

9-21-2001

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### Recommended Citation

Coolidge, Jeff (2001) "Raising Spirit in Institutional and Public Life," *New England Journal of Public Policy*: Vol. 17: Iss. 1, Article 9.  
Available at: <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp/vol17/iss1/9>

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# Raising Spirit in Institutional and Public Life

*Jeff Coolidge*

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*This article covers spirit and its role in invigorating and maintaining our institutions. It tracks the origin of spirit and describes the role of spirit in organizations along with its manifestations: vision and mission, each of which, the author explains, must be clearly defined and kept separate to maintain organizational spirit and effectiveness. He makes the case that spirit can be assessed and nurtured and considers it important for funders and other interested parties to do so. Such assessment must identify elements that could corrupt this spirit. While focusing on nonprofit institutions, he demonstrates where spirit and its effects are documented by management experts to infuse corporations, thus broadening its social impact. Spirit can therefore remedy the concerns of social scientists about our nation as a consumer society with a balkanized political vision. The author describes efforts to revitalize our public and institutional life, including faith-based initiatives and social entrepreneurialism represented by four agencies in which he has participated.*

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Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!  
A fine wind is blowing the new direction of Time.  
If only I let it bear me, carry me, if only it carry me.  
If only, most lovely of all, I yield myself and  
Am borrowed by the fine, fine wind that  
Takes its course through the chaos of the world.

— D. H. Lawrence, 1920  
“Song of a Man Who Has Come Through”

Lawrence evokes a sense of the force of spirit, driving and moving the world like water roaring down from a mountain. It lifts us, nourishes our spirits, our health, and our institutions and civic life. How does this happen? Is it possible to make concrete assessments of something so ephemeral as the state of spirit in an organization? Could we approach this issue with a set of indicators against which we could measure the health of spirit in an organization and develop steps to renew it?

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If so, funders, staff, government organizations, and other constituencies could add to their ability to assess and assist organizations to better serve the community.

This article treats spirit and its effects and manifestations in our nonprofit institutions and the society around us. This is now a society under vicious attack by religious zealots and terrorists. I attempt to develop some context for this terrible phenomenon, but the emphasis is on more of the microcosm of spirit manifestations at the level of organizations and institutional life. It is a work in progress, an extension of some of my experiences and thinking over the years; I elaborate on some of those as a frame of reference. I attempt to provide a definition of spirit — something that means a lot of different things to different people — and explore its origins and incarnations within our nonprofit institutions. This in turn leads to a discussion of the role of spirit in driving the mission and vision of an organization — including the importance of keeping them separate — to maintain direction, avoid burnout, and meet the challenge of renewal.

I examine the role of spirit in public life, particularly as manifest, or not, in nonprofit institutions, both those which have no obvious religious connection and those which do. I look at the institutional dimensions of spirit, including the difference between “vision” and “mission,” the organizational forces that contribute to or undermine spirit, and practical steps that donors, board members, staff, and concerned citizens can take to sustain it.

No organization, of course, can be viewed independently of the society in which it exists. What is the state of spirit there? How can an organization with spirit survive in a decidedly dispiriting environment? Our contemporary society seems to have lost a sense of common values, of civic engagement, and gained a sense that institutions and government cannot function as expected or needed. Although many individuals and communities are stirring with new energies and missions, much of their energy appears to be geared toward special interest activity, further balkanizing any consensus that may emerge.

I believe that if we are concerned about renewal of our society and our organizations we should also be concerned about “spirit.” Within this context I attempt to show how spirit and its various manifestations have renewed both organizations and certain segments of society. I argue that spirit, working within and through our institutions, can lead to a more focused engagement in society at large.

One way to turn attention to that intangible dimension of organizational life is for donors and funders to seek it out and evaluate it. Thus this article also concentrates on internal measures of an organization’s spirit, not the results of its program on those it is serving. I provide a set of assessment tools that highlight qualities that can be discerned *before* the programs are launched or the resources committed.

My hope is that I succeed in making the case to all readers — volunteers, donors, board members, staff, policymakers, the general public — about the primacy of spirit in considering the worth and viability of nonprofit endeavors. But the process of writing has also made me realize that spirit knows no boundaries, that it permeates institutions not within our definition of “nonprofit” while producing similar results. Spirit crosses boundaries when it generates and supports a “vision” for an organization; moreover, the centrality of vision is not limited to nonprofits. As I demonstrate later, management experts recognize that vision is the quality that distinguishes outstanding enterprises from the rest of the pack.

In other words, the real scope of this inquiry includes the broader society: civil, economic, and political.

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## The Call of Spirit in a Fragmented Culture

These days we are hearing a lot about spirit, values, and what is wrong with them — or us.

Most of the time it seems as though we are in a collective psychic snit.

Our media are rife with bad news of declining values, lack of civility, and increasing distrust of the once revered and vital institutions of government and education. Our youth are portrayed as caught up in the materialism of the mall, practicing irresponsible sex, lacking in character, and underperforming at school — even committing crimes, including mass murder of their peers.

What to do?

I am often told that we have become so diverse that we lack common values and standards to pass along to them. Meanwhile, for some of us, “cultural diversity” challenges the perception that traditional values were those of the ruling elite; an extension of this view claims that now there should be no universal values for all of us. Meanwhile, we are concerned about whether or not self-created values — disconnected from any larger moral framework — will override self-interest.

The problems of fragmentation are not just individual but institutional.

As our nonprofits face a changing environment so do our broader civic culture and the general public, at least as reported by some of our leading political philosophers and sociologists. Their commentary begins with a deep unease, a feeling that we may be at a low point of confusion and misdirection — the trough. Some of their concerns concentrate particularly on problems of social erosion or disintegration.<sup>1</sup>

“The loss of self government and the erosion of community together define the anxiety of the age,” writes Harvard political philosopher Michael Sandel in *Democracy’s Discontent*. Ours, he says is a government of rights “universally owed and voluntarily incurred,” lacking loyalties and obligations to community and nation.<sup>2</sup> Sociologist Alan Wolfe observes that the traditional concept of family loyalty has declined, now characterized, he writes, as “a victim of new ways in which it is redefined to accommodate how we live.”<sup>3</sup>

The idea of decline is reflected in our national politics as well, in spite of the racket made by advocates of special causes. In 1964, 75 percent of the public said they trusted the federal government; in 1995, only 25 percent did so, according to Joseph Nye and colleagues in *Why People Don’t Trust Government*.<sup>4</sup> An apparent anomaly is that voter participation has declined and party influence has weakened, yet political interest is greater than ever, according to University of Michigan political scientist Ronald Englehart.<sup>5</sup> However, special interest groups are the primary source of this burgeoning activity. Englehart tells us that these “more active and issue-specific forms of mass participation” draw our attention at the expense of the national focus once held by the Republican and Democratic parties.<sup>6</sup> Might we call this the balkanization of our political and social discourse, our identity as a nation? It surely reinforces the concern of so many about cultural diversity, seeing it as dissolution of the “American” values to which some refer as the core of our national consensus.

Sandel says that we as a nation acknowledge only individual rights, not obligations to the larger community. There is no claim of public good against these rights.<sup>7</sup>

Since our ethic of rights does not include “the good” or shared obligations, we do not have the language to deal with really important issues. But this was not always so. Slavery was such an issue, yet we were able to rise to the occasion with appeals to a greater good and action to achieve it. Now the issue of abortion occupies public attention yet remains something about which we cannot agree. Indeed, across the public landscape there is no push for civic action, only rivalry and confrontation.

Each interest group seeks to define national issues within its own parochial paradigm with no overriding obligation or ethic. Without grounds for debate, we have a situation Sandel describes with the metaphor of “the naked public square” where “fundamentalists rush in where liberals fear to tread,” clothing it with the “narrow intolerant moralisms” of groups like the Moral Majority.<sup>8</sup>

We also hear anxious expressions about the absence of religion in public life, or again, the threat that fundamentalists will force religion in, completely filling the public square. President George W. Bush has unleashed national debate with his initiative to support so-called faith-based social programs with federal dollars. For many, this would violate our cherished separation of church and state. Moreover, some churches that might benefit are concerned that they might “lose their prophetic voice” under government pressure and regulations.

Americans have adopted the idea that freedom of religion is not just the right to choose a religion but the right to decide for themselves what to believe, even if it means adopting elements of different faiths or life styles.<sup>9</sup> We now move easily from church to church, destabilizing established religions in our own search for spiritual meaning.

### ***Consumer or Citizen?***

But perhaps one of the greatest challenges to our sense of civic belonging comes from the globalization process. It is a challenge for the whole world. “A world made over in the image of Disney, Nike, and McDonald’s isn’t necessarily a world made safer for democracy,” cautions Michael Sandel. “We shouldn’t assume that the world’s enthusiasm for American pop culture necessarily translates into an embrace of democratic values or of individual liberties.”<sup>10</sup>

We do not gain as a nation when we are perceived only as consumers.

To offset consumerism, we have a strong spirited force addressing this issue through our Peace Corps and countless nonprofits overseas. A good example is City Year’s joint venture with Nelson Mandela to provide training for South African community service leaders. Washington may be considering that a “go it alone policy” is best for a great power like the United States, but we are always well served by those whose spirit carries our endeavors overseas.

In fact, I believe it is no coincidence that our self-confidence was at a peak in the mid-sixties before Vietnam, at a time when we were relishing the success of the Marshall Plan in Europe and expanding our international efforts beyond Europe to Asia and Africa. The conclusion I have drawn from this earlier age is that an outward-looking country is the most satisfied and self-confident.

### ***Faith-Based Initiatives***

On the bright side, society seems to be responding with currents of reform in education and welfare. President Bush is attempting to widen federal funding of “faith-based” social programs with the intent, undoubtedly, to infuse spiritual values into

their content. This is a policy move that has not been wholeheartedly welcomed, by any means. Liberals fret over “violations of the separation of church and state, and pandering to the religious right” while conservatives “were mystified that such a program was placed in the hands of a Democrat who chided evangelicals for their lack of inclusiveness.”<sup>11</sup> The offending Democrat abruptly quit last summer, allegedly because of health concerns.<sup>12</sup>

What can one make of all this?

Not too much, I hope, at least to the extent of viewing the whole matter in a dismal light.

