

The Woodson Principles Applied

The Woodson Principles were developed from 40 years of experience working with effective grassroots groups that have transformed struggling neighborhoods and empowered the people within them.

Here is a list of Bob Woodson's 10 Principles:

Competence	Innovation
Integrity	Inspiration
Transparency	Agency
Resilience	Access
Witness	Grace

Which Woodson Principles does the story of Marcus Garvey exemplify? Did Garvey fail to employ any Principles that would have been beneficial? Here are some possibilities for discussion:

Competence

Look first among people suffering the problem for a solution. Then rely on the “uncertified” practical knowledge of those living in the same geographic and cultural zip code as the people experiencing the problem, instead of ivory tower ideas from distant scholarly experts. Certification is not always synonymous with qualification.

Resilience

In searching for healing agents within toxic communities, study those who are “in” troubled circumstances but not “of” those circumstances—those who have managed to survive and thrive. If 70% of parents have troubled kids, study the 30% who have successful, healthy children to discover the secret of their success.

Inspiration

You can learn nothing from studying failure except how to create failure. Begin your inquiry by recognizing the capacity people possess. People are inspired to improve when they are presented with victories that are possible, not injuries to be avoided. Provide them with the tools for self-determination and help them strive to succeed above all reasonable expectations. Then, look for ways to celebrate even modest improvements.

Witness

A witness is more powerful than an advocate, because witnesses live by the values they convey to others. Look for those who have overcome hardship. They possess more credibility with the lost and struggling than the most pedigreed, accomplished experts. For example, those who are in recovery from an addiction are living proof that recovery is possible.

Agency

No one should have to surrender his or her dignity as a condition for receiving help. Unconditional giving leads to pity rather than the desire to succeed. People should be agents of their own uplift. Never do more for them than they are willing to do for themselves. There must be reciprocity as the framework of any meaningful relationship. In other words, a person should be given the opportunity to give in return for what is received.

Access

Eliminate barriers to access and serve all who suffer. Support positive incremental change through flexible options, not directives. Always strive to be “on tap and not on top.” Expectations in the absence of opportunity are restrictive. People must be given the tools to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them.

Grace

Love and respect others, even when it's inconvenient. Look at neighborhoods as filled with people who have potential, not dysfunctional victims. The foundation of grace is radical forgiveness; a refusal to be held back by what used to be a hindrance in your life, real or imagined. Be free of bitterness, regret, and uncertainty about the future.