

## Wendy M. Edmonds, PhD



Leaders and their leadership are often commented on, while little attention is paid to the followers who support and/or enable them. Much of what we think of as toxic leadership, however, is actually the product of toxic followership. Dr. Edmonds defines toxic followership as the actions of someone who, as a result of being manipulated by a trusted leader/authority, now exhibits unethical, destructive or disruptive behavior similar to that of the unscrupulous leader. Authoritarian rulers would be nothing without those who willingly follow, exchanging an ethical compass for a flawed human one. Followership is, in fact, one of the most pressing and least understood issues of our time.

Dr. Edmonds is an Assistant Professor in the College of Professional Studies at Bowie State University, the oldest Historically Black College and University in Maryland. She is Chair of the Followership Learning Community at the International Leadership Association – the largest followership research and practitioner group in the world. She is the first researcher to conduct focus group studies with survivors of the 1978 Jonestown Massacre that occurred in Guyana. It was that life changing event which fueled her interest in “toxic followership” and the various perspectives of leader-follower relationships.

Recognized internationally as a scholar-practitioner in followership, an emerging field of study in organizational leadership, Dr. Edmonds’ most recent work focused on the lived experiences of victims of domestic violence in relation to followership and the impact of spirituality. She is also the author of *inTOXICating FOLLOWERSHIP* and co-author of *When Leadership Fails: Individual, Group and Organizational Lessons from the Worst Workplace Experiences*, two upcoming books on leadership and followership.