

Being There Matters—Redefining the Model Public Servant: Viola O. Baskerville in Profile

Administrative Profile

A descendent of slaves and a woman of proud but humble origins, Viola Osborne Baskerville has ascended to prominence in Virginia public life. As only the second African American woman to serve as secretary of administration, her appointment to the cabinet of Governor Tim Kaine has afforded her the opportunity to affect the policy areas that have long been her passion. Baskerville is known as a leader with integrity, as a dedicated public servant, and as a tireless advocate for policies that affect the promise and well-being of women and children, families, and minorities, particularly those who have suffered from poverty and discrimination. Baskerville, a trailblazing African American woman, embodies a new model of the public servant.

Civic trailblazing comes more easily to some than to others. While many struggle to break new ground, making their way through the public underbrush, others seem to cut inviting paths to new visions of what is possible in the civic realm. Viola Baskerville is one such natural civic trailblazer. The swath she has cut in Virginia politics and government for women of all colors and ethnicities has been remarkably wide and generous, and she seems to have accomplished it all with extraordinary grace and élan.

Viola Osborne Baskerville was born in Richmond, Virginia, on October 29, 1951. She was educated in the segregated Virginia public school system until the eighth grade, graduated from the College of William & Mary in 1973—where she was one of six African Americans in her class—won a Fulbright scholarship in German literature that same year, and earned a law degree from the University of Iowa's College of Law in 1979. She is married to her life partner, Dr. Archer Baskerville, and is the mother of two grown sons.

Baskerville, a Virginia native who traces her maternal family's roots in the state to 1790, began her public



career in 1994 when she was elected to the Richmond City Council. Prior to that, she had worked for many

Civic trailblazing comes more easily to some than to others.

years as a civic volunteer while raising her children. In 1997, she was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates, where she served four terms before resigning

in 2005 to run for lieutenant governor in the Democratic Party primary. Following her primary loss to fellow Democrat and former U.S. congresswoman Leslie Byrne, Baskerville was appointed to run the transition team of the newly elected governor, Democrat Tim Kaine. In recognition of her success co-chairing the transition, the governor tapped her to serve as the state's secretary of administration, the position she currently holds. In announcing her appointment, Kaine, a former colleague on the

Janet R. Hutchinson is an associate professor and coordinator of the public administration program in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University, and she is codirector of the Virginia Family Impact Seminars. Her research and publications focus on child and family policy and theories of feminisms, particularly as they apply to the field of public administration. She also has a research interest in the sociology of knowledge use. She teaches courses in research, feminist methodology, and women and family policy and is affiliated with the women's studies program at Virginia Commonwealth.

E-mail: jhutch@vcu.edu

Deirdre M. Condit is an associate professor of political science in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her research interests in feminist political theory and ethics encompass issues of gender within electoral politics, the politics of reproductive technologies, and maternal theory and public policy. Her recent publications include an article on androgenesis in a forthcoming collection titled *Twenty-First Century Motherhood*, an essay on Sara Ruddick's contribution to political thought, and many journal articles.

E-mail: dcondit@vcu.edu

Richmond City Council, noted that Baskerville “impressed me as one of the hardest working members of the City Council when we served together in Richmond. She has continued to show that work ethic and that commitment to making government work more efficiently and serve its citizens as a member of the House” (*Washington Post* 2005).

In her role as secretary of administration, Baskerville oversees nine state agencies, including the Virginia State Board of Elections, Department of General Services, Department of Human Resources Management, and Department of Minority Business Enterprise. While the governor’s cabinet reflects some diversity, with four of the 14 positions held by people of color, and four of the posts held by women, as the sole African American woman in the cabinet, Baskerville’s intersectionality distinguishes her among her colleagues (Crenshaw 1998).

Our profile of Baskerville is part of a two-year-long research project examining women in elective office in Virginia. During the first project year, a series of unstructured, in-depth interviews was conducted with Secretary Baskerville to elicit an understanding of her background, her history, her philosophy and motivation to engage in public service, and her perceptions of herself as a woman and African American policy maker in Virginia.

The highest offices of public service in the United States continue to exclude women, in general, and African American women, in particular. Some have expressed skepticism that the absence of historically marginalized populations “makes a difference” to our democracy; research indicates that they do. Researchers writing on representative bureaucracy point to the relationship between having a government that “looks like America” and the ability to fully represent the interests of a diverse electorate (Naff 2001; Selden 1997). Different life experiences afford different abilities, perspectives, and leadership styles. Moreover, according to a research report of the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, women’s representation in elective office has a measurable effect on policy making and outcomes: “[W]omen’s presence in legislatures and other state-level elected offices is closely associated with better policy for women” (Caiazza 2002, 4). An earlier study on women in Congress, conducted on behalf of the Institute for Women’s Policy Research by Swers and Caiazza (2000), also found that women members of Congress sponsored legislation relevant to women’s unique experiences and shared concerns much more frequently than did men. Elected women and minorities also tend to bring with them other women and minorities, thereby opening up government

positions that were previously inaccessible (Ricucci and Saidel 2001). This profile, which examines the personal history and public life of Viola Baskerville, offers an intriguing vision of how one African American woman trailblazer is redefining the model of the public servant in Virginia.

