



UnLeading invites us to challenge common-sense assumptions and center often-silenced approaches to leadership, allowing us to re/imagine possibilities for leading, learning, and being in relation to ourselves, each other, and the more than human world.

<https://www.yorku.ca/edu/unleading/>

Season 1: Facilitator Guide

“UnLeading requires a commitment to holding multiple truths, troubling common-sense assumptions, living the inquiries and sitting in the ambiguities of complex ideas such as leadership, schooling, and society. UnLeading asks us to engage in the praxis of leadership, a continual interplay of action towards systemic change and deep, inner reflection. In this way, it is a process of becoming, with no predetermined destination or finite goal. UnLeading asks us to look for leadership in unfamiliar places and challenge the notion of the individual leader.” (The UnLeading Project, York University)

SUMMARIZE by identifying several themes/concepts that arise in this conversation with the guest speakers. Note similarities, differences, tensions, connections, and possible contradictions between and among them. Additionally, note the perspectives, ideas, and voices that might be missing as well in this conversation. You are also invited to draw out compelling quotes from the speakers and comment on them

MAKE CONNECTIONS to your experiences in/with communities and to larger socio-political and historic contexts. Think about and comment on how the thoughts and ideas presented by the speakers connect to similar themes/concepts in other contexts of leadership.

REFLECT on how the conversations with the speakers inform your understanding of leadership outside of familiar frameworks using the guided reflection questions posed below.

ACT by committing to possible actions (immediate and long-term) that you will engage in to disrupt the status quo, which will steadfastly guide you in actualizing the type of leader you hope to be in and with communities.

The Four I's: Embracing Fractals as Possibilities for Leadership

“A fractal is a never-ending pattern. Fractals are infinitely complex patterns that are self-similar across different scales. They are created by repeating a simple process over and over in an ongoing feedback loop.

How we are at the small scale is how we are at the large scale. The patterns of the universe repeat at scale. There is a structural echo that suggests...that what we practice at a small scale can reverberate to the largest scale.

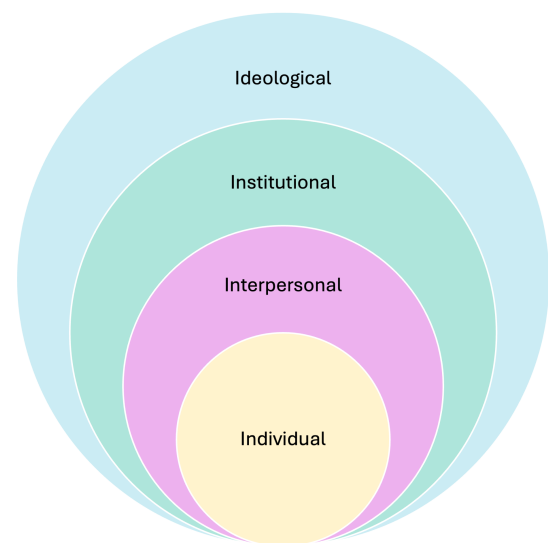
These patterns emerge at the local, regional, state, and global level—basically wherever two or more social change agents are gathered. And this may be the most important element to understand—that what we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system.” (adrienne maree brown)

Individual Relates to the emotions, biases, perceptions, thoughts about ourselves.

Interpersonal Concerns relationships, how we treat one another as individuals and communities.

Institutional Applies to structures, policies, curriculum, professional learning, parent and family engagement, classroom and school climate, and larger policies.

Ideological Connection to ideas about each other and the world.



SEASON 1

CULTURALLY RELEVANT & ANTI-RACIST LEADERSHIP

(Click image to listen)



Guiding Reflection Questions:

How do we imagine and rebuild an education system that is relevant and responsive to the communities that we serve through centering the experiences, knowledge systems, and leadership approaches of the global majority?

Reflection Questions:

1. What does culturally relevant and responsive leadership and anti-racist leadership look like within the educational spaces that we take up?
2. How might we create leadership practices that disrupt White supremacy in education?
3. How do silences, denial, projections, protections, stalling, and other in/actions maintain White power in the institution of schooling?
4. Who do we need to be as leaders to lead in culturally responsive and anti-racist ways?
5. How might we apply this understanding to the work we do in communities, schools, and academies?

