

Leadership in Cinema



Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program

RADIO

Submitted by: Pam McDonald E-mail: pmcdonal@blm.gov
Phone: 208-387-5318
Studio: Columbia Pictures Released: 2003
Genre: Drama Audience Rating: PG
Runtime: 109 minutes

Materials

VCR or DVD, television or projection system, Wildland Fire Leadership Values and Principles handouts (single-sided), notepad, writing utensil

Objective

Students will identify Wildland Fire Leadership Values and Principles illustrated within Radio and discuss leadership lessons learned with group members or mentors.

Basic Plot

Radio is a dramatic and uplifting tale inspired by true events that focus on the mentoring relationship between a high school football coach (Ed Harris) and Radio (Cuba Gooding, Jr.) -- who his mother describes as "the same as everybody else, just a little slower than most" -- and how their unique friendship ultimately transforms the entrenched attitudes of a small South Carolina town. . . .(Synopsis from [Rotten Tomatoes](#))

Cast of Main Characters

Cuba Gooding, Jr..... Radio, James Robert Kennedy
Ed Harris..... Coach Harold Jones
Alfre Woodard..... Principal Daniels
S. Epatha Merkerson Maggie, Radio's Mother
Brent Sexton..... Coach Honeycutt
Chris Mulkey..... Frank Clay
Sarah Drew..... Mary Helen Jones
Riley Smith Johnny Clay
Debra Winger Linda Jones

Facilitation Options

Radio illustrates an abundance of good and bad examples of leadership values and principles. Special emphasis exists on mentoring and setting the example. This film does not stress a racial issue but addresses the impact that people can have on one another. Students should have few problems identifying those that correspond to the Wildland Fire Leadership Values and Principles. The objective is not to identify every leadership principle but to promote thought and discussion. Students should be less concerned with how many principles they view within the film and more concerned with how the principles they do recognize can be used to develop themselves as a leader.

The film can be viewed in its entirety or by clip selection, depending on facilitator intent and time schedules. Another method is to have the employee(s) view the film on his/her own and then hold the discussion session.

Full-film Facilitation Suggestion

When opting for the full-film method, the facilitator should determine a good breaking point near the middle of the film.

1. Review the Wildland Fire Leadership Values and Principles with students.
2. Advise students to document instances within the film that illustrate/violate the Wildland Fire Leadership Values and Principles on the handout provided.
3. Break students into small discussion groups.
4. Show students Radio.
5. Break. (Suggestion: After the football season concludes.)
6. Begin the guided discussion.
7. Provide a short synopsis with some “ticklers” to pay attention before beginning the rest of the film.
8. Resume the film.
9. Have students discuss their findings and how they will apply leadership lessons learned to their role in wildland fire suppression. Facilitate discussion in groups that have difficulty.
10. Wrap up the session and encourage students to apply leadership lessons learned in their personal and work lives.

Clip Facilitation Suggestion

1. Review the Wildland Fire Leadership Value or Principle targeted for discussion. (May be given or ask students to identify the value or principle being illustrated after viewing the clip.)
2. Show the clip.

3. Facilitate discussion regarding the selected clip and corresponding value and/or principle.
4. Break students into small discussion groups.
5. Have students discuss their findings and how they will apply leadership lessons learned to their role in wildland fire suppression. Facilitate discussion in groups that may have difficulty.
6. Wrap up the session and encourage students to apply leadership lessons learned in their personal and work lives.

Mentor Suggestion

Use either method presented above. The mentor should be available to the student to discuss lessons learned from the film as well as incorporating them to the student's leadership self-development plan.

Encouraging individuals to keep a leadership journal is an excellent way to document leadership values and principles that are practiced.

Suggest other wildland fire leadership toolbox items that will contribute to the overall leadership development of the student.

Hyperlinks have been included to facilitate the use of the [Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program website](#). Encourage students of leadership to visit the [website](#).

