

Foreword

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Scholars who have particularly engaged in research in critical race theory, critical feminist theory, and critical Latino(a) theory have explored and articulated the power of personal narratives or storytelling. Personal narratives are not restricted to the vernacular of the scholarly, though they certainly are not immune to academic expression. But personal narratives are products of not only the mind but the heart and the soul of individuals. The stories that are written, spoken, or even sung are the inventions of experience, personal perspectives, and individual predispositions. Daniel Farber and Suzanna Sherry, in their chapter entitled *Telling Stories Out of School: An Essay on Narratives* in Richard Delgado's edited volume, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, assert that for many, the art of storytelling is not often found in more formal types of literature, but storytelling can tell a counter-hegemonic narrative that questions and holds suspect the tenets of the metanarratives that have so often been celebrated as societal truths. The art of storytelling has a distinct way of blending fact and nuance, perception and reality, and in many ways serves a revisionist or even more significantly at times an unvarnished role in recounting events or life impacting episodes. Telling personal narratives is a vivid example of what Charles Lawrence, III, in quoting Vincent Harding, calls the paradigm of the Word. Lawrence offers several purposes of the Word. According to Lawrence, the Word is a unifying force. The Word is often a "statement of protest, it is an expression of courage, an organizing tool, the articulation of utopian dreams or a higher law . . ." (p. 337). The form and substance of the Word, especially through the art of storytelling, must articulate what we see, what we feel, and what we think. The Word is responsible for describing how we experience life and for disclosing the union of imagination and contextual detail.

In this book, *Culturally Proficient Leadership: The Journey Begins Within*, the authors, Raymond Terrell and Randall Lindsey, have taken the courageous steps to disclose their personal journeys that have led them to become two of the most prolific writers on cultural proficiency and educational leadership in the nation. It is intriguing to discover some of

the intersections and similarities of experiences that mark these scholars' journeys. They have clearly had separate points of departure and innumerable differences in experiences. As one is an African American man and the other a white man, it is exceptionally plausible that in multiple ways their journeys would be divergent. But I invite you as you read this poignant text to notice carefully the points of convergence. Pay close attention to the ways in which Terrell's and Lindsey's paths crossed and how the differences in their experiences have helped them to coalesce and explore an area of leadership that can be explosive, aggravating, and powerfully life changing all at the same time.

To couch leadership in a culturally proficient space and to then reveal how these two authors have come to this place of holding school leaders accountable for examining their own dispositions that often minimize and silence others on the basis of difference is a daring project that catapults educational leadership to a totally different arena. It is impossible to think about leadership in a traditional fashion once you have been exposed to the notions of cultural proficiency and the personal narratives of Terrell and Lindsey. It is vitally important for the reader to be open to the narratives and personal perspectives that fill this text while at the same time meeting the challenge of juxtaposing your own stories that tell of your journey in leadership as well. The exciting facet of the art of storytelling and in particular the work of Terrell and Lindsey in this text is that the reader is encouraged to listen to the authors' personal narratives while also being encouraged to create his or her own. The authors leave open the door to legitimate our own personal experiences and to use them all as fodder for creating the context and content of our leadership journeys.

Reading this text allows us to celebrate our imaginations, clarify our perspectives and locate ourselves through testimonies and narratives where the awesome work of culturally proficient leadership is concerned. Terrell and Lindsey motivate us to position leadership in an intimate space colored by our experiences and perceptions. We are challenged to interrogate those experiences and perceptions through the lens of cultural proficiency, openness to difference and celebration of the Other. This text is an intellectual as well as introspective journey designed to cause leaders to couch their personal and professional behaviors in a context of understanding, appreciation, and recognition of difference and diversity. The authors compel us to grapple with the fact that leadership really is a journey that begins within.