

Thursday, July 7, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

To me, leadership is being able to acknowledge your weaknesses whilst facing challenges and inspiring others in doing so. Taking on the role of prime minister while being an introvert and an altruistic person was the biggest challenge I faced this year. When I first accepted the role, I was hesitant because I felt I wasn't the right person for the position. It required a lot of commitment alongside my class load and would easily become overwhelming. I was forced to step out of my comfort zone because I essentially became the face of the school. However, these were minor problems compared to the pressure I felt from my peers. As a black prime minister, I was constantly questioned about how I was supporting black students. In addition, the student body expected me to fix issues that were beyond my position. I always made sure to address each issue that students were facing. However, when I couldn't fix a particular issue, I would feel like I wasn't doing enough. It reached a point where my self esteem was damaged and I had to remind myself that I could only do so much. Today, if there is something that students need that I can't provide, I join them in finding a solution to present to the school board.

While being the student council prime minister, I have gained many leadership and communication skills during these past few years. As a member of the Student Council team, I represent our student body in every event we plan and host. Listening to our fellow peers allows me to make calculated decisions for the betterment of our school as a whole. I am always eager to learn from those who are experienced and even the youth around me. There are many times in my life where I have taken lessons from my fellow peers that have made me make better and more informed decisions. My mantra is that to grow you must be open to learn. Understanding that you can acquire knowledge from those around you is the first step to being a good leader.

Community service is a very important aspect of my life. I enjoy volunteering in food banks, clothing drives and other community-driven activities. One impactful activity I engage in is the socks drive. At first I never understood the impact this activity had on the homeless community members in need. Nevertheless, I joined the chaplaincy team in gathering one thousand pairs of socks for the Toronto homeless community. It was only when I saw the reaction on an older man's face when we were distributing the socks that I understood the impact it had. He hugged me just because he would no longer have cold feet that upcoming winter. It was so heartbreaking when he asked for another pair that I could not provide because there were so many others who required a pair as well. From that moment, I made it my goal to double the amount of socks we collect each year. Although we weren't able to undertake this activity these past two years, I was able to go back this final year so I could give that man or anyone I encounter two socks instead of one as I had once promised.

In addition, a leader must be passionate about wanting to help people. I have participated in many acts, such as visiting nursing homes and helping out in my community. Bi-weekly, my church community has a program where we visit nursing homes to care and socialize with residents. Knowing how to interact with others and be able to build rapport is a skill I have strengthened out of this event and I believe this will be of great value to me in my life and career. In addition, I never

miss joining our school community service and annual sock food drive. I strongly feel it is important to think about those who are less fortunate or have dire needs. It is a humbling experience that makes you feel you are making a positive contribution to society. I believe leaders who put others before themselves make a difference and greatly contribute to a better world. I want to be a part of something that I am passionate about, I want to be able to be included in being the change.

I am happy that the Dufferin County Canadian Black Association recognizes the need to provide persons of African ancestry, like me, an opportunity to be able to have this significant exposure to higher education. I am looking forward to joining this cause and playing my part in the welfare of my community.

Best,

Esther Otieno