

CHAPTER 11

Place in Leadership Formation

The Institute for Educational and Community Leadership (IECL)

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Place contextualizes us—it provides a grounding for where we are from, where we have had profound experiences, and what communities we identify ourselves to be from. Place influences our personal sense of nature, hometown, socioecological values, and the visions we hold for the world. Place affects our sense of problems and priority issues that we believe our primary communities ought to deal with and why. Moreover, place contextualizes what we believe leadership to be and our assumptions about how best to exercise those qualities.

Over the last quarter century, more and more cities, geographical regions, and civic-minded organizations have begun to sponsor public leadership programs oriented toward the needs, opportunities, and/or problems associated with American communities. Community leadership programs emerged as civic orientation mechanisms for preparing a new generation of leaders for nonprofits, community associations, corporate and governmental institutions, and the diverse networks required to maintain a higher quality of community life and deal with complex local problems. Most public leadership projects guide their participants toward recognizing the assets of particular locations and seek to build long-term relationships among project participants in order to carry forward shared visions for community improvement.

The Institute for Educational and Community Leadership (IECL) was unusual in this regard. IECL was created as a special outreach project

of the College of Education at the University of New Mexico and the Division of Educational Leadership and Organizational Learning. Coordinated by the Policy Center of the College of Education, IECL required a 1-year commitment on the part of participants; at IECL's conclusion, each participant was to receive a special certificate in community leadership, and 18 academic credit hours. IECL was organized around weekend workshops and retreats, including two intensive summer sessions and a concentrated practicum. Over a 3-year period (1997–2000), more than 60 students ranging from high school aged to retirees participated in three separate cohorts.

IECL's design was a response to a specific moment in time, an experiential and academic answer to the issues confronting particular people and places in the southwestern part of the United States. IECL was intertwined in the lives, work, and home places of educators and community workers who actively sought to better understand who they were, where they were from, what challenged families and children, and, most importantly, how to change community and educational conditions.

What made IECL unusual, beyond its staying power with select participants, was its underpinning in place-based learning—rural, urban, and tribal communities—and how it established a space for participants to contextualize problems and examine issues grounded in personal experience and real places. In the process, IECL's community learning orientation informed participants' sense of shared problems and possibilities across urban, small town, and Indigenous communities.

Although IECL would deal with complex social problems and major institutions, such as schools and health care entities, its entire orientation was toward place and relationships. This included not only New Mexico as a bioregion or Albuquerque as a unique cultural area, but the actual places people lived, worked, and went home to every evening. IECL's focus was on the places people found themselves in every day.

As IECL emerged and evolved into a distinct community leadership program, the relationships among people, the stories they shared, and how they came to energize and inspire one another, made this a memorable group experience that has simply become known as "IECL."

PLACE, LEARNING, AND LEADERSHIP

Community learning originates within our individual life experiences and the various settings we become immersed in. In terms of leadership formation, place becomes a teacher that is always present, no matter how many times we move or relocate. As we become more attentive to

what community has to teach, the lessons of place seem never ending, perpetual, and often paradoxical.

My own development from young boy to adolescent, into adulthood and now aging father and community member have all been influenced by the places I have lived, explored, and worked in over the course of life's journey. These experiences, accumulated learning garnered from each influential place, continue to steer my curiosity and direct my intellectual interests.

My boyhood adventures with community learning began by jumping trains and riding into the countryside, past "the colored section" of town into the rural rolling hills, where I saw the name Tecumseh on a roadside sign for the first time and acquired a permanent interest about all things Native. Boundaries, neighborhoods, the "wrong side of the tracks," and borders between the city and farmlands became my escape routes. These pathways allowed me to enter into rural and urban environments, into nature and learning outside institutional buildings.

Immediately after high school, I spent 2 years reading gas and electric meters in Dayton, Ohio, where I would find myself one day in poor neighborhoods, the next in middle-class suburbs, then downtown in the urban basements of skyscrapers and small shops. This let me see a variety of residences, commercial enterprises, and family living conditions. My day job became a sociological walkabout in an American city divided by racial and class lines, embodied in diverse neighborhoods and stark economic disparities.

Next came the American civil rights era, where my interest in social justice struggles and regional differences drew me to Mississippi. I remained on the sidelines in Hattiesburg until Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s murder in 1968. "What side are you on?" became more than a movement song. Working on voter education and "get out the vote" campaigns in the Black neighborhoods in South Dallas, Texas solidified a personal pull toward studying community power, race relations, and local organizing.

Graduate studies in social psychology in Dallas, Texas convinced me that traditional higher education institutions required radical change and reform. The nature of academic structures, conventional academic course work, teaching methods, semester credit-hour systems, and assumptions about core knowledge seemed an impractical way to organize learning in an era of war, civil rights conflicts, and emerging social movements. As a result, my attention turned toward American traditions in innovation and experimentation within colleges and universities, in both historical

and contemporary terms. I sought to discover places dedicated to alternative visions and ways of approaching learning.

My doctoral research on academic change pointed me toward the experimental institutions—Antioch College (which I had passed as a young boy countless times on my trips through the countryside), Goddard College in Vermont, and the New Colleges in Alabama, California, and places like Hofstra that sprang up during the '60s. In response to a national call to redesign learning options for diverse populations and adults—such entities as the University Without Walls movement, the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, Evergreen State College, Alverno College, Empire State College in New York—all became significant contributors to my sense of what is possible in post-secondary education and the critical importance of creating access for those blocked from attending college (at the time, women, minorities, special populations, and older adults).

These experimenting institutions were places where learning was centered on individual development through interdisciplinary study; problem-based or project learning, guided by learning agreements and personalized contracts, with extensive use of structured field experiences that emphasized community participation and civic involvement. The ideas associated with how learning could be more de-institutionalized and made more community oriented would hold my attention for more than three decades.

While completing my dissertation (1976–78), I did a two-year stint coordinating a national network for a Danforth Foundation funded Center for Individualized Education (CIE), promoting adult learning and new adult degree programs. Based at New York's Empire State College's administrative offices in Saratoga Springs, my work revolved around strengthening the eight-institution network of CIE and organizing the first international conference ever held on adult learning in the United States. However, faculty development workshops and conference organizing soon became too detached; they seemed very disconnected from place, community, and the lives of everyday people.