Not long ago I was in a workshop concerning Eastern philosophy where just about everyone passionately declared, “There is no spirituality in religion.” Then, of course, we tried to define “spirituality”: *Connection to the Infinite. Fills all space. Quickening the experience.* These were some of the thoughts people shared during an admittedly short brainstorming session.

What was important for me was the fact that these were people of great spiritual resources with a deep commitment to ameliorating pain in our society, and who by any measure live and act in spirit. I guess sometimes spirit moves us in spite of religion — and sometimes because of it. But they are not unique.

Such is my definition of faith-based — with a small f. There need be no sectarian basis, just organized and sustained efforts in pursuit of a larger good that are nourished by deeply held convictions, yet accountable to democratic ideals.

Faith-based or not, I argue that the role of spirit knows no religious bounds, and that what is important is not *where it comes from* but *how it manifests itself* and *where it directs us*. I argue that we need to learn how to recognize spirit, nurture it, and remember that its importance lies not just in its presence, but also in how it lifts our gaze to a vision of a better world. I draw upon my own experience with a group of Boston-based nonprofit organizations, some of which have achieved national prominence, but I do not restrict my insights to them. Business organizations have spirit, too — or at least they should. The same goes for government. Although different in mission, scale, and scope, my example organizations have in common their contributions to Lawrence’s “new direction in time” while constructively addressing the “chaos in the world.”

In other words, they all have spirit. We can learn from them. But first a note of caution on spirit, because we are seeing a dramatic form of it behind the September 11 assault on our country.

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### **The “Rogue” Vision: The Dark Side of Spirit**

While my emphasis is on the positive power of spirit for an organization and its members, we need to be mindful that dangers lurk, too. The leadership challenge is to maintain spirit by remaining true to the founding vision and mission, something that begins as almost whole, perfect, and pure conception. Success, after all, can incubate an obsession with power. It can lead to an inflated sense of self-importance, institutional expansion, turf, and an excessive focus on fund-raising, which in turn can corrupt the wholeness or purity of the original vision.

Visionary organizations, religions, and even nations can go from success to exclusion through corruption of their original vision by defining themselves in terms of

“the other.” This is a great temptation, because by projecting the enthusiasm against perceived and specific flaws of the other, the need to wrestle with the doubts of one’s own thesis appear to be unnecessary, even threatening. The original vision is stood on its head and becomes the kind of “rogue vision” that drove Nazi Germany to persecute the Jews, the crusaders to slaughter Jews and sack the Christian city of Constantinople, often in the name of God. Pope John Paul II is now bearing witness to the last two corruptions.

The current example of a rampage by a rogue vision is the terrorist assault on America by Islamic extremists. The “other” in this case is the vision of America: freedom, freedom of religions, equal respect for race and gender, the City on a Hill. These qualities are an “affront to the certainty of fundamentalist Muslims,” according to Yale scholar Lamin Sanneh.<sup>13</sup> Yes, Muslims may well have justified resentment of certain aspects of our foreign policy, but its violence comes from forces deep in the souls and characters of the haters.

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### **Whose Faith? Which Institutions? What Aim?**

Two points need to be made on the question of “spirit” and government support of faith-based institutions. First, we don’t always need religion to get the spirit; in fact, sectarian or dogmatic belief systems sometimes generate more heat than light. Second, the government already supports faith-based institutions. According to Joseph Doolin, president of Boston’s Catholic Charities, half of the financial support the Boston group receives comes from the federal government; Catholic Charities USA receives three-quarters of its funding from it.<sup>14</sup>

Federal funding of faith-based institutions could be a big fat red herring that ends up swimming off into the deep.

But federal support is not limited to just the big fish.

### ***Four Models: Spirit, Service, and Civil Society***

I take a brief look at the Bethel A.M.E. Church of Jamaica Plain, Training, Inc., City Year, Inc., and the Thomas Jefferson Forum. Spiritual sensibility for the first two derives from traditional religious values; spiritual sensibility for the others draws more upon our civic republican tradition. All four rely on ceremonies, rituals, and practices that promote fidelity to visionary ideals; although interpretations vary, all four are guided by a service mission of personal transformation, growth, and community well-being. While they have different theological bases, all rely on spiritual values, embrace all races, and work through the same legal and governmental structures. And all share a vision of personal transformation, the revitalization of civic virtue, and social justice.

I guess you could say all of them are faith-based.

Only one is a bona fide church, yet all four rely on government moneys of one kind or another. Some are federal block-grant funds; state moneys and private donations also underwrite their work. The pastor of the Bethel A.M.E. Church of Jamaica Plain, the Reverend Ray Hammond, is a founding member of Boston’s Ten Point Coalition, a nationally renowned group of inner-city clergy seeking to restore values and social responsibility to youth involved in crime and violence. Training, Inc.’s mission is to transform lives through training and placement of unemployed people

in jobs and careers. City Year and the Thomas Jefferson Forum are secular agencies seeking to involve youth in community service.

### ***Bethel A.M.E. Church and Restorative Justice***

A while ago, I walked into the West Roxbury Court House with the Reverend Roland Hayes Robinson of the Jamaica Plain Bethel A.M.E. Church. The Reverend Robinson had been working so closely and so well with the court that we both breezed through security apparatus like court insiders. He was working with First Justice Kathleen E. Coffey and Associate Justice Robert C. Rufo to secure grants for his church programs, helping fathers being released from jail. The justices were spending their night hours working with and making grants to a church agency to provide restitution, healing, and redemption to the system of justice they administer daily from 8:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M.

Over the years, I have learned that spirit is making a difference in our justice system. Another movement, Restorative Justice, has been challenging our traditional justice system with the proposition that the community must be given a role in the administration of justice to provide healing both to victims and the community following criminal acts. Restorative Justice programs are operating in Canada, Europe, and the United States. In Massachusetts one has been established in Franklin County and Revere, with initiatives under way at the Lynn District Court.

I was drawn to the Bethel program through my volunteer work at the Lynn District Court, where I serve on the Visitor Information Program and the Reinventing Justice Committee. The committee is looking at the same program as Bethel's — enriching our justice system with community involvement that attempts to bring healing and redemption to victim, offender, and the community. The Lynn District Court is exploring ways of helping to heal both victims and offenders through job and parenting training and, in the future, offender restitution to individuals and communities harmed by their acts. The primary aim is personal and social responsibility, reparation, and rehabilitation, but most of all, restoration of peaceful and self-confident individuals and communities.

The traditional justice system has never been more successful than it is these days in pursuing criminals, catching them, and putting them in jail. Yet this has not necessarily lowered our fear of crime. I recall a case mentioned during a Restorative Justice conference I attended in Toronto in the summer of 2001. An elderly woman who had recently immigrated to the United States was living with her daughter. Her daughter's house was ransacked and robbed during the night. Although the intruder was apprehended, the experience so terrorized her that she could not live in the house. The authorities authorized a conference or "circle" that brought together the offender, the victim, friends of both, and police and justice personnel. The offender was in fact somewhat pitiful, wasted by addiction. He offered restitution and committed to a twelve-step program. Both mother and daughter felt more pity than fear and were able to shed their anxiety and move back into their house.

This was the healing of restorative justice, for people as well as communities.

### ***Training, Inc.***

Training, Inc., began in 1975 as a collaboration of employers, public funders, and the YMCA organization in the Chicago area; the Boston chapter is a member of the Greater Boston YMCA.<sup>15</sup> In 1984, I joined Training, Inc.'s "founding" group and



became a member of its advisory board when it subsequently joined the Greater Boston YMCA. I am currently on the board of Training, Inc., National, a nonprofit made up of six Training, Inc., organizations in Boston, Chicago, Indianapolis, Newark, Pittsburgh, and New Orleans.<sup>16</sup>

Training, Inc., which provides entry-level job training to the unemployed and the working poor, relies on a unique approach. It seeks to integrate what it terms “workplace simulation” with a culture of learning and collaborative partnerships. The Boston agency has an annual budget of about \$600,000. In existence for fifteen years, it has trained more than 2,500 people for entry-level jobs in corporate management with a successful job placement record of more than 97 percent.<sup>17</sup> Most, but not all clients, are women. Training, Inc., seeks to meet the spiritual needs of trainees so they may overcome the handicaps of poverty, abuse, and despair. Its programmatic approach is consistent with the stated mission of the Greater Boston YMCA: “To build health of spirit, mind, and body based on the highest ideals of the Judeo-Christian heritage, and to improve the quality of life for children, individuals, families, and communities in the cities and towns of Greater Boston.”

The standard challenge to an agency that trains welfare mothers is to overcome symbolic or spirit issues that prevent transfer of technical knowledge in the classroom. Many students are intimidated by the downtown business environment and do not have the language or behavior to fit in successfully. To deal with this, Training, Inc., provides a realistic office setting, which reinforces the basics of business behavior: correct speech, clothing, punctuality, and so forth. Like many social service programs, Training, Inc., must address the issue of domestic violence when working with clients. As students advance through the program, it is not unusual for disgruntled boyfriends to abuse them, beat them, or otherwise control them to block their success. Should this occur, the staff is knowledgeable, primed, and ready to intervene.

### ***City Year, Inc.***

On a vastly wider plane, City Year, Inc., is a national organization of youth, generally between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three, who are engaged in full-time community service for one year. They perform a broad spectrum of services, including mentoring children, caring for the elderly, and renovating dwellings and outdoor spaces. City Year’s primary motto is Putting Idealism to Work; during its youth training, City Year emphasizes leadership and commitment to social transformation and change. Former president Bill Clinton has praised the organization as a national model; he cites City Year as the inspiration for his creation of AmeriCorps in 1994. Senator John McCain and Secretary of State Colin Powell are also enthusiastic supporters.