Recognizing Women’s Absence in the Public Landscape

To be a woman in either high elective or administrative office in the United States epitomizes the trailblazing life. Only a handful of American women have

To be a woman in either high elective or administrative office in the United States epitomizes the trailblazing life.

been elected to state and national legislative office. For example, between the founding of the republic and April 2008, only 2 percent, or 240, of the 11,582 members of the U.S. Congress have been women, and only 32 of those women have been

women of color. Carol Moseley Braun is the only African American woman ever to have been elected to the U.S. Senate (CAWP 2007a). According to a 1994 estimate from the U.S. Department of State, at the current rate, women will not gain proportional representation in Congress until the year 2333. While women have a greater presence in state legislatures, their relative numbers remain low there as well. As of April 2008, only 23.7 percent or 1,746 of 7,382 state legislators in the United States were women, and of those, a mere 329 or 4.5 percent were women of color (CAWP 2008). The 1994 State Department project for gender parity in America’s state legislatures predicts that women could reach 50 percent of all legislative seats as early as 2038.

Women fare only slightly better in public administrative posts. As of 2007, a total of 33 women have served in federal cabinet-level positions (CAWP 2007b), and data from the previous year found that women occupied only 27 percent of the elite ranks of the federal Senior Executive Service (Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2007). At the state level, research conducted in 2001 found that 30 percent of all state executive department heads were women (CWG 2001), and research by Ricucci and Saidel (1997) found that white women held only 22.1 percent, and persons of color only 13.4 percent, of gubernatorial posts around the country. There is little evidence that women have made significant gains as appointed policy makers over a decade later.

The history and status of elected and public administrative women in the Commonwealth of Virginia lags even more markedly behind the nation. By April 2008, Virginia ranked forty-second among the states in the number of women elected to the legislative body; only 16.4 percent, or 23 of 140, of the state House seats were held by women. Between 1791 (the

earliest date of our research database) to 2006, only 62 of the 6,830 people who have served in the Virginia House of Delegates have been women. (The Virginia House of Burgesses was initiated in 1619 but became the House of Delegates in 1791.)

Since the commonwealth's founding, no woman has ever served as Virginia's governor or lieutenant governor. In 1993, the only Virginia woman to have ever secured a major party nomination to run for the top executive spot was defeated in the general election when Democrat Mary Sue Terry lost to Republican George Allen. Terry was the first and only woman to date to run for and win as attorney general. Until Viola Baskerville competed with former Congresswoman Leslie Byrne, the only Virginia woman Democrat ever elected to the U.S. Congress, Virginia's candidates for lieutenant governor had all been men. Women are equally absent from the administrative posts in Virginia's government. The historical paucity of women public administrators in Virginia appears to confirm the findings of Riccucci and Sidel (1997), just as they mirror the data on elected women's historical underrepresentation at the national level.

When Viola Baskerville was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1998, only 15 percent of the members were women. Baskerville's election made a total of three seats that were occupied by African American women. As of January 2008, five African American women serve together in the House of Delegates, marking an all-time high in representation by women of color.

Explaining Women's Absence

A robust literature has considered women's absence from the public landscape. Ample evidence demonstrates that when women run, they are as likely as their male counterparts to win (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2007). The explanation for their absence lies elsewhere. Researchers point to the fact that Americans' devotion to incumbents results in their reelection over 90 percent of the time, which then locks out all newcomers to the public landscape. Thus, increasing the number of women in public office first requires that the seats of entrenched incumbents be vacated (Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997).

Other literature indicates that the pool of eligible women candidates is smaller when compared to that of men (Fox and Lawless 2004). This is so because "too few women occupy high-level positions in the professions that serve as pipelines to careers in politics" (Fox and Lawless 264–65, citing Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994). However, more recent research by the same authors points to the "candidate emergence phase" as a significant source of the underrepresentation of women in public office. They found that parties and

party elites are less likely to select, recruit, or encourage women than they are men. Moreover, women are more likely than men to rely on their own internal perceptions about what it means to be "qualified." As a result, they are less likely than men to perceive themselves as qualified. The upshot is that, overall, women are less likely to self-select and thus self-promote themselves toward seeking public office (Fox and Lawless 2004, 275).

The size of women's eligibility pool is also affected by the differing family constraints typically experienced by women. Many women who wait until their children are grown to seek office confine themselves to local offices such as school boards and county councils. The result is a "substantial winnowing process" of potential women candidates, thus shrinking the pool of those women who will eventually seek public life (Fox and Lawless 2004, 275).

