

TAKING ACTION, SAVING LIVES

Our Duties to Protect Environmental and Public Health

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and on racism as a cause of ill health. It also will require that physicians not rely mainly on drug-industry representatives to obtain most of their continuing pharmaceutical education.³³

Enlightened medical education and protection of life also require citizens to demand more regulatory and medical emphasis on using the precautionary principle as a default rule under uncertainty about serious threats to life. As already mentioned, the APHA recommends adopting this principle. By pushing government to follow this recommendation, citizens could ensure that pollution threats did not become catastrophic or widespread before government did anything about them.³⁴ The principle also would promote greater testing of industrial pollutants as well as swifter development of green technology and products.³⁵

Organizing themselves as consumers, through NGOs that use the small-wins strategy, ordinary people can be especially powerful in preventing threats to life and to human rights. They can use consumer boycotts to make it more costly for firms *not* to use, than to use, worker-safe and environmentally safe technologies. By boycotting lettuce from nonunion farmworkers and boycotting Nestlé because of its infant-formula practices, as APHA has recommended, well-organized Western consumers have sent corporations a powerful message via their pocketbooks. The message? If companies jeopardize life and human rights, in the long run citizens will force them to reform or to go out of business.³⁶ Many university students have kept their institutions from buying goods made in sweatshop conditions of unsafe, slave, child, or underpaid labor.³⁷ Likewise people can force governments and manufacturers to recognize human rights. They can lobby to stop all forms of assistance to governments and to companies that do not recognize rights to life, to bodily security, to organize labor groups and to enjoy equal environmental protection.³⁸ One example of such needed lobbying is forcing abolition or reform of the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). Designed to promote economic growth at home and abroad, OPIC gives American firms taxpayer funds for up to 75 percent of financing, plus investment insurance for overseas projects costing hundreds of millions of dollars. In reality, however, OPIC often helps firms locate abroad so they can avoid U.S. public-health, environmental-, and occupational-safety regulations. Once abroad, the firms impose serious health risks on those in poor nations who are unable to protect themselves. For example, although such plants are outlawed in the United States, OPIC has used taxpayer dollars to help U.S. companies build dangerous, asbestos plants in India and substandard smelting complexes in Africa.³⁹

Other practical strategies for preventing threats to life and to human rights include encouraging the United States to endorse the International Criminal Tribunal.⁴⁰ People also could work with NGOs like Human Rights Watch,⁴¹ for instance, to ensure reform of USAID (the U.S. Agency for International Development). USAID currently administers billions of U.S. aid dollars in over 100 countries. As chapter 1 showed, however, the agency mainly gives subsidies for U.S. businesses, rather than aid to the needy. The same is true for

OPIC.⁴² Projects of USAID have included paying for the move of Decaturville Sportswear to El Salvador. Taxpayer money funded the loss of 650 jobs in Decaturville, Tennessee. It moved them to El Salvador sweatshops but lined the pockets of the company owners. As chapter 1 noted, reforms of USAID have never been carried out, largely because special interests have fought them.⁴³ The alternative? Citizens could lobby government so that USAID would support human rights, workplace safety, sustainable development, and natural-resource protection. Citizens could help promote foreign aid that provides medical care and food to the needy, not merely welfare for U.S. corporations. They could lobby groups such as CARE, the World Bank, and the Church World Service to use assistance guidelines that promote only projects that protect public health, democracy, and sustainable development.⁴⁴