Since its founding in 1988, City Year has trained and supervised 4,000 young people for community service, generally occurring in the year between high school and college. Now with an annual budget of approximately \$30 million, City Year has rapidly become one of the nation’s biggest nonprofits. It currently has programs in thirteen cities around the country, involving nearly 1,000 Corps members. City Year, enjoying outstanding support from private corporations and citizens, is a member of the AmeriCorps National Service Network.<sup>18</sup>

I initially became involved in City Year as a member of its board of directors, and my wife and I continue to maintain an informal affiliation. (Indeed, around the

same time City Year started, I founded the Thomas Jefferson Forum. In the summer of 2001, my wife and I attended City Year's annual meeting, "Cyzygy," which is based on the Greek word *syzygy*, or confluence of all forces. This was a celebratory retreat to inspire everyone present and to reflect on City Year's mission. Prominent national leaders were present, giving people a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves and their group. Senator McCain announced his intent to sponsor national service legislation, a long-term goal of City Year.

### ***The Thomas Jefferson Forum***

In 1985, the idea of the Thomas Jefferson Forum was seeded at the Barnicle Restaurant in Marblehead over a bowl of clam chowder shared with my pastor, the Reverend Randall Niehoff of the Old North Church nearby. He pointed out that registration for U.S. military service had been reinstated and while it was unlikely to be invoked, it would be a good time for his youth group to explore avenues for public service other than the military. As an admirer of Thomas Jefferson, he suggested that we form an association for that purpose in his name. We came up with The Thomas Jefferson Forum, established in 1986.

The Forum's mission was to bring community service to Massachusetts high schools. It was driven by a vision "where young people of all walks of life come together to serve, to confront, and to change the major areas of concern in our national and community life."<sup>19</sup> It began as a part-time, cocurricular community service program within Massachusetts high schools. The Thomas Jefferson Forum adopted the strategy of working with the schools to launch community service teams as extracurricular activities. The Forum had an annual budget of about \$400,000; by 1991 it had programs in forty-two high schools throughout the commonwealth, involving about 750 students.

With a program successfully established throughout Massachusetts, the organization had a problem: its organizational model was too expensive for its limited resources. Faced with the possibility of insolvency, the Forum held a retreat where it "re-envisioned" itself as a research center with essentially the same mission — to promote service learning in public schools. The board urged that it take pains to maintain its purity, the image of an idealistic organization with a cause. A university would be a logical home, but as the Forum was constituted it did not qualify as a university research organization. However, it seemed to the Forum that the Lincoln Filene Center at Tufts University would be interested in cooperating because of a symbolic/spirit affinity: the Filene Center had been created by Tufts alumni and Boston-area civic leaders to encourage citizen participation in government and community affairs. Shared vision, mission, and spirit were the connections for the two organizations, and the merger, or acquisition, seemed almost a natural development, subject of course to a reduction in the size of the Forum prior to its closing.

As a coda, the Massachusetts Youth Service Alliance, which the Forum to its own great cost financed and helped set up, became the Massachusetts Service Alliance, now with a \$13 million annual budget supporting AmeriCorps and scores of other youth service activities throughout Massachusetts. This was a step beyond its immediate organizational mission, yet a giant leap toward the Forum's vision. There was still integrity in this development, which, generally speaking, might not be considered a prudent act for a financially strapped organization. In any case, I believe the purity and consistency of focus on mission not only inspired the staff but helped draw victory from the jaws of defeat.

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## From the Small Pond to the World Outside

I believe that because we are all consciously or unconsciously caught up in our own stories, we paint a picture of the world outside that reflects what they tell only to us. Therefore, I should say something about a few of the critical incidents and influences that color my commitments and shape the views I express here. Three come to mind: childhood experiences, military service, and during and after a business career, increasing commitment to public service.

### *Early Days: Citizen Servant-Soldier*

The small pond from which I first contemplated this universe was at a boys' camp for underprivileged youths, where I was a counselor. My prep school's emphasis on the ideals of service to broader society had pretty much pushed me in this direction, but the boys' camp experience taught me that all young people respond to care and appreciation. What happens to them when they do not get it turns up in the media as violence either done by or to them.

Another major force was my two-year stint in the Marine Corps. This was when I realized the obvious: the defense of our country was in the hands of our youth, meaning teenagers between the ages of seventeen and twenty. This recognition contradicted media portrayals of youth as a problem, what with crime, sex, drugs, and so forth.

In fact, in his 1807 message to Congress, President Thomas Jefferson called for the formation of a military force of eighteen- to twenty-six-year-olds to meet the threat of nations, such as Napoleon's France, with national armies. The idea of a citizen servant-soldier had good provenance in our own democratic traditions. Why not continue it to this day?

I learned that there was more to Marine boot camp training than the drill and harassment. I will never forget the discomfort of being denied, along with a buddy from the South, a regular uniform. He was too skinny; I was too fat. We both ate all we could, and each of us became the "fine figure of men" the Corps was seeking. We got our uniforms. What was good for the goose was good for the gander. Aside from thinking to myself that the Marines are good for everybody, I was caught by the idea of national service as a way of bringing young people from all regions and strata of society to work together on an important mission. Years later, at my college twenty-fifth reunion, I found, without exception, that my classmates who had been through the military draft felt the same way.

That was when youth service became one of my interests.

### *Adult Passages to the Global*

Another set of influential forces came from my government service, followed by life and work in South Korea, at the end of the Korean War a devastated land. There were virtually no physical assets with which to rebuild it. Eighty-five percent of the land was not arable; it was overpopulated and had no natural resources. I remember that in a 1958 op-ed piece for *The New York Times* Professor Hans Morgenthau wrote off the country as a net burden on U.S. aid. Yet Professor Morgenthau and most of the world overlooked one asset Korea had in abundance: *spirit* — the energy to learn, to achieve, and to excel. In spite of its current economic troubles, which affect so much of Asia and the rest of the world, Korea has become one of the world's economic success stories and a leading trading partner of the United States.

After watching Korea start to bloom in the late '60s and '70s, I began to think, *After economic development, what next?* By some kind of fate, a group from the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) walked into my office one day with what they deemed an answer. The ICA was a group of lay people and Christian ministers looking for ways to renew developing countries whose cultures were being changed by twentieth-century forces. Their approach was to go to a village, sit down with the villagers and local authorities and experts, and elicit from them and analyze the challenges and opportunities as the villagers perceived them. It was an exercise in planning a cultural, social, and economic development program to work *with*, not *for* people, emphasizing *assets*, not liabilities. I also came to realize that the so-called third world was not a foreign land. One found poverty, suffering, and exclusion from progress everywhere, and the solutions seemed to be similar, no matter what the culture.

### ***Giving Back: Stewardship and Spirit***

These experiences as a young man and adult did not complete my education, but they set the direction for my steps into the world of service. Even though they were rooted in earlier life experience, my current thoughts on the role of spirit began to form early in 1995, when my wife and I participated in a day-long workshop at Boston's Old South Church, facilitated by a consultant, Chip Chapados, and organized by The Boston Foundation (TBF).<sup>20</sup> The goal was to help us make recommendations to TBF for grants from my family's donor-advised fund, which TBF was administering.<sup>21</sup> About twenty-nine human service agencies that work on domestic violence issues, with a good leavening of other services, were in attendance. With Chip's help, we used a nominal group exercise technique to elicit the gathering's answer to two questions: *What were the major constraints facing them? What solutions would they suggest?*

We received more than a hundred answers to these questions, but when my wife and I noticed the frequent mention of issues such as "isolation," "lack of self-esteem and confidence," "lack of clout," "lack of networks," "distance from levers of power," we took an intuitive leap to the view that a key missing element was *spirit*. While we figured that plenty of the organizations undoubtedly had spirit, it was a topic that did not come up in general workshop conversations.

We decided that we might cut through a lot of potential problems by starting with issues related to spirit and incorporate some of that language into the request for proposals (RFP) The Boston Foundation would send out on behalf of our donor-advised fund. In this RFP we said that we were interested in funding organizations that shared, through their leadership, a "core sense of spirit inspired by connection to some personal higher power, however defined," and a "rooted sense of spirit, vision, or profound hope for the future."<sup>22</sup> Christine Green, then program director, was a great help to us in this pioneering effort.

While initially we were not sure how our grantees might respond to it, we developed some very positive relationships with effective agencies, including Boston Justice Ministries,<sup>23</sup> the Bethel A.M.E. Church of Jamaica Plain, and the Ten Point Coalition. Now a nationally acclaimed organization, the Coalition was organized in 1992 by Boston-area African-American ministers who decided to stand together, accountable to the community, to deal with escalating youth alienation and problems of guns and violence. The Bethel A.M.E. Church is represented by its pastor, the Reverend Ray Hammond, also a founding member of the Ten Point Coalition.

As we became swamped with responses, we abandoned the RFP process and pursued a more targeted approach, focusing on domestic violence, youth, and restorative justice. As I have pointed out, the latter supports community involvement in court cases, seeking to heal the harm done to both victims and the community by criminal acts.

This grant-making process was instrumental to my engagement in the nonprofit world. It also forced me to tackle the elusive question, in institutional form, of *spirit* — what it means, what it looks like in program terms, and how it can be sustained.

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### **What Is Spirit? Definition, Origins, and Manifestations**

For us to trace spirit working in our society and institutions, we first need to deal with definitions. This is not an easy task, but it is important to start with some clarity and give a perspective that takes into account the origins of this dynamic force and its manifestations in our institutions and society.

I believe spirit can be called a number of things: “The wind that blows through me — in the new direction of time — if only it carry me,” wrote Lawrence.<sup>24</sup> The notion of “breath” is another helpful metaphor, used by my former pastor, Ran Niehoff, in his sermons. Spirit is “the wind beneath our wings,” as sung by Bette Midler.<sup>25</sup> It is the intangible force that drives us to endure and sometimes to succeed beyond our expectations. It is the rush we get from a wonderful relationship, event, or being in the presence of something like a sunset. We also get the lift of being part of something bigger than us.

Spirit is complete and whole, therefore perfect and holy. Its essence is all-encompassing and all-inclusive. It is inexhaustible, with no beginning and no end, maybe circular in its wholeness and completeness. It may have infinite manifestations and expressions of values — such as empathy, caring, loyalty, and dedication to mission and cause. It motivates teams and organizations with the same values, while providing mutual care and bonding. Earlier, I referred to the diversion of spirit to the dark side, but here we are riding it to the light.

