

While my time in a leadership position was short, the isolation of leadership was driven home with a sense of finality. This paradox was proven to me in very different ways during the two halves of my leadership experience: one taught me the solitude of being the only one putting in extra work, while the other taught me the isolation of suffering when you need to help others to heal.

The first half of my leadership experience was defined by drive and passion on my part—I was appointed the First Soprano Section Leader in my school's Treble Ensemble my senior year because of my love for choir and for music. During the latter portion of my junior year, I unwittingly took over some of the jobs that the Section Leader performed (taking the initiative on learning songs, keeping people on track, and "pounding notes," or playing the melody on the piano so auditory learners could memorize it) and was rewarded with the position of Section Leader. Immediately, I set to work using my passion for music to help my section become better than it was. Although I didn't realize it at the time, I was following the guidelines set by W. Deresiewicz in his speech, "Solitude and Leadership": I broke the status quo (Treble Ensemble was notorious for getting distracted during practice times, and I kept my section on track, allowing us to get more done with our time), I used creative practices to help us improve our technique, and I tried as hard as I could to push my girls to be the best they could be. This required some solitude, as I needed to put in a lot of extra work in order to stay ahead of my section and be able to teach them. It also proved to be isolating in that I was no longer really a member of the group. As the authority of the group, I had to be both lawmaker and enforcer, which meant that on a fundamental level, the other girls in my section interacted with me differently.

The second half of my leadership experience was very different, marked by tragedy and trauma. I would very much prefer not to go into the events of November 14th at Saugus High School because I am still very much affected by everything that happened. I suspect I always will be. Suffice it to say, a violent and traumatic event occurred at my high school, and everyone who went to Saugus was affected. My girls in particular suffered because almost all of them were either in Jazz Choir at the time (the people in the choir room during Jazz Choir had a closer brush with the violence that day) or they were freshmen, and knew the victims. After the month of November, when Saugus attempted to bring back a sense of normalcy, it became clear that all my previous goals for the section were now gone. I could no longer be just a teacher, but an almost parental figure as well. During this time, I actively avoided any kind of solitude or introspection as everyone on campus, myself included, was deeply traumatized. I worked hard to lead my girls in the right direction and help them heal, which had the paradoxical effect of isolating me further, as I had to hide my own suffering in order to be the support they needed. I could not talk about my thoughts with anyone, which forced me into deep introspection and depression. This solitude and isolation came about directly as a result of my attempts to lead with compassion and gentleness. I also, along with my Choir Director, and everyone else in a leadership position on campus, had to exercise tremendous ingenuity during that time period. None of us had ever gone through anything similar, so we all had to forge our own paths in the direction of healing, although none of us knew which direction that would be.

While my leadership experiences were far from normal, and taught me some lessons not covered in "Solitude and Leadership", I can say with certainty that solitude and leadership, as

paradoxical as they may seem, are intricately entwined. It is the uniqueness of the true leader that causes this phenomenon. After all, one can't lead the pack without walking ahead. And there is something inherently lonely about being unique.