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Journeys to Leadership Series

Although much has been written about leaders and leadership, we unfortunately know little about women, particularly minority women, who fill this particular role.

This book – the second in a series that explores women leaders in different contexts – presents

the stories, and the reflections on their paths to leadership, of seven African-American women. Five are, or have been, college presidents; three have devoted a good portion of their lives to leadership in higher education policy at state and/or national levels.

Each has been the first woman, or first African American, or first African-American woman in one or more of the positions of authority that she has held. Along the way, they have overcome the double bind of sexism and racism that can inhibit the professional attainment of African-American women, particularly as they move toward the top of their professions.

Although their pathways into leadership are different, definite similarities in their experiences, values, and beliefs emerge. Their values took root in the 1960s, a time of strong cohesion in the Black community, a time during which African Americans and women made great strides toward equality. They recognize that they owe their strength to the confidence and sense of empowerment instilled in each of them by parents and early role models. Several of them believe that their leadership skills were born out of their childhood experiences. Grateful for the support they have received, these women leaders express a need to give back to those communities that nourished their growth and leadership – of which this book is a manifestation.

At a time when national demographic data indicate that a significant turnover in college leadership is about to occur – presenting increased opportunities for women and minorities – these African-American women leaders hope that the strategies they describe, the insights they impart, the experiences they recount, and, most of all, the passion they have sustained for the betterment of and greater inclusiveness in higher education, will inspire the next generation of women to answer the leadership call.

The African-American women leaders featured in this book are **Debra Austin, Lois Carson, Marvalene Hughes, Yolanda Moses, Beverly Daniel Tatum, Jerry Sue Thornton,** and **Belle S. Wheelan**

. These women exude strength and self-confidence. They each hold the belief, as Belle Wheelan puts it, that "with a little heart and a lot of learning I can do anything."