

FACILITATED ON ZOOM

TUESDAY, June 30th 2–3:30pm EST

1 Founder
1 Facilitator
30+ Thinkers
100s OF NEW IDEAS & CONNECTIONS

Maria Soyka
FACILITATOR

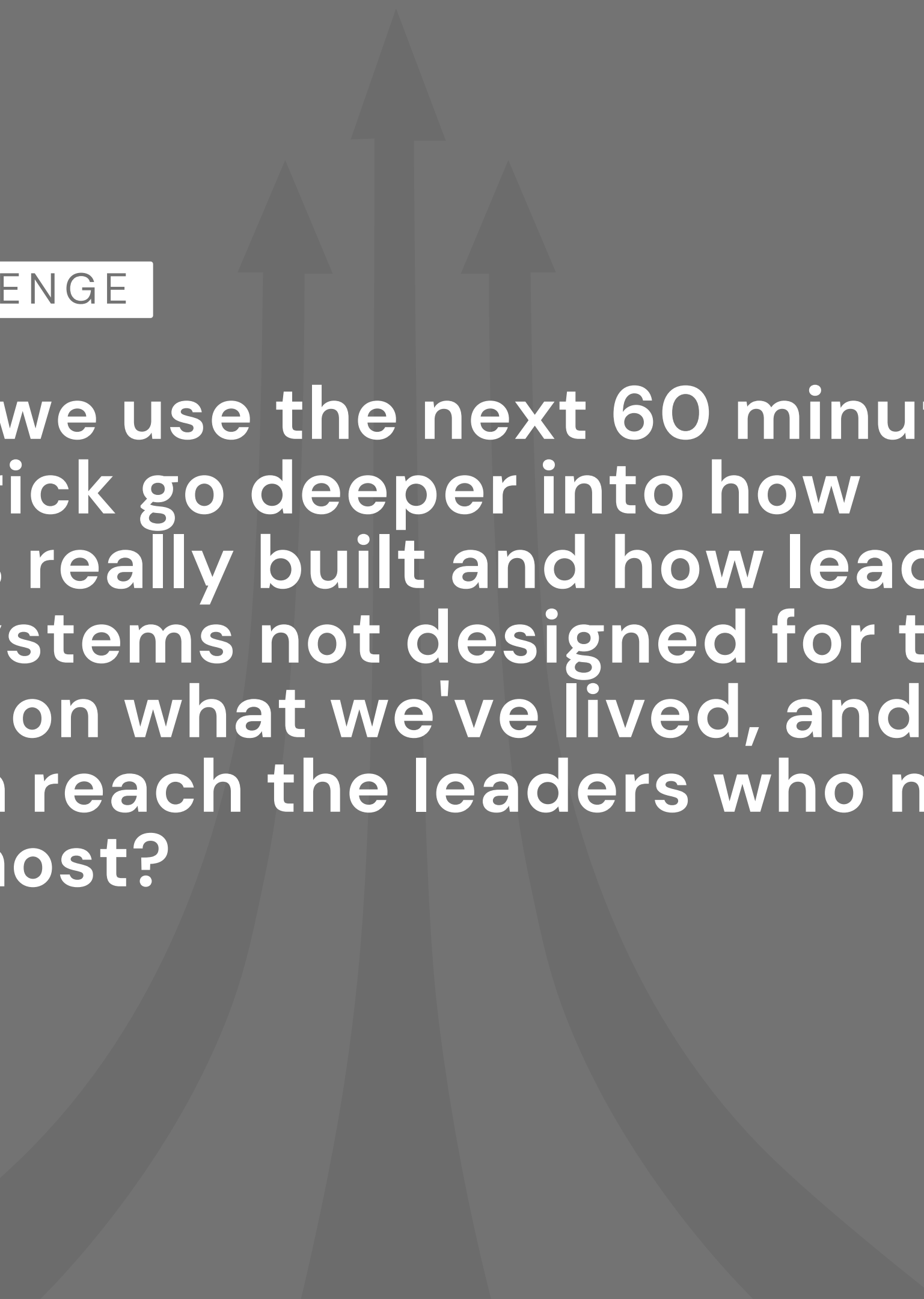


JEFFERSON **LEADERSHIP**



Frederick C. Jefferson III | Founder

Strategic Coaching for Black Executives in PWIs
Build Undeniable Influence | Navigate Power Dynamics | Lead Authentically
jeffersonleadership.com



SESSION CHALLENGE

How might we use the next 60 minutes to help Frederick go deeper into how influence is really built and how leaders navigate systems not designed for them—by drawing on what we've lived, and helping him reach the leaders who need this work most?



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Who Was in the Room

The wisdom of a room is measured not by agreement, but by the breadth of lived experience willing to meet a shared challenge.