#### ***Birth of Spirit***

The moment for creation of spirit in the Judeo-Christian tradition is described by Walter Brueggemann in *The Prophetic Imagination*, which describes the birth of these beliefs.<sup>26</sup> (I am using the Judeo-Christian tradition as a source, but not in any exclusive way. Almost all our religious traditions are based on a founding story, and my own provides the elements needed to guide the process.) Brueggemann writes of energies being released in people who are totally trapped in despair. This condition can arise from a great national disaster or oppression or from drastic change — the attack on America, for example. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, even industrial innovations like the steam engine or computer caused severe hardship to thousands of people through change or dislocation.

But in addition to suffering, history has shown us adaptive responses of renewal and adjustment. This happens in Brueggemann’s presentation when a prophet “brings to public expression those very hopes and yearnings that have been denied so long and suppressed so deeply that we no longer know where these yearnings are.” To do this the prophet must “speak metaphorically about hope but concretely about the real

newness that comes to us and redefines our situation.” Moses was such a prophet for the Jews; Jesus for the Christians, Mohammed for the Muslims. They created the metaphors that activated the spirit which, in turn, launched the practices that gave rise to the traditions.

In Christianity the metaphor cited by Brueggemann is the Lamb of God, but perhaps the notion of Redeemer is more readily understood. The real newness, according to Brueggemann, is the healing ministry of Jesus and his good news that the suffering followers are saved, triumphant over death and temporal oppression. In the words of the Gospel, people are astonished (Matthew 22:33), or as we describe the sensation at lower voltage levels, empowered.

Finally, Brueggemann tells us that “only those who anguish will sing new songs.” Such new songs are most likely to come from the disenfranchised at the margins of our society — a message that big institutions need to hear and a model not unlike the civil rights movement in the United States. This certainly applies to the cosmic energy released from the martyrdom and the Christian belief in the resurrection of Christ and the persecution of his followers — call it the Big Bang creation of the spiritual universe that has carried on down through religious organizations and secular agencies.<sup>27</sup> The message here is that modern organizations share or possess inherited values that inspired earlier faith and are still present.

Countless individuals and agencies are following similar visions and similar missions with a very similar spirit, albeit perhaps less dramatic and far-reaching. It does not seem hard to trace nonprofit values to a root source in an earlier faith, where the energy came as people awoke from terrible hardship or were freed from an oppression that might not even have been fully known. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference demonstrated the power of spirit’s driving people in service of a dream or mission. Was this not the power of an Old Testament prophet, galvanizing the energies of those who had been denied recognition, justice, and influence in the established society? Healing in hospitals, enlightenment in education — surely these draw power from the suffering of the sick or those constrained by inadequate knowledge or fulfillment. We often judge nonprofit organizations by the degree to which the goal it seeks to meet is real or genuine; that is, the area where community pain and anguish are really strong.

Trapped in a challenge, people are astonished by a prophetic vision, empowered by the release of their spirit, and proceed, or are led, to ground it in action, usually through an organization — in our case the nonprofit organization. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference was an example of spirit’s moving an organization to complete its mission. Closer to home, the Ten Point Coalition, the Restorative Justice movement and its affiliate programs, Training, Inc., City Year, Inc., and the Thomas Jefferson Forum are other examples of spirit’s guiding vitality.

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### **Vision and Mission, Part I**

Not many nonprofits have such a dramatic provenance or spirit manifestation, but the signs are there. What are they? According to the experts, probably the most important is a “clearly articulated mission and consistent focus on it.”<sup>28</sup> Other authorities cite vision, infused by a leader throughout an organization.

An early example of recognizing spirit can be found in an anecdote from the seventeenth-century essayist Matthew Arnold. It involved an exchange between Sir

Christopher Wren, the architect who was rebuilding London's St. Paul's Cathedral after a fire, and three of his bricklayers. When Wren asked the bricklayers what they were doing, the first said, "Laying bricks, one at a time. Just like I did yesterday, and will be doing tomorrow." The second said, "Making a shilling, one at a time. Just like I did yesterday, and will be doing tomorrow." The third said, "Building a cathedral."

Here we have the full range: motivation by the drive to survive, by profit, and finally by the mission — very nearly a vision itself. Organizational members who are able to relate their task so directly to the vision have spirit, which they often impart to others. Throughout modern management literature, the idea of vision is often mentioned, and both mission and vision are credited in various sources with guidance and inspiration. We need to distinguish between these two concepts, which I do later.

We also have to note that vision is not limited to the world of nonprofits. The for-profit area offers us rigorous examples of where spirit may be playing a role and demonstrates the permeability of the definitions we place around our sectors. In the best-selling book *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, authors James Collins and Jerry Porras develop the theme that vision is the key attribute that distinguishes successful commercial enterprises from the merely successful, or second-tier, ones.<sup>29</sup>

We also have the emergence of those who call themselves social entrepreneurs, who believe that creative entrepreneurs can address large social problems by combining business and charitable methods.<sup>30</sup> The authors of *Enterprising Nonprofits* state that the social entrepreneur "leads through mission," which "inspires and guides their work."<sup>31</sup> In the community service field, social entrepreneurs have launched new organizations such as City Year, Inc., YouthBuild, Jumpstart, and Youth Service America, which have achieved national recognition. These are just a few examples of the porosity of the boundaries we have created between for-profit and nonprofit institutions, boundaries that are now being eroded.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Other Signs and Symbols***

In addition to vision and mission, I have observed other manifestations of spirit in organizations where I have worked, including:

1. Open and inclusive behavior toward one another and to outsiders;
2. The use of stories and myths to inform constituencies about their nature and purpose;
3. The use of symbols to reflect a common culture; and
4. The use of ritual to welcome newcomers and supporters.

We can, of course, see some of these signs reflected in public life. Our flag is a symbol of our nation; we hold political conventions that, with all their rituals, seek to inspire a feverish, though declining, emotional focus and response from citizens. President Bush's aforementioned faith-based initiative has elicited both enthusiasm and suspicion — the former inspired by the perception that religious organizations have just the right kind of strong altruistic, caring values needed to do the trick. The suspicion is based on our traditional division of church and state, but also on a con-

cern about the hiring policies of religious organizations that accept only applicants of their own faith and discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation.<sup>33</sup>

Now is the time to see just what we might all be looking for, from the president on down to political philosophers, journalists, and the concerned public. To do this, let's go back to our case examples.

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### **Spirit in Institutional Life**

The organizations mentioned serve as a window into spirit in our institutions and society. Each organization has many manifestations of spirit, but I select highlights from each to give a flavor from a variety of associations. Consideration of institutional spirit will lead us naturally to the for-profit sector, where management consultants have already blazed a trail. Here I discuss the distinctive roles that spirit and vision play in organizations, a most important distinction in an age of change and discontinuity. I argue that *vision* is what keeps an organization on track, that *vision* keeps an organization honest, and it is against *vision* that, eventually, an institution's leadership and actions must be judged.

Put another way, the idea and importance of mission derive from its relationship to vision: *An institution with vision but lacking a mission has lost its direction; an institution with a mission but no vision has lost its soul.* This is true for *all* institutions, public, private, or nonprofit.

Finally, I highlight the relevance that this permeability creates for spirit in all our institutions.

### **General Traits**

First, a review of the manifestations of spirit, which include:

- A sense of mission and vision, which I differentiate in a way that I believe is very important;
- The use of symbols, myths, and stories to describe the organization and its purposes;
- Diversity;
- Openness and authenticity in dealing with *all* constituencies;
- Equal respect and care for individuals in the organization;
- A priority for retreats or similar opportunities for reflection and planning that connect the symbolic with day-to-day routine.

### **City Year, Inc.**

Qualities of spirit exhibited by City Year include first and foremost a sense of mission and vision. It relies upon myth and stories to demonstrate its culture, the starfish story chief among them. The openness I experience there is part of City Year's authenticity. Each member "walks its talk" with everyone, inside the organization or out. Its Cyzygy meeting was a form of retreat and celebration to rededicate itself spiritually and practically to its mission. The City Year Corps is a near perfect reflection of the diversity in our country. And it relies on partnerships to bridge the perceived gap between nonprofit and profit-making institutions. It was powerful enough to enlist a corporation in a joint pursuit of its vision.

The first day I walked into City Year offices, the receptionist and her colleagues welcomed me as though genuinely interested in what I was trying to do, a wonderful



display of openness. I saw an office with City Year jackets hanging on the walls and everyone in uniform, representing all our ethnic groups. City Year uses stories, symbols, and ceremonies to engage its constituencies. One is the starfish story, which is about a little girl who is asked by an adult why she is throwing a starfish back into the sea when there are so many. Most will die in spite of her effort, she is told. How can she make a difference? “Well,” she says, “I made a difference with that one” — an apt story for young people working in near hopeless areas of human despair.

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### **New Alliances: Spirit and Corporate Responsibility**

An example of a spirited organization dealing with an institutional challenge concerned City Year’s efforts to work with corporations to support its expansion. City Year’s ambitions are nationwide, and government funding would not meet their expansion and growth needs. Corporations were one possible answer. In 1990, City Year had already received seventy pairs of boots from the Timberland Company, a leading footwear manufacturer. But a few pairs of boots were not going to meet their growth needs either.

When City Year cofounder Alan Khazei thanked Timberland CEO Jeffrey Swartz for the donation, the latter mused in conversation that whereas he was making boots, Khazei was saving lives — which Swartz wanted to do. Khazei responded that he could show him how to accomplish it at Timberland.<sup>34</sup>

Over several months, a corporate partnership between City Year and Timberland was initiated and strengthened, eventually leading to a \$5 million investment in City Year and a mutual exchange of services. Timberland saw this partnership not as philanthropy but a relationship that could benefit them in many ways. City Year supplied Timberland with training sessions worth thousands of dollars; their methods of engaging people in community service had the collateral benefit of encouraging Timberland employees to become more involved in company decisions involving their own work.

The spirit or symbolic boost also helped to improve company performance. This is a phenomenon now being recognized in business management analysis, such as that of Lee Bolman and Terry Deal in their insightful book, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Training, Inc.***

The path to economic self-sufficiency at Training, Inc., is characterized by hands-on projects, workplace simulations, personal skill development and peer support, and the use of visual imagery to overcome stumbling blocks and achieve success. Like City Year, Training, Inc., relies on stories, most notably that of the popular 1970s Jonathan Livingston Seagull, who was transformed when exhorted to fly. This story helps trainees transcend negative views of their abilities.