For African American women, who have grown up surrounded by both racism and sexism, the issue is surely compounded. Our interviews with African American women reveal a determination and drive to succeed and to make a difference that equals, if not surpasses, that of their white women colleagues. At least anecdotally, this suggests that African American women in our study might be less inclined to see themselves as unqualified when compared to their white women colleagues. Our interviews with both African American and white Virginia delegates demonstrate that a common thread among them is a moral certitude and strong sense of self-confidence that, we suspect, is the result of strong family support and the unwavering encouragement to succeed passed on by one or both parents. Experience with adversity may also play a role.

When asked why she thinks so few women run for political office, Baskerville speaks about her own experiences. She married very young and had her first child at 24, while a law student. It was not until her two children were in school and her family had moved back to Richmond that she became involved in civic and professional organizations and with political campaigns. As her network in the community expanded, she was encouraged to run for Richmond City Council. Three years later, when the 71st State Legislative District incumbent, Jean Cunningham, announced her retirement, Baskerville ran for, and easily won, Cunningham's seat. As noted earlier, researchers Fox and Lawless (2004) support the view that it is at the emergence stage of political candidacy that women lag men; the eligibility pool differs by gender, with men receiving encouragement to enter the field. If, as was Baskerville's experience, women are encouraged to enter the race, they are equally likely to win it. Baskerville also notes that women may be less inclined to play the games that men play, referring

to political gamesmanship: “[Y]ou have to play your own game and be comfortable with it and stick to it. But you’ve got to be wise to the other game, too.”

On Becoming “Qualified”

Viola Baskerville’s Virginia roots go deep. She describes memories of her childhood growing up in Woodville, a predominantly African American working-class neighborhood in Richmond, Virginia:

I’m a native Richmonder born at Saint Philips Hospital (a racially segregated hospital that later became the Medical College of Virginia) in October, 1951, one of a set of twins, born prematurely. I was 4 lbs. 12 oz. My sister weighed 3 lbs. 15 oz. I wasn’t expected to survive. But I did. I have an older sister and younger brother. We were baby boomers, post-WWII babies. My dad was a carpenter and my mom was a nurse’s aid. My dad didn’t finish the eighth grade, and my mom, the youngest of twelve children, was the first to go to college when she entered Virginia Union University in 1939. Her father was a laborer born December 25, 1872. His father was born in 1848, and his father was born in 1814, and *his* father born in 1790. So I can trace my family on my mother’s side to 1790 when my great, great, great grandfather Robbin Braxton was born on a plantation in Hanover County. He was either a slave of Carter Braxton or was owned by one of Carter Braxton’s relatives. Braxton was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and a member of the Virginia General Assembly.

Her pride in her family, especially her mother and grandmother, is palpable. She tells of the bit of land that her grandparents owned, which was then given to her own parents on their wedding day, and she speaks fondly of a photograph of her parents working side by side to build their home with their own hands. She proudly notes, “My mother could wield a hammer just as well as my dad; she could cook, hoe a garden.” Baskerville underscores the historical view that the strength of African American women grew out of a necessity to command a living and to maintain family ties in the face of uncertainty. This uncertainty emanates from a lack of assurance that their male partners will always be there for reasons that suggest institutionalized racism. To paraphrase Baskerville, this tradition of survivorship creates strong black women with an equally strong sense of motherhood and sacrifice for their children. In her own case, civic participation was emphasized by Baskerville’s mother, who remembered the poll taxes created to prevent African Americans from voting. Her mother wished her happiness on her eighteenth birthday then told her to

register to vote. She did, and she has voted at every opportunity since.

Civic interest ran strong in the Osborne family. Baskerville recalls that her illiterate maternal grandfather had an avid interest in community and civic affairs. He was proud of who he was and proud of his heritage. He was also a continuing influence on the Osborne children as their frequent caretaker while their parents worked. The family shared a fundamental resourcefulness. Although poor, there was always food on the table. The family gardened, canned fruits and vegetables, and brought wild game from their relatives in the country. Baskerville emphasizes the importance to the family that they not take anything from the government.

The family, like so many others in their circumstances, saved enough money for a set of encyclopedias, the *World Book Encyclopedia*. “Like almost every other African American family we knew, we had a picture of Jesus, Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy hanging somewhere in our house, and a set of encyclopedias.” They read the encyclopedias from cover to cover, and took piano and band lessons. Baskerville played the viola and the clarinet and sang in the church choir. The family went to Mount Olivet Baptist Church, which Baskerville’s grandparents had founded in the late 1800s in Richmond. The church still exists today.