Proposals for Fulfilling Rights to Know

Citizens, however, cannot work with government to reduce threats to life unless they know what those threats are. This means that public-health duties must include using the small-wins strategy to help ensure fulfillment of citizens' rights to know about environmental contaminants. As the APHA put it, in one of its policy statements promoting rights to know, "respect for . . . individual autonomy and individual rights . . . requires that those who are at risk have the right to know . . . and the right to decide whether to undergo such risks."⁴⁵ One of the most important ways to help fulfill these rights is to demand, with the APHA, that Congress pass the 2002 National Health Tracking Act, already discussed in earlier chapters. Still another important way is to expand requirements for food labeling, also recommended by the APHA. Consider how weak labeling is, even for genetically engineered foods. Even before the first such foods came to market, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) claimed they were "substantially equivalent" to traditional foods. As a result, FDA said they needed no special regulations or labels. Indeed, unless there is a known change in nutrient composition, or the engineered food is already known to contain some protein that induces allergic reactions, transgenic foods are "not subject to any pre-market approval process, public notification, or labelling." Even if transgenic foods were completely safe and had caused no deaths—and they have caused deaths—it would make sense to label them. Why? Most of them are heavily loaded with pesticides. Indeed, 80 percent of transgenic foods are engineered for resistance to otherwise-lethal doses of herbicides, so that farmers can reduce labor costs by using more chemicals. Those who eat the resulting food, however, are not resistant to the higher levels of chemicals. Without the labeling as APHA recommended, people will be aware neither that their food is transgenic nor that, as a result, it likely has higher levels of chemicals.⁴⁶

To prevent threats to children's rights to know, citizens could use the small-wins strategy to help implement the APHA recommendations to designate

schools as "advertising-free zones," to limit child-directed advertising on television, to develop school-based initiatives on "consumer media literacy," to limit alcohol and tobacco advertising and product placement in films, and to limit advertising that stimulates unnecessary use of legal drugs.⁴⁷ More generally, citizens could promote fuller citizen knowledge of public-health risks by working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Fairness in Advertising and in Reporting (FAIR) to outlaw advertiser censorship of media, to limit the degree to which media ownership can be concentrated in the hands of only a few people, and to monitor ways in which media-controlling polluters may bias news coverage. Still other reforms include limiting tax deductions for media advertising and using the proceeds to support public broadcasting. Citizens also could work with NGOs like Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) to strengthen whistleblower laws. This would help protect reporters (who may need to disclose advertiser or media-owner conflicts of interest), university or private scientists (who may need to disclose harmful effects of drugs or pollutants), and federal employees (who may need to disclose details of regulatory capture). At present, even though federal-scientist whistleblowers are better protected than those in private industry, the case of Adam Finkel shows they often face severe retaliation. Frequently they must fight costly battles to protect both scientific information and public health.⁴⁸

Citizens also could enhance fulfillment of their rights to know by promoting campaign finance reform and public funding of elections. As earlier chapters suggested, this would help prevent the legalized bribery through which polluters are often able to capture regulatory agencies and politicians and thereby suppress important health information. Lack of effective campaign finance reform could be a key reason that the Congress has not passed the National Health Tracking Act.

Ultimately, however, fulfilling citizens' rights to know about health threats requires better science, more science, and policing the manipulation of science. For instance, APHA notes that special interests have influenced the White House Office of Management and Budget. Under the guise of "paperwork reduction," this office has "blocked information collections" and public-health studies by government health and regulatory agencies. As a remedy, the APHA recommends policing the Office of Management and Budget so that it refrains "from interfering with scientific studies of occupational, environmental, and other health problems." "Special interests [also] have exploited the nature of science, specifically scientific uncertainty, to delay legal protection and/or regulatory action" against dangerous pollutants, says the APHA. "Under the guise of a call for 'sound science,'" these special interests have rejected "established scientific methods as 'junk science.'" To balance this influence of flawed, private-interest science, the APHA likewise recommends increasing public funding of science and the public-health work force.⁴⁹ Yet if chapter 3 is right, public funding for both scientific research and university education has decreased massively in recent years. Between 2001 and 2005, the average in-state tuition at public, four-year institutions in-

creased 36 percent; enrollment increased 12 percent; consumer prices increased 11 percent; while total state-taxpayer appropriations for their universities have remained flat, at about \$68 billion per year. In real dollars, taxpayer support has declined, and the percentages of state budgets going to higher education have declined. Private-interest funding is often a substitute. The results? As earlier chapters suggested, the effects are less public control of information, less access to education, less knowledge of pollution risks, and less fulfillment of rights to know.⁵⁰

