

A Call to Serve



Quotes on Public Service

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Compiled by:

Marc Holzer, Mahako Etta, Yetunde A. Odugbesan

A Call to Serve



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Inside Cover
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School of Public Affairs and Administration
Rutgers University – Newark Campus
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∞ Table of Contents ∞

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A Call to Serve.....	1
Compassion	11
Motivation to Serve.....	17
Quality of Life	29
Purpose	35
Ethics.....	45
Citizenship.....	53
Volunteerism.....	61

≈ Introduction ≈

We are all public servants at some point in our lives: employees of government and not-for-profits, elected officials, members of boards and community organizations, volunteers, philanthropists, etc. The purpose of this book is to emphasize the concepts of civic engagement and the common good, to foster an understanding of the spirit of service already evident among many citizens, and to suggest a broad array of pathways to public service.

Public service attracts a special kind of individual and is often based on a sense

of duty or an intense inner commitment to a cause that extends beyond the pressures of the moment. Public servants achieve internal satisfaction by making a contribution to a society as opposed to a commitment to achieving only personal goals. Those who enter public service do so out of a desire to serve the public interest and link themselves to the larger community.

Public Service embodies the ethical principles of the common good, service to others and social equity. Public Service is important because the essential components of our society are largely carried out

in the public sphere: public education, public health, justice and security, environmental protection, museums and the arts, etc. We hope the quotes contained in this volume inspire, encourage and draw more of our fellow citizens to public service.

A Call to Serve



And so, my fellow Americans,
ask not what your country
can do for you; ask what you
can do for your country.

JOHN F. KENNEDY
35th President of the United States



Never doubt that a small group
of thoughtful committed citizens
can change the world; indeed,
it's the only thing that ever has.

MARGARET MEAD
American Cultural Anthropologist

I can assure you, public service
is a stimulating, proud and lively
enterprise. It is not just a way of
life, it is a way to live fully. Its
greatest attraction is the sheer
challenge of it – struggling to
find solutions to the great issues
of the day. It can fulfill your
highest aspirations. The call to
service is one of the highest
callings you will hear and your
country can make.

LEE H. HAMILTON
Chairman of 9/11 Commission

Service to others is the payment
you make for your space
here on earth.

MOHAMMAD ALI
World Champion Boxer



We are all called to serve
as long as we call ourselves free.

TOM RIDGE
Former Governor of Pennsylvania



We are here to add what we can to,
not to get what we can from, life.

SIR WILLIAM OSLER

I shall pass through this world
but once. Any good therefore
that I can do or any kindness
that I can show to any human
being, let me do it now. Let me
not defer or neglect it, for I
shall not pass this way again.

MAHATMA GANDHI
Global Humanitarian



The vocation of every man and
woman is to serve other people.

LEO TOLSTOY
(1828-1910) *What Is To Be Done*

This is man's highest end, to others'
service, all his powers to bend.

SOPHOCLES
Greek Playwright



There is no greater calling
than to serve your fellow men.
There is no greater contribution
than to help the weak. There is
no greater satisfaction than
to have done it well.

WALTER REUTHER
American Labor Union Leader

Citizen service is the very
American idea that we meet
our challenges not as isolated
individuals but as members of
a true community, with all of us
working together. Our mission
is nothing less than to spark
a renewed sense of obligation,
a new sense of duty, a new
season of service.

BILL CLINTON
42nd President of the United States

I was taught that the world
had a lot of problems,
that I could struggle and change
them; that intellectual and material
gifts brought the privilege and
responsibility of sharing with
others less fortunate; and that
service is the rent each of us
pays for living, the very purpose
of life and not something you
do in your spare time or after you
have reached your personal goals.

MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN
Founder and President of
the Children's Defense Fund

What made you choose this
career is what made me go into
politics – a chance to serve,
to make a difference. It is not
just a job. It is a vocation.

TONY BLAIR
Former Prime Minister of United Kingdom



Do nothing – Or, take history
into our own hands and like
few generations are given
the chance, bend it, bend it,
in the service of a better day.

VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN
at Syracuse University

The service we render to others
is really the rent we pay for our
room on this earth. It is obvious
that man is himself a traveler;
that the purpose of the world
is not 'to have and to hold'
but 'to give and to serve.'

SIR WILFRED T. GRENFELL
Medical Missionary
to Newfoundland and Labrador



Every life speaks to the power
of what can be done.

OPRAH WINFREY
Talk Show Host

Compassion



The moral test of a society
is how that society treats
those who are in the dawn of life.
the children; those who are in the
twilight of life. the elderly,
and those who are in the shadow
of life; the sick, the needy
and the handicapped.

HUBERT HUMPHREY
38th Vice President of the United States



What do we live for if not to make
life less difficult for each other?

