

Leadership

By: Jizzelle Brown

Forbes defines leadership as a process of social influence, which maximizes the effort of others, towards the achievement of a goal. Intrigued by this interpretation of the word, I began to evaluate my own definition of leadership. As a result, I have determined that, in my opinion, leadership is the act of motivating, inspiring, and encouraging others, through actions, to work toward a goal. And although, for the purpose of the essay, I can not use her as a reference, my mom is the best example of leadership that I can think of.

In addition to my mom, Yandy Smith is a wonderful leader. If you are not familiar with Yandy Smith, she is a reality star from Love and Hip Hop. In addition to appearing on the show, Yandy owns her own skin care line, has a family, and is an activist. I have always liked Yandy on TV because unlike her cast mates, she has never been a negative person. She doesn't fight, use profanity, or talk negatively. She is always positive and trying to avoid drama. But over the last two years, I have grown to like her even more. She has used her social media platform to launch a skin care line and take on a role as an activist. She now works along side Tameka Mallory fighting against police brutality and for the equal treatment of the African American citizens of this country. Her actions are very inspiring, and I hope to one day get the chance to tell her that in person.

While growing up, I was able to see all of the qualities of a leader exhibited daily. These qualities include strength, resilience, focus, determination, and kindness. As such, I began to internalize and exhibit these qualities myself. However, unlike my mother, I was not as confident in my leadership abilities.

When I was 10, my family moved from the city to the suburbs, and I was forced to change schools. This was scary because I no longer saw people who looked, talked, or dressed like me. I was the only "Black Girl" in my class, and only 1 of 43 African American students in the entire school. I felt like an outcast and wanted nothing more than to fade into the background. However, my mom would not allow that to happen.

She constantly encouraged me to be ME. She forced me to speak up about things that insulted me. For example, she insisted that I correct anyone who mispronounced my name. She made me join after school activities and clubs. She also encouraged me to join pageants and modeling contest- many of which I won! She would always say "Your black is beautiful" and I don't think she knew just how badly I needed to hear it. But it was those words that gave me the confidence to be a true leader.

It is because of this, that I was able to have all of the experiences that I have gained. I have also been blessed to hold multiple leadership positions. I have been on Student Council and Class Vice President. I was junior Miss St. Francis and Little Miss

Wisconsin. I was captain of both my volleyball team. And last but not least, I was founder/creator of the Diversity and Inclusion Group at my middle school.

I am truly blessed to have such a wonderful example of a leader in my home. In my short time on this earth, I have realized that being a leader is not an easy task. Leaders are met with adversity and challenges that are sure to make them question their decisions. But my mom, told me that the key to overcoming challenges and adversity is to face them head on- be intentional, be focused, and be determined. And I will be sure to pass this information along to people that I meet during my life time, as well.