The Osborne girls’ strong work ethic toward their schooling, instilled by their parents, resulted in a prestigious scholarship for Baskerville from the A Better Chance (ABC) Program of Boston, Massachusetts. The program was designed to give promising urban minority children the rare opportunity to expand their horizons by attending a scholastic summer camp held at Mount Holyoke College. Baskerville was thirteen at the time. At the end of the six-week program, she was offered a scholarship to attend a member school for her high school education. She attended Northfield School (now Northfield Mount Hermon), a preparatory school in East Northfield, Massachusetts, on a full, four-year scholarship.

After graduating from Northfield, Baskerville entered the College of William & Mary, also on a full four-year scholarship. She placed into a third-year German literature class in her freshman year. Although academically successful, she was one of only six African Americans in her class in a student body of 4,000, and she was unhappy in what was, at the time, an indifferent and insensitive environment. Nevertheless, to honor her parents’ sacrifices and to demonstrate the tenacity that her parents had taught her, she remained there until graduation. With the support and encouragement of her German literature professor, she applied for and won a Fulbright scholarship to study in Germany. With

her degree in German literature, Baskerville spent a year in Bonn studying post–World War II German women writers.

Upon her return from Germany, she married her fiancé, who had graduated from the Medical College of Virginia in 1973. While he was training at the Mayo Clinic, Baskerville applied to and was accepted on a full scholarship to the University of Iowa’s College of Law. She attended law school while raising their first child; after completing law school, the family moved to California, where their second son was born. Once Archer Baskerville completed his training at the University of Loma Linda Medical School, the Baskervilles returned to Richmond. While a homemaker, Baskerville became active in the neighborhood civic association and joined the hospital auxiliary, a local chapter of One Hundred Black Women, and the local chapter of the NAACP, developing the networks that eventually propelled her into public office.

A Public Life That Makes a Difference

Baskerville began her political career when she was elected to the Richmond City Council in 1994. She chose to run for political office after being encouraged to do so by a network of friends and neighbors who were impressed by her civic leadership in the community. Baskerville’s story confirms our research, which suggests that encouragement from women peers is the single most common reason for women’s entry into politics. This finding is supported by Githens’s (2003) work on women’s “recruitment” into elective office.

Baskerville was also motivated to run by a desire to bring a sense of dignity and leadership to the often rancorous city council deliberations, a motivation common to many women in public leadership roles (Fine 2007). Her ambition was to change the image of council deliberations in the eyes of Richmond’s citizens, who, she felt, were disenfranchised, even disgusted, with their government. She was elected to the position of vice mayor by her council peers, who were clearly influenced by her leadership, her dignified demeanor, and her ability to get warring factions to negotiate.

Later, as a member of the House of Delegates, Baskerville saw herself as a loner seeking to remain aloof from the “horse trading” that is the common quid pro quo among legislators. It was her belief that the bills she sponsored should stand on their own merits, and that her colleagues should vote for them because they were worthwhile, not because they sought her vote on their own legislation. Fine (2007) notes that women leaders tend to define themselves by such ethical norms. As a first-term legislator, Baskerville was strongly warned

by senior members against taking an unpopular stand or speaking out on the floor; however, she did both—successfully. Less than 30 days into her first term, she chose to speak out on a last-minute Richmond city charter amendment that was supported by influential senior delegates but opposed by her constituents. Remarkably, she was able to persuade a small majority of delegates to remove the offending language, a unique success for a first-term woman legislator, according to researchers (Bratton and Haynie 1999; Kathlene 2001; Rosenthal 2000).

Engineering legislation through to a successful vote is not for the faint of heart. If you are not a horse trader, then votes are earned through the sponsor’s ability to convince colleagues that the legislation is good for, or at least not harmful to, their constituents and to their party. Baskerville became known for “doing her homework” for each piece of legislation, which at times entailed consulting with constituents, reading detailed reports, and, as she says, “Googling.” Rosenthal (1998a) suggests that women legislators are more inclined to research issues than their male counterparts. Baskerville believes that good research is a manifestation of the democratic process. Her work ethic helped build her reputation for leadership, integrity, attention to detail, and commitment to the legislative process.

Baskerville’s story confirms ... that encouragement from women peers is the single most common reason for women’s entry into politics.

Her committee work often focused on families and children; she served on the Health, Welfare and Institutions Committee and on the Commerce and Labor Committee, where she championed the development of opportunities for women and minority

business owners. Her work on the Joint Subcommittee on Lead Poisoning and the Committee Studying Access and Diversity in Higher Education reflected her central concern with children, their economic empowerment, and the ways in which issues of race and gender affect them. She was one of only three African American women serving in the House at the time of her election. She also served as secretary of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus from 2000 until leaving the House of Delegates in 2005.