GEORGE ELIOT
English Novelist

Let us not be satisfied with
just giving money. Money is not
enough. Money can be got,
but others need your heart to
love them. So, spread love
everywhere you go.

MOTHER TERESA
Global Humanitarian



The miracle is this – the more
we share, the more we have.

LEONARD NIMOY
Actor, "Star Trek" series

Those who bring sunshine
to the lives of others cannot
keep it from themselves.

SIR JAMES M. BARRIE
Scottish Author and Dramatist



Volunteers are the only
human beings on the face
of the earth who reflect this
nation's compassion,
unselfish caring, patience, and
just plain love for one another.

ERMA BOMBECK
Novelist, Columnist

How far you go in life depends
on your being tender with
the young, compassionate
with the aged, sympathetic with
the striving and tolerant of the
weak and strong.

GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER
American Scientist, Educator and Inventor



It is important to engage those
we serve, but often we do an
adequate job of ministering to
the poor, but not with the poor.

ANONYMOUS

I have been the recipient of love and service; therefore I can love and serve. There is great satisfaction in service to others, in seeing people and their conditions change.

CLARENCE E. HODGES

Former US Commissioner for the Administration of Children, Youth, and Families



Living is the art of loving. Loving is the art of caring. Caring is the art of sharing. Sharing is the art of living. If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

American Educator, Orator,
and Author *Up from Slavery*

Motivation to Serve



Act as if what you do
makes a difference. It does.

WILLIAM JAMES

American Psychologist and Philosopher



Everyone can be great because
anyone can serve. You don't have
to have a college degree to
serve. You don't even have to
make your subject and your verb
agree to serve... You only need a
heart full of grace. A soul
generated by love...

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

African American Civil Rights Leader;
Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church

The only thing necessary for
the triumph of evil is for
good men to do nothing.

EDMUND BURKE

British Statesman and Orator



I don't know what your destiny
will be, but one thing I know:
the only ones among you
who will be really happy are
those who have sought and
found how to serve.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Author and Journalist
The Ethics of Reverence for Life

The world will little note,
nor long remember what
we say here, but it can never
forget what they did here. It is
for us the living, rather, to be
dedicated here to the unfinished
work which they who fought
here have thus far so nobly
advanced. It is rather for us to
be here dedicated to the great task
remaining before us – that from
these honored dead we take
increased devotion to that cause
for which they gave the last full
measure of devotion – that we

here highly resolve that
these dead shall not have died
in vain – that this nation, under
God, shall have a new birth of
freedom – and that government
of the people, by the people,
for the people, shall not
perish from the earth.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

16th President of the United States



The highest of distinctions
is service to others.

KING GEORGE VI

Insist that we support the sciences
and the arts, especially the arts.
They have nothing to do with
the defense of the country;
they just make the country
worth defending.

KEN BURNS
Documentary Filmmaker



It is better to light one small candle
than to curse the darkness.

CONFUCIUS
Chinese Thinker and Social Philosopher

I was having a better time at
my job than were those of
my peers who had opted for
private practice. Life as a public
servant was more interesting.
The work was more challenging.
The encouragement and guidance
from good mentors was more
genuine. And the opportunities
to take initiative and to see real
results were more frequent.

SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR
Supreme Court Justice

Yes, our greatness as a nation has depended on individual initiative, on a belief in the free market. But it has also depended on our sense of mutual regard for each other, of mutual responsibility. The idea that everybody has a stake in the country, that we're all in it together and everybody's got a shot at opportunity. Americans know this. We know that government can't solve all our problems – and we don't want it to. But we also know that

there are some things we can't do on our own. We know that there are some things we do better together.

BARACK OBAMA
44th President of the United States of America



The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON
American Essayist, Philosopher, and Poet

I am of the opinion that my life
belongs to the community, and
as long as I live it is my privilege
to do for it whatever I can.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW
Irish Playwright



The time is always right to do right.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
African American Civil Rights Leader;
Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church

I always wondered why somebody
didn't do something about that.
Then I realized I was somebody.

LILY TOMLIN
American Actress, Comedian, Writer



Let the public service be
a proud and lively career.

JOHN F. KENNEDY
35th President of the United States

Careers focused on lifting up our communities – whether it's helping transform troubled schools or creating after-school programs or training workers for green jobs. These careers are not always obvious, but today they are necessary.

FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA

Quality of Life



Without community service,
we would not have a strong
quality of life. It's important to the
person who serves as well as the
recipient. It's the way in which we
ourselves grow and develop.

DR. DOROTHY I. HEIGHT
President and CEO of the National Council
of Negro Women



The care of human life and
happiness is the first and only
legitimate objective
of good government.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
3rd President of the United States

The magnitude of our social
problems will require that
all citizens and institutions make
a commitment to volunteering
as a way of life and as a
primary opportunity
to create needed change.