Individual Relates to the emotions, biases, perceptions, thoughts about ourselves.

Quotes to provoke our thinking and guide us in our actions:

“I am a motivational, instructional leader and team builder who will work collaboratively to improve the educational life outcomes of underserved students. I will expect and only accept greatness.” (Ramon San Vicente)

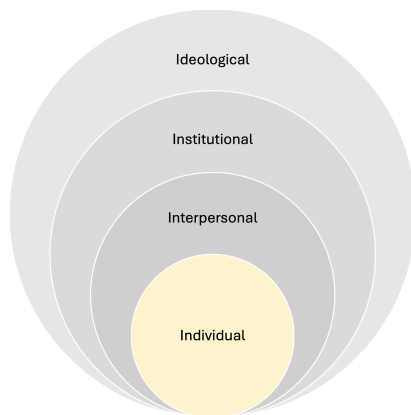
“Leaders come in, all forms, all sizes and you know what? Those of us who are deep into Critical Race Theory belong just as much as those who don't even see race because sometimes we have to take their spaces. Many times we have to take that space.” (Karen Murray)

“No matter how much research and theory and findings are produced by Black people, White education systems continue to ignore it and refuse to center this research. This obvious refusal to learn from Black educational leaders has allowed racism to persist in education and we can now see that culturalism hasn't worked.” (Melissa Wilson)

“We need to really consider and take inventory of what has been missing in terms of their own learning and how we can then be able to change the way that we perceive what is important, what is necessary, what is possible.” (Shernett Martin)

Reflection:

How do these statements resonate with you in terms of how you see yourself leading?



Action:

- What theories guide your practice as a leader? If you find this question difficult to answer, what might you do? What learning might you engage in?
- We are all complicit in violating human rights. What does this look like for you? We are all committed to upholding human rights. What does this look like for you?
- In what ways are your actions performative? In what ways are your actions genuine? What does this reflection teach you about yourself?

Interpersonal Concerns relationships, how we treat one another as individuals and communities.

Quotes to provoke our thinking and guide us in our actions:

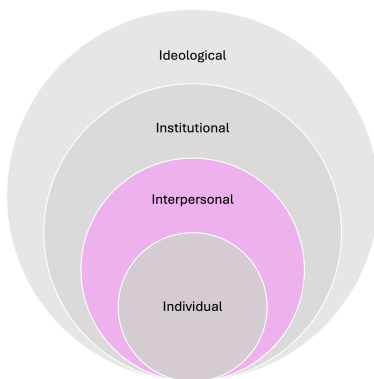
“If we were to be true to this whole idea of critical anti-racism or culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, it is to actually challenge hierarchy, to look at our students and the communities we work with and the educators in our systems as peers and partners.” (Alice Te)

“Culturally responsive teaching, and just understanding that the importance of seeing our students for who they are, their capabilities, understand the underlying systems that are present, that are making our racialized students feel inadequate, feel that they cannot achieve the systems that are there that have been oppressing them for all of these years.” (Shernett Martin)

“We are in a system that we all know is corrupt and violent and so many other things and at the same time, we build relationships, even with those who are perpetuating the violence. That’s because in the spaces that we work in, to have the impact that we need to have, I think we have to work in dynamic ways that bring people into the conversation and be able to have the impact that we need to have and that we want to have.” (Ramon San Vicente)

Reflection:

How might we put relationships and humanity at the center of leading? How do we practice being more human with each day, each year?



Action:

- When are you seeing entire groups of people as a monolith or through a single story? Write down that single story and look for evidence to challenge that single story.
- Make a list of the skills you use to bring people into conversations about equity and anti-racism. In what ways do people avoid or give up on speaking to people who are not committed to equity? In what ways do people explore different ideas, stay in dialogue, and commit to strengthening relationships across different experiences?

Institutional Applies to structures, policies, curriculum, professional learning, parent and family engagement, classroom and school climate, and larger policies.