Who Was in the Room

The Participants

The room brought together an exceptionally experienced and multidisciplinary community of leaders. Founders, CEOs, executive coaches, consultants, organizational development practitioners, educators, healthcare professionals, retired ambassadors, senior leaders from the U.S. Department of State, corporate executives from organizations including Capital One, Qualcomm, and Grainger, nonprofit leaders, and experts across public health, technology, and real estate all contributed their lived experience.

Collectively, participants represented decades of work in leadership, strategy, organizational change, executive coaching, public service, entrepreneurship, and cross-sector collaboration. Rather than approaching Frederick's challenge as observers, they engaged as practitioners who had personally navigated the realities of organizational influence, advancement, and invisible systems.



About the Process

Sometimes the most important questions aren't answered—they become clearer together.



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About the Process

Guiding Question

How might we use the next 60 minutes to help Frederick go deeper into how influence is really built and how leaders navigate systems not designed for them—by drawing on what we've lived, and helping him reach the leaders who need this work most?

The Process

Participants first reflected individually on Frederick's story through the lenses of I Like, I Wish, and I Wonder. They then explored three collaborative prompts: lived experiences of when excellence was not enough, practical opportunities to expand Frederick's work, and the larger possibilities created when people are fully seen within organizations.

Rather than generating disconnected ideas, the conversation evolved into a shared exploration of power, influence, authenticity, and organizational systems. Across every activity, participants returned to one central realization:

Leadership advice often explains how to perform —but rarely how power actually works.



Emerging Insights

Sometimes the most valuable insight isn't a new idea—it's finally having language for an old experience.



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👁️ The Second Org Chart Gave Language to What Many Had Been Living

The concept of the "Second Org Chart" became the defining framework of the session. Across industries and career stages, participants described the relief of finally having language for invisible organizational dynamics they had experienced throughout their careers. Rather than introducing a new problem, Frederick's framework validated experiences many had struggled to explain.

Participant Voices:

"The framework of two org charts. I could never articulate that succinctly but it's very much my lived experience."

"Transition from faculty to admin; no support for transition. I only had the first org chart, and 90% of the job was actually managing the second one."

"I could see how one arrives to be on the high potential list but didn't see the unwritten rules of how to get on that list."

Excellence Opens the Door. Influence Determines What Happens Next.

Participants repeatedly challenged one of leadership's most persistent myths—that exceptional performance alone leads to opportunity. Instead, they described careers shaped by sponsorship, perception, strategic visibility, informal relationships, and the ability to understand how influence is actually built.

The conversation affirmed Frederick's central premise: excellence remains essential, but excellence without influence often leaves leaders wondering why advancement remains out of reach.

Participant Voices:

"I only have to be excellent at my job. Why do I have to network and play politics? Excellence is the baseline."

"Who knows you, who will speak up for you when you are not in the room."

"People who are mid-career... Use the Second Org Chart to climb the first org chart."

The Hidden Costs Extend Far Beyond Promotion

The discussion quickly expanded beyond career advancement. Participants described invisible systems affecting health, confidence, identity, wellbeing, creativity, and belonging. Just as importantly, they recognized that organizations themselves pay a significant price when talent remains unseen or constrained.

What emerged was a reframing of organizational effectiveness: invisible barriers don't only limit individual leaders—they limit collective potential.

Participant Voices:

"It costs us authenticity and creativity and innovation."

"Professional grief when your work is dismantled."

"Being ONLY the Black woman executive... compromising health and wellness."

Strategic Influence Doesn't Require Sacrificing Authenticity

Participants admired that Frederick's work never encouraged assimilation. Instead, they saw his approach as helping leaders understand organizational dynamics while remaining grounded in who they are.

This distinction became one of the strongest differentiators of Jefferson Leadership. The goal is not to become someone else in order to succeed; it is to navigate complex systems with greater awareness, intentionality, and agency.

Participant Voices:

"The emphasis on showing up and leading as you truly are."

"Strategy is your leverage and authenticity is your power."

"A newly appreciated sense that I have the power to create my own narrative."

When More Leaders Can Lead Fully, Organizations Become More Human

The final conversation moved beyond helping individuals survive existing systems. Participants imagined organizations where psychological safety, curiosity, creativity, and authentic contribution become organizational strengths rather than aspirations.

Rather than simply creating fairer workplaces, they envisioned environments capable of unlocking greater innovation, stronger collaboration, and deeper human flourishing.

Participant Voices:

"People bring their best thinking, so organizations thrive."

"Psychological safety is more likely to exist; people are more willing to contribute what they really think."

"When people are fully seen, creativity and innovation expand."

Invitations to Experiments

Momentum comes from testing ideas before waiting for certainty.