Radio

The following clips illustrate/violate the Wildland Leadership Values and Principles. These are only guidelines and may be interpreted differently by other views; they are presented as a guide for facilitation.

Duty

- Coach Jones shows the utmost in professional character throughout the entire movie. (Adhere to professional standard operating procedures.)
- Mrs. Daniels and Mrs. Kennedy ask Coach Jones why he is doing what he's doing. He really doesn't know. (Clearly state expectations.)
- Coach Jones gives Radio a job on the football team. (Consider individual skill levels and development needs when assigning tasks.)
- Radio blurts out the football play to the opposing team. Coach Jones mentors Radio on what is acceptable throughout the film. (Issue clear instructions. Use positive feedback to modify duties, tasks and assignments when appropriate.)
- When Radio is left unsupervised, Johnny convinces Radio that the female coach needs to see him. Principal Daniels questions whether having Radio in the classroom is a good idea. Coach Jones has no clear plan. (Develop contingencies and consider consequences.)

Respect

- Coach Jones disciplines nine football players for abusing Radio after the team finishes practice. (Apply disciplinary measures equally.)
- Coach Jones gives the team a pre-game motivational speech. (Give the reason [intent] for assignments and tasks.)
- Coach Jones debriefs with the men—extended team—in the barbershop after the home games. (Conduct frequent debriefings with the team to identify lessons learned.)
- After the last football game, Coaches Jones and Honeycutt talk about Radio's future. Honeycutt tells Jones to make the call as the Athletic Director. (Provide early warning to subordinates of tasks they will be responsible for.)
- Coach Jones nearly sacrifices his relationship with Mary Helen to help Radio. (Take care of our subordinate's needs.)

Integrity

- Coach Jones tells Radio that he cannot ride on the bus to the out-of-town game. Makes it up to Radio the next game. (Don't show discouragement when facing setbacks.)
- Coach Jones has not told Principal Daniels that Radio is visiting his classroom. (Keep your superiors informed of your actions.)
- Coach Jones tells Radio that giving the community his Christmas presents was a good thing. (Credit subordinates for good performance.)
- Coach Jones tells Mary Helen the reason why he is helping Radio. (Know the strengths/weaknesses in your character and skill level. Share the hazards and hardships with your subordinates.)
- Coach Jones resigns as head football coach. (Accept full responsibility for and correct poor team performance. Choose the difficult right over the easy wrong.)

Radio

Guided Discussion – Possible Answers

1. How does Coach Jones' dual role as head football coach and Athletic Director affect his ability to make objective decisions where Radio is concerned?
 - Answers will vary. Coach Jones tends to be too closely attached to Radio. He may be doing the right thing, but at what costs? What is his motivation?
2. During the first practice Coach Jones says, "We do things as a team, Gentlemen. If one player doesn't execute, it's the difference between six yards and six points." How does this statement relate to actions on the fireline?

- Answers will vary. Wildland firefighting requires a coordinated team effort. When violations occur within the Standard Firefighting Orders or the Watch Out Situations, the difference could be lives. Team effort not only accomplishes the mission but also provides for the safety of all involved.
3. Leaders must discipline subordinates on occasion. How well did Coach Jones handle the two disciplinary situations—abuse of Radio and girls’ locker room incident? How would you have handled the situations differently?
- Answers will vary. Coach Jones addressed the situations immediately but held off with the punishment. He had time to assess the implications of the situation and obtain as much information as possible. His disciplinary actions in the abuse situation addressed all nine individuals and not the entire team—appropriate action. Should criminal charges have been considered? In the case of the girls’ locker room incident, nothing was done to the two team members who witnessed the action along with Johnny.
4. Is Principal Daniels an effective leader? Identify strengths and weaknesses in her leadership.
- Principal Daniels is a very supportive of Coach Jones—including putting her job on the line when a member of the school board visits to discuss Radio. She seems to be on top of situations and backs Coach Jones’ disciplinary decisions. However, Coach Jones identifies her lapse of authority when Mr. Clay begins to call the shots. Her handling of Frank Clay and the parent meeting were not professional and above the board. Although her intentions were good, her approach was questionable.
5. Coach Jones gives a speech to his team prior to the first game. How effective is this briefing? How effective are the briefings that you receive on the fireline? What tool exists to aid a fireline leader in giving a briefing?
- Answers will vary. Coach Jones gives a very powerful speech. His use of visualization allows the team to feel success prior to entering the stadium. He asks that each player do what needs done to the benefit of the team. “You win your battles and we’ll win our war.”
 - Answers will vary.
 - The [Incident Response Pocket Guide](#) provides leaders of all levels with a Briefing Checklist (located on the inside back cover). The [Leadership Toolbox](#) also has a section on Briefing and Intent.
6. Coach Jones attends after-game reviews with members of the community at the local barbershop. Is this type of review worthwhile or professional? What review process does the wildland fire leader have available to conclude an incident?
- Answers will vary. Some students may question the professionalism of talking about the game with the community. Coach Jones excuses himself at one point when Radio is identified as a “distraction that needs dealing with.” Although we

