

5

ESSENTIAL  
LAWS OF  
YOUTH  
LEADERSHIP:

# THE ART & SCIENCE OF YOUTH INVESTING

BY WOKIE WEAH



*"I believe in*  
**GLOBAL-LEADERSHIP**  
*AND PREPARING OUR*  
*next generation."*

-Wokie Weah



*Congrats,*

If your end game is to accelerate leadership, equity and transformational systems change you just made the right decision! Downloading this interactive ebook will catalyze the change you want to see and help your organization achieve excellence in Equity Leadership.

My name is Wokie Weah and I have worked in the Youth Development field for over 30 years, crisscrossing intergenerational, cultural, and racial borders. The mission of Wokie Weah, LLC is to provide strategies to help you understand how to effectively engage youth, especially BIPOC youth who have capacity but often lack opportunity. So why is investing in BIPOC youth an important step for accelerating leadership, equity, and transformational system change? For starters, that investment will help improve your organization's bottom line, energize your client base, strengthen your governance structure, sharpen your risk assessment skills and help you lift up a new vision of community. Applying these 5 Essential Steps is all you need to bring about holistic, sustainable change.

In addition to providing consultancies to Foundations, Policymakers, and Youth Serving Organizations, Wokie Weah, LLC offers a variety of services ranging from motivational speaking, customized professional development, and products sales. Our team prides itself on thinking outside the box and building collaborative cultures. Please contact us at [wokieweah.com](http://wokieweah.com) with further questions.

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# 5 ESSENTIAL LAWS OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP

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At Wokie Weah we believe that when you invest in youth you are investing in our future. In this ebook I give the laws to ensure that your organization is investing in our future. Follow these laws to increase your global leadership and prepare our next generation.

## Step 1: LEAD BY EXAMPLE

The most important thing you can do to accelerate leadership and drive equity, whether in school or out of school, **is to lead by example.**

In my work at Youthprise this meant investing deeply in creating a seat at the table for young people on the Board and implementing other forms of Youth Advisory Structures. **Inspired by the saying, "If you are not at the table, you will be on the menu"** I clearly saw how getting youth on our Board would simultaneously increase our credibility within the field, incentivize Youthprise grantees to do the same, and grow the leadership skills of youth age 16-25.

While it is true that this worked for Youthprise, I would be remiss if I did not point out that going down this rabbit hole requires a willingness to pivot and retrofit your growth strategies. **Young people can sniff out "tokenism" and want no part of it.**

### ADDITIONAL SUREFIRE TIPS:

Tip 1:

Co-create a youth-centered theory of change with youth.

Tip 2:

Model transparency and accountability internally and externally

Tip 3:

Monitor and Track Data

## Step 2: LISTEN TO YOUTH POV

**Rat Trap is not for Rats alone** is a famous cautionary Liberian story that reminds readers that sometimes blindness to the better good of everyone leads to unforeseen but consequential outcomes.

It is essential to seek the perspectives, insights, and input of youth who have a vested interest in dismantling systems of oppression. **Equally important to remember is to never politicize young people. (It is a battle you will lose.)** There are a myriad of opportunities to infuse youth voice in your organization ranging from having youth be a part of your staffing and governance structure, to implementing different types of youth advisory structures to hosting youth run podcasts. In addition, what worked for me was to quietly disrupt, apply diplomacy and surround myself with a highly competent staff.

Over the years, **I have learned two important lessons about equity.** #1 Remember, those who are most impacted by the problem, often have the best solutions. And # 2. Until the Lion has its own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best stories.

### ADDITIONAL SUREFIRE TIPS:

Tip 1:

Offer paid fellowships,  
internships,  
apprenticeships

Tip 2:

Youth Participatory  
Action  
Research (YPAR) is  
one of the best  
strategies for  
engaging youth.

Tip 3:

Don't make driving  
equity the  
responsibility of  
people of color.

## Step 3: LEARN FROM THE COMMUNITY

**This is critical.**

Driving equity is not about your vision, it is recognizing and uplifting the community's vision. Establishing an intentional learning agenda for your organization is how you build ownership, catalyze systems change and end disparities! **Keep that learning agenda visible to remind you what is at stake.**

## ADDITIONAL SUREFIRE TIPS:

Tip 1:

Map out your  
community vision for  
change

Tip 2:

Trust young people  
to be an authentic  
partner in creating  
the change you  
want to see

Tip 3:

Establish a  
Community Advisory  
Council

## Step 4: LEAN INTO YOUR NEW VISION

If you are doing a good job with the first three laws, you are now ready to embrace risk, innovation, and change.

Through the years I have found it useful to have an **'Equity Learning Plan'** that is both youth and human centered, rooted in principles of democracy, and deeply committed to respecting the views of 'the other'.

## ADDITIONAL SUREFIRE TIPS:

Tip 1:

Host a Community  
Forum

Tip 2:

Incorporate a "youth  
to youth" training  
model in your  
design

Tip 3:

Convene a  
Gathering of Elders

## Step 5: LEAP INTO THE FUTURE

**You have arrived and are ready to reimagine a justice filled world that works for everyone!**

The timing, landscape and climate is ripe for reimagining this bold and brave new world led by youth. COVID-19 revealed how disparities hurts everyone. Foundations, Policymakers, and Youth Serving organizations are seeing real value in investing in the enterprise of youth.

### ADDITIONAL SUREFIRE TIPS:

Tip 1:

Host Design Thinking Sessions with and for youth

Tip 2:

Remember the 3 E's - Evaluate! Evaluate! Evaluate!

Tip 3:

Leverage the Power of Social Media

Applying these 5 laws will help your organization flex its collaborative muscles and achieve equity excellence.

**The formula  $YE+E=QR$**  is foundational to everything I know about effective youth engagement. Remember the history of the United States is rooted in slavery, genocide, gentrification, disparities, violence, and war. But it is also a history rooted in democracy, free choice and hope. **The time is now to flex those collaborative muscles, discover what it really means to be a servant leader and reimagine excellence in equity leadership with and for youth.**