Another way to promote better public information, science, and disclosure would be to follow the APHA recommendations to have independent clinical trials for new drugs, germicides, and products like pesticides. This would provide more checks and balances than the current system, in which testing is done and reported (typically without any real oversight) by the same companies that stand to profit from the results. Special interests might still do their own studies, but at least there would be more reliable, independent research to act as a check on errors or fraud. Better fulfillment of rights to know also would be achieved by requiring federal regulatory agencies to perform or fund alternative benefit-cost analyses and quantitative risk assessments. While the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act mandates agencies to evaluate alternatives, almost none do. As a result, benefit-cost analyses and quantitative risk assessments often reflect the biases and conflicts of interest of the polluters who conduct them. This bias often occurs, as the APHA warns, because of "administrative policies that attempt to define the characteristics of valid public health science, or dictate prescriptive scientific methodologies" instead of using "the best available science to protect the public health." One solution would be to conduct different analyses, relying on different factual and ethical assumptions reflecting different stakeholder interests. The different conclusions of these alternative assessments could then be assessed through some form of quasi-judicial "adversary assessment," like that used in U.S. congressional committee hearings. If the pollution victims of Hammond, Indiana, had been able to perform their own quantitative risk assessments, they might have been protected from the flawed private-interest science that threatened both their children and their rights to know.⁵¹

Citizens likewise would be better able to fulfill their rights to know if there were fuller disclosure of conflicts of interest on all U.S. federal advisory committees. Using the small-wins strategy, citizens could urge government to require that all committee members reveal, to the public, their sources of income and stock, above some threshold, such as \$5,000. As already argued, current U.S. law does not require this full disclosure on all committees. Even in cases where some internal disclosure is required, there is never disclosure to the public, and often government regulators grant waivers (of conflict-of-interest rules) based on the assertion that some individuals' talents are needed by a committee. Unjustified waivers would be less likely in the face of full public disclosure and a more transparent governmental health-advisory process. Citizens could go even further and promote the recommendation of the APHA that all federal committee members be "free of direct financial

conflicts of interest" and that government employ universal criteria for avoiding such conflicts of interest and achieving committee balance. At present, the APHA notes that, because

there are currently no government-wide uniform criteria for determining and managing conflicts of interest or achieving balance on federal scientific and public health advisory committees, or for determining the scientific or expert qualifications of candidates . . . committees are heavily weighted toward business and industry interests.

Business and industry representation on federal scientific committees tends to be between three and four times that of citizen or nonprofit groups. Achieving more balance would help protect rights to know.⁵²

Proposals for Fulfilling Rights to Consent

To help fulfill the public's right to consent to various pollution-related risks, citizens also could urge government to implement two important recommendations. In 1996 a U.S. National Academy of Sciences report, *Understanding Risk in a Democracy*, recommended that risk assessors give equal weight to stakeholder deliberation, as well as expert views. The 1997 APHA recommendations on chemical exposures said something similar. As already noted, the APHA called for reevaluating chemical-exposure regulations because they were set largely by chemical-company experts whose presence on the committees "was not balanced by those representing workers' [or public] interests." No health professionals or stakeholders were involved. Consequently, the APHA has said, many of the regulations are too lenient, partly because they were arrived at in ways that were "not balanced." Yet both government and other scientists have largely ignored these academy and APHA recommendations. A possible explanation is that balanced committees do not serve special interests. As chapter 3 suggested, it is far easier for special interests to control experts, whom they can pay as consultants, than to control citizens who are trying to protect their health. As a result, many government advisory committees are dominated by scientific employees of polluters and by university scientists having consulting relationships with the polluters. Of the roughly 15 members of typical government risk-assessment committees, usually pollution victims and their stakeholders are represented by only one or two people. They also often are not paid for their time, as the industry or academic members are. Instead, the victim- or stakeholder-members of the committee often must take off from their work and serve at their own expense. Often they find themselves outnumbered by well-financed special interests. If campaign finance reform requires public financing of elections, something similar seems necessary for government science advice. As it is, the current system of supposed "representative consent," through expert- and

industry-dominated government advisory committees, puts stakeholders at a disadvantage. These disadvantages are so great that, because genuine citizen consent is questionable, citizens must use the small-wins strategy to help implement recommendations like those of the APHA.⁵³

