

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2012

The SOJOURNER TRUTH *Newsletter*

A PUBLICATION OF THE CENTER FOR AFRICANA STUDIES AT CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
FROM ILLUSION TO REALITY



THE VALUE OF HARD WORK FOR CCSU STUDENTS



Message from the Editor in Chief

For this fall semester issue, we look forward to sharing insightful information about a topic that influences the quality of our lives and will continue to do so in more drastic ways throughout this century. Certainly, in the upcoming decades, the value placed on hard work in this society and globally will be measured in much broader yet competitive contexts, and this reality will encourage strategic ways of exploring career based opportunities, especially for college graduates. Of the many challenges that students face currently, two that must be conquered early as key measures of success in college are the skills of time management and critical inquiry. The value placed on hard work by students determines if these particular skills can be utilized as successful mediums that advance their endeavors or become legitimate reasons that opportunities are diminished or missed in the college environment. We are obligated to ensure that students are guided appropriately to develop and to master these core life skills in this or any academic environment.

So much of what we value in life was modeled to us from previous generations and hard work, especially for those of us who represent the Black diaspora, is certainly no exception. It is our responsibility to make sure that blatant ignorance and media driven illusions will not be modeled as norms or become part of any excuses that typically lead many students in endless circles of despair. Teaching the value of hard work proactively and consistently, in very positive ways, allows us to make one of the best investments of our time and resources as a collective people. Simultaneously, we will honor our ancestors’ lives with the respect that was not only earned but well deserved. Thus, this issue of the Sojourner Truth aims to promote and to advance a serious discussion about the value of hard work with articles that highlight the following topics: The Value of Hard Work for CAS Staff Members, the Presidential Re-Election Campaign, and Student Athletes’ Perspectives. In the tradition of previous issues, we conclude our key features with the core standing topic of News from the Motherland.

We offer our sincere thanks to each contributor for the work and the time given for the completion of this issue.

Dr. Beverly A. Johnson

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READERS' COMMENTS

“A Legacy of Love and Empowerment: Part Two” of the Black Aesthetics was highly informative. Dr. Johnson emphasized how important the values the Black Aesthetics embodied were in the sixties, leading up to the present day. One statement in particular was very memorable: “The rediscovery of heritage within and outside the United States continues to be a life changing experience for many people of color.” This article reminds us that African Americans were and are still able to find success by embracing their cultural identities, and it gracefully captures the essence of this message.

Valerie Derisme, CCSU Sophomore, Criminology Major

I enjoyed reading the various perspectives of staff and students about the significance of the Black Aesthetics and what it meant to them. In particular, the definitions given by Ms. Christina Carpenter and Mr. George Richardson were quite interesting to me. As a new generation of African American leaders, it is our job to make a mark on the world and add to the legends who have paved the way for the Black Aesthetics consciousness. This was a very informative issue, and I really appreciated the students’ and staff’s input.

Erica Fitzpatrick, CCSU Junior, Political Science Major

This past issue of the Sojourner Truth newsletter is a perfect representation of its title. It’s relevant to me because it encourages enlightenment about our surroundings as they relate to our struggles as well as our strengths. I absorbed several articles because they evaluated what it meant to be Black in America in the past and why it really matters today. It is inspiring to know that our history is being studied and evaluated to understand who we are and how we can be better.

Leehna Ware, CCSU Senior, Biology Major

Last semester’s issue of the Sojourner Truth was very intriguing, especially the selection on the “Ninth Annual Amistad Lecture”. It gives voice to people of African descent and promotes stronger connections within the Black community. I would like to read more subjects about modern discrimination and religious based empowerment in future newsletter issues.

Rynel Wise, CCSU Sophomore, Exercise Science Major

I really liked reading the article entitled “The Black Aesthetics: A Legacy of Love and Empowerment – Part II” that focused on the 1960s and Beyond. The images and discussion of powerful figures such as Angela Davis, Nikki Giovanni, and John Johnson were uplifting. It reminds me that in current times, we have high achievers such as Beverly Bonds who created Black Girls Rock and Michael Jordan, the ultimate basketball legend and entrepreneur. It really connects to me because my success as a young Black American can make me a role model for the people in my community. By understanding that the past has paved the way for us, our dreams and many others can come true.