GEORGE ROMNEY
Former Michigan Governor

Never before has man had such a great capacity to control his own environment, to end hunger, poverty and disease, to banish illiteracy and human misery. We have the power to make the best generation of mankind in the history of the world.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

35th President of the United States

I think the events of September 11th remind us that there are issues larger and more transcendent than the issues we thought they were before September 11th, things we took for granted before September 11th – the idea of progress and prosperity, the sense of our security – are now very much at risk. And as they come to be very much at risk, the imperative of service to society becomes all the more important.

LAWRENCE H. SUMMERS

Former President of Harvard University

I must study politics and war
that my sons may have liberty
to study mathematics and
philosophy. My sons ought
to study mathematics and
philosophy, geography, natural
history, naval architecture,
navigation, commerce and
agriculture in order to give their
children a right to study
painting, poetry, music,
architecture, statuary,
tapestry, and porcelain.

JOHN ADAMS

2nd President of the United States

Purpose



Giving kids clothes and food is one thing, but it's much more important to teach them that other people besides themselves are important, and that the best thing they can do with their lives is to use them in the service of other people.

DOLORES HUERTA

Co-founder and First Vice President Emeritus
of the United Farm Workers of America

How can we expect our children to know and experience the joy of giving unless we teach them that the greater pleasure in life lies in the art of giving rather than receiving.

JAMES CASH PENNEY

Businessman and Entrepreneur;
Founder J.C. Penney stores



Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and help them become what they are capable of being.

GOETHE

German Writer

It is one of the most beautiful
compensations of this life that
no man can sincerely try to
help another without
helping himself.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON
American Essayist, Philosopher, and Poet



If I am not for myself, who
will be for me? If I am not
for others, who am I for?
And if not now, when?

RABBI HILLEL
Jewish Religious Leader

Never forget that the purpose
for which a man lives is the
improvement of the man himself,
so that he may go out of
this world having, in his great
sphere or his small one, done
some little good for his fellow
creatures and labored a little
to diminish the sin and
sorrow that are in the world.

WILLIAM E. GLADSTONE
Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

When you cease to make a
contribution, you begin to die.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT
First Lady of the United States



Doing nothing for others
is the undoing of ourselves.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
A Founding Father of the
United States of America

I've met many people across
the public sector who are as
efficient and entrepreneurial
as anyone in the private sector,
but also have a sense of public
duty that is awe-inspiring.

TONY BLAIR
Former British Prime Minister



No act of kindness, no matter
how small, is ever wasted.

AESOP
Greek Slave and Writer

It is not the critic who counts,
not the man who points out
how the strong man stumbled,
or where the doer of deeds could
have done better. The credit
belongs to the man who is actually
in the arena, whose face is
marred by dust and sweat and
blood, who strives valiantly,
who errs and comes short again
and again, who knows the great
enthusiasms, the great devotions,
and spends himself in a worthy
cause, who at best knows
achievement and who at

the worst if he fails at least fails
while daring greatly so that his
place shall never be with those
cold and timid souls who
know neither victory nor defeat.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT
26th President of the United States



We make a living by what we do,
but we make a life by what we give.

WINSTON CHURCHILL
Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

Focusing your life solely
on making a buck shows
a poverty of ambition. It asks
too little of yourself. And it
will leave you unfulfilled.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA
44th President of the United States

Ethics



Try not to become a man
of success but rather try
to become a man of value.

ALBERT EINSTEIN
Theoretical Physicist



A man is truly ethical only when
he obeys the compulsion
to help all life which he is able
to assist, and shrinks from
injuring anything that lives.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER
German-French Theologian, Musician,
Philosopher, and Physician

Nobody made a greater mistake
than he who did nothing
because he could do only a little.

EDMUND BURKE
Anglo-Irish Statesman, Author,
Orator, and Political Theorist



I have the consolation of having
added nothing to my private
fortune during my public service,
and of retiring with hands
clean as they are empty.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
3rd President of the United States

Being good is commendable,
but only when it is combined
with doing good is it useful.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



The citizen can bring our
political and governmental
institutions back to life, make
them responsive and accountable,
and keep them honest.

No one else can.

JOHN GARDNER

Secretary of Health, Education,
and Welfare under Former President
Lyndon Johnson

My creed is that public service
must be more than doing a
job efficiently and honestly.
It must be a complete dedication
to the people and to the nation
with full recognition that
every human being is entitled
to courtesy and consideration,
that constructive criticism is not
only to be expected but sought,
that smears are not only to be
expected but fought, that
honor is to be earned, not bought.