CHEROKEE TEACHINGS

Therefore, in the July summer sweltering heat of 1978, my wife, 18-month-old daughter, and I moved to eastern Oklahoma to live and work among the Cherokees, America's second largest Indigenous tribe. We hoped to do something that would be much more community oriented. My role, in both teaching and administration, would be as a full-time

social science faculty member with one of the nation's first innovative tribal colleges, Flaming Rainbow University (FRU).

Created with Ford Foundation support, FRU was the only Native American college founded to replicate the University Without Walls approach—assessment of prior learning, learning contracts, small topical classes, combined with many field projects. My primary assignment was to teach the introductory courses in Political Science, Sociology, and Social Problems and try to make learning as applied as possible. In addition, serving as Social Science Division Director, I was to develop programs dealing with cooperatives, community studies, and assist with the preparation of accreditation study documents.

A year later, Wilma Mankiller, a former FRU student who had been working in the planning department of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and Scott Gregory, the chief financial officer for the tribe, urged me to apply for the Tribal Development Officer vacancy. A new senior planning position reporting directly to the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, the Tribal Development Officer (TDO) led the planning department (which included Health, Education, Social Services, and various Community Projects). The TDO also was to prepare new federal and state grant submissions, assist communities with planning and program development, and establish new partnerships with national and state foundations.

A month into this new position, in early November 1979, our family's little world was forever changed when my wife, Sherrye Ethridge Morris, was killed in a head-on car crash near our home. My barely three-year old daughter Meghan and I were left to heal in a small cabin at the edge of Lake Tenkiller. In a sympathetic and caring reaction, the Cherokee people held us close to them in familial ways. Tribal elders invited us into the spiritual life of the communities. We were permitted to live more intimately among the people and take part in their daily trials and joys.

The hopes and dreams Sherrye held for the entire Cherokee experience were transported into my new position. In the process, my educational background and training were deeply tested. New learning occurred around river bottom mineral rights, historic building restoration, negotiations with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, implementation of the new federal Tribal Self-Determination laws, and the tug-of-war challenges associated with contract negotiations between various federal agencies. My cultural and historical ignorance about the Cherokees further challenged me. Extensive learning opportunities propelled me into subjects

and social problems that no degree in education or public policy could possibly have prepared me for.

Seven years later, my knowledge about communities and Indigenous approaches to development were permanently transformed. My sense of how people and place were intertwined was lived out in both everyday terms and through the conscious development of a new government with roots and representation tied directly to place and communities.

The Cherokee experiences produced innumerable lessons—enough to fill a book in its own right. Two incidents, in particular, stand out in terms of place-based learning and leadership formation.

LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE

One morning, Fan Robinson, a student of my wife's who was an environmental community health planner for the tribe, invited me to her office. Immediately upon entering the portal of her door, sitting to the side in a small chair, still wearing his cowboy hat with an eagle feather in the headband, was a Cherokee elder. Fan introduced him as Crosslin Smith.

As soon as I heard the name, I knew this was one of the traditional medicine chiefs, a hereditary descendent of the Keetowah's (the religious society) spiritual leaders. In an instant, Fan announced she needed to run an errand, picked up some papers, and left me standing before Mister Smith.

As she was departing, Crosslin began the long version of the Cherokee creation myth. He then went into the full explanation of the meaning and importance of each of the seven tribal clans. Becoming exceedingly nervous and unsure about what was happening, nearly 40 minutes standing witness to this endless stream of stories, I waited for him to pause and simply jumped in: "Uncle, why do you tell me all these things?"

His instructions still echo in my ears. "Son, you have been given a great responsibility. You have been asked to lead the Cherokee planning department, to represent us in the halls of government, to create programs and projects for our people. You know nothing, really, about us. You are a stranger, a newcomer to our world and our ways. You do not know our origins, our medicine, our traditions, our values and beliefs. Before you make any major decision or choose a particular path for our people, you must listen to what we think should be done. Do not assume you know what to do. We know what we want to happen for our communities, our way of life, the next generation. Listen to the people; speak with the elders -- we will tell you which way to go."

This simple but potent message has greatly influenced me in terms of place-based learning—listen to the people, they will point the way. People in every community and place know what they need, what is important to them, what they want to learn and do. Sometimes it may not be clear at first; there will be competing ideas and conflicting interests. But, the way will eventually be pointed out, if one listens to the people.

REMEMBER THE REMOVAL

By the early 1980s, there was a general recognition that the Cherokee children—elementary, middle, and senior high school aged students—were not receiving an adequate or historically accurate education about their people, the Cherokee contributions to society, their language, their removal from Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, and the tribe's struggles with the federal government over centuries, within the public schools and state controlled education.

The Cherokee Nation Youth Leadership program was established to address this oversight and encourage a new generation of potential tribal leaders. Young people did not know each other as blood relatives; they tended to only meet through school-based academic or athletic competition. Too few knew their own tribal history, the clan structure, anything about the old ways and key words and concepts in the Cherokee language. The tribe started the youth leadership program outside the schools as a way to deal with tribal history and core cultural values.

In an effort to revive interest in tribal history, the Cherokee Nation Youth Leadership Program sponsored separate trips to retrace the Trail of Tears, the infamous routes over which Cherokees were transported from their homelands in the east (Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia) to Indian Territory (modern day Oklahoma). Commonly known as the Trail of Tears by the Cherokees and several other Oklahoma tribes, these forced removals resulted in more than one-third of the tribal membership dying at the time (early 1830s) due to the arduous journey, various diseases, starvation, and freezing to death.

Historians have estimated more than 17,000 Cherokees perished in these forced removal trips from their eastern homeland to Indian Territory. The Trail of Tears marked the tribe's principal historical memory and was intensely implanted in every tribal members' consciousness. However, despite its cultural importance, only a few paragraphs appeared on this subject in the official State of Oklahoma history textbook.

In order to bring more prominence to this subject and rekindle a deeper interest in tribal history, the Cherokee Nation Youth Leadership Program

embarked upon three separate trips back to the ancient Cherokee homelands to retrace removal routes. These trips began in the summer of 1983—first through actually hiking the remaining trails in Arkansas and southern Missouri, then retracing historical points in North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee.

The last trip in 1984—called Remember the Removal—sought to bring larger public attention to naming various parts of the 1400 mile long land route of the Trail of Tears as a federal designated trail system. Ultimately, this trip did contribute to the federal designation being granted, and the entire experience remains an important youth development achievement for many tribal leaders. Later in 1984, the national Association for Experiential Education (AEE), with urging from the National Youth Leadership Council's chief executive officer, James Kielsmeier, named The Remember the Removal Project one of the outstanding youth leadership programs in the nation.