don't see them, a more professional review would occur between the coaches and players.

- After Action Reviews are available to the wildland fire leader. The [Incident Response Pocket Guide](#) provides leaders of all levels with a process (located on page 17). Additional information can be found in the Leadership Toolbox and on the [Wildland Fire Lessons Learned website](#).
7. Frank Clay claims that Radio is a distraction to the team; asks if Coach Jones has a football team or a social club. Principal Daniels wonders if Radio is just a glorified mascot. Is teamwork all about winning or accomplishing the objective, or has more been learned in this situation?
- Answers will vary. Teamwork is more than completing the objective. Coach Jones does an excellent job of creating citizens of his players. The lessons learned will make the players well-rounded individuals. Players learned the meaning of values and principles in their organization.
8. When Coach Jones is called to Mrs. Daniels' office to meet with Mr. Tucker, school board representative, he leaves Radio in charge of the classroom. Is this appropriate? Have you been in a similar situation on the fireline where your supervisor left you under the direction of someone without experience? How did you handle the situation?
- Answers will vary.
9. Mrs. Kennedy asks Coach Jones why he is doing what he is doing with Radio. He responds, "I figure it's the right thing to do." Mrs. Kennedy replies, "There's a lot out there that's right; don't mean we always do it." How does this statement apply to the wildland firefighter?
- Answers will vary. Humans don't always do the right thing. Ethics are an important part of the wildland firefighter's job. Use this opportunity to talk about ethics. The Bureau of Land Management created "Do What's Right: EEO, Conduct and the Wildland Fire Community" in April 2004. Contact a BLM Human Resources or EEO Manager in your area for additional information about this product.
10. Coach Jones confronts Frank Clay concerning his maneuvers to remove Radio from the classroom and the football team. Are Mr. Clay's concerns warranted? As Coach Jones, how would you have handled this situation differently?
- Answers will vary. Mr. Clay is warranted in his concerns. The school has little experience with a severely handicapped individual. However, his concerns seem to be more about his son's being a member of a winning team than about Radio, students, or the other players.
 - Coach Jones handles the situation very professionally. He expresses to Mr. Clay, "At least I know where you stand."
11. Coach Jones begins to feel that helping Radio is a mistake. Leaders will make mistakes. Do you feel that Coach Jones made a mistake? Have you made a mistake as a leader? How did you handle the situation?

