



A Perspective on the Alabama State Bar's 2008 Leadership Forum—Class 4

“Leadership can be thought of as a capacity to define oneself to others in a way that clarifies and expands a vision of the future.” Edwin H. Friedman

By Robert C. Lockwood

Like many people, I’ve always wanted to be a “leader.” Yet, I never thought of myself as a leader because I perceived that I was lacking in “It.” I’m not sure how to define “It” other than to observe that certain people possess a magnetism and charisma that draws others to them. People with “It” tend to naturally wind up in leadership positions. Don’t get me wrong—my wife will be happy to tell you how good-looking and funny I am. But, when other people (who have not taken a lifelong vow of devotion) are looking for an individual to be public face of their cause, the name “Robert Lockwood” doesn’t always leap to mind.

Thus, I was immediately intrigued when a good friend of mine suggested that I apply for the Alabama State Bar’s Leadership Forum. Totally ignorant of the content of the program, I assumed that I would finally receive tutelage that would allow me to develop “It.” I was certain that the forum would teach me and groom those esoteric qualities that would help me attain the status of “Leader” that I so greatly desired. So, I submitted my application and the accompanying inspirational essay to prove that I was leadership material.

Despite the admittedly sappy content of my essay, the selection committee for the forum decided to accept me into a class of individuals who are clearly stars

of the Alabama State Bar. When speaking of these stars, however, it is important to emphasize that the selection committee did not limit itself to “big firm” corporate attorneys. Almost every imaginable legal discipline and practice size was represented in our class: plaintiffs’ attorneys, defense attorneys, corporate attorneys, big firms, medium firms, solo practitioners, in-house counsel, government attorneys, and legal aid attorneys. I am honored to be included in their number. To make sure that they get the recognition they deserve, I am also going to repeat their names: Holly Alves; Hamp Baxley; Kelly Brennan; Russell Buffkin; Valerie Chittom; Jequette Clancy; Bradley Cornett; Jonathan Cross; Anne Durward; John England, III; Sandy Gregory; Erik Heninger; Dana Hill; Adrian Johnson; Sam David Knight; Kent Lauderdale; Jonathan Lowe; David Martin; Flynn Mozingo; J.B. Perrine; Cynthia Ransburg-Brown; Clay Ryan; Chris Smith; Chad Stewart; Ashley Swink; Jimbo Terrell; Tom Warburton; John Webb; and Tari Williams.

I am extremely grateful for an opportunity to meet these outstanding attorneys. I could consider my participation in the Leadership Forum a success simply because of the opportunity to interact with them. Beyond the fellowship and networking opportunities, however, the forum provided an experience which was

the diametric opposite of my pre-conceived expectations, and which unquestionably helped me and all of my classmates to develop our leadership skills.

Most importantly, the forum taught me that leadership is not about “It.” Certainly, every member of my class possesses charisma and charm. More important than their personalities, however, is that each is an incredibly intelligent, hard-working individual who just wants the opportunity to serve his or her community. Through that service these individuals have become leaders.

Indeed, the central theme of Class 4 of the Leadership Forum was “Servant Leadership.” We were exposed to a diverse array of individuals who have sacrificed their own time and welfare for the benefit of their communities. These people did not serve in order to attain the radiance of “leadership.” Instead, they found a passion for a cause, worked for the cause and gradually moved to the forefront of the cause.

If you are looking for a nuts-and-bolts tutorial on how to develop specific leadership skills, the Leadership Forum is not for you. We were not taught how to make friends and influence people, and rightfully so. Dale Carnegie’s courses are extremely adept at teaching those skills, and the state bar has appropriately stayed away from that niche. Instead, the Leadership Forum relies upon a more subtle approach that is

more akin to the Socratic Method that we were supposed to learn in law school.

Every member of Class 4 was presented with a set of problems and offered the opportunity to confront and solve those problems in his or her own manner, if so moved. Each month from January through May 2008, our class gathered in a different location to learn about issues facing the state bar and the State of Alabama. These were not brainstorming sessions to debate the best methods for solving social and political ills. Rather, each session represented an experience and an opportunity. None of our presenters dictated a solution for any issue or mandated that we follow a specific path. Instead, the resolution was left up to us.

In January, we held an orientation retreat at the Marriott Legends in Prattville where we learned about issues surrounding the Alabama Constitution of 1901 and we were inspired by Millard Fuller, one of the founders of Habitat for Humanity. Our February meeting was conducted in Selma and focused upon historic and modern difficulties which confront Alabama's Black Belt. The Alabama Education Association graciously hosted our March session in Montgomery while the state bar offices were undergoing renovation. We learned from leaders who are at the forefront of education in Alabama, including Superintendent of the Alabama Department of Education Dr. Joe Morton, Chancellor of Postsecondary Education

Bradley Byrne and Executive Secretary of the Alabama Education Association Dr. Paul Hubbert. In April, Balch & Bingham hosted our class in their new offices in Birmingham where we learned about access to justice and professionalism. Additionally, we were inspired by presentations from two "everyday" lawyers who are the embodiment of servant leadership: Jim Rotch, who initiated *The Birmingham Pledge*, and Julie Marks, one of the leaders of "The Heart Gallery" in Alabama. Finally, in May, we received "Insiders' Reflections" on current challenges facing the bar, which were highlighted by presentations from Morris Dees and 2007-08 ASB President Sam Crosby.

From the foregoing sessions, the greatest lesson that I learned is that leadership is not always the result of "It." More often, leadership is the result of passion. Individuals feel a passion for a cause and respond appropriately. To me, the Leadership Forum sought to develop that passion in its members. The forum exposed us to a myriad of situations and

sought to light the fire that would result in service and ultimately leadership.

After five months of participation in the Alabama State Bar Leadership Forum, I can't proclaim myself a "leader." No individual can anoint himself or herself with that title. Nevertheless, I am motivated to address some of the issues that were presented in the forum, and I am prepared to work with the bar to bring change. Along the way, I may become a leader, but even without that title, I know that I can make a difference.

If you are an ASB member who has practiced not less than five and not more than 15 years, I recommend that you apply for membership in the 2009 class of the Alabama State Bar Leadership Forum (Class 5). Applications are available online at www.alabar.org under the link "Leadership Forum." The deadline for applications is November 3, 2008 and applicants will be notified on or before December 8, 2008. Applications will be reviewed in the order in which they are received. ▲▼▲



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Alabama State Bar Leadership Forum Applicant Demographics 2005-2008

	Class 4 (2008)			Class 3 (2007)			Class 2 (2006)			Class 1 (2005)		
	Applications	Class	Alternates	Applications	Class	Alternates	Applications	Class	Alternates	Applications	Class	Alternates
Number of Applicants	78	30	4	72	30	4	71	30	4	42	30	4
Male	51	20	4	52	20	3	52	20		25	16	
Female	27	10		20	10	1	19	10		17	14	
Black		7	5			2	1	6	6		2	2
City:												
Birmingham		34	13		33	13		34	12		18	14
Huntsville		2	2		6	2		4	1		4	3
Mobile	7	2		6	2		6	2		5	2	
Montgomery		13	5		6	2		8	3		6	5
Tuscaloosa		5	1		5	3		2	1		4	4
Other		17	7		16	8		17	11		5	2