



Project on Civic Reflection



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The Project on Civic Reflection

A democratic society needs citizens who engage actively in their communities. But civic action without reflection is not enough. A democratic society also needs citizens who engage thoughtfully in their communities, with clarity, wisdom and imagination.

The Project on Civic Reflection encourages civic reflection by fostering the practice of reflective reading and discussion. Through facilitated discussion of short provocative readings, citizens can be helped to reflect on the beliefs and values that underlie engagement—leading to deeper understanding, improved relationships, and more effective action.

In a civic reflection discussion, a group of people engaged in common civic work—such as a youth group or Rotary Club, AmeriCorps program or nonprofit board—steps back and reflects on that work. Conversation focuses first on a short, thought-provoking reading and gradually opens up onto larger questions about civic engagement, questions such as, *What do I expect from those I serve? To whom are we accountable? Why give? How does one become a leader?* By reading and talking together about these questions, participants gain a deeper understanding of one another and of their common work.

Among the resources that the Project on Civic Reflection offers are an extensive electronic resource library; an online forum in which facilitators share their experiences; expert training in facilitation; individual consultation with Project staff; and anthologies of readings that inspire rich conversation about civic engagement. *The Civically Engaged Reader* (Great Books Foundation, 2006) includes more than forty readings by authors ranging from Moses Maimonides to Toni Morrison, along with discussion questions and tips for facilitators. Our newest anthology, *Hearing the Call across Traditions: Readings on Faith and Service* (Skylight Paths, 2009) explores the connections between faith, service, and social justice through the prose, verse, and sacred texts of the world's great faith traditions—Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, and more.

Reflective reading and discussion can be useful for virtually any group of civically engaged people, from senior philanthropic leaders to young people exploring the call to service. Among the benefits that participants in civic reflection discussions enjoy are improved relationships with colleagues, fresh perspectives on their day-to-day work, and heightened commitment to and understanding of their mission.

In the words of a recent participant in a civic reflection series, **“The experience has strengthened relationships among colleagues and helped to build a common bond of care for those who need our help. The program has produced amazing results for our organization and the community we serve.”**

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