadership. Events include:
  - a. February 2, 2013 in San Francisco, CA
  - b. February 3 - 8, 2013 at Esalen Institute, Big Sur, CA
  - c. June 22, 2013 in New York, NY
  - d. November 9, 2013 in Atlanta, GA.
  - e. December 7, 2013 in New York, NY
  
2. Host regional gatherings and trainings for network members and partner organizations to raise awareness about the Initiative and to strengthen leadership of activists. Events include:
  - a. Be Present Family Camp week-long training at Esalen Institute, August 4 - 9, 2013.
  - b. *Race, Gender, Power and Class* four-day workshop in San Francisco Bay Area, September 19 – 22, 2013.
  
3. Host *National Network Leadership Convening* in Atlanta, GA on November 6-9, 2013 with training workshops on collective governance, community organizing and public policy as well as celebration events honoring 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Black & Female: What is the Reality?* and 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Be Present, Inc.



**PHASE II: IMPLEMENTATION (January 2014 – December 2016)**

**GOALS:**

1. Implement *Black & Female: What is the Reality Training Institute*, 18-month intensive training series for Black women and girls.

<b>Black &amp; Female Training Institute</b>	<b>Leadership Team</b>	<b>Full Group</b>
<i>Leadership Team Retreat</i>	January 26-31, 2014	N/A
<i>Leadership Team Retreat</i>	May 1-4, 2014	N/A
<i>Leadership Team Retreat</i>	September 18-21, 2014	N/A
<i>Training Session #1</i>	January 12-14, 2015	January 15-18, 2015
<i>Training Session #2</i>	April 13-15, 2015	April 16-19, 2015
<i>Training Session #3</i>	June 8-10, 2015	June 11-14, 2015
<i>Training Session #4</i>	October 19-21, 2015	October 22-25, 2015
<i>Training Session #5</i>	February 1-3, 2016	February 4-7, 2016
<i>Training Session #6</i>	May 16-18, 2016	May 19-22, 2016
<i>National Black Women’s Leadership Conference</i>	September 19-21, 2016	September 22-25, 2016

2. Implement trainings open to all people. Events include:
  - a. *National Network Leadership Convenings* in the fall of 2014, 2015 and 2016 in Atlanta, GA.
  - b. *Race, Gender, Power & Class Training Institute* in San Francisco Bay Area, an 18-month training series beginning in the winter of 2014 and culminating in a National Conference in the fall of 2015 (see dates below).
  - c. *Race, Gender, Power & Class Training Institute* in New York City area, an 18-month training series beginning in the fall of 2014 and culminating in a National Conference in the fall of 2016 (dates TBD).
  - d. *Be Present Family Camp* in the summer of 2014, 2015 and 2016.

<b>Race, Gender, Power &amp; Class Training Institute in San Francisco Bay Area</b>	<b>Leadership Team</b>	<b>Full Group</b>
<i>Orientation</i>	September 17 - 18, 2013	September 19 - 22, 2013
<i>Training Session #1</i>	January 6 - 8, 2014	January 9 - 12, 2014
<i>Training Session #2</i>	April 7 - 9, 2014	April 10 - 13, 2014
<i>Training Session #3</i>	July 28-30, 2014	July 31 – August 1, 2014
<i>Training Session #4</i>	October 20-22, 2014	October 23-26, 2014
<i>Training Session #5</i>	January 26-28, 2015	January 29 – February 1, 2015



<b>Training Session #6</b>	May 11-13, 2015	May 15-18, 2015
<b>National Conference</b>	September 21-23, 2015	September 24-27, 2015

3. Design and implement evaluation plan to capture collective leadership lessons learned and best practices. Evaluation employs a 3-tiered approach:
  - a. **Evaluation by the Numbers (Quantitative).** Programs are monitored based on quantifiable outcomes.
  - b. **Participant Feedback (Qualitative).** Surveys are developed to track each participant’s experience in all training sessions. Participant Surveys asks basic demographic and background questions. They also record participants’ understanding and/or uses of the Be Present Empowerment Model®; as well as specific issues that come up and how work in the training sessions and the Be Present network leadership development systems facilitate positive movement. In addition, videographer uses creative documentation, such as photography and videography, to capture qualitative data.
  - c. **Changes in Behavior (Qualitative).** The 18-month training institutes, as well as Be Present Peer Support Groups and Regional Organizing Core Groups, track each participant’s longer-term leadership development and the impact of the Be Present Empowerment Model® on their personal and professional lives.
  
4. Develop and implement *Social Justice Archives Project* that catalogues Be Present, Inc. historical papers and data; and prepares organizational records for transfer to The Sofia Smith Collection, Women’s History Archives at Smith College.





**PHASE III: REPORT-OUT (NOVEMBER 2015 – December 2017)**

**GOALS:**

1. Publish report entitled *Moving Forward in Action: Black Women and the Role of Collective Leadership in Building Diverse Movements for Social Justice* with key findings, recommendations and case studies focused on lessons learned and best practices.
2. Create video that highlights lessons learned and best practices in collective leadership.
3. Implement trainings open to all people to share lesson learned and best practices. Events include:
  - a. *National Network Leadership Convening* in the fall of 2017.
  - b. *Be Present Family Camp* in the summer of 2017.
4. Transfer Be Present, Inc. organizational records to The Sofia Smith Collection, Women’s History Archives at Smith College.

**BUDGET**

The budget for the five-year initiative is \$3,375,000. (See Attachment A)