Training, Inc., has a number of rituals to welcome the student. On a particular day of the month, the company celebrates everyone whose birthday occurs in that month. On the first day of every class cycle, each trainee is welcomed by both the organization and a business world employer.

The curriculum is so constructed that, as early as possible, a test is given to trainees; the test is designed so it can be mastered by beginners, but represents a significant step in its own right. Successful results are then celebrated, and the effect on

the students can be amazing. They are not prepared for success, and the event releases spirit and builds confidence.

Tamara Thompson, a Training, Inc., graduate, says she received critical support from Training, Inc., which addressed both work and personal problems. "All voices are heard equally and all problems addressed," says former director Linda Swardlick-Smith.<sup>36</sup>

Training, Inc., demonstrates spirit through its celebration of each person's contribution, the equal care and attention it gives to all, and its emphasis on individual morale. This is demonstrated by the fact that its curriculum is designed to build morale and confidence quickly and dramatically. All executives and staff match their words with their deeds by affirming all equally. Training, Inc., in turn, reflects the focus and renewal of its members through its own vitality, high morale, and work satisfaction.

### ***The Thomas Jefferson Forum***

A few years after the Forum was taken over by Tufts University, I met with the staff to talk about their early motivation and spirit. Some of their conclusions were:

- They had their own vision of young people in service, and the Forum provided a space to nurture and pursue it;
- They had a story that transcended the negative in their work. This was the particular example of young people demonstrating the extraordinary benefit they could be to others, even when both they and the people they helped were in serious need;
- They felt they were a team, not a hierarchy;
- They shared their successes;
- They had hope. When the environment was negative, they were aware and sensitive to the idea that it did not have to be that way.

Staff also reported that it helped to be able to see their vision in their everyday work. "To keep the flame alive," staff member John Bengel suggested that funders should make the agency "sit down, step back, and review their mission at a retreat."

The Thomas Jefferson Forum had picked an area that was self-selective for young people with spirit, but spirit proved to be very contagious, as demonstrated by the 700 students who would attend its annual celebrations.

### ***Beyond the Nonprofit***

The importance of vision, stories, and symbols is not limited to the nonprofit world. As mentioned earlier, management consultants and best-selling authors James Collins and Jerry Porras state that vision is the key attribute which distinguishes successful corporations from their brethren. They are visionary in the sense of following their vision even when it conflicts with the bottom line.<sup>37</sup> Bolman and Deal see the symbolic side of organizational culture as a key aspect of management, which if overlooked can lead to corporate disaster.<sup>38</sup>

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## **Spirit Rising: A Four-Frame Analysis**

The *symbolic* realm is one of the four major frames Bolman and Deal advise us to consider if we want to understand corporate culture; the other three are the *struc-*

*tural*, *human resource*, and *political* frames. Elements of the structural frame include industrial process, organization charts, and chains of command. The human resource frame concerns relationships, employee motivation, and blending human and organizational needs. The political perspective addresses intramural power struggles, negotiations, conflict resolution, and advocacy.<sup>39</sup>

Viewed separately, each frame provides a restricted picture of the organization; managers often use just one or two as a basis for crucial decisions that do not pan out. In fact, the authors state that we “are hard pressed to manage organizations so that benefits regularly exceed costs.”<sup>40</sup> The operational affairs executives seek to manage are not within their control in an age of interdependence and rapid change. Many public constituencies often need to be dealt with before a corporate manager can launch a product or build a factory. Bolman and Deal cite a range of disasters and failures — from airplane crashes to multibillion-dollar corporate blunders — that result from seeking hasty solutions amid conflicting priorities, therefore looking at only a small part of the problem. Managers are quite often overwhelmed by situations that are too big, complex, and fast moving for them to handle.

The authors refer to the former CEO of General Motors, Roger Smith, who in the 1980s ignored the challenge of small cars from Japan, relying instead on rational thinking and financial logic to conclude that GM needed better computers and technology to compete. The Japanese continued to gain market share; meanwhile, during Smith’s tenure, arch-competitor Ford Motor Company surpassed GM in revenues for the first time in sixty years. Not a pretty picture.

Under Smith’s leadership, a form of redemption was achieved when GM introduced its Saturn model in 1990. The key here was improving productivity through utilization of a nonbureaucratic environment and a newly skilled and motivated labor force. Deal and Bolman call this management perspective the human resource frame. Until Saturn, Smith had been relying only on what Bolman and Deal term the structural frame; that is, the part of the corporation concerned with production lines and technology, the so-called hardware of enterprise.

### ***The Symbolic Frame***

Within Bolman and Deal’s four-frame model, the symbolic frame interests us most, because this is where the spirit of an organization manifests itself and ties in very closely to corporate procedures. These manifestations include corporate symbols, mythology, stories, goals, and mission. Even the corporate building is a symbol.

Leaders invoke the symbolic through their stories and deeds, reinterpreting experience for the employees. Jan Carlzon, the CEO of Scandinavian Air Systems, had his employees see every customer contact, even a brief one, as a moment of truth.<sup>41</sup> During a difficult time for Chrysler, Lee Iacocca cut his pay from \$360,000.00 to \$1.00 a year. Why? Because he believed that people “would follow a guy who sets that kind of example.”<sup>42</sup>

Bolman and Deal provide their own focus to the importance of the corporate retreat. Traditionally, retreats are used as a strategic planning exercise, producing five-year financial projections and so forth. Bolman and Deal, however, believe that much of the value of a corporate retreat lies not in the written plans that it produces but in the opportunity “to resolve contradictions and envision a solution to our problems,” and how the following questions are answered:

1. What was expressed?
2. What was attracted?
3. What was legitimized?<sup>43</sup>

They describe one expert's characterization of corporate planning retreats as rain dances because they may mean a lot to those who do them but do not seem to have any effect on the weather — that is, day-to-day corporate activities.<sup>44</sup> But from a symbolic perspective, corporate retreats serve an important ceremonial role because they impart energy and purpose, help provide focus, and reinforce corporate identity and motivation.

Authors Greg Dees, Jed Emerson, and Peter Economy go deeper into the symbolic and motivational realm in their study of what they describe as enterprising nonprofits. They see these organizations as combining both nonprofit and corporate structures and procedures into a new form of enterprise.

Their *Enterprising Nonprofits: A Toolkit for Social Entrepreneurs*, which is a collection of essays also featuring contributions from other leading experts, highlights the importance of mission. In a chapter written by Rob Johnston, senior vice president for program at the Drucker Foundation, mission is cited as the cornerstone of effective associations. Organizational mission tells us “why we do what we do” and provides credibility and understanding of the organization's goals to both employees and outsiders. Focus on a mission gives significance to the employee's daily tasks. Mission “can provide the inspiration to persevere” and is “the star we steer by.”<sup>45</sup>

I believe these statements are absolutely true, but only to the point where mission ends and vision begins. *The preceding quotes do not tell us what happens when the mission changes.*

For example: When polio is cured, should the March of Dimes go out of business?

Hold on — there may be some vital unfinished business for the vision's being served!

I don't mean to say that all programs should exit forever, but we need to be clear on the ultimate goals of all our endeavors. From the point of view of spirit alone, people working in the trenches need an inspiration that goes beyond some temporal or corporate goal. We must not set the sights too low. Let us elevate them by trying to define what a compelling vision is and how it relates to and is distinct from mission.

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## **Vision and Mission, Part II**

Bolman and Dees acknowledge that missions must be revisited in times of great change, but what happens to the guiding star? Is there an inconsistency here?

I think the writers are asking too much from a mission, that it must be focused on something fairly immanent and achievable, thereby ruling out its role as a lodestar. I propose that we include *vision* as the lodestar, and *mission* as a more particular goal in service of the vision.

Here we revisit our assumptions about mission and vision and examine their relationship in more detail.

### ***Vision: Clarifying Spirit***

Vision is distinguished by its attributes. It could be a picture such as a City on a Hill or a value such as human brotherhood and sisterhood or justice. Whatever it may be, the agency or the individual is serving this vision — to see it advanced, articulated, or embraced by a larger constituency.

*The key aspect of a vision is that it is very unlikely, if not impossible to be achieved fully by those who are working for it, yet it is so compelling that we are not discouraged by its distance.*

By never being destroyed or achieved, the vision remains a lodestar for our journeys.

### ***Mission: A Manifestation of Vision***

By contrast, *mission is what grounds the vision in the real world and daily tasks.* Mission is *always* in service of the vision, and mission is achievable — though not always and not without tremendous challenges. Moreover, mission is, at least, deemed to be possible, which is vital if people in an organization are going to work toward it without giving up.

Mission is conveyed through a statement that needs to be clear and concise — ideally, no more than seventeen words, beginning with the word “to” — so that the agency and everyone on its staff can maintain focus on it, with all the diverse plans and measures that may also be involved.

### ***First, the Vision . . .***

Meanwhile, because of its broader scope, the inspired vision can have a crucial role in helping an agency deal with change; for example, when the mission changes. We all know cases of a mission change, when the agency goes through a good deal of turmoil. A new director, who usually creates a new mission and sets about enlisting supporters for it, is hired.

Fine, so far. But the point that needs to be made here is that an agency might have to be clear about the vision before hiring a director to lead it out of the wilderness. Achieving such clarity at a time of fundamental change requires a good deal of adaptation. The leader cannot resort to his authority; indeed, he or she often has to push accountability down the hierarchy, into the ranks, and outward to other constituencies to elicit new solutions.<sup>46</sup> But these are matters related to leadership style and process.

I want to stick to vision.

The vision, the highest inspiration or motivating idea of an agency, functions as a compass or a guiding star that can assist in a successful resolution of turmoil. If there is no such guidance, policies of survival and chasing grants can take over.

A few years ago, I was on a volunteer peer board to review proposals for funding from a state agency. The first question applicants had to answer was to describe the vision of their organization. As far as I could see, no one described a vision. Most touted the wonderful work they were doing and how whatever it was they were doing would be done better if they received the money.

Does this mean that people lack vision?

I don't think so. If vision is not apparent, it might be latent. Generally, people do not think they have time for it, and nobody asks them about it very often. What a shame! I am sure that many organizational leaders have looked back on some fiasco

and realized how much time and strife could have been saved if the vision had been made clear at the beginning and revisited in a timely manner.

