BLACK LEADERSHIP SELF-AFFIRMATIONS

Success Comes from Affirming Your Potential

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In the **early stage** of my career, I envision myself becoming a leader.

I build a robust sense of self that strengthens me.

I critically question and reject negative stereotypes and society's lowered expectations of black leaders.

I embrace my unique strengths and cultural resources. I bring new perspectives and ideas that have value and are specific to my experience.

Like everyone else, I will fail sometimes. This is not because of my race, and my failures do not reflect on my race as a whole. Because I understand this, I use every failure as an opportunity to learn, grow, and develop my resiliency.

The workplace is not perfect, and neither are my colleagues. At times, I experience painful bias, but I do not let these micro-aggressions limit my career. Instead of shutting down or quitting, I choose to seek the support of my colleagues in making my workplace more inclusive.

I develop the credibility, networks, and capabilities to thrive by aligning my skills and my cultural resources — my connections and my background — with strategic opportunities for my company and career.

In the **middle stage** of my career, I am positioned to grow into greater leadership roles.

I recognize that as my core strengths and talents increase, I can be a stronger contributor in my organization. I draw on these attributes to position myself for increased responsibility and greater visibility and impact.

I proactively cultivate vibrant networks — both existing and new — in which my peers and mentors support my growth. I know I can't necessarily rely on existing networks to provide me with everything I need to grow and develop; too often, marginalized people are excluded from these places. While I do participate in existing networks if possible, I also construct my own spaces where I can draw support while I learn and grow.

Sometimes, even when I am in a position of authority, my authority is challenged or contested. I choose to not let this make me feel less secure in my leadership. I learn from feedback and others' perceptions, but I do not let them limit my leadership potential.

When the path forward isn't obvious, I carve my own path. I have deep ingenuity and know I am capable of building inclusive and high-performing organizations in which I can flourish.

At times I question whether I have to choose between my career success and my authentic self. I want to be able to wear my hair and clothes in a manner that I feel is professionally authentic, discuss my personal interests and commitments with my colleagues and supervisors, and honor my unique background and experiences. For the sake of my health, I make choices that promote my ability to be authentic at work — whether that is expressing myself through my appearance or my language — and I am accountable for those decisions. This is the paradox of authenticity. I embrace this with courage.

In the **late stage** of my career, I use my leadership, power, and influence for good.

I face the same challenges as other leaders when it comes to fighting biases, ethical breaches, and abuses of power. At the same time, because of my race, I am held to higher standards and face greater scrutiny. I continue to uphold my integrity by being mindful of my decisions about how I lead, and I use my powers to uplift others.

My power and influence give me the opportunity to design and implement more inclusive leadership practices, regardless of my job title or formal responsibilities. I use this opportunity to clear the pathway to leadership for others.

I willingly pass on experience, knowledge, and credibility to expand opportunities for the rising generation. In so doing, my legacy is strengthened.

I seek out people on the margins of the organization and find more ways to both include them in conversations and bring their names to meetings in which they might not otherwise have been mentioned. It is my personal responsibility to make open, public commitments to developing these future leaders.

In **all stages** of my career, I find space — space to be nourished, space to explore, and space to flourish.