Sakirah Epps, CCSU Freshman, Business Management Major

The Value of Hard Work for CCSU Students

Hard work is one of the most valuable commodities for students who are determined to earn a college degree, and there are no substitute actions that can overshadow or diminish the value of it. Of course, there are several college students at this university and other universities throughout this country who understand the importance of valuing this commodity. It becomes the core bridge to the success they desire to have within and outside of the college environment. This bridge should become a central part of every college student's profile so that the positive effects deserved can be appreciated more collectively by all students, rather than a select few. However, for many students who do not take the concept seriously and who may not even have a framework in order to apply the value effectively, constructive help must be given to them, even when it may not be convenient or popular to do so. As an educator who was raised within a family and community that promoted wholeheartedly the value of hard work, whether mental or physical, I see firsthand that the detachment and indifference to appreciating the value of it by many students at CCSU is becoming more and more alarming each semester. Although times have changed with technological advances and standards of teaching methods vary based, in part, on these changes, I remain optimistic about the fact that underachieving students can learn to challenge themselves with hard work and go against the tendency to belie their true potential.

Professors, just as any other group of educators, teach with inherent premises. One premise that we should not take for granted is the premise that students attend college with the intent to learn knowledge that will enable them to earn a degree. Yes, this does sound rather naïve. However, at the very least, we can have as a key premise that young adults understand the necessity for attending and earning a college degree in today's times. Fundamentally, a clear understanding between college students and professors should exist: the intent is to create and to enhance the learning experiences so young adults can become highly skilled, independent, and productive citizens. Once a degree or two is earned, students should be able to apply the necessary skills required to achieve and maintain sound careers. Today, this premise can be quite faulty or simply inaccurate due to numerous factors that are typically beyond a professor's control, yet it is one that must be examined and reexamined thoroughly by all parties. Making it clear that any class one teaches will involve hard work and that hard work is valued by the professor is an imperative that must be done at the beginning and even at the end of the course. Students should never believe that their minimal efforts will matter much in today's world with the high level of competition they will face in their immediate futures. Thus, it is good policy to prepare students with a sufficient and even challenging workload that does not make them outliers by default of poor preparation or a lack of understanding the value of hard work in the academic environment.

If any student believes, from the first day that he or she enters a college class, that the minimum amount of work is acceptable for a top grade, he or she is being simply schooled rather than educated. They are being schooled with misinformation and misperceptions causing them to accept that they are fine as underachievers. This also creates unnecessary tensions between students and professors if or when more complex work is demanded. Because most students have little to no knowledge of the challenges professors must overcome to effectively teach students whose preparatory skills from high school to college significantly vary, they have a tendency to personalize (with exaggerations) legitimate criticism that promotes hard work as a serious value for them. Instead, many students become derailed by looking for loopholes (written or stated) that would enable the least amount of work possible, extended timeframes from established deadlines, or some form of extra credit as a substitute for covering the initial work assigned. I find it rather peculiar and amusing, at times, that the students who are indifferent to working hard for the major graded assignments are the first ones to raise their hands when extra credit opportunities are offered to the class.

It is critical for me to reiterate this strong message to the students who take my courses: their syll should be viewed as an established framework that embraces the value of hard work, and they are responsible for producing the type of quality work that indicates the value they place on it as well. Students who select an upper level course out of convenience or because of late planning typically do not reflect on their choices enough to make sound decisions about them. Hard work requires a serious level of reflection and contemplation that should be part of the learning experience as much as the actual work produced, and the lack of seriousness about selecting certain classes indicate a low assess of its value.

Two short pieces of literature that really influenced my thinking about this issue that I highly recommend, especially for college freshmen students, are nonfiction essays entitled “The Perpetual Adolescent” by Joseph Epstein, and “Against School” by John Taylor Gatto. Both essays are quite relevant to current times, relatable to students as a core audience, and provide historical illustrations to ground certain arguments. They are very useful as teaching material because they challenge students to rethink many of their assumptions about education while also helping them to understand that many systems



ENG212 students work on critical thinking skills and essay development in their African American Literature Course.

are designed to exploit those who refuse to accept the responsibilities of adulthood and the hard work that comes with this acceptance. For instance, Gatto emphasizes in his essay that schools train children to be complacent and to “reflexively” do what they are told; however, students should be taught to think “critically and independently” (690). Interestingly, most students who read these assigned essays were engaged in the class discussion about them, and some were rather eager to point out why the essays were a strong wake-up call for them to not take their education lightly.

