

Role Models

by
Dr. Daniel Osabu-Kle

The Role Model Problem

A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. The first step in any discussion about role models is to answer the question: Who is a role model? Webster's college dictionary defines a role model as a person whose behaviour in a particular social setting is imitated by others especially younger persons. Because a person's behaviour may be good or bad there is a real danger of bad role models leading the younger generation astray. Parents therefore have to be concerned and careful about whom their children pick as their role models. The problem is complicated by the fact that what constitutes good or bad is itself relative, for one person's meat is another person's poison. However, I dare penetrate through this relativity barrier by defining what is good as "what is acceptable simultaneously within the context of the logic of nature and the law", and it is within this context that I differentiate between a good role model and a bad role model rejecting the latter and concentrating on the former.

The Good Role Model

Who then is a good role model? He or she is that motivating and admirable personality, psychological mentor, or guiding light whose skills, achievements and behaviour are worthy of emulation. In this context, if he is a husband he is a responsible husband, if a wife, a responsible wife. In whatever sphere that fellow is engaged, he or she is an inspiration to the younger generation. The links between the role model and the imitator are admiration and the will to emulate on the part of the imitator. Being a psychological mentor, the role model need not necessarily be in physical contact with the imitator. However, before admiring and deciding to imitate any role model, the imitator must be aware of something about that role model, but before that awareness there must be information. The greater the volume and scope of information about successful personalities, the greater the possibility of finding a suitable role model. This is where Silvertrust comes in.

The Role of Silvertrust

Silvertrust aims at providing concise but sufficient volume and adequate scope of information about African Canadians considered successful despite the formidable constraints and odds that have rendered the unemployment rate among African Canadians three times the national average. This unemployment situation is so frustrating and so demeaning that there is a real danger for the younger generation giving up altogether about the future. Indicators of this frustration include high drop-out rate from school, teenage pregnancies, drug abuse, suicide and other acts of the underworld. By affording the African Canadian youth the opportunity to be aware of the distinguished personalities within their own community, Silvertrust wishes to establish the necessary link between the African Canadian youth and potential role models from whom they can draw

inspiration, become effective participants in the Canadian work force, and thereby contribute their quota to the development of the nation. Simultaneously, as Silvertrust projects the images of these personalities, the attention of corporate Canada, professional and academic Canada, and the federal and provincial governments are drawn to the talents within the African Canadian community which they can conveniently tap. The contribution to multicultural harmony and, hence, national unity cannot be overlooked or overemphasized.

The Need for Moral and Material Support

Thus, the benefits of this Silvertrust project are not limited to the African Canadian youth, but to all patriotic citizens of Canada who are committed to the ideals of national unity, multicultural harmony, equality, and equity. I sincerely believe that these are ideals to which the federal and provincial governments are committed at least in principle, for given their expected role in the Canadian community it cannot be otherwise. Corporate and academic Canada seem to cherish the same principles for their advertisements in the media often carry the phrase 'equal opportunity employer'. Surely without the prior existence of equal opportunity there can be no "equal opportunity employer", and the present situation in which the unemployment rate of African Canadians is three times the national average cannot be said to be that desirable regime of equal opportunity. What Silvertrust is essentially attempting to do is to assist Canada in achieving that desirable state conducive to harmony and national unity. Silvertrust has provided the vision and has acquired for itself the necessary system of capability, initiative and will power, but requires moral and material support to enhance its capacity to achieve. It is within this context that I seize the opportunity on this occasion to call upon, the federal and provincial governments, all patriotic citizens, and all patriotic groups and organizations to cooperate by providing both moral and material support to this noble project of Silvertrust. I say to all fellow Canadians "Salus populi suprema lex esto. Let the welfare of all the people be the supreme law." I believe and hope we all will. Thank you.