- Answers will vary. Mrs. Jones says it best, “It’s never a mistake to care for someone.” Although Radio was not Coach Jones responsibility, he felt it necessary to help him. Coaches after him did the same thing. The principal, school board, community, and nation embraced Radio.
 - Answers will vary.
12. Coach Jones attempts to get Radio to graduate. Radio is content to be an 11th grader. Many subordinates will work within their comfort level. As a leader, how can you motivate subordinates to break the comfort barrier?
- Answers will vary. Developing subordinate employees is a critical function leaders must perform. Without proper opportunities to learn new job skills, face new challenges, or grow within an organization many employees will never reach their full potential. As a leader you have a responsibility to your followers and to your organization to pass your knowledge on...to pay back your mentors by paying forward. Tips are available in the [Leadership Toolbox](#).
13. Coach Jones mentors Radio; his efforts and those of other coaches along the way continue to make James Robert Kennedy a valuable member of the Anderson, South Carolina, society. Is there a mentor that helped you become the leader you are today? How do you intend to “pay it forward”?
- Answers will vary.
14. In the parent meeting at the barbershop, Coach Jones says, “We’re not the ones who’ve been teaching Radio. Radio’s been teaching us. Cuz the way he treats us all the time is the way we wish we treated each other even part of the time.” As a leader, what does this statement say to you about leadership and teamwork?
- Answers will vary. This scenario ties into the Golden Rule (Treat others as you want to be treated.) and Mrs. Kennedy’s comment: “There’s a whole lot out there that’s right; don’t mean we always do it.” Radio was unselfish in his treatment of others. Many can learn from his example.
15. How effective was Coach Jones as a leader? What are his strengths and weaknesses? What will you do differently as a leader after viewing this film?
- Answers will vary.

DUTY

Be proficient in your job, both technically & as a leader.

- Take charge when in charge.
- Adhere to professional standard operating procedures.
- Develop a plan to accomplish given objectives.

Make sound & timely decisions.

- Maintain situation awareness in order to anticipate needed actions.
- Develop contingencies & consider consequences.
- Improvise within the commander's intent to handle a rapidly changing environment.

Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, accomplished.

- Issue clear instructions.
- Observe & assess actions in progress without micro-managing.
- Use positive feedback to modify duties, tasks & assignments when appropriate.

Develop your subordinates for the future.

- Clearly state expectations.
- Delegate tasks that you are not required to do personally.
- Consider individual skill levels & developmental needs when assigning tasks.

Know your subordinates and look out for their well-being.

- Put the safety of your subordinates above all other objectives.
- Take care of your subordinate's needs.
- Resolve conflicts between individuals on the team.

Keep your subordinates informed.

- Provide accurate & timely briefings.
- Give the reason (intent) for assignments & tasks.
- Make yourself available to answer questions at appropriate times.

Build the team.

- Conduct frequent debriefings with the team to identify lessons learned.
- Recognize accomplishments & reward them appropriately.
- Apply disciplinary measures equally.

Employ your subordinates in accordance with their capabilities.

- Observe human behavior as well as fire behavior.
- Provide early warning to subordinates of tasks they will be responsible for.
- Consider team experience, fatigue & physical limitations when accepting assignments.

Know yourself and seek improvement.

- Know the strengths/weaknesses in your character & skill level.
- Ask questions of peers & supervisors.
- Actively listen to feedback from subordinates.

Seek responsibility and accept responsibility for your actions.

- Accept full responsibility for & correct poor team performance.
- Credit subordinates for good performance.
- Keep your superiors informed of your actions.

Set the example.

- Share the hazards & hardships with your subordinates.
- Don't show discouragement when facing setbacks.
- Choose the difficult right over the easy wrong.

RESPECT

INTEGRITY

Radio

1. Document film clips illustrating the Wildland Fire Leadership Values and Principles.
2. Discuss leadership lessons learned from the film with group members or mentor.

Duty

- Be proficient in your job, both technically and as a leader.
- Make sound and timely decisions.
- Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised and accomplished.
- Develop your subordinates for the future.

What scenes from the movie relate to “Duty”?

Respect

- Know your subordinates and look out for their well-being.
- Keep your subordinates informed.
- Build the team.
- Employ your subordinates in accordance with their capabilities.

What scenes from the movie relate to “Respect”?

Integrity

- Know yourself and seek improvement.
- Seek responsibility and accept responsibility for your actions.
- Set the example.

What scenes from the movie relate to “Integrity”?

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Guided Discussion

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17. ll as your own crew.