In a recent survey about the value of hard work taken by twenty-five freshmen students this past November, seventy-five percent of the students defined the concept of hard work as putting in as much “effort” as possible or a slight variation of this definition. The participants were equally divided when asked if one should have expectations of a tangible rewards based on hard work, and seventy percent of the participants chose a family member over a famous person as an exemplary representative of hard work. This survey was useful in several ways; it helped me to understand how some students could easily misconstrue effort for quality work, while others view tangible rewards as incentives to work hard, especially in this environment. This suggests that the grade becomes more important than the work more often than not for some students while others value the hard work as a reward of its own.

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THE SOJOURNER TRUTH NEWSLETTER

Work Ethics in Place for Center for Africana Studies' Staff Members



Final Exams Prep for Salam Measho, a CCSU Political Science Major and Isaih Scales, a CCSU Business Management Major and CAS Staff member.

Anyone who travels for the first time down the semi-dark steps to the basement of Marcus White Building on campus might be slightly nervous before reaching the end of the steps. However, as soon as one reaches the final step and opens a narrow door, an immediate ray of light comes through as a way of indicating a safe and inviting space has been reached. A sharp right turn will quickly lead the person to a rather large room filled with complimentary brown and mahogany hues that provides a subtle depth of warmth and calmness. Intensifying these colors are the shelves of various African artifacts and resource materials such as drums, elephants, ceramics, sculptures, educational films, and several fictional and nonfictional works. As one walks completely inside, he or she will certainly notice the front desk where several campus and community advertisements are displayed in addition to educational pamphlets and a sign-up sheet filled with names and times. One can easily view the standard white copying machines and printers beyond the desk, yet what stands out more is the large oval meeting table centrally placed that dominates much of the room's space. Encompass-

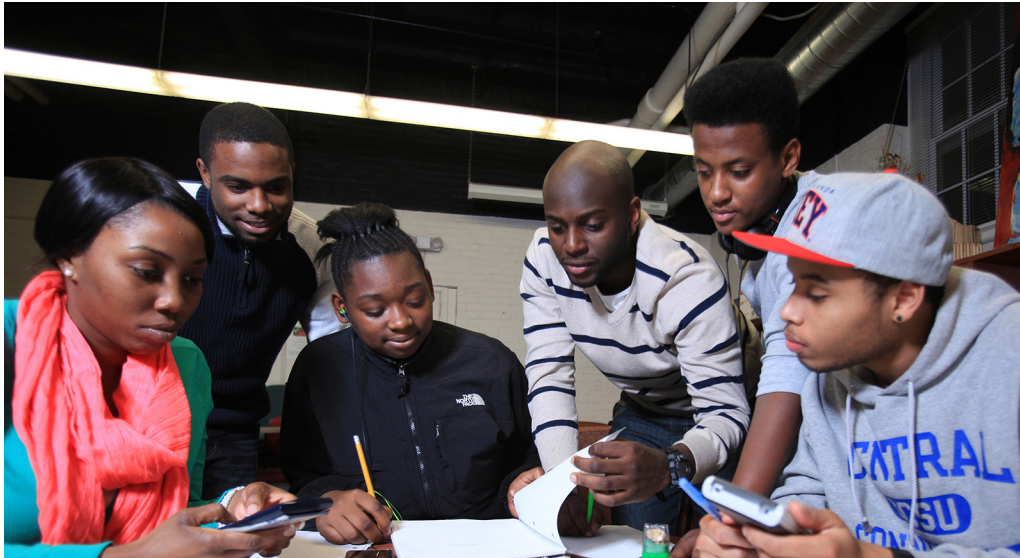
ing the walls are several flat-screen computers sitting atop computer tables aligned with decorative artwork that provides a welcoming ambiance for the room just as the sitting areas offer with blended red and bone colored-couches behind small tables at the far end of the overall space. In the seconds that one takes to internalize this space, he or she will hear a familiar "Hi, how are you?" or "Hi, may I help you?" from at least one of the Center's staff members. When stated by a staff member, particularly in this environment, these questions initiate a genuine respect and concern for the visitor well beyond his or her immediate inquiries.