As mentioned earlier, another way to help citizens fulfill their rights to consent is to accord pollution victims the same protections as subjects of medical experiments. It makes sense, morally speaking, to disallow medical experimentation on especially vulnerable groups whose consent may be questionable. If so, allowing widespread pollutant experimentation on especially vulnerable groups, who have failed to consent at all, also is questionable. Individual medical subjects typically have the protection of written consent forms. Pollution victims, who are far greater in number, whose exposures are tracked far less carefully, who are less easily identifiable, and who receive few if any benefits from their exposure, however, have no written consent forms. Indeed, the relevant risks are rarely fully disclosed to them. What appears to have happened is that society has regulated the "easy case," medical risk. Perhaps it has done so because fewer special interests gain from medical, as opposed to pollution, experimentation. Whatever the reason, there is no obvious justification for not protecting pollution victims as well as medical subjects. Achieving this protection will be more difficult, since some pollution is unavoidable, and many pollutants are ubiquitous. One of the first steps to achieving fuller citizen consent to various pollutants would be improving techniques for full risk disclosure. In the case of worker pollution exposures, the APHA has recommended that all health-related guidelines, including those in the hazardous workplaces, be "linguistically and culturally appropriate" and not merely written in English. The APHA also has recommended institutional review boards for all private research conducted on workers, typically to study workplace pollutants or health effects. For members of the public, the APHA has promoted fuller consent by recommending increased funding for community-based participatory public-health research, for participatory processes to evaluate public-health protections and environmental-health programs, and for full citizen involvement and consent "that builds from the bottom up and that places maximum responsibility on the community: citizens." The APHA also has recommended that government publish and distribute informed-consent policies, so that all citizens will be aware of them, and that it increase funding for groups like the Consumer Product Safety Commission.⁵⁴

Citizen Exemplars

Despite the many APHA policy recommendations and its assistance with community education, evaluation, cooperation, and advocacy,⁵⁵ it is not easy to help stop threats to health and human rights. As earlier chapters noted, one reason is that it often is not easy to identify pollution victims. They may be

merely "statistical casualties." Or perhaps no reliable health studies have been done. As a consequence, those who do know about some pollution victims, or suspect some pollution problems, bear special responsibilities to tell their stories and to take action. Perhaps this is why most of the work of protecting pollution victims is done locally. Millions of unnoticed people throughout the world, people like Gwen Pearson, Juana Gutierrez, and Adolph Coleman, work to protect their own neighborhoods.

What might motivate more citizens to take on such duties of the responsibility argument? One way is to build on the information and arguments presented here, like the many APHA recommendations. Another way is to help people learn from, and become part of, existing traditions of public service and volunteerism, especially in the United States. Just among people aged 55 and older, 24 million Americans volunteer in some cause. Often they do so through their churches, schools, and neighborhoods. The federal Foster Grandparents Program, for instance, links older men and women with disabled or disadvantaged children. The National Service Corps' Program places volunteers in 1,300 programs nationwide. In centers like Samaritan House in San Francisco, it enables retired dentists and doctors provide free care to uninsured, homeless, and poor people. It is easy to think of ways to build on this already-existing generosity and use it to help prevent pollution-related threats.⁵⁶

Pulitzer Prize-winning Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles, in his book *The Call of Service*, recounts some of this generosity. He tells of dozens of ordinary people—of all ages—doing extraordinary things to help protect the lives and human rights of others. Many of them were transformed by crucial early experiences. Often the transformation was through programs that bring American youth to impoverished urban ghettos, to Appalachia, or to foreign lands. Coles says young people "especially disapprove" of dictatorships in Latin America. Yet they continue to serve there, trying to better the conditions of the people. Two government programs he mentions repeatedly are the Peace Corps and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). Coles quotes one young Peace Corps volunteer who spoke for the experiences of many. He said the best part of his service was not what he did for others, but how those in Latin America educated him, both as a moral person and as a citizen. VISTA Volunteers said much the same thing—that their transformation was personal, as well as political. As one volunteer in West Virginia said,

I've learned how rotten the county system of government is, how corrupt. Here government is the major industry, along with coal—and government is tied up with the coal industry, lock, stock, and barrel. Every once in a while I get really down. I remember that I'm just a volunteer, and I'll be out of this soon, very soon. But for the people I'm working with, this is life.

