

WOMEN LEADERSHIP VIRTUAL EXCHANGE (WLVE) DIGITAL STORYTELLING PROJECT

Rose Diggs: Women's Leadership in Corporate American and Foster Care

Story by KSU student, Grace Stafford. Photos by Rose Diggs.

Rose Diggs is known in the Atlanta area as a pinnacle of the Foster Care system for her work with her own children and her non-profit *Down 7 Up 8*. However, Ms. Diggs has been a leader in corporate America for years before her work with the Georgia Foster care system. She serves as a role model for women leaders in the corporate and family care industries.

Ms. Diggs is originally from Liberia, where her parents, both community leaders raised her. At age 9, Rose Diggs showed interest in opening her own store. Instead of brushing it off as many parents would, her father helped her follow through with comprehensive research into running a store and gave her a small investment to start her mini-store. She initially visited the United States as a foreign exchange student at 16 years old, before permanently coming to the United States to receive a college degree. Ms. Diggs received a Speech Communication and Journalism degree from the University of Minnesota. It was in Minnesota, where Ms. Diggs would start her first leadership role. She started initially by working in Television before transferring to work on several local radio broadcasts. During this time, she noticed that many African American women- herself included- struggled to find hair care products in Minnesota. She started by creating a chain of African American beauty supply stores that spanned multiple states. From these stores' profits, she expanded corporate enterprises to include boutiques, recording studios, beauty salons, talent agencies, and modeling studios. She would stay and run this enterprise for 25 Years. After a divorce in her later years, Ms.

Diggs lost some of her stores in a divorce. Not defeated, Ms. Diggs moved to open more beauty supply stores in Mississippi.



Rose Diggs CEO of Down 7 Up 8. She is a renowned as a female leader in Cobb County and the Atlanta Area.

After encountering some financial losses due to Hurricane Katrina and her youngest son's graduation, she moved to Atlanta and began her work with the foster care system of Georgia. In Liberia, Ms. Diggs said that she always grew up around other family's children. This was not a formal foster care system, but her family always believed that you should use your privileges to help others. In this vein, her mother, who had always wanted to open a group home, offered to take in children whose families had hit a hard time. Despite this, Rose Diggs never thought to put her leadership ability into foster care until her biological children suggested she put the skills she developed in corporate American into raising children. Over her first 15 years in

The [WLVE project](#) is a partnership between Hassan II University of Casablanca and Kennesaw State University. It is supported by the Stevens Initiative, which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, with funding provided by the U.S. Government, and is administered by the Aspen Institute. The Stevens Initiative is also supported by the Bezos Family Foundation and the governments of Morocco and the United Arab Emirates.

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Atlanta, Ms. Diggs would become President of the Foster-Adopted Parent Association and would foster over 160 children herself. However, Ms. Diggs believes that leadership is not just your actions, but the way you build up your community around you, so she created *Down 7 Up 8*. This non-profit originally help create single-family homes for foster and at-risk children but has since grown to include community outreach programs such as 'Princess for a Day,' which work to build confidence and life skills in foster kids and regular foster parent nights which host workshops and community groups for foster and adoptive parents.

In both corporate and non-profit America, Ms. diggs have been a leader in her field. She finds that leadership is a quality many people are born with, but what is more important than born leadership is a passion for your work. Ms. Diggs's passion for serving African American women and children in need has motivated her even after major setbacks. Furthermore, in day-to-day leadership, she finds that leading by example is the most effective way of not only creating loyal motivated coworkers but in fostering leaders of the future. One way of leading by example is being comfortable executing a variety of tasks; as a leader, no work is beneath her, and she is willing to do whatever is needed to make sure her businesses succeed. Additionally, she emphasizes how it is important to look for inspiration and motivation everywhere. Ms. Diggs notes that as a younger woman, she was inspired to seek out her goal by traditional mentors, her parents, and a college professor who help to mentor her and get her work in the field she wanted to work in. However, she also cites her children, both biological and foster. She says each day, seeing her kids trying to become their best selves has inspired her to constantly work towards being a better leader. When asked if she had any advice for future women leaders, Ms. Diggs stresses how important it is to not let how others see you be an obstacle in your own way. "Do not let other

people control your destiny," she elaborated, "No woman is an island; you need others, but they do not get to define you."

Grace Stafford is a senior at Kennesaw State University majoring in International Affairs. She is a member of the Kennesaw State Model United Nations Team and was cohost of the ADP Webinar: Mock Debates to Increase Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. She hopes to work in minority advocacy and Lobbying.



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