

Dr. Bernice Ledbetter

Pepperdine University

By Cheryl Wadson

As an MBA student in Dr. Ledbetter's leadership course, I learned about ethics and leadership, management, moral developmental, and historical as well as non-western approaches to leadership. She profoundly shaped my views on leadership, and was the person who introduced me to Servant Leadership, which has guided me in my corporate career and now as an Associate Faculty member in Business at MiraCosta College.

The timeline of when our paths crossed was equally profound in shaping who I am today. It was in 2002 during the wake from the Enron, Tyco and WorldCom scandals, to name a few. Our examination of leadership through myriad perspectives led me to conclude that I had a larger purpose to one day fulfill. Someday I would return to the classroom to carry on her legacy by introducing others to Servant Leadership and instilling a foundation for students rooted in business ethics, and universal ethical standards, such as responsibility, respect, honesty and trustworthiness – all of those things lacking at Enron.

Aside from shaping my views on leadership, Dr. Ledbetter perhaps influenced me most in the way she taught me to reflect on my own life. In fact, to this day I still hold the crisp white paper syllabus from the Great Leaders, Great Literature course she led in the summer of 2002. In it, she outlined topics for the reflective papers we would write that semester. Topics such as: How have your beliefs influenced your perception of self and your behavior in potential leadership situations, Discuss the relationship between beliefs about followers and how do your beliefs about followers influence your leadership, and From whom and how did you learn leadership?

These were questions I'd never stopped to consider. I was so focused on profits and market share growth strategies, that candidly, the linkage to how I became who I was, or identifying my core values, were things I'd never contemplated. I've since reflected back on my experience in her class and thought how simple and straightforward these assignments were, and yet how difficult and thought-provoking they were at the same time. Often it's the simple things in life that can be the hardest to achieve. Dr. Ledbetter prompted me to explore these important aspects of my life, and my future, which led me to ask myself not *what* I wanted to become, but *whom* I wanted to become.

After graduation I continued a successful career in the healthcare industry, before later transitioning to the airline industry, and also owning my own business. I was fortunate to work with people from all walks of life all over the globe, and to serve others humbly, always doing my best to help others

develop and perform as highly as possible. It was that experience that brought me the greatest joy in my career, and from which I grew the most as a business person.

In 2013, I was ready to fulfill the promise I'd made to myself while a student of Dr. Ledbetter's. It was time for me to return to the classroom, this time as the professor. I joined the faculty of MiraCosta College in Oceanside, California last fall, where I teach Introduction to Business and Human Relations in Business. It's not a coincidence I've chosen to teach those very topics in which I was so inspired by Dr. Bernice Ledbetter's influence, and continue to be so to this day. Though we spent a mere 3 months together in class, she is one of the people to have had the most influence on my life.