Whether the subtle essence of the location influences the staff or vice versa, the Center for Africana Studies is a place that encourages students, in particular, to study, to seek knowledge, to have quiet reflections, and to converse purposefully, at times, in a mentor or mentee capacity. However, it is the Center's staff members' commitment to sound work ethic practices that distinguishes this location from any other resource site with similar attributes. By fully understanding their multiple roles as staff members, the students project a sense of purpose through their work that compliments their personalities. The level of authenticity apparent in their desire to be of assistance enhances their work performance in a manner that they can independently or collective function while making it appear rather effortlessly to do so. When asked, therefore, to complete survey questions about their work experiences and the work ethics used, several staff members provided quality information affirming in many ways that the Center for Africana Studies is an major asset for the student employed well beyond the monetary compensation for hours provided. The collective perspective provided by three male staff members about their work ethics reinforces the Center as a place that provides them with valuable resources needed to support their academic endeavors while also allowing them to simply be themselves, especially when they interact socially with various members of the campus and the community.

Although the two concepts of academic learning and socializing might appear counter-productive, for the staff members surveyed, it is clear that they are able to multi-task their responsibilities and understand the value of intermixing within this dualistic setting. For instance, according to staff member, Adamski Celestin, the work he does in the Center for Africana Studies is important because it complements his academic major and

interests. He states, “As a Political Science major with a minor in Business, I’ve learned to value the professionalism from faculty and co-workers; in addition, the work allows me to voice my opinions and have some serious input on the policies that impact the students and the community. In a similar context, two female staff members, Ahj Meeks and Nicola Weise, gain distinct knowledge from the interactions with different cultures representative within the Center as well as through the insightful lectures and conferences they assist in organizing. According to Weise, her work [at the Center] complements her interests “to learn more about African roots and values”, and, as a result, has increased her knowledge of the many “social, political, and cultural factors associated with developing countries.” Meeks further supports this view by acknowledging the link between her major of Psychology and the Center. Meeks asserts, “In psychology, it is important to take in different cultural norms so that you don’t misdiagnose someone because what might be normal for you may not be for someone else.” Weise’s and Meeks’ comments are indicative of a strong work ethic that is linked to one’s skills being morally used to benefit others.

Equally significant is the point that working in the Center inspires high work performance for the staff members. “I want to be known as someone who always work hard and the Center helps tremendously with that goal; this is because seeing people working diligently and using it as a study area motivates me each day to do the same.” writes staff member Isaih Scales. This perspective is reaffirmed by Alexander Richards-Parnell who views the Center as his own room and as a place where he can relax and concentrate in order to apply



CAS’ student staff members Adamski Celestin, Isaih Scales, and Nicola Weise engage in problem solving with CCSU students Racquel Allen, Michael Whittaker, and Salam Measho.

the strategies that will enable him to earn no grade below a C average. In addition, he believes that the Center has played a key role in his development as a person and student. He remarks, “I like being the person people speak to when they enter the Center, and I enjoy interacting with anyone who is searching for knowledge about the Center, especially the freshmen students.” Collectively, the staff members view their work as rewarding and enriching, although some believe the Center can further evolve with more student employees’ input about select activities that the Center sponsors.

Any space that has a unique character should reflect the quality of work that is done within it. Spaces and locations matter significantly more than some may think, especially for students. There are probably many students who are unaware of the Center as a place that can provide a solid foundation for students to thrive. For the students who do take the opportunity to see and to utilize the space as it was intended, they position themselves to apply work ethics that are learned through purposeful interactions, study groups, and genuine camaraderie. This is a value that can remain intact well beyond the university years. This is what the Center for Africana Studies’ staff members know, and what they demonstrate to anyone who completes the steps down from the semi-dark staircase into the basement of the Marcus White building. ◆

CCSU Students Engaged In Hard Work

Hard work for college students should be like car keys to the NASCAR driver. It is so crucial to the matter at hands that no student will cross the finish line and see the checkered flag without it. Now realities such as being accepted as a college student, applying for internships, and searching for meaningful work make the world appear increasingly competitive. Adapting rather well to this growing trend of Darwinism, hard workers are the ones tends to miss out on the thrills of an action packed social life. Hard work should be valued by everyone because whatever is worth having is worth the amount of work and effort one puts into it. For instance, a person should be more than willing to commit oneself to work hard in order to earn any nice six figure career desired. Like a return investment, the amount of work put into the undergraduate classes at Central Ct. State University or put into graduate courses will produce a reward worth having in the end. Both the dream and reward should be in tandem, and the thoughts of having a successful career should be a long term goal that is accomplished by the knowledge one has developed and mastered while in college.