Although such young volunteers leave their distant assignments and begin lives of their own, Coles says their experiences shape them for life. If citizens today could take on assignments to compensate for pollution harms to which

they contribute, their efforts might also empower and enrich them in later life.⁵⁷

Books like Coles's and Robert Bellah's *Habits of the Heart* tell the stories of many people whose lives have been ennobled and transformed by their service to others. They experience the sufferings of others, identify with them, and as a result live their lives differently. Many people have neighbors or friends whose lives have been shaped this way. Some of their stories are dramatic and well known, like that of singer Bono, of the Irish rock group U2. After he and his wife went to work in an Ethiopian refugee camp, their lives have never been the same. He founded an NGO to promote debt cancellation and international aid for Africa, and he has been perhaps the most visible spokesperson for the poor of the world. Actor-director Rob Reiner did something similar. He quit his job for 2 years to raise money to pass California's Proposition 10. This was a 1998 ballot initiative to raise the tax on cigarettes by 50 cents a pack, then use the proceeds for health and nutrition care for needy California preschoolers. And many people know how actor Martin Sheen has engaged in civil disobedience on behalf of U.S. farmworkers facing hazards in the fields. Winona La Duke has fought for land rights and environmental justice within her own Native-American Ojibwe Tribe.⁵⁸

As goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Development Program, actor Danny Glover has traveled widely to promote reparations and debt relief for African nations. In the United States, he is an active board member of the Algebra Project, a math-empowerment program developed by civil-rights advocates. Trained at the Black Actors' Workshop of the American Conservatory, Glover says two events empowered him as an actor and a public citizen. They gave him vicarious experience of the sufferings of others and helped him realize what he needed to do about it. One experience was his appearance in a play about apartheid in South Africa. Another was his playing a homeless man in the movie *The Saint of Fort Washington*. Efforts like Glover's, helping protect lives and rights, often have a price. Because of his opposition to the death penalty and to the 2003 U.S. war in Iraq, people have boycotted Glover's films and labeled him "unpatriotic."⁵⁹ And NBC executives told actor Martin Sheen, formerly performing in the TV series, *West Wing*, that they were "very uncomfortable" with his social-justice activism. In 2002, prowar forces flooded the Burbank office of NBC. They tried to have Sheen fired from the series because he used his fame to draw attention to social-justice causes. Over the last 20 years, Sheen has been arrested more than 60 times for civil disobedience in connection with his fighting racism, homelessness, and nuclear testing. In response, he says simply: "I had to stand for something so I could stand to be me." Sheen says it doesn't matter whether people are Republicans or Democrats or Independents. Everyone "must make a contribution." Everyone "must accept responsibility for what goes down."⁶⁰ Otherwise, he says, democracy will be "left to the wealthy and privileged."

Such examples suggest there are many ways to accept the duties of the responsibility argument. Wayne Bauer of Campaign California, formerly the "Campaign for Economic Democracy," helps vulnerable renters, especially

Hispanics, join together in tenants' unions. Working with this egalitarian, grassroots organization, Bauer also has helped the Campaign promote government-sponsored daycare, environmental protection, and energy conservation. Another Californian, Mary Taylor, a member of the California Coastal Commission, is a housewife turned professor. She began community work with the League of Women Voters. Arguing that we all share a debt to society, she claims that her inspiration is her grandfather, who was in the Catholic Worker movement. For Mary Taylor, being a public citizen means living with generosity of spirit, caring for other people, and working with others to secure the public interest.⁶¹ In Reno, Nevada, retired Air Force pilot Dennis Grover, active in the Libertarian Party, helps prevent public-health harms by funding and filming numerous videos for broadcast on public TV. These are on topics such as whether fluoride should be added to the drinking water and whether the mercury in vaccinations has added to the increase in autism.⁶²