Neil Armstrong's landing on the moon was the end of the mission, but what was the vision? For some time, NASA had to wrestle, with limited success, with the larger issue of where it should go next. No vision existed beyond the goal, thrilling though it was, of putting a man on the moon. The point is, *missions may change, be completed, or superseded, but there must be a vision to continue to guide the process.*

Without a vision, an organization's campaign is, like NASA, left sitting on the moon with no place to go, waiting for a congressional appropriation. Leadership did not step up to the plate in a timely manner to guide NASA to a new vision and help it adapt to radically altered circumstances.

For example, a vision statement for NASA might have touched on a broad vision of "fulfilling a relationship of our planet and peoples to the cosmos." Now, this may not race motors, but one hopes it makes the point.

A vision statement should "sing." It could, in fact, be a hymn, with no limitation, within reason, on the number of words or format. A vision statement is heard and understood in the heart as well as the mind.

The mission statement for NASA could have been to put a man on the moon by (a specific date). This was a mission *in service of* a vision, which, if the latter had been properly articulated, could have guided NASA to its next mission.

### ***Then, the Mission***

Mission is organization-specific and includes that agency's special features, such as types of people, certain skills, biases, and so forth. Meanwhile, the vision is inclusive, vast, way out there, just beyond our reach.

The Thomas Jefferson Forum, for example, had the mission to "establish community service and community service learning in Massachusetts public schools." Its vision was, as already noted, to include all of our country's youth, from all backgrounds, and to address all problems.<sup>47</sup> This vision *expands* the Forum's mission to something more inclusive, potentially involving something much larger than itself.

The mission grounds us in the practical problems of life and makes our tasks significant. *Leadership* is the catalyst or intermediary between vision and mission. The vision has the potential to unite us with much larger groups that do not share our particular beliefs and values but whose goals may well be our own. Vision can provide a context for vigorous organizations to develop a shared dialogue on issues larger than their own, even on matters of national concern.

After the September 11 attack on America, the diversity and particularities of our nation were subsumed under a vision symbolized by our flag; all available American flags were quickly sold out. More important, within three weeks of the tragedy, more than \$700 million was raised for victims and heroes as the country mourned, prayed, and honored its struggle.

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### **Putting It All Together**

Having been swept up to this plateau, I want to go back to the beginning, where my wife and I were encountering deep concerns of a broad spectrum of agencies that, in turn, were dealing with deep concerns of their constituencies, people not so different from you and me. The scholars and commentators I have cited analyze forces that affect not just the institutions they are studying but society as a whole.

Matters of spirit, on which I have chosen to concentrate here, turn up in surprising places, not just in social services but also in supposedly bottom-line corporations. There are no iron boundaries or autonomous entities. But maybe there are broader meanings and insights to be gained from what can be found at ground level, where our personal and organizational efforts are focused.

We might go about it by asking some questions about what life is like in an institution where abstract principles meet the messy business of day-to-day practice:

- What is the organization's vision?
- How is the vision revisited? What form of self-assessment and learning is used?
- How do members of an organization know when they stray from the vision, and how serious are they about restoring it? What kind of sacrifices are they willing to make? Where do they draw the line?
- How does it reduce the likelihood of mission creep, arrogance, or corruption? For example, are there regular structured opportunities for assessment, evaluation, reflection, and rededication to visionary ideals? How are transparency and regular reporting help carried out?

Organizations, like people, need to renew their faith in something larger than themselves so that their lives are not subsumed by forces seeking to undermine them.

When The Thomas Jefferson Forum board urged that the organization remain pure, they meant that it remain true to its original purpose, its goals, and vision. There are often threats on all sides. If failure is likely, the organization may lose its focus and search for funds at any cost. If the organization is hugely successful, it may choose to expand its operation at any cost. Power, competition, and turf battles can easily cloud the vision.

Other questions:

- How does the organization treat people? How are their important contributions recognized, regardless of rank or seniority?
- How do they use stories or episodes to recount serious challenges, including how they were met, what they learned, and how things changed? Are they open about these challenges, even the failures? Are they aware of and sensitive to these challenges? Do they demonstrate that they have learned from them?
- What collegiality, openness, and spontaneity does one feel on visiting the site? Are you an outsider getting a dog and pony show, or are they authentically sharing with you something they are proud to offer?
- How are working-level individuals involved in the conversation?
- How does the organization demonstrate teamwork and people helping each other?
- How broad and inclusive is the organization in affect manner and style as well as gender and race?
- How are individuals supported in professional development or education?

- How does the organization recognize its accomplishments or deal with individual recognition: his or her problems, personal events, birthdays, and family situations?

The key question for members is: Do we have an integrated, highly motivated organization, where all constituencies are informed of the vision and mission, where leaders lead by example, and staff can relate their tasks to the mission and vision?

External evaluation helps to reflect on the impact of this kind of spirit. Other factors — leadership, financial, legal, or external events in the target population — might confound the mission, but a positive score on these less tangible points enriches the odds for success.

### ***So What?***

I have discussed the importance of spirit in the function of institutions. Even if spirit is true and institutions feel a little better, what might this mean to so many of us who may not feel connected to any particular one that can really make a difference? What might any random citizen of this country consider to be significant? I cannot speak for everyone, but it seems to me that in the midst of this disconnection we also are surrounded by forces tending to pull things back together. These forces come from institutions with spirit.

Following the September 11 attack, might we now be witnessing the powerful forces of spirit, along the lines of a cosmic outburst as described in Walter Brueggemann's *Prophetic Imagination*?

Let us look again at some of the concerns raised by social and political scientists. I referred earlier to Michael Sandel's assertion that the loss of self-government and erosion of community have defined the anxiety of our age. Alan Wolfe tells us that old relationships of loyalty have virtually dissolved; Wolfe's interviewees profess values that make sense to and for them, but are not necessarily the values of our traditional institutions and authorities.<sup>48</sup>

Earlier this year I was at a community circle in Chelsea, Massachusetts, involving about forty teenagers and sponsored by ROCA, a social service organization.<sup>49</sup> The attendees were primarily Cambodian, Hispanic, and African-American. Most had been or were members of gangs. The facilitator assigned them to groups with a request that they develop rules and principles for carrying on the planned discussion. All came up with traditional behaviors and values, including: listen, don't interrupt, care for each other, offer love and understanding, be tolerant, honest, kind, and so forth.

Loyalty was important to them, up to the level of friends and family. Institutions and governments did not seem to have a place, even though many of their families had been decimated by invading armed forces. They must have known the need for a larger political society that could provide security, but did not recognize any they could trust. They seemed ready to build one, however, one whose values would not appear much different from what many of the rest of us would call traditional.

They referred to a form of spirit that could provide guidance and strength, but no one advanced a particular faith. It was as though most traditional religions had some baggage, which disqualified them from a healing process. In fact, ROCA facilitators often use Native American rituals to focus on the spiritual.

The basic point I want to make is that underneath the cultural dissonance we Americans experience, there are common values and goals that we all share. These



in turn are manifestations of spirit coming not from on high through institution or edict, but elicited from we the people, who voluntarily participate under leadership of our choosing.

But not everyone shares this view, especially when the subject of religion arises. On the one hand we want values to have a place in our public life, and these have clear sources in religion. On the other, we do not want religion involved in our public life.

I recall a time when The Thomas Jefferson Forum was presenting its community service program to some faculty at a local high school. When we mentioned the benefits of student reflection on their service experience, some faculty objected to the use of the word *reflection* as a violation of the separation of church and state.

We realize an urgent need for spiritual strength and values but lack the means and vocabulary to discuss it. The source of strength is not too far different from the proverbial 800-pound gorilla looming over the scene that nobody wants to talk about.

Well, I believe that there is no conflict between the spirit that drives our civil institutions and churches. It is a pure force that moves both, but conflict grows out of the translation.

When we become aware of an overarching vision, we transcend the differences. When The Thomas Jefferson Forum began to work with City Year and others to organize the Massachusetts Youth Service Alliance cited earlier, we got hung up on turf conflicts for months. Each group identified with a particular mission. Their unique characteristics, such as ethnic or any other distinctions, first appeared as barriers. But after a while we understood that we all shared the same overarching vision — that of all young people joining together to serve the community and nation. The result was a strong multimillion-dollar alliance.

The nature of a mission can show the way to a larger vision. It takes the energy of spirit to lift you there. An advanced soul like the Dalai Lama can engage in a dialogue with leaders of other religions while appearing to acknowledge that there is some absolute even beyond his own. I once heard a tape in which the Vietnamese Buddhist, Thich Nhat Hanh, advised a young American not to become a Buddhist but to seek his goal through Christianity, where the young man's traditions already provided him with a base.

### ***Healing the Wounds of the Body Politic***

Spirit shows the possibility of healing and redemption, exemplified through programs such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation program in South Africa. Achieving redemption and healing through the spirit of reparation and forgiveness is the goal, which is reflected internationally through other efforts. For example, the United States has paid reparations to Japanese citizens who were incarcerated during World War Two; since the late 1980s it has been engaged in discussions and action regarding reparations to Native Americans. In the last year or so, reparations to African-Americans for slavery and colonialism emerged as a heated public topic, most dramatically represented in September's controversy surrounding the UN's World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa.

The key spirit aspect of all this is the attempt to heal the whole body politic so it may stand together as one. With our own problems, as well as those in Africa, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and central Asia, we can be assured of continued engagement in the question of racism and reparations for some time to come.

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## The Road Ahead: E Pluribus Unum

While so many of our commentators are concerned about civilian discontent and withdrawal from public life, an organization like City Year attracts dedicated youth from all kinds of social groups throughout the country to community service. They claim, with great credibility, that the inherent idealism of the nation's youth is responding to City Year's message. Yet City Year is only one of hundreds, even thousands, of organizations doing this very thing: appealing to idealism — the spirit.

The crucial question is how many of us will answer the call. My idealistic younger colleagues in The Thomas Jefferson Forum said they envied me because my generation was united by a cause: the destruction of Hitler and the Axis powers. They missed the unifying challenge. For all its faults, America was perceived as strong, purposeful, and united. The generation just behind me is now known as the Greatest Generation.