After wondering what other CCSU students thought about this topic, I interviewed several upper-classmen (three seniors and one junior) and a couple of sophomore students as well who represented engineering, business, science, and criminology majors. I discovered from my interviews that hard work isn't only a valued entity for the select few. The majority defined hard work as putting in the extra time and effort in order to be ready to achieve a desired goal. It was also agreed that hard work has to be valued because it reflects the type of work ethic a student wants to be known for having in this academic environment. We all agreed that working is just a "break even" concept, doing typically the minimum required for an assignment, project, or test while hard work constitutes going above and beyond the basic expectations that has been asked of the person. An example of a hard worker is someone who maintains his or her position on the Dean's List while working a part-time job and taking at least five classes. Another example is the student who completes every extra credit assignment that is offered (when the grades are already high ones) in order to demonstrate the student sincerely values hard work. So it was unanimous amongst the students that the hard work it takes to earn good grades consistently matches their expectations to be top students, at least, on a short term basis.

I believe being enrolled as a student here at CCSU or any university speaks volumes about the person's work ethic because he or she must eventually take classes that will test the quality of their work. Students will learn sooner or later that any "easy" class is illusionary at best and that every student should work hard during his or her time in college. As an Exercise Science major, I believe the "knowledge" bonds I'm faithfully depositing and storing in the my "college bank" currently will be very beneficial to me when I am ready to cash them, and my value placed on hard work is the key reason the reward will be more than worth it. ♦

Crawford, B.

Evaluating Hard Work: CCSU Student Athletes' Views

When it comes to defining and assessing hard work, there are several freshmen track and field athletes at Central who have a lot to offer on the subject matter. They know first-hand the lifestyle that demands it more than other students who are not involved in sports. Aside from the stress of college classes, athletes must complete intense practices within their prospective sport. The seven freshmen athletes interviewed agreed collectively that pushing oneself to work past a point where the average person would have already given up exemplifies the concept of hard work most accurately for them. In addition, the majority of these athletes believed their work ethic on the field translates into a similar one in the classroom; thus, they see a strong athletic performance as the catalyst for having a high level of academic success. “When we work hard in practice, we get better; when we work hard in our classes, we get better grades.” stated Freshmen Ali Kliech.

Because athletes want to be at the top of their game and are extremely competitive, it is normal for them to approach their academic work as different challenges or goals they must overcome or accomplish. In particular, many athletes want to stay ahead of the class just as in a competitive race and being first in everything are challenges that can be inspiring for them to do extremely well. Giving one’s best at all times and never accepting a mid- range or low grades are key standards of hard work that these athletes believe will benefit them by having more career opportunities than they would have without them. As freshmen athletes, they have many more semesters to put forth the hard work that will make a real difference in their lives well beyond this college environment. ♦

Knighton, C.



Select members of the CCSU Track Team Relax and pose after campus workout.

Hard Work Pays Off for the 2012 Presidential Campaign

The re-election effort of President Barack Obama began days after he won the presidency in 2008 and continued until the national vote on November 6, 2012. More than thirteen million people contributed to the 2012 Obama-Biden campaign initiative. President Obama and his advisors took a multi-faceted approach to campaigning in order to reclaim the White House. The campaign utilized tactics such as grassroots organizing, television advertisements, and digital communications. ‘Organizing for America’, a grassroots organization for the re-election of President Obama, was started just after the President took office in 2008. President Obama stated that the organization would play a “crucial role” in his re-election. Subsequently, the Obama campaign has led one of the largest grassroots organizing efforts that the United States has ever witnessed.

“While the volunteers were important in persuading voters to go to the polls and cast their votes for Obama, they were backed up by the campaign’s mammoth database operation”. The database told volunteers which homes to visit and what to say upon arrival. Paid staff for the Obama campaign tracked every email, letter, text message, and website to decide the effectiveness of their strategy. “The campaign developed more than 7,000 customized e-mails, tailored to individual prospects, and made real-time improvements to its outreach materials. Adjustments were made daily to improve performance and conversion”. Through constant revision, Obama campaign staff noticed a steady increase in the effectiveness of their tactics.