Teaching cultural and political history on the road, in actual encampment sites reported in official removal documents, visiting gravesites and places with direct historical and cultural importance, changed these young people's perspectives and lives. It also taught me that government, political, and cultural history could be made more alive through meaningful site immersions and deep field-oriented learning. Using community and local people as teachers made the past come alive through stories, official records, and documents. All these were powerful pedagogical tools.

My experiences also taught me that history in place matters; cultural and community history shape and influence what we experience. Untapped, and often unrecognized and devalued, knowledge exists at the local level if we but seek to uncover it. Listening to the people, sharing stories, identifying what common visions people hold for their home places and the future, one can learn what folks believe are the right actions to take when faced with difficult problems. All these lessons would influence what became known as the IECL approach.

HIGHLANDER AND GRASSROOTS CHANGE

In modern American culture, few places have achieved the revered status as a site for sharing problems and democratizing leadership as has the Highlander Center in Tennessee. Founded during the Great Depression, Highlander became an Appalachian people's retreat and regional think tank for community activists and common folks wanting to make a difference in the life of their communities.

My awareness of Highlander began in the late 1960s. Civil rights friends and colleagues had been there, and many admired Highlander's role in training Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others working to pursue nonviolence and civil disobedience. Social activists knew how Rosa Parks had been trained there before the famous incident on the Montgomery bus that helped ignite the contemporary era in the American Civil Rights movement. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) also met at Highlander under the watchful eye and inspiring wisdom of Ella Baker. Highlander played an important role as a "safe house" for social justice and for organizing around social and political problems.

My life became more directly tied to Highlander during graduate school. One of my mentors, the late Royce "Tim" Pitkin, founding president of Goddard College, was a longtime family friend and ally of Myles Horton, also a founder of Highlander. Tim and Myles had traveled to the Danish folk schools while graduate students in New York. When Pitkin first heard my dreams for creating a rural learning center tied to community development, he strongly suggested that I meet with Myles and one of his former Goddard students, Frank Adams. These introductions later paved the way for my own relationship with both Myles and Frank (who wrote the initial history of both Highlander and Goddard).

Myles' first wife, Zilphia Mae Horton, was part Cherokee. So Horton's interest in eastern Oklahoma and the challenges of the Cherokee people were lifelong and genuine. He had several times visited that region pondering whether or not a Highlander replication project might make any sense. He told me that he concluded a Highlander adaptation could only work if native Cherokees led it from that region. Three of my Flaming Rainbow students had that potential—Wilma Mankiller, Julie Moss, and the late Georgianna Springwater. But none took on this critical task.

Over the years, my primary community learning interests would center on the facilitation process used at Highlander and its role in developing the Citizenship School model—a grassroots effort to train common people to pass the literacy tests in Southern states and secure their rights to full citizenship. Citizenship Schools were an informal learning system that allowed and encouraged people to understand democratic concepts and then practice through direct actions how average citizens could influence voter participation, issue articulation, and public policy.

Through the committed leadership of Septima Clark, Bernice Johnson, Eutaw Jenkins, and later Andrew Young and Dorothy Cotton, Citizenship Schools became a widely used tool for achieving voting rights

and inspiring people to become involved in community leadership. Dorothy Cotton, the longtime director of the Citizenship Schools, recently told me, “There has never been a leadership program like the Citizenship Schools; it encouraged unlettered and often uneducated people to define what democracy meant to them and assume greater control over their public lives and the direction of their home communities.”

Myles, Highlander, Frank Adams, and Dorothy Cotton taught me the power inherent in informal learning, the importance of people sitting as equals in a circle together sharing stories and concerns across communities, the fellowship and bonds that form when people express their innermost heartfelt and passionate concerns for life, their families and loved ones, and the hope they hold for their communities. Highlander also taught me what Friere suggested in his writings: People could make their own political and historical meaning from defining difficult words and ideas in their own terms—such as Bill of Rights, Freedom, Democracy, and Community Change.

Highlander also permitted me the opportunity to better understand shared leadership among colearners who gain power and perspective from the lives and encouragement of others, in extended dialogue and discussion with each other, while defining problems and issues on their own terms. This process—what we might call an informal, nonhierarchical, non-teacher-dependent, discussion and organizing practice—would become fundamental to how IECL sought to teach and create a community of learners in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

TIME AND PLACE: RISE OF GANG VIOLENCE, PLANT CLOSINGS, AND RACISM

The 1990s were unkind to New Mexico. The state and its people were in the throes of another boom and bust economic pendulum, an economy tied to tourism and military and war-related research, compounded by a bottoming out of oil and gas drilling revenues. Small towns across the state, especially rural villages and tribal pueblos, saw their stores and livelihoods either diminished or further transformed into commuter economies—driving greater distances for employment and household goods and services. Only urban magnets such as Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Cruces continued to grow in population, despite these shifts in economic fortunes.

Albuquerque, the geographical center of New Mexico, sits at the actual crossroads of Interstates 40 and 25. Development in this city over the last half century would best be described as continuous sprawl.

Housing has spread up and down the Rio Grande River and into the mountain edges and western desert mesas, while the central city has struggled to maintain its infrastructure and vitality.

The core of the city, the downtown areas surrounding old Albuquerque, were designated “Pocket of Poverty” neighborhoods during the federal War on Poverty era in the 1960s. The 17 diverse neighborhoods that comprise this “Pocket of Poverty” area had not only lost physical and commercial vitality, but a growing number of long-term residents as well. Neighborhoods such as East San Jose, Kirtland Corner, South Broadway, and Wells Park are comprised of a large portion of low-cost housing and rent options that serve a more transient population, making these neighborhoods less rooted, less stable. Families with children, in particular, come and go in an almost constant fashion. Several schools in these neighborhoods lose 100% of their student body over the course of a school year.

At the city’s boundaries, literally but a few miles away, lay the ancient tribal villages that surround modern Albuquerque—the pueblos of Isleta, Sandia, Santa Anna, San Felipe, and, only a few miles further out, Laguna, Acoma, Santa Domingo, and Cochiti. These are traditional communities dating back hundreds of years, now seeking to shape more contemporary visions for how a Native American community lives.

