



**MICHELLE NEWLANDS**

Professional Autobiography

ADS740A  
Leadership in a Global  
Society  
Professor Mike Smith  
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## **Introduction**

Awarded the authority as a success trainer by *New York Times* best-selling authors Jack Canfield and Raymond Aaron, Michelle has been at the forefront of instructional leadership in education for more than a decade.

The award-winning author currently lives in Canada but travels extensively across the world, conducting seminars and workshops to help leaders, achievers and small businesses reach their potential for success.

Michelle has worked in both public and private enterprises and found that the gap between success and failure is in small degrees and details.

Currently, Michelle is a speaker and trainer with the John Maxwell Team. Michelle provides leadership coaching for individuals and group coaching for businesses seeking to improve performance and relational leadership. Using research-based principles of success and influence, Michelle will lead you on a path to feel better, work smarter and live the life you have always wanted.

## **Raymond Aaron**

New York Times Bestselling Author

## Background

I was born in Jamaica in the early 70's to a very affluent family. When I was around 3 years of age my family migrated to Canada and settled in Ottawa.

The move was very challenging for my mother who had always been double privileged. Her family owned a significant amount of land including the location where Doctor's Cave Beach Hotel now stands. In addition to family wealth, my mother has a honey yellow complexion. In many ways this is social wealth. The closer you are to white the better you are. Unfortunately for my mother, that did not always prove true in Canada.

I remember my mother being very angry about the racism she faced at every turn. At school my sister and I faced daily discrimination. I remember my teachers hating us and taking action on what seemed like a daily basis to humiliate and embarrass us.

I had a friend in grade 2 named Janet Ford who was also Black. We were allies and a support to each other but we were never allowed to sit together. I remember quite vividly a time when Janet asked to go to the washroom. The teacher denied the request although white children were allowed to go. Janet wasn't able to hold her pee and she urinated at her desk wearing very heavy push cord pants that did nothing to absorb the urine. I think she had to stay in her seat for quite a while before she was allowed to go to the washroom.

I wasn't quiet and obedient like Janet. I spoke-up and fought back. My grade 2 teacher punched me in the stomach for speaking up. She also made me sit with the boys. She told me that if I behaved like a boy I could sit with them. I had to suffer racism and sexism.

My early memories of school in Ottawa are all painful recollections of racism, discrimination, and exclusion.

When I was in high school my parents divorced and my mother, sister and I moved to Toronto.

Life was much better in Toronto. I attended Northview Secondary School and for the first time found myself in classes with more than one other minority. We were not considered bad, we were just Black. It was truly amazing!

After high school I went to McMaster University. A school I had dreamt about since grade 10. It was a wonderful experience. I loved MAC. I left after four years to pursue my teaching degree at York University.

York was another amazing experience where I made lifelong friends. At York outside of the teacher's education program there were equity studies. I had never heard of equity studies but those students who had, were very different from me. They were comfortable being Black and they were comfortable talking about race. They had a vernacular that was completely foreign to me. Dismantle racism? Disrupt colonial thinking? James Bank's Continuum? I was totally in the dark, but I was listening.

## **Career**

I was hired by the Toronto District School Board when I was still in Teacher's College. I began my teaching career in a grade 2 classroom in downtown Toronto. Every day was a learning adventure as I tried to master my profession. For a long time, I stopped thinking about race, racism, equity and discrimination. I was focused on reading, writing and mathematics and didn't yet realize how critical it was to understand the intersectionality of race, poverty and privilege.

As I began my teaching career, my thirst for learning never left me and it wasn't long before I headed back to school. I applied to the University of Toronto and completed my master's degree in 2007. While completing my graduate degree I worked hard as a teacher, consultant, and then school administrator. My promotions came steadily through hard work and determination. I consistently said yes to every opportunity but unlike many of my colleagues who had an elevator straight to the top, I had to take the stairs. I am still on the stairway to heaven.

## Goal Attainment

In 2012 I left the Toronto District School Board for a principalship with Halton District. In Halton I once again felt the cold bite of racism. Exclusion, oppression, and discrimination became as common place as the meaningless salutations which masked the realities faced by Black, Brown and Indigenous staff and students. I persevered and in 2016, my innovative thinking and distinctive ability to use data to lead student learning earned me national recognition when I was named one of [Canada's Outstanding Principals by the Learning Partnership](#).

My district decided to move me from my small school in Burlington to a large facility in Milton. In September 2016, I became the principal of one of the largest elementary schools in the province. Having a staff of over 100 educators and a student population of almost 1200 full-time learners My ability to lead change, influence teaching practices and implement the key conditions for learning resulted in significant educational gains for staff and students. Despite this, I could always feel the bite of racism nipping at me. I knew I had to leave or risk being punched in the stomach again.

I worked hard to get away from the fear-inducing racism in Halton and after issuing nightly prayers to a higher being, I succeeded in obtaining a secondment to the Ministry of Education. I received a three-year secondment to work as an Education Officer with the Leadership Collaboration and Governance Branch. In this role, I developed an understanding of effective practices for working with principals, supervisory officers, and Directors of Education.

## End Goal

While I have enjoyed my many experiences working with the Ministry of Education, I would like to do something more. In 2020 I was promoted to the position of Toronto Regional Manager. This is quite an honor and a position that comes with high expectations and immense responsibility. Nevertheless, I yearn for something more.

My work at the Ministry of Education is both impactful to the sector and professionally gratifying. Although I qualify for a full pension if I chose to retire, I am yearning for something more. How can I continue to contribute to Education in Ontario or globally?

The search for an answer to this question led me to Niagara University where I am pursuing my PhD. I can quench my thirst for knowledge and explore ways of making a viable difference to students and parents.

During my twenty-five years of service to Ontario public schools I have had opportunities to speak and lead the learning locally, provincially, and internationally at numerous workshops, conferences and symposiums including the International Confederation of Principals and Phi Delta Kappa. I would like to do more of this work in the areas of:

Race and leadership, deviance in leadership, mentorship, and support for leaders.

### **The Next Chapter**

I am hoping that my PhD from Niagara University will be a gateway to other employment opportunities and most significantly a pathway to learning, growing, and achieving.