As an unabashed liberal in a conservative House, an independent woman in an overwhelmingly male delegation, and an African American in a largely white House, her record of accomplishments is indeed exemplary. Policy sea changes require, at a minimum, both inaugurating new ideas and marshalling them into legislative reality. The first requires a kind of singular courage—the willingness to break new ground and go it alone, if necessary. The second requires garnering numbers of supporters. Baskerville

succeeded admirably in the first. Her comparative lack of success in the second is attributable in large measure to her status as a minority party member in a predominantly conservative, Republican House of Delegates, dominated by an overwhelming majority of white men.

Research demonstrates that when women make up only a small proportion of an organization, their willingness to engage in “critical acts,” such as offering legislation, may actually be constrained (Childs and Krook 2006; Dahlerup 1988; Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005; Kanter 1997). Baskerville is not much concerned with such legislative setbacks. Rather, she simply transferred her commitment to civil rights, women, children, and small business owners to her work as Virginia’s secretary of administration. There are many routes to policy change, and Baskerville has seized every opportunity—and continues to do so—to fulfill her lifelong commitment to economic and social justice.

Baskerville vacated her 71st District legislative seat to seek the Democratic nomination for lieutenant governor in 2005. During the campaign, the *Washington Post* described Baskerville as “by far the best candidate in the Democratic field ... a principled liberal who does not try to cloak her views ... and an independent thinker” (Scarborough 2005). Despite such accolades, Baskerville lost a close primary election.

With her history of academic opportunities and accomplishments, Baskerville has actively supported education for all children, but especially those who have lived with discrimination and poverty. On the day after Baskerville lost out on the democratic nomination for lieutenant governor in 2005, she was awarded *Good Housekeeping* magazine’s “Women in Government” award. The award recognized her work to repair the harm done by the massive resistance to desegregation that occurred in Virginia during the 1950s and 1960s. Baskerville sponsored legislation (H.B. 846, 2004) to create state-funded scholarships for those whose educations had been disrupted by public school systems that had closed rather than desegregate. According to the press release, the *Good Housekeeping* award is intended to honor “remarkable women who have worked endless hours overcoming huge hurdles to make the world a better place” (Ruff 2005). This award was one among dozens over the years honoring Baskerville for her outstanding public service. As secretary of administration, she has continued to champion children’s education by maintaining and directing state funds to public broadcasting entities to implement instructional television programming for K–12 schools, even in tight budget years.

In many ways, Viola Baskerville’s life was an apt prelude to her appointment as one of the state’s most

powerful administrators. The array of offices and responsibilities that come under her auspices is impressive. The secretary of administration has wide reach and authority. The secretary’s scope of responsibility involves managing the state’s properties and buildings, administering employee policies and benefits, overseeing state procurement, overseeing elections, directing state funds to constitutional officers and public broadcasting entities, overseeing charitable gaming, and the broad and daunting task of protecting Virginians’ human rights. In our interviews with her, Baskerville repeatedly emphasized service to the people as her first priority.

Common among the many diverse departments, agencies, and responsibilities housed under the umbrella of the secretary of administration in Virginia is care for the people’s investment in themselves, their communities, and their government. Serving as the chief protector of such precious public treasures is a natural role for one who sees herself as a public servant concerned not with her own welfare, but with the welfare of those whom she serves.

As a delegate, and now as secretary, Baskerville has had a particular interest in and passion for enhancing the opportunities for working people, particularly women and minorities. Bills introduced during her career as delegate included measures to assist with procurement opportunities for women and minorities, options for military spouses to collect unemployment compensation when leaving employment because of spousal redeployment, state tax relief aimed at saving rural family farms and family-held businesses, and authorization for a study on the status of women-owned businesses. As secretary of administration, Baskerville supports increasing procurement opportunities for small businesses and for women- and minority-owned businesses. As delegate, her time spent on the Sciences and Technology Committee has continued with her instrumental role in the development of Virginia’s eVA program to streamline the state’s procurement and purchasing systems by making them available online.

Throughout her career, Baskerville has remained grounded with her local community, with grassroots interests, and with regional and national organizations that reflect her policy concerns and her values. She is a lifetime member of the National Council of Negro Women and the Coalition of 100 Black Women. She also sits on the board of directors of the Virginia Foundation for Women. Her efforts have been recognized with numerous awards and honors. The Planned Parenthood Federation of Virginia awarded her its prestigious Best Choices award in 2002, and she was recognized as the Outstanding Domestic Violence Advocate by the Richmond Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee in

2001. Most recently, in 2006, she was honored for her outstanding commitment to civil rights by Equality Virginia, a grassroots organization dedicated to lobbying against discrimination in all forms. Again in 2008, Equality Virginia gave Baskerville its Public Servant Award. In her acceptance speech, Baskerville responded to a question about the active role of the African American community in the passage of Virginia's regressive "marriage amendment," saying,

I only wish the same amount of energy could be spent combating poverty, health care disparity, educational disparities, economic disparities, the escalating imprisonment of fathers and sons in the black community, and underage parents with limited or no support systems. These are some of the true stresses in the black family that need to be addressed ... I stand here as a representative of two minorities, to urge those who look like me to join in this fight by speaking out for human rights and human dignity.