What is important about Bauer's, Taylor's, or Grover's service is not whether it springs from Democratic or Republican or some other roots. The crucial thing is that it contributes to the social way in which people learn. It is part of deliberative democracy. It comes from less powerful people, claiming their rights, who challenge more powerful institutions. It encourages debate and promotes respect for life and for human rights. Anita Roddick, the CEO who founded the cosmetics giant, Body Shop, believes almost everyone and every group can also promote respect for life and human rights. As Roddick sees it, there is no reason that corporations cannot both promote integrity and enjoy great financial success. She says the vast majority of the world's businesses are owned by local stakeholders, are fully responsible, and empower people in many good ways. Roddick herself provides a good example. She saw that Shell Oil cooperated with the Nigeria military dictatorship in 1995 to kill nonviolent environmental activists, like Ken Saro-Wiwa. They were protesting Shell's lax pollution control and destruction of indigenous Ogoni homelands. Roddick held Shell and fellow CEOs to a higher standard. If she had not orchestrated the international boycott against Shell, it might have gotten away with both the murders and the pollution. At Body Shop, Roddick established a regular executive position in social ethics. Her goal was not only that the company behave ethically but also that it promote ethics around the world. A doting grandmother, Roddick files dispatches from the Amazon rain forest, pillories warlike global leaders, and solicits spoofs of corporate logos. She even opened a publishing house to produce her books, *A Revolution in Kindness*, *Take It Personally*, and *Brave Hearts and Rebel Spirits*. The proceeds go to humanitarian work.⁶³

Keeping in mind the example of Anita Roddick, citizens following the responsibility argument should be wary of any NGO involvement that is too neatly classified as pro-corporate or anti-corporate, right-wing or left-wing. Protestant theologian Richard Neuhaus claimed that many left-wing advocates vociferously advocate vegetarianism because they want to protect all life. Yet, he claims, they inconsistently defend abortion on demand. And

writer Kurt Vonnegut warned that many right-wing advocates push the Ten Commandments on others, even in public places. Yet he claims they inconsistently fail to recognize the Beatitudes—especially its injunctions to be peacemakers and to be merciful.⁶⁴ As both sets of complaints suggest, the responsibility argument requires that people avoid ideology. Instead it requires empathy, education, interaction, and sustained, self-critical reflection. Public citizens—those who follow the responsibility argument—might even find themselves in a situation like that of Mairead Maguire, winner of the 1976 Nobel Peace Prize. Embraced by much of the world for her efforts to achieve peace in Ireland, she was rejected by both the Irish Republican Army and many fellow Irish as a British sympathizer. Left-wingers rejected her because of her religion; right-wingers rejected her because of her hunger strike at the jail of American peace activist Philip Berrigan. Fellow Roman Catholics criticized her for lobbying the pope for women's ordination as priests. Much the same has happened to Martin Sheen. The Right has rejected him because of his civil disobedience on behalf of farm workers. The Left has rejected him for his opposition to abortion on demand. Consistent with the earlier point about avoiding ideological "right" or "left" stances, the crucial point here is not whether Sheen's or Maguire's or any other positions are correct or incorrect. That is for the people to decide, case by case, using democratic deliberation and the methods outlined in this book. What is apparent is that Sheen and Maguire appear to have adopted reflective and self-critical positions. In so doing, they have contributed to deliberative democracy and promoted both life and human rights.⁶⁵

