

“John Hope Bryant is a...whirlwind of ideas and action.”

—From *Giving* by Former President **BILL CLINTON**

JOHN HOPE BRYANT

Founder, Chairman, and CEO of Operation HOPE

LOVE LEADERSHIP

THE NEW WAY TO LEAD
IN A FEAR-BASED WORLD

Foreword by **BILL GEORGE**, author of *True North*

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John Hope Bryant

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*To Bill Robinson, founding program manager of
Operation HOPE, Chicago, who recruited hundreds
of volunteers, educated thousands of young
bright minds, and showed us all how to
live a life that “gets” by giving.*

*To Secretary Jack Kemp, your words and deeds
demonstrate the stand you took for those “less than,”
and you will never be forgotten. You were the
Republican that everyone could talk to.*

You both have been promoted.

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FOREWORD

I doubt that you have ever read anything quite like this marvelous book by John Hope Bryant. Lest you're misled by the title and think that *Love Leadership* represents the “soft side” of leadership, let me assure you that love leadership is hard. Very hard.

Being a command-and-control leader who issues orders and overpowers people isn't difficult, and it isn't leadership. It is coercion.

Throughout my career, I have observed many who use fear as a leadership style to take advantage of people and to control and manipulate them. As we see every day by the failures of these leaders—from Wall Street firms like Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns to companies like Chrysler and Health South—they cannot sustain success in the twenty-first century by leading with fear.

People who lead by coercion will never empower people to peak performance over a sustained period of

time. Eventually the best people leave the organization, and others just capitulate. Over time, performance declines, and so does the organization.

When I worked for Litton Industries in the 1970s as president of Litton Microwave Cooking, the corporation's new CEO used fear and coercion as his primary style. One day when we were touring the machine shop, he verbally accosted a machine tool worker, yelling at him about the metal scraps coming out of his machine. The worker was taken aback and didn't know how to respond, but he certainly wasn't motivated.

Later that same day, the CEO started shouting in a meeting at our vice president of human resources about the division's benefits policies. I intervened to say that I had approved these policies and that if he objected to them, he should direct his concerns to me. In my office after the meeting, I expressed concern that his intimidating style had a negative impact on our staff. He replied, "Bill, this is the only style I have used throughout my career, and it works for me."

Incidents like these were common among twentieth-century leaders. The media contributed to the problem by venerating so-called tough bosses like Donald Trump with mantras like "You're fired." Leaders like this aren't really tough, as much as they are tyrants and bullies who use their power to take advantage of other people.

My experiences with today's leaders have led me to believe that in the twenty-first century, love leadership—

described by Bryant as the opposite of leading with fear—is the only kind of leadership that can sustain success.

In the twentieth century, people looked to all-powerful leaders with legions of followers, whom they trusted and to whom they gave their loyalty. All too often, these leaders betrayed their trust. In the twenty-first century, trust must be earned by the leader before loyalty is conveyed by the people. It is in crises that people look to their leaders to determine if they are authentic and follow their True North.

Today's leaders must be very different, because their people have changed. Their organizations are filled with knowledge workers who know more than their bosses. These workers want to step up and lead now rather than waiting in line for ten to twenty years. Why shouldn't they have that opportunity? I was division general manager of Litton's microwave business at twenty-seven years old. If young people don't get opportunities like that, they will likely move on.

Most of all, these days people are looking for meaning and significance in their work, not just compensation. If people are going to devote more time to their work than any other aspect of their lives, they feel they have a right to find meaning in it.

To quote Dave Dillon, chair and CEO of Kroger, from my book, *True North*, "All human beings want to find meaning in their lives. At Kroger we're aligned in believing that serving the public is a dignified, proud profession.

We make customers' lives better because someone is friendly and helpful to them. Little touches of human kindness can literally change their day. Employees delivering human kindness feel better about their work. At the end of their careers, they can say, 'I was part of something special.'"

Love leaders understand at a deeper level how to bring out the best in people and empower them to perform at far higher levels of performance than anyone believes is possible. *Love leadership*, however, isn't about singing "Kum-Ba-Yah" around the campfire. Bryant has a much deeper and more insightful understanding of what it means to lead with love.

He describes why leading with love means learning from loss and failure, and shares personal stories about his own challenges. He demonstrates convincingly why being vulnerable gives you power, offering moving stories of what it means to be vulnerable, and how your vulnerability as a leader enables you to connect with people at a deeper level.

One of the most poignant examples comes from the time he invited Alan Greenspan, then the chairman of the Federal Reserve, to a middle school classroom in inner-city Washington, D.C. Bryant suggested to Greenspan that he set aside his prepared remarks and speak from his heart. According to Bryant, the chairman of the Federal Reserve just talked about his life, going back to his childhood, and related it to the current challenges he faced. The students

were deeply motivated by Greenspan's message: "If I can do it, you can do it."

Throughout this book, Bryant teaches with stories like this one. He demonstrates that "When you get real with people, when you show vulnerability, you connect with them and you move them on a human level. That gives you real power. . . . People meet you where you are. If you're open, they tend to be open. If you're closed, they tend to be closed. If you're vulnerable, they tend to be vulnerable."

In my experience, it's not easy to be vulnerable when people are looking to you as their leader, but it is much more effective. Sharing your story with people in ways that exposes your vulnerability connects you deeply with others and enables you to form authentic relationships. When you do that, people will trust you and be willing to align with your leadership goals and your values.

Bryant shows how leading with love is central to career success and describes why the expression of love in business—creating long-term relationships with your customers, employees, and community, based on caring for others and doing good—makes you wealthy. He contends that giving is really getting. As he says, "Leaders give—followers take. . . . Giving inspires loyalty, attracts good people, confers peace of mind, and lies at the core of true wealth."