Lessons Learned

The impact of Viola Baskerville's achievements is not easily quantifiable; however, her record of leadership as an active and involved private citizen, as a member of the Richmond City Council, as a delegate in the Virginia state legislature, and now as a member of the governor's cabinet must, by virtue of her uniqueness, personality, accomplishments, and visibility, offer a role model for all women, and women of color who aspire to positions of leadership.

There appears to be a relationship between similarities with one's constituency and the ability to effect policy making and policy outcomes. The presence of women and minorities in the bureaucracy and in state-level elective offices has a salutary effect on policies that affect both. Furthermore, the presence of women and minorities increases the accessibility to professional positions and to elective office of others who share these attributes. Empirical evidence supporting these assertions has been found in the research of several prominent public administration theorists (Dolan 2002; Keiser et al. 2002; Meier and Bohte 2001; Meier, Wrinkle, and Polinard 1999; Riccucci and Saidel 2001; Selden 1997).

Women are often motivated to enter public service by a desire to positively affect the lives of others. This is a common theme when students are queried about their reasons for entering public administration programs. It is also a common conclusion drawn by researchers in women's leadership studies (Fine 2007, 182). Condit

and Hutchinson's ongoing research confirms this. Baskerville exemplifies this ethic of public caring. As we came to know her through our interviews, we concluded that there are several lessons that can be useful for women and minority public administrators.

- *Envision success and dare to fail.* This implies a willingness to take risks in one's professional life. Cantor, Bernay, and Stoess note that "[t]he word risk comes from the Greek 'to sail around a cliff' which implies that we don't know what's around the bend" (1992, 165). Baskerville repeatedly articulated this in our interviews with her. For example, she sponsored controversial legislation on racial reparations that, through her able stewardship, was enacted into law. Her unsuccessful yet groundbreaking run for lieutenant governor exemplifies her mettle. She is not afraid to take on challenges, and she is not afraid to fail.

- *Build coalitions and work collaboratively.* Flammang finds that women attribute their distinctive leadership styles to "[a]n insistence on mutual respect, consensus decision-making, validation of the feelings of others, and non-competitive power" (1985, 111). Baskerville's successful professional career is based on her ability to generate coalitions and to work collaboratively with those who would thwart her policy goals. In both her city council and House of Delegate roles, she made a point of working with the opposition, and there is evidence that doing so worked to the benefit of her constituents. She has always been a consensus seeker and is more than willing to share the credit for success.

In contrast to James McGregor Burns's famous research in 1978 that distinguished male leadership styles as either transactional or transformative, more recent studies on women's leadership styles suggest a

more integrative, collaborative, and cooperative style of leadership (Fine 2007; Rosenthal 1998b). This integrative style is marked by power sharing, empowering those who come behind them, creating noncompetitive and inclusive environments, and consensus seeking in

a participatory environment. Effectiveness is valued over status seeking (Rosenthal 1998b, 5). When she speaks of her experience on the city council, Baskerville's comments frequently refer to "coalitions" and "cooperation" and "communication"—all values characteristic of women leaders (Fine 2007).

- *Do the work.* This may be one of the most important lessons that we have learned from Viola Baskerville. She is meticulous in her research. She repeatedly affirms the importance of detailed

The presence of women and minorities in the bureaucracy and in state-level elective offices has a salutary effect on policies that affect both.

preparation, and she enjoys doing it! Doing her homework, according to Baskerville, is a reason that she has engendered the respect of both her colleagues and her constituents, even when her support for a bill or policy has been unsuccessful.

- *Value lifelong learning.* This is not, of course, a lesson specific to women or to African Americans. Nevertheless, it is a value that is dearly held by Baskerville, and one that she has demonstrated in her own life. This is exemplified by her experiences as a scholarship student in Massachusetts, as a Fulbright scholar studying women writers in Germany, as a law student, and as an energetic supporter of policies to strengthen education in Virginia.

- *Mentor future leaders.* Women's mentoring role is important to bringing women into public life and to their success as leaders. Citing the characteristics inherent to good mentorship, including fostering autonomy, personal responsibility, and self-development, Porter and Daniel note that "Contemporary organizational theorists increasingly view such qualities as crucial for all leaders of effective organizations" (2007, 254). Citing Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and Van Engen (2003), Porter and Daniel note further that "mentoring is a transformational behavior that serves women leaders well."

