Honorable Mention
Elliott Hoogerland
Forest Hills Eastern High School / 12th Grade

The Meaning of Leadership Today

A leader is an individual who is capable of captivating and inspiring the creative or productive nature of those he leads. The idea of a single person being a leader is incongruous, even outlandish, in the context of today's social and cooperative aspect of the work force. Today, leadership has advanced past mundane, individually led teams to the administrative power being ubiquitous in the hands of the group. Each member of the group must lead themselves, be led, and lead other members in need of help. The leader must-- in essence and form -- be both the marble and the mason. Even as I write this paper my thoughts are leading me in a direction that will make it a more complete essay; I must have the initiative to act upon her notes and advice to synthesize the final result, just as any member of a group must be productive and accepting of criticism in order to create a stellar product.

Being easily accessible, immediately intuitive, and naturally collaborative, the internet has become endemic to most of the human race and it is axiomatic that these characteristics of the internet brought about the heavy focus on collaborative and group work. Empirical examples of how the internet originated on forum-focused websites like Reddit and 4chan. How the respective communities of each of these websites interact with each other is a clear indicator of how the internet encourages group-led projects; for example, the music board on 4chan has on multiple occasions created halfway competent, collaborative covers of songs as well as entire albums where each cut is created by a different user. The completion of these projects clearly demonstrates an ability to cooperate, facilitated by the internet.

Compared to a single leader system, collaborative leadership allows for each member of the group to fully express his or her ideas and be heard out as well as respected as an innovator rather than have a leader presuppose that all the final ideas would come from his or her own mouth. On the opposite spectrum, the lack of a face for a project prevents any one person from being the receptacle for blame. Also, group aesthetic disallows a single figure to be the recipient for all a project's credit. Essentially, poly-leader projects guard against the tendency single leader groups have to cater to the will of said leader. Pure, Marxist, communism is wonderfully relatable to multiple-leader groups. No one person has a leg up on another, people work together for the better of the state (group) and each individual reaps the rewards. Moreover, the fact that in Marxist communism the resources are redistributed from the old aristocracy (the single leader) to the working class (the group members other than the leader) further enhances the similarities. However, most communist governments end up failing to successfully redistribute resources becoming little more than captious dictatorships full of disappointing 5 year plans and bearing naught but lip service to the communist principles of old; the multi leader system is too big to fail.

As I am a student, I have had extensive encounters with collaborative leadership. In my junior year of high-school I participated in a project to implement a school garden. We used a

conceptual method of planning called design thinking; it involves considering each member's thoughts and suggestions no matter what you might think of the idea. The intensive focus on group collaboration was, for the most part, the reason that Forest Hills Eastern now has the beginnings of school garden.

Multi-person leadership is the future of schoolwork and is also the most intuitive way for a group to work as it promotes independence as well as an understanding of how to work with other people.