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Teach the Second Org Chart Earlier

The Invitation: Introduce the language of invisible organizational dynamics before leaders are forced to learn it through painful experience.

Why it matters: Many participants wished they had encountered these ideas years earlier. Emerging leaders repeatedly surfaced as the audience most likely to benefit from understanding influence before navigating career-defining moments.

How we might explore it → Develop learning experiences for universities, leadership academies, and first-time managers that introduce the Second Org Chart as a foundational leadership capability.

Supporting Voices:

"I wish this message was shared with up-and-coming leaders."

"Early career leadership cohorts."

"Emerging leaders is an important time to learn about the Second Org Chart."

Expand the Conversation Through Story

The Invitation: Scale the work by making invisible systems visible through compelling stories, practical frameworks, and public platforms.

Why it matters: Participants consistently described Frederick's greatest gift as making difficult conversations accessible without diminishing their complexity.

How we might explore it → Build an integrated thought leadership strategy around the forthcoming book, keynote speaking, podcasts, and executive education.

Supporting Voices:

"TEDx stage for Fred."

"Fred makes being provoked very palatable."

"Get a marketer for your book. Book tour."

Transform Organizations, Not Just Leaders

The Invitation: Position Jefferson Leadership as helping organizations redesign the conditions that shape leadership—not simply coaching individuals to navigate existing systems.

Why it matters: Participants repeatedly imagined Frederick's work influencing leadership cultures, organizational systems, and decision-making itself.

How we might explore it → Develop organizational offerings that pair executive coaching with system-level advisory work on influence, culture, and leadership effectiveness.

Supporting Voices:

"Intervening at the root cause."

"People working within predominantly white cultures need to understand the full diversity of their staff."

"When people are fully seen, organizations thrive."

UNIQUE IDEA SPOTLIGHT

Some ideas become memorable because they make the invisible impossible to ignore.

✨ "The Second Org Chart"

Participants consistently returned to the Second Org Chart as the session's defining idea. More than a metaphor, it became a shared language for understanding the gap between formal organizational structures and the informal networks of influence that often determine who advances, who is heard, and whose potential is recognized.

The power of the concept lies in its simplicity. It validates lived experience without reducing it to individual failure and reframes leadership as understanding both visible structures and invisible dynamics. Participants saw it not only as a coaching framework but as a lens that could shape leadership development, organizational design, and future conversations about influence across sectors.

Negative Space

Absence often points toward the next opportunity for discovery.



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Leadership Development Rarely Teaches the Reality of Organizational Power

Participants repeatedly described conventional leadership development as preparing people to perform rather than helping them understand how influence actually operates.

The Language Arrives Too Late

Many reflected on learning these lessons only after experiencing setbacks, burnout, or stalled advancement. Earlier exposure emerged as one of the strongest unmet needs.

Organizations Were Discussed Less Than the Systems They Create

While much attention focused on equipping individuals to navigate complex environments, participants also hinted at a larger opportunity: helping organizations redesign the conditions that make invisible navigation necessary in the first place.

Creative Challenge Statements

Every new possibility begins with a better question.



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 **How might we help leaders recognize the Second Org Chart before it begins shaping their careers?**

Naming invisible systems earlier could transform years of uncertainty into intentional leadership.

 **What if understanding organizational power became as fundamental to leadership development as communication or strategy?**

Doing so could redefine how influence is learned across every sector.

 **Imagine if organizations measured success not only by who advances, but by whose potential becomes visible.**

This shift could unlock creativity, innovation, and human capability that too often remains unseen.

Closing Reflection

The future belongs to organizations willing to see what has always been present.



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Closing Reflection

Throughout this conversation, participants did more than respond to Frederick Jefferson's challenge—they expanded it. They named the invisible dynamics that have shaped careers, reflected on the personal and organizational costs of unwritten rules, and imagined a future where influence is no longer reserved for those who instinctively understand hidden systems.

The conversation affirmed that excellence remains essential, but excellence alone is rarely enough. Influence is built through relationships, strategic visibility, and an understanding of how organizations truly operate. Frederick's work gives leaders language for these realities while offering a path that does not require sacrificing identity, values, or purpose.

Perhaps the most compelling insight to emerge from the session is that the goal is not simply helping more leaders navigate the Second Org Chart. The larger opportunity is to equip leaders with the awareness to navigate today's realities while helping organizations evolve toward a future where fewer invisible barriers stand between talent and opportunity.

In that future, leadership is measured not only by who succeeds, but by whose brilliance becomes possible because someone finally understood how influence is really built.



**MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE BRAINSTORMING
GENERATES NEW IDEAS**



Of course, it does! But brainstorming does much more.
Brainstorming also engages our hearts and minds, confronts
limiting beliefs, and co-creates the future.

STARTUP | CORPORATE | IMPACT

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