

To: ILA Executive Committee

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Re: Proposal for a new ILA Learning Community

Date: February 4, 2011

The twenty-one ILA members identified above propose a new ILA Learning Community dedicated to understanding and promoting the relationship between culture, faith, philosophy, religion, worldviews and leadership.

The purpose of this new ILA community is to promote an understanding of the healthy nexuses between philosophy, religion and worldviews and leadership consistent with ILA's mission statement. The Philosophy, Religion and Worldviews Leadership Learning Community will be a forum to establish critical crossroads and connections between different belief systems and leadership perspectives and practices. Hicks (2009) uses the metaphor of "crossroads and connectors" for a model to develop "religiously literate leaders and citizens who engage one another where their paths cross with equal regard, respectful curiosity, and humility" (p. 9).

There are several justifications for creating a Philosophy, Religion and Worldviews Leadership Learning Community.

1. Philosophy, religion and worldviews touch the very core of human experience and address the assumptions people make about life. These stated and unstated assumptions subsequently structure people's leadership theories and practices, often resulting in unevaluated consequences and implications. Evaluating leadership theories and practices at the most basic level will generate greater insights to the intersection of leadership with culture and better align leadership study and practices with the habits of specific cultures and belief systems.
2. Religion and leadership are ubiquitous phenomena that promote transformation. Combining the lessons from both religious and leadership studies promises to generate a synergistic understanding between the two fields which can, in turn, yield new insights for transforming both leadership and religious practices.

What a nation becomes is in large part due to how the relationship of religion and public life is resolved. The issue is even more pressing when considering the "indigenization and the revival of religion are global phenomena" (Huntington, 1996, p. 102) and the events surrounding September 11, 2001 (Young, 2010). Religion is critical to a nation's identity and instrumental in promoting human and social capital (Putnam and Campbell, 2010). At the same time, religion is a source of conflict between sub-cultures, cultures and even civilizations. Religious intolerance and misunderstanding has generated much turmoil and various challenges for leaders.

Drath (2001) expressed a new goal for leadership where "leadership happens when people who acknowledge shared work use dialogue and collaborative learning to create contexts in which that work can be accomplished across the dividing lines of differing . . . worldviews" (pp. 14, 15). This leadership learning community will provide a forum for leaders to improve their literacy of diverse religions and worldviews and equip them with insights to better lead "devout and diverse" communities and minimize, if not avoid, "clashes of civilizations". (Hicks, 2009; Huntington, 1996).

3. A Philosophy, Religion and Worldview Learning Community may well encourage additional philosophers and religious leaders to actively participate in ILA as a means to hone their leadership skills for use in their respective spheres of influence and provide corresponding insights to current ILA members.

4. The 12th Annual ILA Conference revealed the importance and interest in connecting religion and worldviews with leadership by hosting Karen Armstrong's keynote address on Interfaith Leadership & Compassionate Action and four panel/paper presentations on religion and leadership (Role of Faith – and Interfaith Literacy – in Public Leadership; Worldviews and Leadership: Time for Action; Religious and Spiritual Leadership: Lessons on Leading from the Margins and Breaking the Stained Glass Windows; and The Future of Religious Leadership).

References

- Drath, W. H. (2001). *The deep blue sea: Rethinking the source of leadership* (1st ed). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Hicks, D.A. (2009). *With god on all sides: Leadership in a devout and diverse America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Huntington, S. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Putnam, R. D. & D. E. Campbell (2010). *American grace: How religion divides and unites us*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Young, W. (2010). *The world's religions: Worldviews and contemporary Issues*, 3rd Ed. Boston: Prentice Hall.