For many people, the preceding examples of Roddick, Maguire, and Sheen are far removed from the ways they have chosen to live their lives. For them, following the responsibility argument is something they have chosen to do more in their personal, than in their political, lives. A good example is that of Jan and Damian Barthle of Louisville, Kentucky. They discovered, 30 years ago, that Damian's cancer would prevent their having children. Instead of worrying about their own future and a possible recurrence of Damian's cancer, they adopted a baby girl with severe cerebral palsy. She had been abandoned by her parents because of her extreme disabilities. When Jan and Damian took Melissa home, she was a total stranger, a four-year-old who could only lie in bed, too weak even to hold up her head. Despite their own full-time work as teachers, Jan and Damian spent many hours working with Melissa. They raised her as their own, never spoiled her, and did exercises to strengthen her muscles. They taught her and traveled around the country with her in their specially equipped van. Rather than self-centered or self-pitying, Melissa has become joyful, loving, and confident. She is able to use a wheelchair, and she graduated from high school. She is even able to hold a part-time library job and now lives on her own as an adult in a group home. Without Jan's and Damian's efforts, Melissa likely would have spent all her life lying in an institution, unable even to communicate.⁶⁶

In the natural lottery of life, Melissa was disadvantaged. Jan and Damian—with their modest teachers' salaries—were advantaged. They decided to help

level the playing field, to become responsible for a complete stranger. In the process, they not only loved and adopted Melissa, not only prevented further harm to her. They also dramatically helped her fulfill her life. Like the Polish workers discussed in the last chapter, they realized that they could not achieve big wins, massive change. Instead they became the change they sought. Their doing so empowered Melissa. It also helped create a more just and healthy society. For Robert Bellah, this is a society that takes a stand with the vulnerable, the poor, and the oppressed.

Bellah's community-based vision of a just social order is rooted firmly in the populism of Thomas Jefferson. When he visited France, Jefferson was appalled at the extremes of wealth and poverty that he found. He believed the United States had hope for the future only because it lacked such extremes. Following Jefferson, Bellah says crumbs from rich people's tables will not eliminate poverty. These crumbs also will not reduce life-threatening pollution. Instead, justice requires that extreme poverty and extreme pollution be eliminated. But how can anyone begin such a monumental task? One answer is that the task already has been begun by many, already moderately successful, NGOs. Others can join their efforts. Another answer is that people can try to become the change they seek—as the Barthles have done and as Gwen Pearson, Karen Silkwood, Reason Warehouse, Adam Finkel, Adolph Coleman, and Juana Gutierrez have done. A third answer is given by Robert Bellah. He says people can begin the work of creating a just and healthy society by becoming less attached to the extrinsic rewards, like money, associated with work. Instead, he says, people can dedicate themselves to their own communities and to work that has intrinsic rewards.⁶⁷

Princeton ethicist Peter Singer gives examples of many ordinary people whose lives show that they live by intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, rewards. He tells the story of a major donor to the Australian Conservation Foundation, a man who regularly sent the foundation checks for \$1,000. When the head of the foundation went to the man's home, to thank him for his large donations over many years, he thought he must be at the wrong address. It was a small suburban home owned by an employee of the state department of public works, David Alsop. Despite his modest government salary and small home, Alsop donates 50 percent of his income to environmental causes. Whether or not people share Alsop's commitment, there is something ennobling about the way he lives his life.⁶⁸

There also is something ennobling about the numbers of ordinary citizens—in Britain, for instance, roughly 6 percent of those eligible to donate—who repeatedly give blood to blood banks in Britain, Australia, Canada, Europe, and the Americas. This is the only supply of blood for medical purposes. Giving it requires about an hour of one's time, mostly from ordinary people who typically remain unknown and unheralded. In about 25 countries, there also are bone-marrow donor registries. There people offer to undergo anesthesia, stay overnight in a hospital, and donate their marrow to cancer victims—strangers—who need a match. In the United States, 650,000 donors

are in the registry. In France, 63,000. In England, 180,000. Ordinary people also are often generous with their money. American surveys indicate that nearly 90 percent of Americans donate some money to charities. Indeed, at least 20 million families give at least 5 percent of their income to charity. And nearly half of all Americans donate their time to some charity. In addition, 82 percent of all Americans say they are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products. This all suggests that many people are ready to take on the duties of the responsibility argument.⁶⁹