Central to Baskerville's lived philosophy is the importance of bringing along those who come behind. Baskerville values mentoring. She has experienced it in her career and is determined to extend the benefits of her experience to young women and African Americans who aspire to public leadership. For example, upon leaving her seat in the House of Delegates in 2005, Baskerville encouraged Jennifer McClellan, another young African American woman, to seek the seat that Baskerville was vacating, a seat that McClellan still holds today. Mentoring has a clear connection to a central tenet of representative bureaucracy: As more women and minorities are brought into leadership positions, constituents benefit. This is further supported by the representative bureaucracy literature that has become a part of the public administration discourse (see Keiser et al. 2002; Meier and Bohte 2001; Meier, Wrinkle, and Polinard 1999 for more on representative bureaucracy).

Conclusion

In examining the strain of literature on leadership and on "the difference leaders make," Van Wart notes that "it is important to remember that leaders do not act in a vacuum—they are a part of the flow of history and set in a culture filled with crises, opportunities, and even dumb luck. In practical terms, however, the

question of whether leaders make any difference gets translated into the questions of how much difference and when" (2003, 221). We must leave the "how much" question on Baskerville's leadership in Virginia until she is done trailblazing. However, the "when" question—the difference her leadership has made to women and people of color—can be addressed in the moment. Baskerville is a vanguard figure in Virginia public life, a model for young, aspiring women, one of the few African American women to serve in the Virginia State house in the state's history, and the first African American woman to run for statewide elective office. As Kelly so astutely concludes,

The role of both elected and appointed leaders in promoting and supporting multiracial, multiethnic, and gender diversity can not be overstated. 'Being there' matters. If someone like oneself is not present, the likelihood of adequate substantive representation most likely will decline, and often decline sharply. When that happens, an inclusive democratic polity becomes less viable and less feasible. (1998, 204)

In breaking this new ground for women and people of color who follow, Baskerville personifies the model public servant. She marks a new and more hopeful future for public service in Virginia.

Central to Baskerville's lived philosophy is the importance of bringing along those who come behind. Baskerville values mentoring.

References

- Baskerville, Viola O. 2006. Interview with the authors, March 6, May 1.
- Bratton, Kathleen A., and Kerry L. Haynie. 1999. Agenda Setting and Legislative Success in State Legislatures: The Effects of Gender and Race. *Journal of Politics* 61(3): 658–79.
- Caiazza, Amy. 2002. Does Women's Representation in Elected Office Lead to Women-Friendly Policy? Publication no. I-910, Institute for Women's Policy Research. <http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/i910.pdf> [accessed September 22, 2008].
- Cantor, Dorothy W., Toni Bernay, and Jean Stoess. 1992. *Women in Power: The Secrets of Leadership*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Center for the American Woman and Politics (CAWP). 2007a. *Fact Sheet: Women of Color in Elective Offices*. New Brunswick, NJ: Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University.
- . 2007b. *Fact Sheet: Women in Presidential Cabinets*. New Brunswick, NJ: Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University.
- . 2008. *Fact Sheet: Women in State Legislatures*. New Brunswick, NJ: Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University.

