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Student Leaders, the University of the Free State, and the 2012 Global Leadership Summit: An Introductory Note

Regennia N. Williams
The RASHAD Center, Inc.

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Student Leaders, the University of the Free State, and the 2012 Global Leadership Summit

As someone who participated in anti-Apartheid protests as a Cleveland State University (CSU) student leader in 1985--and served as both a CSU faculty host for delegations from the University of the Free State in 2011 and 2013 and a member of the CSU delegation to the 2012 Global Leadership Summit in South Africa, I had firsthand experience working with American and South African students. These young people readily accepted the challenges associated with becoming change agents on campus, in their home communities, and in their countries.



In both the distant past and in more recent years, CSU student leaders were encouraged to read, listen to, reflect upon, discuss, and write about the ideas of such world leaders as Nobel Peace laureates the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., President Nelson Mandela, and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu—especially as their ideas related to the history of racism in their countries and the need for transformative leadership, truthfulness, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

During the spring semester of 2019, I gathered and analyzed documentary evidence from 2011-2013 and partnered with Cleveland Public Library to launch a related oral history project, interviewing CSU alumnae about their experiences and the impact of the above ideas on their current work and worldviews. Two of my interviewees, Estefany Rodriguez and Jasmine Elder, whose photographs appear on this page, were also part of the 2012 CSU delegation to the Global Leadership Summit in South Africa.

Today, Ms. Rodriguez and Ms. Elder have completed both their undergraduate and graduate degrees, and each is a leader in her own right. Their contributions to CSU's 2012 *Global Leadership Summit Newsletter*, the archival document that I chose to include in this issue, demonstrate their keen understanding of the positive difference that young people can make in the world. It is my pleasure, therefore, to again share their thought-provoking comments with you.

As a result of my ongoing research, I hope to produce another scholarly publication that will help readers gain a better understanding of the ways in which ideas that are rooted in or related to religious and/or spiritual traditions might enhance or hinder student leadership development and post-secondary learning. --RNW

Photos: Participants in my 2019 oral history project included Estefany Rodriguez (top photo), who is shown with me following her oral history interview at the Cleveland Public Library, and Jasmine Elder (bottom photo), who was also interviewed at the library.

***Excerpts from the above story appeared in the Spring 2019 issue of the *Traditions & Beliefs Newsletter*.**