MARGARET CHASE SMITH

Former Maine Senator

As soon as public service ceases
to be the chief business of the
citizens, and they would rather
serve with their money than
with their persons, the State
is not far from its fall.

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Major Philosopher, Writer, and Composer



When will our consciences
grow so tender that we will
act to prevent human misery
rather than avenge it?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Former First Lady of the United States

And I say to you that it is the
work of public employees – it is
the work of those who work
in the public sector – to hope,
to be optimistic, and to
build a better, safer, fairer,
more just society.

LAURENCE H. SUMMERS

Former President of Harvard University

Where is the man who owes nothing to the land in which he lives? Whatever that land may be, he owes to it the most precious thing possessed by man, the morality of his actions and the love of virtue.

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU
Philosopher, Writer, and Composer

Citizenship



We seldom stop to think
how many people's lives are
entwined with our own. It is a
form of selfishness to imagine
that every individual can
operate on his own or can
pull out of the general stream
and not be missed.

IVY BAKER PRIEST
Former United States Treasurer



You must be the change
you wish to see in the world.

MAHATMA GANDHI
Global Humanitarian

No one is useless in this world
who lightens the burden of it
for someone else.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
A Founding Father of the
United States of America



Your nation will succeed or fail
to the degree that all of us
citizens and businesses alike
are active participants in
building strong, sustainable
and enriching communities.

ARNOLD HIATT
Former CEO of the Stride Rite Corp

We ourselves feel that what
we are doing is just a drop in the
ocean, but the ocean would be less
because of that missing drop.
We can do no great things, only
small things with great love.

MOTHER TERESA
Global Humanitarian



How wonderful it is that
nobody need wait a single
moment before starting
to improve the world.

ANNE FRANK
Author The Diary of a Young Girl

Everything that lives, lives not
alone, not for itself.

WILLIAM BLAKE
English Poet, Painter, and Printmaker



One reason not to wait to address
the world's biggest problems is that
they need your attention before
you accept the status quo, before
you are plagued by the knowledge
of what is impossible.

WENDY KOPP
Teach for America Founder

If I can stop one heart
from breaking,
I shall not live in vain.
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

EMILY DICKINSON
Poet

It is possible to eradicate
hunger. How can we live
and sleep comfortably knowing
that millions of our sisters and
brothers go to bed hungry?

ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU



If you can't feed a hundred people,
then feed just one.

MOTHER TERESA
Global Humanitarian

Be the special envoy of
your ideals. Be citizen ambassadors,
using your personal and
professional lives to forge
global partnerships built on a
common commitment to solve
our planet's common problems.

HILLARY CLINTON
Secretary of State

Volunteerism



Throughout my life, I've seen the difference that volunteering efforts can make in people's lives.

I know the personal value of service as a local volunteer.

JIMMY CARTER

39th President of the United States



I urge young people to consider public service, whether they do it now by volunteering in their community or prepare for public service as an adult.

JOHN WALTERS

Director of the White House
Office of National Drug Control Policy

Volunteering can be an exciting, growing, enjoyable experience. It is truly gratifying to serve a cause, practice one's ideals, work with people, solve problems, see benefits, and know one had a hand in them.

HARRIET NAYLOR

National Director of the
Office of Volunteer Development

A volunteer is a person who is a light to others, giving witness in a mixed-up age, doing well and willingly the tasks at hand namely, being aware of another's needs and doing something about it.

A volunteer is a person who remembers to do the thing to make other people happy, who takes the loneliness out of the alone by talking to them, who is concerned when others are unconcerned, who has the courage to be a prophet and to say the things that have to be said for the good of all.

A volunteer is a person whose charity is fidelity, who is faithful in an unfaithful world, grateful in an ungrateful world, giving when all about are grasping, listening when others need to tell about their fears and problems.

THE BEACON

Newsletter of Birthrite, South Africa



Opportunity + Preparedness = Success. Volunteer to help others be prepared for the opportunities afforded them.

ANONYMOUS

A volunteer is a person who can see what others cannot see, who can feel what most do not feel. Often, such gifted persons do not think of themselves as volunteers, but as citizens – citizens in the fullest sense: partners in civilization.

GEORGE H. W. BUSH
41st President of the United States

There is something enormously fulfilling about being engaged in something bigger than you yourself. It imparts a satisfying sense of purpose which, in my experience, is not attained in any other way.

GENERAL BRENT SCOWCROFT
United States National Security Advisor

Though government has an important role to play in meeting the many challenges that remain before us, we are coming to understand that no organization, including government, will fully succeed without the active participation of each of us. Volunteers are vital to enabling this country to live up to the true promise of its heritage.

BILL CLINTON

42nd President of the United States

~ Sources ~

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Inside Back Cover
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