



Meetings

Remarks by Leonard Wesley
Former assistant superintendent for elementary education
Wichita Unified School District 259
Americans All® Press Conference, November 6, 2003
Wichita, Kansas

[Prior to Dr. Wesley's remarks, Ms. Tamara Cotman, assistant superintendent for elementary education, Wichita Unified School District 259, delivered these introductory comments. Ms. Cotman spoke earlier during the press conference.]

For those of you who have experience in public speaking, there are times when you forget to say something and you sit down, saying to yourself, "It's okay, that's alright." And then there are times when there's something you didn't say that you know must be mentioned.

In my greetings this morning, there's one person who I failed to mention. And, without this person, we wouldn't be here today. Because this one sole individual—who long since retired from my district and who should be out fishing or golfing somewhere each day—is the person who's made sure that Americans All® has been instituted in our district's schools. He's responsible for the training of our teachers and for keeping this vision alive. And I would be remiss if I didn't personally and publicly thank Dr. Leonard Wesley for his support and efforts on behalf of our students.]

[Remarks by Dr. Wesley]

Following that introduction, I feel pretty lucky. In some cultures, they often kill the messenger, but fortunately not here. I am Dr. Leonard Wesley, a former assistant superintendent here in Unified District 259. Our students, as you've seen this morning, come from all walks of life, all ethnic groups, all cultures, and all religious backgrounds. They are the strength of our democracy. And democracy as we know it is an experiment. If we don't keep democracy alive with our youth and those that follow them, we will probably lose the privilege of being a democratic society.

My relationship with Americans All® dates back to 1990, as a result of attending a national conference in San Diego. At that time, I was this district's assistant superintendent in charge of integration and desegregation. It was a very large meeting, hosting more than 10,000 attendees. While we were there, we were asked to visit the International Baccalaureate High School, which was quite exciting because we wanted to bring a program like that to Wichita. And, while at the International Baccalaureate High School in San Diego, I was told that there was a program in the history and social studies department that I should see. It was called Immigrants All . . . Americans All. Wow, that hit my fancy, and I rushed to that floor with members of our Wichita

delegation who also expressed interest in knowing more about that program. While there, I met a group of young ladies who had done a unit on the contributions that women had made to this nation, and the unit was supported by a large photographic collage of many of those women.

While I was studying the photos, one of the young ladies came to me and asked, "Dr. Wesley, do you know who Sybil Ludington was?" I told her that I was a history buff and, after scratching my head, I said, "You know, I really don't think I can answer that." She then asked me, "Do you know who Paul Revere was?" That one was easy and I told her I knew about Paul Revere. He rode on the North Bank 20 miles to alert the Massachusetts colonists that the British were coming. She explained that while Paul Revere rode on the North Bank 20 miles, a 16-year-old young lady, Sybil Ludington, rode her pony Star 40 miles along the South Bank delivering the same message. And they began to tell me about all the information they had found for this unit in American history, how all groups of people that have come to this nation contributed to the good of all. And, all this time, the delegation with me from Wichita kept saying, "Why aren't we doing that in Wichita? Why aren't we doing that in Wichita?"

So, with all my vigor, I began to make contacts with the folks that had created this program. It turned out that our sales representative from the Houghton Mifflin textbook company was also working with this program. After a lot of work, and using funds from grants and other contributions, we were able to bring the program to Wichita.

Our concern today, as Allan has mentioned, is that the *No Child Left Behind Act* is diverting a great deal of our funds and resources toward teaching children to read and learn math. Well, I'm here to tell you that, if we're going to continue to have a democracy and a civilization that cares for all of us, Americans All® must be a part of our instructional curriculum. History, civics, geography and economics—the core subjects of the social studies—must be a part of helping all children understand the dynamics of this great nation.

The Americans All® program, especially with their new plans for state-specific resources, provides us with that opportunity. And, on a personal note, I'm pleased that I was able to develop a strong personal relationship with Bob Knight when I worked on the Building Bridges and the Campaign to Promote Racial Justice initiatives. It showed me that if Bob ever stepped away from being involved in the political sector, and if we could twist his arm a bit to arrange a meeting with Allan Kullen—who I spoke with on a regular basis about our success with the program's resources—we might create a partnership between these two men.

I've been told many times that when things need to be done, the good Lord puts you in the right place with the right people at the right time. I knew that my efforts had paid off when I was fortunate enough to be in the commission meeting when Bob made his



last official announcements as mayor and introduced both Allan and me and indicated his interest in becoming a part of Americans All®. It appears to be a union that I am sure will carry us a long ways in our journey to make this a better nation.

Before I close, I want to tell you a little bit about Allan. Earlier in his career, he served as executive editor for the *New American Encyclopedia* and as production manager for the *International Library on Afro-American Life and History*. He is currently the president of a Maryland-based commercial printing facility with more than 100 full-time and part-time employees that has served the metropolitan area of Washington, D.C., for more than 29 years.

Based on his social reform efforts, I was not surprised to learn that a few years ago, his company, Todd Allan Printing, had been honored by the Prince Georges County Commission on Employment of People with Disabilities as its small business employer of the year. I commend Allan for these kinds of accomplishments. I'm so pleased that we have touched each other's lives, and I am sure that we will continue to work together on behalf of all our nation's children and the generation that will follow.

I am pleased that you're all here today to hear about this effort. It's critical that we continue doing the right things for all our children and the people of our nation. We, too, can contribute to making this a happy place to live.

I thank you.





AMERICANS ALL
National Education Program

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Leonard H. Wesley, Jr.

Former Assistant Superintendent,
Wichita Unified School District 259



Leonard H. Wesley, Jr., has served in several capacities during his 37 years with the Wichita Public Schools, including elementary teacher, assistant principal, assistant director of Head Start, elementary principal, supervising principal of elementary education, director of elementary programs, division director of elementary education, division director of compensatory and accountability service, and assistant superintendent of schools.

Most recently, Dr. Wesley was assistant superintendent for desegregation/integration and federal projects, responsible for implementing, supervising and maintaining the Wichita Public School District's desegregation/integration plan. The 32-year-old plan has been recognized as one of the most effective in the nation.

Dr. Wesley is involved in numerous community endeavors, including the Sedgwick County/City Special Task Force on Crime and Substance Abuse; the Task Force on Students At Risk; the Statewide Advisory Board on Black and Other Minority Infant Health and Mortality; the Youth Development Adult Advisory Board; the board of directors for Cities In Schools; the board of directors for Credit Union of America; the board of directors for the African American Male Academy; the Urban League of Wichita, Inc.; the National Committee on School Desegregation/Integration; the Multicultural/Multi-ethnic and Diversity Task Force Cadre for United School District 259; the National Association for Multicultural Education—Kansas; and the Adult Advisory Council for Big Brothers/Big Sisters. He is a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and also maintains membership in several professional organizations, including the Wichita Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the Kansas Association of Elementary School Principals, and Phi Delta Kappa.

Dr. Wesley has received many awards and recognitions. He is most proud of being named The Bishop's Outstanding Layman for the Third Episcopal District of the Christian Methodist Church. He also takes great pride in the Golden Eagle Award, for outstanding service and contributions to his city and the nation, given by Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., of Wichita, and the H. Councill Trenholm Award, for his work on eliminating racial inequities, presented by the National Education Association.

In addition to his bachelor's degree in education from Pittsburg State University, Kansas, Dr. Wesley holds a master's degree in school administration and supervision from Wichita State University. He earned his doctorate in public school administration, supervision and higher education from the University of Kansas.