John Bryant's message is powerful, and it's one we can learn from. But the best thing about John Bryant is that he doesn't just preach this message: he *lives* it.

I have watched him reach out to a very powerful person, telling him, “You have a big heart, but you cover your humanity with your intellect. Why don’t you just let your hair down and let people see the real you?” Most of us, myself included, would be afraid to be so direct for fear of harming the relationship. Yet people accept this kind of feedback from John because they know he cares about them.

If you want to become an authentic leader, John Hope Bryant will show you how. He has been through the depths and come back. Through the challenges he faced, Bryant learned how to become a leader who can change the world.

Trust me: John Bryant *is* changing the world.

Growing up in a tough environment in south Los Angeles, he was exposed to gangs, drug dealers, and pimps, but was able to avoid them all. He started out as a teenage entrepreneur, and lost it all on a failed venture. Bryant wound up as a homeless man, living in his Jeep for six months. That’s where he decided he wanted to make a difference in the world around him.

In 1992, Bryant was called to action by the race riots that followed the acquittal of the L.A. policemen who beat Rodney King. He saw how financial services organizations took advantage of poor people, exploiting their lack of financial literacy through what he terms “ghettoized financial services.” In response, he organized a group of local bankers to go into the south Los Angeles neighborhood where he grew up, and study how they could help the poor people living there.

The following year, Bryant founded Operation HOPE to help poor people across America attain financial literacy. Since that time, he has raised over \$500 million for this cause. Through Operation HOPE, he is addressing the problems of financial services organizations taking advantage of poor people with misleading home mortgages and credit card scams.

But John Bryant didn't stop there. In April 2007, he took his cause to then president George W. Bush and key members of his cabinet. He explained how the poor were vulnerable to being ripped off in a multitude of ways by their lack of financial literacy. In January 2008, President Bush responded by creating the U.S. President's Advisory Council on Financial Literacy, with a time frame that would carry over into the next president's term. Bush selected Charles Schwab, the founder of Charles Schwab & Company, to chair the council, and asked Bryant to become its vice chair.

Love Leadership is not so much about John Bryant's leadership as it is about *your* leadership—how you can lead with love instead of fear and become a much more effective leader in this process.

Through love leadership, people will give fully—mind, body, heart, and spirit—to your organization in order to accomplish challenging goals, rather than just doing the minimum required of them. This is the way twenty-first-century leaders empower people and achieve peak performance. In my experience, an organization of empowered

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leaders will outperform a top-down, command-and-control organization every time.

Most important of all, love leadership is not just a better way to lead but a more fulfilling way to live. At the end of the day, love leaders know they have lived their lives with integrity; developed authentic, lasting relationships; and enhanced every environment they have been in by their presence. That alone makes it all worthwhile.

June 2009

Bill George

Author of True North

LOVE LEADERSHIP

INTRODUCTION: FROM FEAR TO HOPE

Growing up in the inner city in Southern California, I remember being surrounded by fear. Intimidation hung thick in the air. No one dared pass through the street behind our house in the city of Compton, near Los Angeles. Criminals had hijacked a community filled with ambitious, loving, hardworking people. If you didn't know who you were, someone else was willing to tell you, and there were consequences for not listening.

The pressure to join a gang was constant. Thugs all around me thought of their gang as their "family," a concept I could respect and even admire, if only the family silverware didn't have your elderly neighbor's name stamped on it.

I remember a local punk nicknamed Tweet, who lived next door to me. He was ninety-seven pounds wet, but scared the living daylights out of everyone in the neighborhood.

I also remember my best friend, George, who lived down the street from me. He was eighteen, and I was ten. George was a polite, straight-A student, but the problem with George was that for some reason he thought being like Tweet was actually cooler. So George hung around Tweet, then began to dress like Tweet, and eventually to walk and talk like Tweet.

My mother, however, said no way to dressing like or hanging out with Tweet or anyone else. Groups of people don't succeed, she told me—individuals do. She didn't want me being a part of any group, at least not until I knew how to think for myself. She didn't compel me with a lecture, but rather through her presence. I had absolutely no opportunity to join a gang. She went everywhere with me, and took me everywhere with her. The only gang she would let me join was hers.

Like many people when I was growing up, we didn't have a lot of money, so my mother augmented that lack with a lot of invested time and love. She made all our toys and clothes. But these clothes weren't anything like "the uniform," the standard brown or blue khaki pants and shirts, that all the other kids wore. Back then, my friends would press a crease in their khakis so tight and with so much starch that those pants could stand up in the corner by themselves.

For reasons that boggled my mind, my mother would send me to school dressed in three-piece suits made of purple crushed velvet, paired with a ruffled shirt and a

floppy bow tie. Girls? Forget about it. I couldn't catch a cold dressed like this, and worse, all the tough kids thought I must be rich or something. The result is that I got my natural-born rear end whipped every single day—on the way to school, at school, and coming home, too.

But as I began to wear those suits—as they became my uniform—I started to see suits everywhere. I could now relate to the businessmen who wore suits on television, to the leaders in church who wore suits on Sunday morning, and to my dad, who owned his own business. In time, I started to see myself differently, too. I thought of myself as a businessman.

One day George got shot, just like his role model, Tweet. A straight-A student, George was murdered on a lonely street corner in Compton because he made a decision to hang out with, and look like, a thug—and, I believe to this day, because he did not think for himself. George had all the basic ingredients to become a success in life and a contributor to society, but at age eighteen, because of his choices, George's story was over.

I was determined not to make that mistake. That year, at age ten, I opened my own candy business out of the den of my house—putting the corner store out of that business in the process, because my store was closer to the route kids took to school. (Location, location, location.) I started down a path of entrepreneurship I remain on today.

But more important, I began to learn to think for myself—a skill that would prove difficult to master. I learned