

Dear CBI friends and family,

Since bringing the concept of the Leadership Development Initiative (LDI) to CBI in the late 90's and asking for sponsorship, I've had the full support, collaboration, and wisdom of CBI leadership, both staff and board. In my mind, a dream partnership! LDI's purpose has always been to develop individual leaders and organizations to influence for inclusion and equity.

When founding Executive Director, Dianne English, announced her retirement for the end of 2021, the CBI board chair asked me to remain through LDI 21 (to conclude in August 2023). I was happy to do that. But now it's time for me to begin to step into retirement, close out LDI, and welcome what's coming next from CBI.

As CBI and I bring nearly 23 years of LDI to a close, the resounding word I have is gratitude! I've been fortunate indeed to have had CBI as my partner in this amazing LDI journey, and to have had the special opportunity and gift to engage with all of you remarkable LDI graduates and sponsors. I'm indebted to you for what I've learned from you, and the ways I've been deeply touched, changed, and truly inspired by you. You will be forever "in my ground".

I have enjoyed the challenge of ensuring that LDI evolved and changed over 23 years. Dianne English has my deep gratitude for her strong leadership, wisdom, passion for community and steadfast support that ensured LDI's success. And I cannot thank enough the remarkable Christi Lee for consistently bringing her solid talent and skill, vision, graciousness, and deep commitment to LDI. Christi has been core to LDI's journey since the beginning. I've also been fortunate to work with co-facilitators who offered their special gifts and enriched both LDI and me. A grand Thank You to Edna, Terri, Christian and Victor.

LDI has surpassed the expectations I had when I conceived it many years ago. And that is due to the unwavering commitment of CBI's board and staff, and certainly to all of you who brought your full selves to the LDI experience and, in turn, have used your leadership to influence individuals, organizations and this Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. I challenge you to be authentic, bold and strategic as you continue to influence.

Since beginning my consulting work with CBI in 1997, I've had the good fortune to be involved with many CBI-generated strategies and programs in support of collaborative community change. I'm extremely proud to have been a part of the commitment CBI has demonstrated for 26 years to building a more inclusive and equitable community.

I'll be working with CBI's highly committed and talented Executive Director, Janeen Bryant, in the next few months to evaluate the impact of LDI. I'm excited and confident about what Janeen will create that will build on the LDI foundation, engage all of you and take CBI and Charlotte-Mecklenburg to a new level of commitment to equity. The CBI board, and Janeen, Annetta and Christi, continue to have my enthusiastic support and appreciation.

With abiding gratitude,

*Octavia*