So many of our great institutional efforts, while worthy, lacked the scale that national service enjoyed when I was in college, which left all my friends and me believers in such a service. We can see what spirit can achieve in our society, but we are not there yet. Are there any choices or paths open to us? Our initial response to the attack on America may show new paths, but it is too early to tell. What more can our leadership ask of us, to bring forth a long-term commitment to citizen participation? Some modest possibilities are outlined below.

Earlier I cited four: Bethel A.M.E. Church, Training, Inc., City Year, and The Thomas Jefferson Forum. All four are examples of organizations guided by spirit and engaged in community service. There are thousands of other such organizations meeting crucial needs in our society, displaying similar spirit. City Year is particularly distinguished as a community service organization because of its size and growth to a national scale.

In 2000, representatives from nine similar organizations and I joined City Year to form an informal association, the Action Group for Citizenship and Service (AGCS). Its mission was to follow up on an October 1999 conference held at the John F. Kennedy Library, which was sponsored by Sumner Redstone and featured General Colin Powell, currently secretary of state, as well as former members of the Kennedy administration and presidents and officials of colleges, media organizations, and corporations. The conclusion of this conference was to lay down a challenge to the country, to counter what Paul G. Kirk, Jr., chairman of the Kennedy Library board of directors, termed an “all-time high level of cynicism, disaffection, and citizen disconnect from politics.”<sup>50</sup>

The Action Group developed a document called *A Bold National and Community Service Agenda for the Next Decade*. The agenda consisted of ten proposals for national legislation that were presented to both presidential candidates during the 2000 presidential debates. One proposal was endorsed by then-candidate George W. Bush. It advocated legislation awarding funds to senior citizens who did a certain amount of service, which they could use to fund scholarships for young people. At City Year's annual meeting referred to earlier, Senator John McCain announced that he would propose legislation supporting other points in this agenda. The goal of AGCS is to bring national service to scale, engaging vast numbers of citizens in the vital work of our nation. This represents a powerful answer to our concern for lack of involvement and disconnectedness.

I should add that some people at the Kennedy Library conference raised the point that community service does not lead to political engagement, but I think it is much too early to come to that conclusion, and early experience seems to indicate the opposite.

### ***One More Time: The “Vision Thing”***

“There will have to be an extraordinary resurgence of spirit on the part of the American people, a fierce commitment to the common good,” noted John Gardner some years ago.<sup>51</sup> Right now the common good is missing, fragmented by special interests with their own particular vitality, according to those I have referenced. I have argued that the particular vitality, spirit — or, indeed, fierce commitment — can be subsumed by an overarching vision. Particularities of organization and mission certainly define an agency’s turf, and barriers usually spring up immediately. But as an agency achieves an inclusive vision, it begins to cooperate with others to achieve something larger than the sum of its parts. The AGCS and the Massachusetts Service Alliance are two small examples. The outpouring of American sentiment in the wake of terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., is a major one. In any case, the possibility is demonstrated.

The new millennium has brought us many challenges, but they have stimulated new spirit and forms that show a potential for understanding and meeting them, even resolving them.

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## **Epilogue**

*Fly the ocean in a silver plane  
See the jungle when it’s wet with rain*

This stanza belongs to a hit from the 1960s or early 1970s that planted itself in my mind after hearing a smoky-voiced Filipina sing in a bistro in Manila or Jakarta. The song resonated because I had spent so much time in a silver plane flying over Southeast Asian jungles. Every time we descended into Manila I would gaze down on beautiful coral islands with dense green foliage in the interior. On the shore were villages, some of the houses perched gracefully on stilts. Wooden fishing weirs swept and curved out into the blue sea. Seized by these images, I would still end up in a modern city, in a modern Hilton Hotel, going to appointments in modern office skyscrapers.

Then one day I got off the silver plane, got on a slightly less silver one, a puddle jumper, then on to a bus, and finally a fishing boat operated by a genial Filipino fisherman to the island town of Suttunggan, where the Institute of Cultural Affairs, cited earlier, was having one of its two-week consults on social, cultural, and economic development. In addition to all the work, there was a wedding to celebrate, and the local people got a big kick out of watching all the foreigners — who probably included our Filipino and Filipana colleagues from government, university, and civic organizations in Manila — exert themselves in what was, to the villagers, somewhat bizarre. In addition to the wedding celebration, they thrilled us with their deep commitment to their future.

Every day I would walk out onto the coral beach in the intense tropic sun and look up at a silver plane descending toward Manila. I would wonder if other bemused foreigners were gazing out the window wondering what this impoverished

but exotic setting was all about. The message I hoped that everyone would get, even as we are under attack, is that throughout the world there is abundant spirit to be shared among us all — and lives to be renewed.☞

*My wife, Gloria, provided the inspiration for this article by her intense commitment to helping victims of domestic violence through her work with Help for Abused Women and Children and by her many agencies engaged in this and related work.*

*My thanks to Rob Hollister, dean of the University College of Citizenship and Public Service. Thanks also to Christine Green and her colleagues at The Boston Foundation for comments and advice very early in the process. Many people at the Greater Boston YMCA (the Y) and its Training, Inc., branch were most generous with their time, including John Ferrel, president of the Y, board member Bob Brace, vice-president Elsa Bengel, Training, Inc., staff members Jim Kilgore and Lee Payne, board members Eileen Crowley and Ginger Mara, and graduate Tamara Thompson. The former staff of The Thomas Jefferson Forum, including John Bengel, Jay Davis, Sheila McColgan, and, from City Year, Mike Brown, president, and cofounder Alan Khazei were also helpful.*

*I had vital and early editing support from Cynthia Parsons of SerVermont and editor Alex LaJoie. Finally, Marcy Murningham put it all together, with arduous and skilled editorial work and by expanding my research in and understanding of all the larger public issues involved.*

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## Notes

1. See, for example, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Philip D. Zelikow, and David C. King, eds., *Why People Don't Trust Government* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996); Alan Wolfe, *Moral Freedom: The Search for Virtue in a World of Choice* (New York: Norton, 2001); Robert Wuthnow, *Poor Richard's Principle: Recovering the American Dream Through the Moral Dimension of Work, Business and Money* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994).
2. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, 1.
3. Wolfe, *Moral Freedom*, 60.
4. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Introduction: The Decline of Confidence in Government," in Nye et al., *Why People Don't Trust Government*, 1.
5. Ronald Englehart, "Postmaterialist Values and the Erosion of Institutional Authority," in Nye et al., *Why People Don't Trust Government*, 233–234.
6. Englehart, "Postmaterialist Values," 236.
7. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, 14–16.
8. *Ibid.*, 322.
9. *Ibid.*, 202.
10. Laurie Belsie, "Sink or Swim?" *Christian Science Monitor*, May 3, 2001.
11. Adrian Walker, "A Believer's Rude Reward," *Boston Globe*, August 20, 2001.
12. John Dilulio, the Bush administration's special adviser on faith-based initiatives, cited personal and professional reasons for his departure; a highly regarded scholar, he returned to his teaching post at the University of Pennsylvania. The frequent commute between Washington and Philadelphia, where his family lives, long hours, and job stress were taking a toll on his health, Dilulio told *The Boston Globe*. A big concern: his weight exceeds 300 pounds. "It's not like a dagger in the heart or a gun at my head," Dilulio said, referring to his health, "but being 60, 70, or 80 pounds overweight takes its toll." Others, however, cited the frustra-

- tions of a deeply divided Congress and nation on the matter of federal support for faith-based initiatives as the chief cause of his departure. See Susan Milligan and Mary Leonard, "Faith Initiative Chief Quits as Debate on Plan Heats Up," *Boston Globe*, August 18, 2001.
13. Quoted in "Faith and the Secular State," *New York Times*, September 23, 2001.
  14. Remarks appearing in Mary Leonard, "'The Real Issue Is Trust': Who Are the Believers and Who Are the Skeptics When Nine Activists Discuss Bush's Faith-Based Initiative?" *Boston Globe*, April 29, 2001.
  15. Since its founding in London in 1844, the YMCA has relied on Judeo-Christian values to fulfill its mission; in 1851, the Greater Boston YMCA, the first in the United States, was established.
  16. Training, Inc.'s three strategies combine to offer the prospect of lasting self-sufficiency. "Workplace simulation" means that the "environment and curriculum recreate the atmosphere and expectations of the workplace. Through hands-on projects and simulated companies, trainees make the transition to the 'culture of work' more easily and experience increased self-confidence." Its "whole person" approach encourages the development of problem solving and critical thinking skills. Finally, through comprehensive community teamwork — involving staff and trainees, employers and graduates, community agencies, and public and private organizations — Training, Inc., is able to assure lasting success for its participants. More information on Training, Inc.'s methods, site programs, and outcomes can be viewed on its website, [www.traininginc.org](http://www.traininginc.org).
  17. Information provided in telephone conversation with Elsa Bengel, first director of Training, Inc., and member of the Executive Committee of the Greater Boston YMCA.
  18. In addition to Boston, the site of national headquarters, City Year, Inc., now operates in Chicago; Cleveland; Columbia, S.C.; Columbus, Ohio; Detroit; New Hampshire; Philadelphia; Rhode Island; San Antonio; San Jose/Silicon Valley; Seattle/King County; and Washington, D.C. City Year puts its vision this way: *That one day, the most commonly asked question for an eighteen-year-old is, Where are you going to do your community service year?* Toward this aim, City Year's stated mission is "to put idealism to work by tapping the civic power of young people for an annual campaign of idealism." Its goals are to "generate transformative community service, break down racial barriers, to inspire citizens to civic action, develop new leaders for the common good, and improve and promote the concept of voluntary national service." Further information on City Year is available on its website at [www.cityyear.org](http://www.cityyear.org).
  19. *Coordinator's Handbook*, Thomas Jefferson Forum, 1990.
  20. In the late 1970s and early 1980s I served as a board member of The Boston Foundation, one of the nation's oldest and now the ninth largest community foundation, with assets of \$700 million. When I joined the TBF in 1978, it was moving from providing grants to the well-established charities (hospitals, museums, the Red Cross, and so forth) to support for community development initiatives and smaller neighborhood groups through what was termed the Persistent Poverty Program. A guiding philosophy was that they were to do things *with* people instead of *for* them; the emphasis was on community strengths, not weaknesses. Part of TBF strategy involved working with other local foundations to support programs run by urban churches, not unlike current Bush administration proposals for a faith-based initiatives program. Another key characteristic: TBF sought to involve grantees in program decisions instead of relying on large institutions and experts. Diversity became a major goal in the 1980s; there was only one minority member on the TBF distribution committee when I resigned in 1984 to make room for a second minority member. The mid-1980s saw more changes, not only for the TBF, but also throughout the nonprofit sector. Many of these changes engaged me as they brought in a wave of youth community service programs: Social Entrepreneurs, Venture Philanthropy, and Restorative Justice.
  21. Donor-advised funds are created by contributions of cash, stock, or other assets to a grant-making organization — mostly community foundations, but also including

nonprofit groups established by commercial investment companies – which are then invested in the capital markets. Even though the funds may be administered by the organization, donors continuing to play an active role by recommending how earnings of the fund should be distributed, for example, which nonprofit organizations should receive grants. Donor-advised funds have become very popular. According to a survey conducted by *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, assets of donor-advised funds grew to \$10.2 billion last year, and they made roughly \$1.4 billion in grants. Most of the growth occurred at the Fidelity Investments Charitable Gifts Fund. See Harvey Lipman, “Survey Finds Rapid Rise in Assets and Grants of Donor-Advised Funds,” *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, May 31, 2001.