- Center for Women in Government. 2001. *Women's Leadership Profile Compendium Report*. Albany, NY: Center for Women in Government.
- Childs, Sarah, and Mona Lena Krook. 2006. The Substantive Representation of Women: Rethinking the "Critical Mass" Debate. <http://www.psa.ac.uk/2006/ppts/Childs.pdf> [accessed September 22, 2008].
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1998. A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Law and Politics. In *The Politics of Law: A Progressive Critique*, 3rd ed., edited by David Kairys, 356–80. New York: Basic Books.
- Dahlerup, Drude. 1988. From a Small to a Large Minority: Women in Scandinavian Politics. *Scandinavian Political Studies* 11(4): 275–98.
- Dahlerup, Drude, and Lenita Freidenvall. 2005. Quotas as a "Fast Track" to Equal Political Representation for Women: Why Scandinavia Is No Longer the Model. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7(1): 26–48.
- Darcy, R., Susan Welch, and Janet Clark. 1994. *Women, Elections, and Representation*. 2nd ed. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Dolan, Julie. 2002. Representative Bureaucracy in the Federal Executive: Gender and Spending Priorities. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 12(3): 353–75.
- Dolan, Julie, Melissa Deckman, and Michele L. Swers. 2007. *Women and Politics: Paths to Power and Political Influence*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.
- Eagly, Alice H., Mary C. Johannesen-Schmidt, and Marloes L. van Engen. 2003. Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles: A Meta-Analysis Comparing Women and Men. *Psychological Bulletin* 129(4): 569–91.
- Flammang, Janet A. 1985. Female Officials in the Feminist Capital: The Case of Santa Clara County. *Western Political Quarterly* 38(1): 94–118.
- Fine, Marlene G. 2007. Women, Collaboration, and Social Change: An Ethics-Based Model of Leadership. In *Women and Leadership: Transforming Visions and Diverse Voices*, edited by Jean Lau Chin, Bernice E. Lott, Joy K. Rice, and Janis Sanchez-Hucles, 177–91. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Fox, Richard L., and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2004. Entering the Arena? Gender and the Decision to Run for Office. *American Journal of Political Science* 48(2): 264–80.
- Githens, Marianne. 2003. Accounting for Women's Political Involvement: The Perennial Problem of Recruitment. In *Women and American Politics*, edited by Susan J. Carroll, 33–53. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. 1977. *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kathlene, Lyn. 2001. Words That Matter: Women's Voice and Institutional Bias in Public Policy Formation. In *The Impact of Women in Public Office*, edited by Susan J. Carroll, 22–48. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Keiser, Lael R., Vicky M. Wilkins, Kenneth J. Meier, and Catherine A. Holland. 2002. Lipstick and Logarithms: Gender, Institutional Context, and Representative Bureaucracy. *American Political Science Review* 96(3): 553–64.
- Kelly, Rita Mae. 1998. An Inclusive Democratic Polity, Representative Bureaucracies, and the New Public Management. *Public Administration Review* 58(3): 201–8.
- Meier, Kenneth J., and John Bohte. 2001. Structure and Discretion: Missing Links in Representative Bureaucracy. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 11(4): 455–70.
- Meier, Kenneth J., Robert D. Wrinkle, and J. L. Polinard. 1999. Representative Bureaucracy and Distributional Equity: Addressing the Hard Question. *Journal of Politics* 61(4): 1025–39.
- Naff, Katherine C. 2001. *To Look Like America: Dismantling Barriers for Women and Minorities in Government*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Porter, Natalie, and Jessica Henderson Daniel. 2007. Developing Transformational Leaders: Theory to Practice. In *Women and Leadership: Transforming Visions and Diverse Voices*, edited by Jean Lau Chin, Bernice E. Lott, Joy K. Rice and Janis Sanchez-Hucles, 245–63. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Riccucci, Norma M., and Judith R. Sidel. 1997. The Representativeness of State-Level Bureaucratic Leaders: A Missing Piece of the Representative Bureaucracy Puzzle. *Public Administrative Review* 57(5): 423–30.
- . 2001. The Demographics of Gubernatorial Appointees: Toward an Explanation of Variation. *Policy Studies Journal* 29(1): 11–22.
- Rosenthal, Cindy Simon. 1998a. Determinants of Collaborative Leadership: Civil Engagement, Gender or Organizational Norms? *Political Research Quarterly* 51(4): 847–68.
- . 1998b. *When Women Lead: Integrative Leadership in State Legislatures*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2000. Gender Styles in State Legislative Committees: Raising Their Voices in Resolving Conflict. *Women in Politics* 21(2): 21–45.
- Ruff, J. C. 2005. Effort to Right a Wrong Honored—Good Housekeeping Lauded Baskerville for Scholarship Push. *Richmond Times Dispatch*, July 4.
- Scarborough, M. 2005. A Classic Choice for Virginia's No. 2 Job. *Washington Post*, June 5.

- Selden, Sally Coleman. 1997. *The Promise of Representative Bureaucracy: Diversity and Responsiveness in a Government Agency*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Seltzer, Robert A., Jody Newman, and Melissa Voorhees Leighton. 1997. *Sex as a Political Variable: Women as Candidates and Voters in U.S. Elections*. Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner.
- Swers, Michele, and Amy Caiazza. 2000. Transforming the Political Agenda? Gender Differences in Bill Sponsorship on Women's Issues. Publication no. I-906, Institute for Women's Policy Research. <http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/transforming%20agenda%2010-00.pdf> [accessed September 22, 2008].
- U.S. Department of State. 1994. Report to UN on Status of Women 1985-1994. http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/intlorg/Status_of_Women/s2.html [accessed September 22, 2008].
- Van Wart, Montgomery 2003. Public-Sector Leadership Theory: An Assessment. *Public Administration Review* 63(2): 214-28.
- Washington Post*. 2005. Kaine Names Cabinet Members. December 29.

2009 ASPA Annual Conference



GOVERNANCE IN THE MIDST OF DIVERSITY

BRIDGING OPPORTUNITY AND CHALLENGE

ASPA 2009 ANNUAL CONFERENCE MIAMI, FLORIDA • MARCH 20-24

ASPA's 2009 Annual Conference will be held March 20-24 in Miami, Florida at the Hyatt Regency Miami. The conference will explore and develop innovative practices for public administration to address the growing diversity of communities around the country.

It emphasizes the importance of context and culture on the sustainability of innovations, and ASPA's role in supporting public administration globally from a U.S. perspective. More than 400 proposal submissions were received for the conference! The deadline for submitting abstracts has closed, but for more information on the conference go to:

http://www.aspanet.org/scriptcontent/index_aspaconference.cfm