Mandatory Service

If every citizen could have firsthand experiences of threats to health and to human rights, and of ways to alleviate them, accepting the demands of the responsibility argument would be easier. Such firsthand experiences would help people develop not only intellectual understanding but also the moral and empathetic understanding of fellow citizens that is necessary to make democracy work. The founding mothers and fathers of the United States recognized this need for moral education and understanding. As a result, they built it into the curriculum of most early educational institutions. Today, many high schools, colleges, and universities also try to develop moral understanding by requiring at least some public service or volunteer work of students. This is largely because they recognize that firsthand experience, serving those in need, is necessary both to personal moral education and to democracy.

Moreover, there are many precedents—like the military draft—for asking service of virtually all citizens. There obviously are some times when young people must be drafted, compelled to help defend—and die for—the nation. Surely also there are times when all young people ought to be asked to help prevent threats to the health and rights of fellow citizens. Chapter 4 argued for the *prima facie* duties of the responsibility argument, but such duties require implementation in a meaningful way. Working with NGOs is one form of implementation. But without universal implementation, through something like a national service program, moral education and deliberative democracy are likely to be incomplete. Many citizens are unlikely to learn all that is necessary to make them public citizens, dedicated to the common cause, understanding the needs of others. Otherwise, many citizens may remain free riders—people who enjoy the benefits of democratic citizenship, but who let others do its work and take its risks. Without something like a national service program, citizens will be saying something inconsistent. Although everyone ought to pay taxes for the good of the whole, not everyone ought to give time for the good of the whole. Yet neither democratic governments nor families will succeed if members merely give their monies but not their time, their talents, and their hearts.⁷⁰

A meaningful national service program would be one way to carry out the suggestions of earlier chapters. The program might allow maximum choice

regarding the types of efforts and the sorts of public or private institutions in which young people might serve. The key factor would be that public service is expected of virtually everyone, after high school. Indeed, if most people in democratic societies served for a year, full-time, in programs like Americorps, VISTA, or Big Brothers and Big Sisters, they would probably agree that such service should be part of everyone's education. It should be part of everyone's repayment of the debts of citizenship, part of the building blocks of democracy. A national service program could also be part of the compensation that citizens owe others who have been harmed by flawed institutions in which everyone participates. Besides, the benefits of such a program might be deep and long-lived. Psychiatrist Robert Coles argues that public service, "an idealism exerted, at one moment in life, sets in motion certain forces, crises, choices," that can change people forever, for the better. Many public-service veterans of "social and racial and economic struggles," says Coles, attribute the nature of their current lives to what happened "back then." Volunteers might have been uncertain of what they wanted to do with their lives. Nevertheless, says Coles, they became "sure of certain social convictions and ready to work to realize them."⁷¹

Many civil-rights or poverty workers do more than become ready to realize the convictions built during their service years. Coles says they also pass on their convictions and their dedication to service to their children. As one volunteer puts it:

you see clearly what can be done, what you're doing, even with the disappointments, and you wish that more were being done, that more and more of us were 'sisters' and 'brothers' to each other. And so you look and look at the politics of the city, the state, the country, hoping that your service will get to be a part of a nation that is interested in being of service to its people: a nation that serves those in need of housing, food, and work, rather than lobbyists in need of favors by the million, and worth billions.... I am hoping for a different kind of morality in the nation, a morality informed by service [in which] we take responsibility for each other.

Coles says that service can be the light through which much of the darkness around us is defined.⁷²

Conclusion

In showing the need for the responsibility argument and how we might implement it, these chapters are not calling for a "New Age" person committed only to personal growth. More important, they call for a recommitment to the classic traditions of ethics and democracy. They ask us to rise to the examples of everyday heroes all around us, to the challenges of Jefferson and Lincoln,

Coleman and Gutierrez. They ask that citizens not "retreat into professions and corporations... private pleasure and high consumption... abdication of responsibility, voluntary myopia."⁷³ We can be the change that life-sustaining democracies need. We can be the light that defines—and can often banish—the darkness around us.