

Leadership NEXT! Will we choose to harness the potential of youth in our global village?

Written by Mfon Archibong and Dr. Anita DeFoe (Photos: GRI)
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On Oct. 26, 2011, the UN Population Fund (UNFPD) stated in its Global Population Report that, "The world is in danger of missing a golden opportunity for development and economic growth, a demographic dividend, as the largest cohort of young people ever known see their most economically productive years wasted. The potential economic benefits of having such a large global population of young people will go unfulfilled, as a generation suffers from a lack of education, and investment in infrastructure and job creation."

The authors commented, "When young people can claim their rights to health, education and decent working conditions, they become a powerful force for economic development and positive change. This opportunity (for) a demographic dividend is a fleeting moment that must be claimed quickly or lost."

The report noted that of the 7 billion people on the planet, 1.8 billion are aged between 10 and 24, and 90 percent of those live in the developing world. Two years later, the question remains, are we as a society choosing to invest in the educational and leadership potential of our youth?



Grace Restoration International (GRI) led by President and CEO Mfon Archibong and social entrepreneur, Dr. Anita Davis-DeFoe are determined to harness this demographic dividend in Nigeria, refusing to accept that the potential of youth living in Africa will be lost. Dr. Davis-DeFoe, in her work with World Leadership Day, a global mastermind group of leadership

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ambassadors from 18 countries, is committed to assisting individuals and organizations such as GRI.

GRI reshaping the global village through youth leadership

Around the world, young leaders have become significantly involved in the civic change movement.

Youth have become change apparatus in their communities and are poised to achieve so much more. To reduce generational poverty through education, health, and social entrepreneurship, GRI plans to draw youth into the practice of leadership by piloting and coaching a social active learning movement in Akwa Ibom of Nigeria.



Through the launching of a leadership academy this fall for youth ages 12 – 21, GRI will teach future leaders the principles of transformative leadership. Community problems identified that this academy will address include leadership competencies, accountabilities, community organizing, problem-solving abilities, current and future civic activism, civic and political engagement, and youth-adult partnerships.

The Grace Restoration International Youth Leadership Movement (GRIYLM) is geared toward fostering understanding, respect, and civic engagement among Nigerian youth so that they will participate in community development building strategies. To support leadership development, GRIYLM designed the Youth Leadership Movement to equip youth and their adult mentors with the essential knowledge and skills needed to make significant community-level change. GRIYLM will provide trainings and workshops that gives youth and adults the tools necessary to address community development problems and elevate quality of life for all.

Aligning behavioral change with leadership needs

Behavioral change is needed to achieve the desired mission of building sustainable civic and responsible communities. Effective leadership influences others through motivation, drive,

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confidence, integrity, cognitive ability confidence, and task knowledge. Individual behavioral change continues to be a problem in these communities; leaders are challenged daily about how to influence positive behaviors that will change the course of events without ethical or cultural resistance. Thus, effective leaders need to be able to successfully communicate such changes with skills and precision to drive behavioral change. The GRIYLM incorporates team teaching by youth and adult trainers, experiential and applied learning in both the classroom and community context. Youth will learn about the Strategic Prevention Framework, logic models, strategic planning, developing interventions, advocating for change, evaluation, self-efficacy, and sustainability. GRI also intends to collaborate with faith communities, traditional rulers, schools, and the government in areas of youth leadership and civic engagement aimed at reducing community atrocities; the modeling of entrepreneurial employability frameworks, and serving as health advocates with a mission of reducing the occurrences of sexual transmitted diseases among the youth.

Three years of profound impact

GRIYLM has already had profound impact in the communities. Youth and young adults trained by GRI are assuming leadership roles in their community as evidenced by that youth are supported and actively involved in youth-led civic engagement. Youth also supervise the GRI Global-Village Social Entrepreneurship, have taken on decision-making positions in coalitions and local organizations on matters affecting the community demonstrating they are key stakeholders and problem solvers.

Meeting the demand of young leaders for the 21st century

To meet the demands of young leaders and challenging governance, GRI Center for Social Transformation is initiating a Grace Restoration International Youth Leadership Institute to train and certify youth providing foundational knowledge and skills to become “change agents” within local communities while building youth and adult partnerships.

“Not investing in our youth is missing a golden opportunity for development and economic growth, conversely, investing in our youth will pay great dividends for sustainable economic development,” commented Archibong.