By the 1990s, West Coast-style gang culture—stereotyped for the public by rampant drug usage, unbridled graffiti art, endless drive-by shootings, youth-led executions, and constant territorial battles—added an ever-heightened tension and more anxiety to New Mexico’s sense of place: unsafe communities, neighborhoods, and tribal reservations. This produced a citywide, regional, and even statewide climate of fear and impending violence. Nightly newscasts further reinforced the crisis by running the normal 14 minutes of fear stories. Violence, burglaries, and youth mayhem captured headline after headline. Celebrated murders and shootings lingered in the news for months, not days.

In a conventional reaction, Albuquerque’s mayor (recently re-elected, again), Martin Chavez, dispatched more and more patrol cars and declared a city-wide youth curfew. Youth service providers, however, sought a more deliberative solution by forming a Gang Strategy Coalition, external to city government but still funded by the city, to act as a public–private partnership to share ideas and develop new approaches. Led by Fred Griego III, a longtime community activist and youth service advocate, this coalition sought to establish an interagency convening space where diverse people, ideas, and concerns could be freely

expressed. Meeting monthly, the Gang Strategy Coalition provided a temporary space for sharing stories, hopes, and even visions about what the city might be able to do for its young. Although the coalition discussed many youth concerns, this temporary alliance helped frame the first focus question for IECL: What can we do to support our young people and create healthier communities and neighborhoods?

At exactly the same time, Levi-Straus's corporate office in San Francisco was preparing for its final round of major plant closings in the United States. Still relying on sewing production in jeans and clothing, the company could no longer compete with foreign labor costs. The Levi-Straus Foundation staff visited four cities where plants and sewing factories existed as major employers (Valdosta, Georgia; Knoxville, Tennessee; El Paso, Texas; and Albuquerque) to assess local needs and identify critical issues. A common theme, repeated by plant workers and local opinion leaders in surveys and interviews in each site, surfaced as a central barrier to individual worker, family, and community advancement and prosperity—racism. This label—*racism*—was defined as the institutional structures and cultural values and behaviors that intentionally and systematically discriminate against people on the basis of race, culture, and ethnic background.

In Albuquerque, racial history and interracial hierarchy remain much more challenging to decipher or explain. Not only does the state still have a significant population of Indigenous inhabitants (28 distinct tribal reservations), it also has a nearly majority Chicano and Hispanic population. Besides its small African-American citizenry, there are also growing numbers of Asian-Americans (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Chinese, Japanese, and others). Couple these groupings with a sizable mixed racial background populace, and any explanation of hyphenated interrelations gets very entangled and debatable.

Racism, within these intercultural and interracial dynamics, would prove to be extremely difficult to confront. In order to draw strategic consideration to the deep problems associated with interracial relations, racial discrimination, and correspondent disparities, three crucial institutions drew immediate attention: the banking industry, with its history of redlining and unfair lending practices; city government in its limited appointment of racially diverse commissioners and public board members; and public education through historical inequities and the problems of fairness for non-White youngsters within the public school and university systems.

Each of these institutions provided a unique organizing target for Project Change, a national antiracism initiative supported by the Levi-Strauss Corporation. Each required that a complex and detailed change strategy be applied, with the ultimate goal being to shift racial awareness and results for people of color, in loan practices, representation on boards and commissions, and how largely public schools truly support the success of all students, regardless of their racial and/or ethnic background.

Education proved to be an especially thorny problem in this regard. I served as Project Change's education chair during much of this time (1994–1998) and was repeatedly told by senior school administrators that educational equity and racism were problems of the city and general society and thus could not be adequately solved and/or addressed within the school system. These positions were articulated as if public schools were not a central socialization instrument for the society's racial prejudices as a whole.

After 2 full years of seeking even a brief preliminary public hearing and limited discussion on the issues and educational impacts associated with racism, the school board voted not to endorse Project Change's distribution of its Educational Equity booklets within the schools and pointedly discouraged Project Change's representatives from holding dialogues on these topics on school grounds.

Racism was just too divisive, Project Change board members were told.

These seemingly disparate social forces—youth violence, racism, and educational equity—marginalized, denied, and contested topics that they were, became the initial impetus for creating a new space to explore controversial ideas and community challenges.

IECL—MORE THAN A NAME

The term “educational” has ceased to be utilized on its own as a symbolic term that implies learning in any context; “educational” now equates largely to schooling or institutionalized learning. For many community members, however, schools and universities are now viewed as foreign institutions, organizations increasingly more loyal to their bureaucratic forms, representative of public corporations or “educational” enterprises external to the lives of ordinary people and their communities.

The Institute for Educational and Community Leadership (IECL) sought to directly link the challenges facing school reform and improvement to the life of the community. In this spirit, IECL would strive to balance the importance of leadership within each setting and strengthen the ties between the calls for institutional reform with the

real tests facing communities—to erase the false barriers that have been constructed between institutional realities and community needs.

Within the field of leadership preparation, Community Leadership has come to be categorized as a subfield of leader practice. Those who exercise community leadership are often identified as public leaders—leaders who work for the greater good in largely public arenas. School, in a period of increased federal and state mandates, is often no longer seen as a public institution. Rather, in urban settings in particular, school has become a state institution managed by professional administrators and highly educated teachers. IECL sought to reconnect communities and schools to the natural interdependence that exists between education as learning, schools as organizations, and the context of learning that exists in the places both within and between community and these formal organizations.

Leadership for the average person is also increasingly viewed in elite and elevated terms. Average citizens do not see themselves as public leaders; this is something others do: elected officials, appointed public servants, administrators, people holding titles and positions. IECL sought to change this internalized perspective.

IECL declared that every person should have the opportunity to lead. In a highly professional and expert driven society, noncredentialed people have a harder time penetrating the power and prejudgments of formal leaders, educational and otherwise. IECL tried to level the playing field, to democratize how leadership could be shared and made more authentic and collaborative between professionals and people who may have limited formal education but considerable life experiences.

A profound example of this internalized chasm was stated in the very first IECL vision-building workshop. In these sessions, each participant articulated what they hoped would happen in their community, neighborhood, and/or institutional base, in terms of change and improvement. Irene Ballejos, a new neighborhood association president and dedicated youth violence prevention activist, framed her concerns for the future with this opening disclaimer: “I do not know as much about some of these things as many of you—I am only a mother.”

