

Miracle in Mississippi: Laurence C. Jones

The Woodson Principles Applied

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

<i>Competence</i>	<i>Integrity</i>	<i>Transparency</i>
<i>Resilience</i>	<i>Witness</i>	<i>Innovation</i>
<i>Inspiration</i>	<i>Agency</i>	<i>Access</i>
<i>Grace</i>		

Which Woodson Principles does the story of The Piney Woods School exemplify?

Which principles apply most to its founder, Laurence C. Jones? Which ones apply to his wife, Grace Allen Jones? How do the principles relate to the Piney Woods motto of "Head, Heart, Hands"?

Here are some possibilities for discussion:

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.

Integrity

Relationships are the necessary condition for transforming others, and trust is the common currency. Before you can help others, you need to uncover and acknowledge your personal motives and level of commitment. Then, seek out leaders that are moral practitioners of virtue, honesty, and integrity and who are trustworthy and honest. One test of their authenticity is if they willingly point to those who have been helped by them or their organization.

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.

Innovation

In our market economy, just three percent of people are entrepreneurs, but they create 70% of all new jobs. In like manner, a small percentage of social entrepreneurs can generate large-scale changes and improvements in the social economy, and their innovative ideas are by far the most effective. Empower the leaders and leverage the skills that are already available in the neighborhood.

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.

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.