22. “Coolidge Family Fund: Grantmaking Process and Procedures,” circa 1993. My wife and I developed the following introductory statement in the RFP’s “Need for Spirit and/or Vision: Statement of Grantmaking Values” section:
 

Our recent experiences have led us to recognize that organizations need to have a deeply rooted sense of spirit, vision, or a profound hope for the future. We believe that the concern we have heard from program leaders about their own and their staff’s lack of self- esteem, feelings of powerlessness, sense of disconnection, alienation, hopelessness and despair, have as their root cause this need for spirit. We have come to believe that creating this organizing and motivating force is as important as any improvement in material assets or status. There are many examples of poor communities that show this vitality, and we believe that programs would benefit by working to achieve the same.
23. The Boston Justice Ministries (BJM) was founded by Anne Marie Hunter, a pastor at a Methodist church in Saugus. The Reverend Hunter ventured out on her own to found her organization in 1996. It is now well established as a leading resource in Boston and eastern Massachusetts for helping clergy deal with domestic violence within their congregations. In 1999, BJM trained a network of Christian and Jewish congregations in twelve greater Boston communities representing 11,000 people. See *Voices for Justice*, Boston Justice Ministries, Spring 1999.
24. D. H. Lawrence, “Song of a Man Who Has Come Through,” 1920.
25. “Wind Beneath My Wings,” words and music by Larry Henley and Jeff Silbar, 1983, 1988.
26. Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1978), 16. A classic in its field, it has been revised and updated, including a new preface reissued by Fortress Press in June 2001.
27. This concept of religious revelation being carried down to agencies both religious and secular is introduced in Thomas S. Jeavons, “Role of Values: Management in Religious Organizations,” a chapter in *Governance, Leadership, and Management of Nonprofit Organizations*, edited by D. R. Young, R. M. Hollister, and V. A. Hodgkinson (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).
28. In *Profiles of Excellence: Achieving Success in the Nonprofit Sector*, A Publication of Independent Sector (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), authors E. B. Knauft, Renée A. Berger, and Sandra T. Gray provide detailed case studies revealing how nonprofits can achieve excellence by applying basic qualities of outstanding leadership: a clearly articulated sense of mission, a dynamic leader, an involved and committed governing board, and the ability to raise funds and motivate volunteers.
29. James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (New York: Harper Business, 1997). Collins and Porras identify eighteen visionary companies, then describe what is special about them.
30. A primary aim of social entrepreneurs is to bring nonprofits to scale, that is, meet a particular need on a national or global level. Social entrepreneurs break through the traditional distinctions between nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and often diversify their revenue by charging a fee for service or setting up for profit enterprises to support their charitable activities.
31. J. Gregory Dees, Peter Economy, and Jed Emerson, *Enterprising Nonprofits: A Handbook for Social Entrepreneurs* (New York: John Wiley, 2001), 24.

32. In *Enterprising Nonprofits*, Dees, Economy, and Emerson cite the case of Rubicon Programs, Inc., a California-based business venture whose primary objective is social: to train high-risk unemployed workers. Roughly half of their efforts are funded by the \$4 million in annual revenues generated from a bakery run by its trainees. *Ibid.*, 10. These entrepreneurs have a new approach to financing nonprofits that resemble venture capital funding more than philanthropy. New Profit, founded by Vanessa Kirsch, has established a Venture Philanthropy Fund that uses the language and methods of venture capital for charitable purposes. They seek to involve strategic financial investors employing venture funds to support the dynamic growth to scale of nonprofits capable of ending illiteracy, stopping hunger, providing an excellent education for all young people in our country. New Profit believes that they need to support their clients in the venture manner — that is, by joining client boards and providing funding that will carry them to the point of self-sufficiency and market dominance. Venture capitalists are creating similar models as they seek to engage in hands-on philanthropy. Rather than many grants to many projects, they tend to invest heavily in relatively few nonprofit organizations, heavily involving themselves in the process. In some ways this is a new wave that contrasts with the traditional philanthropy of a community foundation like The Boston Foundation. The venture funders perceive their job as carrying a new initiative for a few years and then moving on to the next, on the assumption that by this time the nonprofit will have achieved stable funding from permanent sources. The venture ethic is that the responsible funder must see the project through take-off.
33. This (literal and figurative) spirited reaction may galvanize the activity President Bush is seeking. But I think the evidence shows that spirit is playing a role outside organized religion, a fact that for some time has drawn the attention of corporate consultants as well as nonprofit experts. Indeed, the debate has become enriched, and the best possibility for what the president is seeking may lie in civil and secular society rather than the religious sector.
34. This episode is elaborated in J. Gregory Dees and Jaan Elias, *City Year Enterprise*, Case No. 9396196 (Cambridge: Harvard Business School Publishing, 1996). Case writers Dees and Elias describe City Year's efforts to diversify its funding base to gain "earned income" through the Timberland collaboration, which also produced a line of clothing. The case "provides a detailed description of City Year's core service operation, its past development efforts, and the process through which Timberland and City Year managed their partnership." In another case study, James E. Austin and Jaan Elias chronicle the Timberland and City Year alliance, which both sides contend constitutes "a new paradigm" for the interaction between a for-profit business and a nonprofit organization. The Harvard teaching case "discusses Timberland's commitments to beliefs and service in light of disappointing financial results for the company and subsequent layoffs during the 1995 fiscal year. [It also] introduces the idea of a corporate strategy for community involvement, allowing the [reader] to raise questions about the choice of activities and partners, the breadth of projects and the source of motivation for such a strategy." See James E. Austin and Jaan Elias, *Timberland and Community Involvement*, Case No. 9796156 (Cambridge: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2001). Information on these and other business cases involving City Year is available from the Harvard Business School Publishing website, [www.hbsp.harvard.edu](http://www.hbsp.harvard.edu).
35. Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 2d ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997).
36. *Conversations* with Tamara Thompson and Linda Swardlick-Smith, 1997, 1998.
37. Collins and Porras, *Built to Last*.
38. Bolman and Deal, *Reframing Organizations*.
39. *Ibid.*, 15. Bolman and Deal present, in table form, an overview of their four-frame model, which identifies each frame's primary metaphor, core concepts, image of leadership, and basic leadership challenge. Their analysis shows "that each of the frames has its own image of reality. You may be drawn to one or two frames and repelled by the others. Some frames may seem clear and straightforward while

others seem puzzling. As you learn to apply all four, you should develop greater appreciation and deeper understanding of organizations.”

40. *Ibid.*, 8.
41. *Ibid.*, 261.
42. *Ibid.*, 314. The Iacocca remark is from Lee Iacocca with William Novak, *Iacocca: An Autobiography* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), 229–230.
43. *Ibid.*, 249.
44. *Ibid.*, 242. “A good deal of the corporate planning I have observed is like a ritual rain dance; it has no effect on the weather that follows, but those who engage in it think it does. Moreover, it seems to me that much of the advice and instruction related to corporate planning is directed at improving the dancing, not the weather.” The rain dance quote, attributed to J. B. Quinn, originally appeared in H. Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning: Reconceiving Roles for Planning, Plans, and Planners* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 139.
45. Rob Johnston, “Defining Your Mission,” chap. 2 in Dees, Economy, and Emerson, *Enterprising Nonprofits*, 19–42. The “star we steer by” image is attributed to Frances Hesselbein, *Excellence in Nonprofit Leadership*, video program (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), and Peter M. Senge, “The Practice of Innovation,” in *Leader to Leader* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999).
46. See Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*.
47. *Coordinator’s Handbook*, Thomas Jefferson Forum, 1990.
48. Sandel, *Democracy’s Discontent*; Wolfe, *Moral Freedom*.
49. I was part of ROCA’s Street Team and Peacemaking Circle. ROCA bills itself as “a grassroots human development and community building organization in Chelsea and Revere, Massachusetts. ROCA’s vision is young people and families thriving and leading change. ROCA’s mission is to promote justice by creating opportunities with young people and families to lead happy and healthy lives. Its core values are belonging, generosity, independence, and competence.” ROCA is composed of five separate programs and one coalition: the ROCA Chelsea Leadership Program, Revere Leadership Program, Healthy Families Program, Youth STAR AmeriCorps Program, the Street Team and Peacemaking Circles, and the ROCA Community Building Team/Coalition for Healthy Families. Founded in 1988, ROCA, in Spring 2001, completed a comprehensive five-year business plan and growth strategy, and is working toward a more productive and positive future. Further information on ROCA is available from Molly Baldwin, executive director, (617) 889-5210, ext. 221, baldwinm@rocainc.com.
50. Quoted in *The Boston Globe*, November 3, 1999.
51. John Gardner, *National Renewal*, a joint publication of Independent Sector and the National Civic League (Washington, D.C.: Independent Sector, 1995), 11.