Aghast at this comment, other IECL members promptly informed her that being a mother was the most important role of all! This catch phrase—I Am Only A Mother—became an oft-repeated remark when any IECL participant felt overwhelmed by the power of institutions or those who were in positions of power.

YOUTH, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITY

In a context of youth violence, plant closings, failing schools, and struggles with racism, IECL emerged from critical dialogues among Educational Leadership faculty at the University of New Mexico, those who prepare future superintendents and principals, and community leaders concerned with the future of children, youth, and families throughout New Mexico. The perspectives presented by these voices were especially important in defining how new leadership approaches and IECL's launching might address these challenges.

Education, in particular, has presented a constant challenge. New Mexico has rated at or near the bottom of every conceivable negative school and child indicator for nearly a decade: literacy rates, school completion, dropouts, teacher salaries, expenditure per child, teen pregnancy, access to health care—the list goes on.

Education has been further complicated by child and family poverty in the state. When you compare school performance with family income and diverse student populations, it is the poorest communities that comprise the highest number of schools and neighborhoods on the school-in-need-of-improvement list. This is where children often come to English as their second language, where economic realities undermine school success and school performance.

One other point warrants noting. In the early conceptual stage of IECL, community members stated that they did not see education solely as occurring in schools. Communities, neighborhoods, villages are places for learning, teaching, and enhancing human potential. Seasoned community leaders also did not interpret education as being separated from community; they saw formal and informal education as essential to the well-being and health of any strong community. In their words—you could not have authentic education without community; you could not have revitalization in schools until learning was more valued throughout communities.

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IECL ANNOUNCEMENT AND CORE DESIGN

The language in the first promotional flyers clarified the principal ideas. IECL was promoted as a year-long project committed to:

- Supporting a new generation of community-school leaders;
- Building more direct connections between parents, community workers, teachers, and administrators;

- Providing opportunities for extensive dialogue and discussion on critical community-school issues;
- Through strengthening community partnerships and collaborations.

The actual introductory brochure stated: “IECL is a field-oriented learning program focused entirely on strengthening the relationship between schools and communities and to enhancing the potential for collaborative community leadership.” IECL would become more than a name; IECL would seek to actively engage its participants with new ways of improving community life and focusing energies and talents on change.

In order to apply to IECL, potential applicants were to be residents of the state of New Mexico. Persons need not be in graduate school or enrolled currently as a college student. A keen interest in community-school matters and the motivation to learn more about community involvement were essential to articulate in the application process. Youth and adults were eligible to participate and teams from neighborhoods, schools, existing community partnerships, and networks were encouraged to apply.

Potential participants were seen as people who possess a deep interest in learning more about:

- Participatory community problem-solving;
- Creating community learning options for young people;
- Building more engaged parent participation programs;
- Wanting to see communities respond more collaboratively to such matters as youth violence, substance abuse, accessibility to health care, and youth employment.

Twenty to twenty-five IECL participants were to be selected through a competitive application process described earlier. Efforts were made to insure applicants came from urban, rural, and tribal community backgrounds. The first cohort had seven tribal members in it; all were youth workers in one form or fashion. Age, gender, and interracial balance were sought as well. Each IECL cohort was composed of teachers, school administrators, active parents, community workers, representatives of local and tribal government, and human service providers interested in school and community issues.

IECL was organized into a four-semester cohort program tied to academic course work and direct field experiences. Each seminar was cotaught with university and community faculty. Three university professors with

interests in education and democracy, health communities, and school reform were involved, along with the author. Steve Preskill, Tom Keyes, and Magdalena Avila each contributed major ideas to course content, the coteaching flow of particular topics, and important community resources to the overall design and delivery of IECL. Community faculty were experienced and seasoned community leaders from health, education, social programs, and community organizing backgrounds, at all levels of community life—urban, rural, and tribal.

Each cohort functioned as a collaborative learning community; competition was downplayed in favor of collaboration and cooperative learning. Participants were encouraged to see one another as co-learners and co-creators of the IECL experience with faculty and sponsors. IECL participants:

- investigated critical local concerns,
- visited exemplary community partnerships,
- met with experienced community leaders,
- worked with collaborative initiatives in the Albuquerque area,
- spent concentrated time developing and refining action plans based on existing or proposed community projects,
- generated interpretations of appropriate leadership strategies from academic and community perspectives.

IECL was to be “an incubator for community learning and a safe place for the exploration of what it means to work collaboratively with others to improve schools and build healthier communities.”

IECL’s educational philosophy was not neutral.

Each participant was required to prepare a personal vision statement on what he or she sought to change or improve in education and the community and why. Participants accepted major challenges for their community leadership projects, rethinking what they were doing and where they might be going with their work and community commitments. This took the form of action plans presented before other IECL participants, community faculty, and advisory board members for review, feedback, and critique.

IECL stated it existed “largely to increase parent and community participation in education at all levels. IECL holds the belief that educators ought to work closely with parents, local community leaders, youth workers, health and human service agency personnel, and the business and corporate community, to enhance the total quality of community life.”

The IECL approach held that schools, whether rural, tribal, urban, or suburban, are primary community resources and therefore have a special

responsibility (really obligation) to become more actively engaged with the critical social and economic issues facing children, youth, families, and communities. IECL cohort members were to use their talents and energies to strengthen community assets and participate in local problem solving. IECL's intent was to be applied and experiential, grassroots focused, participatory, fully inclusive, practical in nature, school and community-based, and project driven.

IECL sought, through its operation and learning approach, to model the best practices of community partnerships, collaborative leadership, local advocacy, and current adult learning principles. It would stretch educational notions about the use of time, space, teachers, university learning, field experiences, practical problem solving, personal and community visions, projects, and collaboration. Learning would be based in community practice and take place in full recognition of prior learning (what students bring with them) and see classroom learning as only a part of learning. IECL also sought to extend learning out over semesters, places, and issues—this would not be a stand-alone course or single experience, but accumulated learning recognizing the uniqueness of individuals and settings and adding content over time.

The outcomes of IECL were intended to form new leadership skills, knowledge, and understandings. These were to include new community learning in such specific areas as:

- The nature of personal and community leadership;
- Development of broader community networks;
- The complexity and interdependence of community problems;
- Cultural diversity in Albuquerque and the Southwest;
- Communication and collaborative decision-making abilities;
- New strategies to build partnerships and collaboratives;
- Assessing and mapping community and local issues;
- How to identify, collect, report on community-generated data;
- The utilization of the media for raising community awareness;
- New approaches to conflict resolution.