President Obama spearheaded the 2012 campaign by traveling throughout the country and speaking to voters. He spoke about the economy and jobs, taxes and the deficit, national security, veteran’s affairs, healthcare, education, immigration, energy, and the environment. The speeches, however, were not simply well planned theoretical talking points. The President offered solutions and plans that he and his staff had been ardently developing since he took office in 2008. Additionally, President Obama took time out of his schedule to sit down, talk with average Americans, and visit some of them in their homes.

1 Eggen, D. (2009, April 6). Obama’s Grass-Roots ‘Organizing for America’ Isn’t A Factor in Budget Battle. The Washington Post. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/05/AR2009040501890.html>.

2 Lefler, D. (2012, November 20). Obama campaign used data and grassroots volunteers, Chicago organizer tells Wichita State students. The Wichita Eagle. Retrieved from <http://www.kansas.com/2012/11/20/2576163/obama-campaign-used-data-and-grassroots.html#storylink=cpy#storylink=cpy>.

3 Monte, L. (2009). The Social Pulpit: Barack Obama’s Social Media Toolkit. Edelman Digital Public Affairs. Retrieved from <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/Social%20Pulpit%20-%20Barack%20Obamas%20Social%20Media%20Toolkit%201.09.pdf>.

The effort for re-election required President Obama to uphold his work on domestic and international policy while making him-self available to the American public for discourse and debate. Towards the end of the 2012 campaign, disaster struck when Hurricane Sandy ravaged neighborhoods in states such as New Jersey, Connecticut, and New York. Residents of the affected areas experienced loss of life, loss of property, and in some cases were left in a state of destitution. President Obama is quoted as saying that the situation became his “number one priority”. He took the time to step off of the campaign trail, personally visit families in New Jersey, and coordinate with the governors of affected states. Obama spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters that, “In between every single event he basically walks off the stage, gets on a phone call with governors, mayors and first-responders... He’s focused on it every minute he’s not on the stage”.

President Barack Obama is quoted as saying that “Change is never easy, but always possible”. His determination, diligence, belief in himself, belief in his compatriots, and belief in his country are translated into his efforts as both President of the United States and as a Presidential candidate. His determination, diligence, belief in himself, belief in his compatriots, and belief in his country are translated into his efforts as both President of the United States and as a Presidential candidate. The Obama campaign functioned as a team who fervently supported their captain, President Barack Obama. President Obama held the torch and led his team to victory due to his tireless efforts both on and off of the campaign trail. Hard work paid off for the 2012 Obama re- election campaign because self-sacrifice was enacted in order to achieve a clear goal. President Obama valued hard work, made him-self available to the American public, upheld his duties as Commander in Chief of the United States of America, and reclaimed the Presidency. ♦



Devin A. Avshalom-Smith, CCSU Philosophy Major, takes time for serious reflection at semester’s end.

4 Stein, S. (2012, November 3). Obama Steps Up Hurricane Sandy Response Before Hitting Campaign Trail. Huffington Post. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/03/obama-hurricane-sandy_n_2068935.html.

5 Harnden, T. (2012, November 3). All the President’s madmen: One adviser says Obama is speaking ‘from his LOINS’ and another says ‘let’s win this m*****f*****r’ (but at least Katy Perry was on message). Mail Online. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2227397/US-Election-2012-Adviser-says-Obama-speaking-LOINS.html#ixzz2ECs1aNWj>.

6 Obama, B. (2005, May 1). NAACP Fight for Freedom Fund Dinner. Retrieved from <http://obamaspeeches.com/015-NAACP-Fight-for-Freedom-Fund-Dinner-Obama-Speech.htm>.

Avshalom-Smith, D.

News from the Motherland

If You Don't Know How to Dance, You Will Need More Space!

Value Restructuring for African Countries

As the life cycle of technology tends to diminish, western economies are now presented with unprecedented economic and social turbulences. The barriers of entry for many technology portfolios of western technology companies are falling steadily. High competitive and cost-conscious new players from emerging economies are increasingly challenging the traditional western market share, changing rapidly the competitive landscape. A rapid shift in technology tends to make western company products obsolete or less competitive. Capacity excess due to subsequent lower market demands calls for adjustments. Changes in competition and customer demands accelerate price erosions for many high tech products, thus challenging traditional business models.

CEOs most natural response to this sort of crisis has been restructuring, which translates into divestiture, downsizing, outsourcing and performance of integration processes. So, restructuring is vital to any organization that aims at freeing itself from distress. Prior to any restructuring program kick-off, the leadership must accept the two pre-conditions for a successful restructuring: First, formal recognition that economic performance will not improve, and second, crisis vulnerability will not be reduced without large-scale changes.