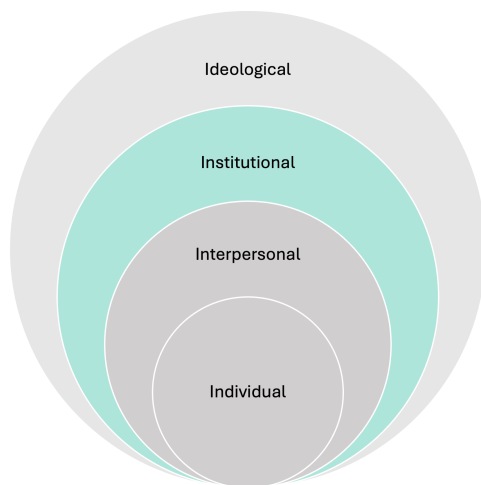
“Anti-racist education leadership reminds us about representation. It reminds us that those who are most impacted by the educational system that we’re working in right now need to be centered within that work.” (Karen Murray)

“But unfortunately, this work is done by people who share the identities of those who are oppressed within the system. It’s this vicious cycle where it really falls on our shoulders and it has a real impact on our mental health, on our physical health. Yet, we’re the ones that have to keep going and keep doing this work.” (Nora Hindy)

“Once we acknowledge that oppression exists in every space that we operate, are we going to uphold the current system in our actions and our thoughts and our words? Or are we going to continually fight to disrupt it so that education is a political act? It’s a spiritual commitment, it’s mind, body, spirit, it’s everything that we are.” (Ramon San Vicente)

Reflection:

How can educational institutions make space for culturally relevant and anti-racist leaders and support anti-racist leadership approaches?



Action:

- Choose one long-standing practice in your school/district. Make a list of the groups that are more served by

this practice and the groups that are less served. How can you change the practice such that the voices with the least positional or social power are centered in the practice? How does this shift benefit *all*?

- Consider the difficult work involved in creating more equitable spaces, such as having difficult conversations, calling people in, teaching and leading in ways that go against the grain and challenge the status quo, addressing human rights complaints, speaking with families and community members who are experiencing harm in school, etc.
- Make a list of the people in your school/district that take on most of this work. What patterns do you notice in the gender, race, age, and position of the people taking on the burdens associated with this work. How might you interrupt these patterns?

Ideological Connection to ideas about each other and the world.

“Instead of having them riddled with this belief system that we live in this fair and equitable society and that if you just try hard and work hard and do all your homework and study hard that you're going to graduate and the world is going to be yours, that's a big lie. It takes much more than just trying hard.” (Shernett Martin)

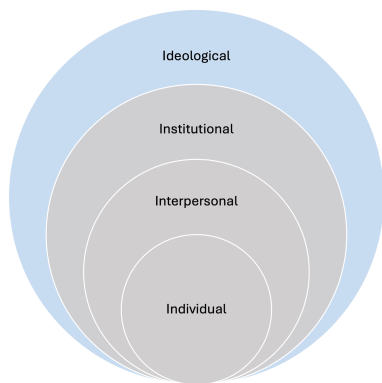
“Honestly, the whole connotation of leader as a noun, I've always rejected. There are more provocative verbs for me, not so much as lead...It is about engaging. It is about advocating. It is about partnering, disrupting, challenging, questioning, reflecting.” (Alice Te)

“The performative pieces are very obvious and people stealing and taking credit for other people, mainly White people taking credit for the work of Black, Indigenous and people of colour, it just keeps growing and growing.” (Nora Hindy)

Reflection:

What might it mean to undo and unlearn practices and ideas that promote and maintain status quo, hierarchy, individualism, and compliance?

Commit to learning about what these barriers look like in your school/district. Edit your Board Improvement and Equity Plan or School Improvement Plans to acknowledge and address these barriers



Action:

- Look for examples of surface-level equity for optics rather than deep-equity for change in anti-racism and equity work. Choose one action you can take to interrupt any one of these patterns. What happens?
- The myth of meritocracy ignores the many structural barriers that different groups of students face because of racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and more.