Four core courses were developed as linked seminars to merge and interconnect this content: Introduction to Community Leadership, Creating Communities of Learners, Education's Role in Strengthening Communities Through Partnerships for Social and Economic Development, and Education for Democracy. Participants were exposed to new interpretations about leadership, recognizing community assets, learning how to sustain broad strategies for Healthy Communities—based on

the World Health Organization projects approach and recent “healthier communities” activity throughout New Mexico.

Workshops emphasized storytelling, heartfelt exploration of who was in the room, where they came from, what challenges life had given them, and the communities each represented. Participants listened to each other give voice to the most difficult challenges in life: death, illness, failures, setbacks, and overcoming these setbacks through family support, relationships, courage, and faith.

Racial and ethnic experiences were placed at the center of these discussions. People studied the Project Change Equity Discussion books, triggering their own challenges with the educational system—public, private, tribal, and university levels. Intercultural dynamics became a central discussion topic, even when it brought tension and divisions. Some of the most difficult exchanges came from the stories and readings associated with racism. A few participants left the circle after these exchanges, due to what it stirred up in them, only later to return for other rounds of talk and exploration. Authentic dialogue became a premium throughout IECL.

IECL participants studied different leadership models, leadership traits and characteristics, and looked at various intercultural and community views on leadership. Sessions were held at community locations throughout Albuquerque and on the reservations, Laguna and San Ildefonso in particular, where members were able to meet tribal leaders and see public ceremonies and dances. Efforts were made to take cohort members into the communities they might not be familiar with. Experienced intercultural leaders spoke to the cohorts and described their projects and personal life stories with community leadership.

Considerable attention was also given to collaborative projects with a mix of partners and participants. Participants were asked to conduct summer and semester-long joint and collaborative research projects with fellow cohort members and people from their home communities. They were asked to cross boundaries and collaborate with people they might not normally work with. Journals and media were used to document key activities and for important activities. Occasional weekend retreats were held to go deeper into a particular topic. Special trainings were held with outside and community experts around: Vision Building, Asset Mapping, Collaborative Problem Solving, and Principles of Partnerships. Site visits were made to exemplary projects, to pilot partnership programs, and to experiments with intercultural cooperation in various settings.

An annual week-long seminar was held with each cohort with an emerging Islamic scholar, Anouar Majid, a Moroccan whose cross-cultural writings and discussions on American society and globalization predated the 9/11 bombings and now serve as an essential reference point for IECL participants to understand how the Muslim world sees America and our people. The Majid sessions were always held during the final summer workshops on Education and Democracy, where participants were able to integrate what they had learned about New Mexico places with a global perspective on the challenges of democracy and education. Majid has gone on to become an international expert on interpreting the American experience to Muslims and Islam to Americans. His sessions served to connect each cohort to larger global dialogues on community and leadership.

The intent behind the content, exposure to different perspectives, and the process was to nurture within each IECL participant the desire to become more purposeful about community change and improvement efforts. This took many forms and has served to make IECL an important networking and collaborative benchmark for many participants.

INCUBATING CHANGE PROJECTS

The process of articulating a personal vision for change, listening to others do the same, and subsequently responding to reading, study, and reflection about what you as an individual were really seeking to accomplish with your life and why, had a profound impact on most participants.

It is rare in our society that we have the time and space to state what we hope for in our worlds and how we want to work on those dreams with others. Moreover, the process of giving voice to innermost hopes for a better world, a better community, a better school system, and being witness to others doing the same has an untold rippling effect on people; each vision inspires the next, and others still contemplating desired futures determine where to apply their full energies.

IECL sought to be an open space for community visions for change. Participants were given the time and safety to fully state their innermost thoughts, fears, hopes, and challenges. People vented their frustrations with one another around community life, isolation, government, major institutions like schools and universities, the challenges of parenthood, lost jobs and relationships, death, and the problems they saw as critical in life.

Such disclosure—often raw and emotional, frequently filled with anger and frustration—builds intimacy. It also leads to trust and deeper dialogue. This was true for all three IECL cohorts.

The process of stating where you want your work or project to go, listening to others do the same, learning about and studying collaborative projects for change, seeing efforts attempt to impact systems and institutions, hearing stories about community organizing and long struggles, either inspire people or drive them to surrender to the forces of the status quo. IECL participants did not surrender.

IECL became an incubator for change projects, and each cohort produced its own projects in that regard. An incubator is a place where people help make personal and community dreams real. An incubator for change is where people work on their projects in a supportive and encouraging environment, where coparticipants assume a contributive role with project design, strategy development, resource acquisition, and implementation.

The crisis with youth violence jumped right into the first IECL workshops, when Irene Ballejos described in vivid detail the murder of her oldest son in a drive-by shooting in the South Broadway neighborhood. Three teachers from Eugene Fields Elementary School, located in the South Broadway neighborhood, listened to Irene's story. The freshness and pain in this story tore at every member's heart. Irene's son had been shot to death in a case of mistaken identity related to a drug deal gone bad.

As a reference point, this story became one that did not go away over the entire 12-month IECL Cohort One experience. Renee Paisano, then a senior program manager with Save the Children/USA, kept thinking about how her work could connect to the needs she heard expressed in IECL. Six months into IECL Cohort One, the first group of participants in IECL, she informed the group of a pilot project-funding opportunity being launched by Save the Children/USA that sought to fund and create urban collaboratives for elementary-aged children designed to provide after-school programming. This funding opportunity—really a seed grant with limited operational monies—provided the impetus to look at how youth programming was occurring at the community and neighborhood level and how a bridge might be built between Irene Ballejos's community (Kirtland Corner) and the South Broadway neighborhood.

IECL participants, community faculty, advisors, and neighborhood allies, all discussed what the vision for such a community collaborative might be. Save the Children/USA staff believed one neighborhood collaborative ought to be formed. IECL participants and Policy Center affiliated faculty argued that this funding ought to seek to build two sites in partnership with one another—Kirtland Corner and South Broadway working together on after-school programming. Each place would develop its own unique community learning plan but work together on

resource sharing, training, staff development, and learning opportunities and share what each site was actually learning about program design and youth development.

