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Rise Up: A Call to Leadership for African American Women

Sylvia Rose
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Many were surprised during the 2004 presidential election when former senator and ambassador, Carol Mosely Braun, announced her bid for the Democratic presidential nomination. More than ever before, African American women are pursuing leadership positions, from company presidents to chancellors of universities. With the publication of this motivational book, perhaps there will be many more.

"We must make an internal choice to lead," maintains the author. She draws on her experience as a former principal and founder of Great Heritage Ministries to inspire women to leadership and help them navigate leadership positions once they have secured them. Her previous books, *Songs of Faith* and *A Guide to Effective Choral Singing*, demonstrate her interest in Christianity, and *Rise Up* in large part addresses women who yearn to become church leaders. Despite this focus, the book's fundamental theme suggests that anyone with a desire and the will to develop her skills can become a leader in her area of interest.

Chapters examine the characteristics of a leader, preparation for leadership, and motivations for taking on such roles. Each chapter ends with a section called "Questions for Reflection and Discussion," which lends a workbook feel that seems to interrupt the narrative, but might be useful to those who need to pause and "digest" the contents of each chapter. The author urges readers to reconceptualize the notion of leadership, including what a leader looks like, because often African American women have internalized the idea that influential people do not share their gender or race.

As the founder of "Breakfast and a Word," a monthly program that welcomes women to come together for an opportunity to share fellowship and empower one another, Rose makes it clear that most leadership positions are accompanied by a true call to service. The final chapters of the book are devoted to urging women to "lift as they climb" by becoming mentors and seeking opportunities to serve. Though Rose uses anecdotes from her own life and the lives of family and friends, she also leans on the experiences of public figures—Braun, Condoleeza Rice, Naomi Long Madgett, and Hillary Rodham Clinton—to argue for the importance of women seeking positions of power as well as serving as "ladders for others."

One of the most interesting parts of the book is Rose's weaving biblical stories and scriptures with current events to support her assertions. She uses the courage of Erica Pratt, who was abducted in Philadelphia, to prove that ordinary people can possess a survivor instinct necessary to succeed in leadership.

Whether dreaming of becoming a minister, principal, or congresswoman, women with various talents and credentials will find that this book will encourage them to "rise up" and answer the "call to leadership."

KAAVONIA HINTON (August 18, 2009)

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