Classic Usage Of Autocratic And Transformational Leadership Styles In Remember The Titans

The above quote is taken from the perspective of the daughter of Coach Yoast. It brings to focus racial tension and deep division in 1971 America, and how it was overcome utilizing the game of football and the essence of teamwork. The film displays the classic usage of autocratic and transformational leadership styles, and the role of servant leadership primarily within the relationship of both coaches. Some might be scratching their heads saying I do not remember any displays of autocratic leadership. Actually, it was Coach Boone himself who stated in the film, that “this is a dictatorship, not a democracy”, which is classic autocratic and authoritative style behavior.

“Remember the Titans, is based on a true story set in Alexandria, Virginia, where a mandatorily integrated high school decides to hire a new highly recognized football coach to run the high school’s football program; who happens to be black.” Due to forced integration, a major paradigm shift is taking place in the whole community, and it will stress the limits of everyone’s values and beliefs system. Enter the newly hired Head Coach, Herman Boone, on to the scene, he is blunt, brusque and hard-nosed, right off the bat he is letting everyone know that he will rule with and iron-fist, as he tells the team, “change everything; change the way you eat, change the way you sleep, change the way you run, change the way you fight, change the way you win, and change the way you train”. Displaying authoritative and coercive power it is believed that he will use any and all authoritarian methods to create a needed paradigm shift within the football team. “Remember the Titans, generates a scenario whereby all races are forced by a federal government mandate to work together, in an effort to win the state football championship.” As the film progresses race issues and dissimilar views of each other begin hampering efforts to achieve everyone’s common goal. This is done when both coaches, in the midst of social change, begin to utilize both Servant and Transformational leadership styles and techniques in an effort to be effective.

Servant leadership by definition is “when the leader yields to the will of his followers, so that their followers can reach their common goal” (Greenleaf, 1996). The servant leader in the film is Coach Yoast, he relinquishes control over to Coach Boone, and it is he who guides the integration processes, he kept an open mind and provided required resources so that the team is allowed to define their own way of getting the mission accomplished. By the way, today, Southwest Airlines uses a servant-leadership philosophy and they have been on “Fortune’s 100” best places to work for some time.

Initially, Coach Boone did not implant his vision or values into the team. But, as the film progressed, it became explicitly clear to the whole football team, that there were huge divides that existed within the team itself. Coach Boone used that as a vehicle to motivate and apprise them of where they were at the time, and where they could be, by employing what we call, a “learning organization” strategy. In time, each player, inspired by the above-mentioned motivating factors, begin to display a hint of leadership roles and of taking responsibility of their own actions and attitudes. It is at this point in the film, that Coach Boone is no longer viewed as an authoritarian, he has successfully transitioned into a facilitator, steward, and teacher. A theme throughout the film seems to be the continuous transition of different power bases and

leadership styles. “Those who are able to be effective transformational leaders have been found to attain a higher developmental level than other leaders (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).” A basic definition of transformational leadership is “using a fair amount of drama, or charismatic behaviors in order to inspire their followers (Gardner & Avolio, 1998).”