The after-school portion of this pilot would be called the Albuquerque Community Schools Project (ACSP) and seek to transfer Lloyd Tireman's Depression-era ideas about schools as centers of community life to the modern after-school arena. However, in the early stages, ACSP would emphasize that the community develop its own schools and operate primarily from storefronts and public spaces. The staff for these after-school programs would be part-time community adults from the neighborhoods combined with 10 UNM undergraduate and graduate students.

This student group would be called the University of New Mexico Service Corps and become a campus-based adaptation of the recently launched federal AmeriCorps program. The name UNM Service Corps was put forth in an attempt to establish a brand designation that could survive any potential demise of the federal program. AmeriCorps, in 1997, was still moving forward with tenuous support from Republican members in the United States Congress. It did not seem at all clear whether AmeriCorps would survive.

The first summer was a complete start-up operation for twin projects: the Albuquerque Community Schools Project and the UNM Service Corps. Four months into the projects, Save the Children/USA was encouraging the local partners to submit a grant to AmeriCorps for a National Direct Education award to support the UNM Service Corps and provide AmeriCorps stipends for the college students. The grant submission was successful and by August 1998, UNM found itself with 80 part-time National Direct Education awards, a tremendous number of slots for any new program.

Under a new mayor, and with Jerry Ortiz y Pino's appointment as director of Albuquerque's Division of Family and Community Services, the partners were being encouraged to expand this after-school model into 10 additional communities. Ortiz y Pino wanted to change the way youth activities were carried out in city-sponsored community centers and saw these projects as a strategic instrument for doing that. After less than a year, the Albuquerque Community Schools Project and UNM Service Corps moved from two sites and 10 corps members to 12 community learning centers and 80 corps members.

All this expansion and subsequent program design was a direct result of the synergy and collaborative spirit inherent in IECL One, a spirit that would find its home with Cohort Two of IECL, composed entirely

of after-school program workers—volunteers, city staff, national program personnel, interested teachers, parents, and school administrators. Youth violence and Irene Ballejos’s story had stimulated the development of an entirely new impetus in after-school program design, recreating the local community schools movement, and infusing community service commitments from college students into community life.

Eight years later, these twin programs persist and are now prospering in 12 community sites, impacting nearly 5,000 youngsters each day. Other projects, perhaps not on the same scale as these two, emerged as well. IECL participants developed high school leadership projects, middle school programs targeted at African American males, training programs on racism and antiracism curricula, parent involvement projects, new approaches to full inclusion for students with disabilities, even legislative agendas to influence how the federal mandated tobacco settlement monies were to be deployed.

IECL emerged as a serious incubator for change.

CHALLENGES: PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL

The goals of IECL changed very little in its initial 3 years (1997–2000). What did change was the funding for IECL. Cohort One was supported with very little external funding. Jaime Tamez, then director of the Albuquerque Public School district Title I office, did support a small number of scholarships for parents and teachers from Title I funded schools to participate in IECL.

The rest of the participants paid their own way. This “pay as you go” pressure would place strains on certain participants. One third of the first cohort were college students working on degrees or their graduate education. They simply built the IECL course work into their degree programs. Another third were school-related personnel who had difficulties balancing the demands of IECL (four semesters, 18 credit hours, evening and summer courses) and their family and school-related commitments. A number of school district participants would step out for one semester over the length of the entire IECL program.

The group most challenged by the academic demands included the neighborhood association leaders, community activists, or parents going to a university program for the first time. The weekly meetings, class assignments, readings, journals, and homework pressures were simply too much for many of them. There was a readiness factor, in terms of educational demands, that also inhibited this group. A third of the grassroots leaders (four participants) would not make it to the final summer.

Years later, when you meet one of these grassroots folks at a community meeting or celebration, they will invariably say: “You know, I need to finish IECL.” Even though the program has not been offered since the summer of 2000, these members still intend to finish.

IECL Cohort Two operated entirely on student funding. Several community participants asked if they could audit the courses and seminars—in other words, do the work but not pay the public tuition cost. This is a critical point because as a learning opportunity modeled after the Highlander Center, whether you link community learning to credit and course work determines how institutionalized you really become.

Highlander never concerned itself with credit and traditional academic course work. The model Highlander works from does not emulate higher education but seeks to stimulate dialogue for social change and action through workshop-based relationship building, sharing common concerns and collective action. The costs associated with this approach are tied to transportation, food and lodging, and minimal workshop fees, not those associated with institutionalized learning that modern colleges and universities now practice.

The key question for university faculty in this regard is: Can you develop an alternative learning approach inside the requirements and bureaucratic guidelines of established colleges, departments, credit-hour generation demands, faculty workloads, and grading systems? Cost and credit demands limit the flexibility higher education institutions have with offering learning options to poor people and/or acting as sites for long-term community building. Most modern universities are increasingly driven by cost-conscious management and an organizational culture oriented toward income production. Courses and workshops, outside continuing education offerings, are tied up in ever-increasing complications related to cost effectiveness, faculty workloads, and revenue generation.

The IECL model remains antithetical to those concerns. This difference would be tested when the Levi-Strauss Foundation stepped back into the picture and fully funded Cohort Three.

In 1999, the local Project Change finally realized the dialogue and discussion approach to rational change would not move the Albuquerque Public School District board and senior administrators into looking deeply at racist practices in education. Project Change was forced to look for a viable alternative to prepare a cadre of change agents around racism and equity issues. Through their solicitation, the National Project Change board agreed to fully fund IECL to the level of 24 participants,

covering full tuition cost, books, retreats, and special events. This would be the only year money was no object.

More candidates applied for the 1999–2000 cohort than any other. Selection was more difficult and teams submitted applications representing certain projects and/or neighborhoods. The balance between university-affiliated participants and community representatives was nearly equal. The group would be composed of high school students, school board members, international graduate students, neighborhood association presidents, community organizers, and every combination of youth, school, and community interest one could imagine.

The interests and the dynamics were the most challenging of any cohort. It is hard to understand, even after all these years, what really happened. But it is fair to say the tensions between institutional learning, conventional teaching and academic requirements (especially grading requirements), and the desire for a significant number of the group to be largely self-directed, literally pulled the group apart. Conflict grew to the point where the group could not hold itself together and the strain pulled it into two camps—university-affiliated versus community interests. The very essence of IECL, its purpose really, was not achievable in the center of this split. As Chinua Achebe titled his powerful novel, *Things Fall Apart*.