Most African countries and their respective governments, today, are still facing some sort of fundamental distress: Organizational distresses (e.g. under-performing government entities, lack of competitive business processes and best practices), political distresses, and economic distresses (e.g. ethnicity management, resources management, accountability). It can be argued that the most fundamental principles from corporate restructuring can successfully be applied to or transferred onto these governments and sovereign states. As the common denominator shall be the conviction to improving performance through large-scale changes only, the suggestion here is that hard work is always fundamental for a turnaround, no matter what nature the entity in crisis is about.

Experiences from new and successful restructured economies, like China, India, Brazil and South Korea have shown that large-scale restructuring requires the government to take a leading role, so as to establish priorities, limit the economic and social costs of crisis, address market failures, and deal with the obstructions posed by powerful interest groups. Although the government's role is highly country-specific, owing to its complexities, social consequences, and involvement of different elements of society, there are relatively few overarching operational principles or obvious ways to organize the policy choices, especially in comparison with other structural policy areas such as capital account liberalization and labor market reform among others. Let's accept that Brazil has a widely accepted model for an African economy (multi-ethnic, blessed with resources, big in size per definition, class-divided, multi-religious, indigenous): It shows that a successful completion of large-scale restructuring can often take a long time. Moreover, transparency and disclosure of all the aspects of restructuring can make clear the impediments put in the way by vested interest groups, consequently leading to public pressure to accelerate reform.

Thus, the tools for any organization restructuring success would be leadership recognition of the existence of under-performance, the need for hard work, realistic timelines, and transparency. Traditionally, the African cultural preposition for success usually favors easy and fast solutions. Any long lasting agenda, suggesting hard work, attitude transparency and accountability is negative connoted and intellectually repugnant. So, there is an unusual, unspoken, erroneous consensus across all African stratum, which suggests, if it lasts long, it is not worth it. Experiences from Brazil and other successful economies reveal, however, there is no easy path to success.

Thus, African leadership must embrace and enforce the wisdom of pursuing success through hard work. Just like any good mechanic, who would need a well-furnished tool set to properly repair a distressed automobile, profound understanding of the nature and limitations of restructuring tools is crucial for problem solving. This would influence the degree of command of these tools. Moreover, sound mechanisms for implementation are indispensable. A relevant factor is how decision options are generated out of a complex, interest group (divided) society. It can be argued, that information gathering processing is the key. Thus, understanding the anatomy of information itself in today's communication (due to increase in quantity, nature and frequency of information flow) is vital.

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African government leadership must ensure proximity to their people because the people are the information source. This can be done through means of technology or through other cultural elements. They must work harder to better understand the specifics of information source: information generators, users, holders, and the flow path of information until cultural or moral convictions are developed. The necessary respect must be granted to them, so they can mature and be relevant for an inclusive decision-making process. In a global context, Africa is still tracing behind other players in many commodities and must start keeping up now, to avoid losing sight of many competitors. Thus, in the ballroom of world politics, Africa cannot yet afford to relax and stay cool. For one fact is clear: If you don't know how to dance, you will have to grant yourself more space, even risking rejection from anyone else. Nevertheless, this would be prospectively a much better scenario, than to sit idle, just watching others having fun based on their hard work. ♦

Assado, C.M.T.



ENG212 students listen attentively to Dr. Johnson's discussion of Z.Z. Packer's short story entitled "Our Lady of Peace."

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The Value of Hard Work For CCSU Students:

Most favorably, the survey suggests that overall students do observe and are watchful of family members who demonstrate hard work to them on some level within their lives.

In order to lead students in a way that will be instrumental to them well beyond a class or two they may take, educators must, at times, accept that they will be resisted, challenged, judged or even maligned. Yet this is the price one should be willing to pay when the stakes are so high for our students and for our society. Sometimes one must allow a person to fall in order for the person to find the strength to pull him-self or herself up. Giving the students who need it a realistic view of their work while challenging them to do better than they believe they are capable of, is a morally based obligation we owe to them. In doing so, we honor the ancestors whose value placed on hard work and education made the greatest difference in so many of our lives. ♦

Johnson, B.

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Students prepare to leave as final course reminders are given at the end of ENG 212 class.

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