In one pointed and exacerbating exchange, Maria Hines, a leader from the Downtown Neighborhood Association, blurted out: “The problem with too many of you university faculty is you have become *institutionalized*; you no longer remember where you come from or why the community matters.” This indictment went to the heart of the matter: How could faculty teach about community if they were disengaged from it?

Five years later (2000 to 2005), many who felt forced to choose sides see what transpired differently, myself included. Now IECL Three is seen as a great teacher in how institutional and community learning differs. One is driven by the requirements of the academy, the other by the realities and needs of community. The university requires course syllabi, reading lists, papers, and exams. The community wants to set these aside and act more immediately within the places where people live and struggle.

As stated earlier, it is not at all clear that this type of community leadership model can survive within the culture of academia. Such efforts may stand a better chance as informal, noncompetitive, and nongraded learning opportunities outside the university. Tuition cost, time, assignments, and the artificial measurements of credit hours and semesters, all contribute to impeding informal community learning and leadership

formation. IECL existed in its own “wrinkle in time,” in a small moment of opportunity, but the permanency that these change-oriented learning projects require may find more nourishing ground in natural community settings. The spirit of an IECL is in its people, their stories and struggles, not in “traditional classes” or conventional professor-led teaching.

In the end, more than 60 community members went through some portion of the IECL experience. Each cohort had the same titled course work and basic experiential sequence. Cohort Three was fully funded and externally supported. That made a qualitative difference in what participants were able to do and the support they received. Cohorts One and Two struggled to make it from semester to semester. Each IECL cohort was entirely different.

Evaluations and member reports continue to indicate that each cohort came away with a powerful sense of IECL as a space to discuss difficult and controversial issues. Each year focused on youth, schools, and community matters, and participants believed they were better prepared to deal with change across these domains. Many IECL graduates and even those who participated for two or more semesters have gone on to more significant leadership at the community and state level. More than a third of the IECL alumni have started their own projects or gone on to direct major community and youth programs.

The participants continue to see IECL as a significant experience in their educational and professional development. Recent research by the city of Albuquerque, where more than 100 city leaders and youth workers were interviewed about after-school programming, identified IECL as a force for change and suggested it be reintroduced as a city- and county-wide leadership development program. About a third of the actual participants say IECL influenced how they teach, work with community, look at community issues, became more engaged with antiracism work, clarified their life goals, and/or decided to return to college. This is no small contribution toward the initial goals and purpose represented by IECL.

EPILOG ON PLACE AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership formation is a relatively new concept for describing how cultures and communities become more deliberate about identifying and preparing future leaders. This subject is drawing global attention as societies find themselves responding to Western economic influences and the downsides of global capitalism. Those who see market forces as

inevitable still seek to protect cherished aspects of community, older patterns of community life, traditional lifestyles, and core cultural values.

In a networked world, where people are increasingly isolated on a human relations level but connected to one another in a technological fashion—where headsets separate generations and mass media connects the same folks—how people come together to listen, witness, talk, define, and act in unison on issues that matter to them is increasingly becoming a filtered, if not compromised, process.

Local people continue to not realize how their particular issues with teen pregnancies or drug usage are now universal. Challenges to modern life, whether they be educational, health, and economic in origin, do not always permit for mediated dialogues.

When IECL One participants listened to the stories of family violence and the degradation of young women in a tribal setting, these became universal stories translated to every neighborhood, every place represented in the circle. The struggle of tribal women united to do something about these things knew no boundaries. The struggle was everyone's concern, held every man's and woman's outrage and hope. This level of human exchange cannot come solely from mediated sources. We must sit and talk with one another, listen to each other's stories, look into one another's eyes, hear our unique voices, and plan for change in collective as well as individual ways.

At its core, IECL was about leadership as relationship building. One leads from relationships as much, if not more, than from positions, role, or place. Place and geography are central to pedagogy, but relationships inspire people to see the seemingly invisible interconnections that bind us to one another and to the land. Community building comes from the exchange between people who are being real and present to one another as they struggle to make a difference.

Our isolation, the separateness explicit in contemporary life, distracts us from the shared struggles we all have and our "lived lives" as human beings. We share countless invisible and unstated agendas with one another that can only come to the surface when we hear each other's stories and challenges. The major gift of places like Highlander, besides merely surviving and being such an important gathering point, is that it has been a civic storytelling place for sharing people's struggles, a place to meet and talk, and more importantly, organize about the most difficult problems facing our communities and our poorest people.

We need hundreds of Highlander Centers across the country—formal and informal—that provide citizens of all ages with the gathering places to

talk long and hard about what is happening to our nation and its communities, how we can work together to protect and improve community life, and how we organize to fight power in ways that preserve our most cherished places and diminish conditions of poverty. This can happen when we meet across communities, class, and contexts and articulate not only the challenges but also the visions for change we each hold, fully examining these plans for the hopes and themes they represent for each of us.

We also need community leadership programs that understand that modern crises are complex and interdependent. Issues impacting community life are not isolated from one another; they are interconnected and interwoven. What happens with the closing of a Levi-Strauss sewing plant does much more than translate into lost economic impact and jobs. It ripples through the lives of families, young people, schools, access to health care, and so on.

The challenges of the 21st century require critical thinking about not only the quality of life we want to see for our communities, but how we respond to globalization, complex technology, health care access, education, and the demands for community sustainability. This requires organizational and community learning that is much more interdisciplinary and applied than what normally is planned and implemented. It also requires us to address how leadership formation becomes more intergenerational, mixing young with the old in a process of mutual problem solving through deep and prolonged life experiences.

Place is what makes such visions real. In the United States, where simplistic analysis speaks of Red and Blue states, we have reduced our distinctive regions and incredibly diverse communities to colors that categorize and further divide us, not into citizens and problem-solvers who act. In order for me to understand the rural villages of upstate New York, the small towns along the Mississippi Delta, the villages of New Mexico's border counties, the distinct neighborhoods of Oakland, California, a Red or Blue analysis will never do.

Place requires us to go deeper with our understanding through observation, study, dialogue, and action; place requires we lead from a sense of community history, human and ecological dynamics, and the practice of democratic action through common problem solving. Place provides the localized opportunity for us to better comprehend the complexities of what leadership means, as well as become more active citizens and learners within our communities. This learning for action holds the promise that we can, indeed, transform our democracy.

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