

CENTER FOR PUBLIC & NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP
AND
CENTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

ISSUES FORUM

**FROM PASSION TO PROFESSION:
MAKING A CAREER
THAT MATTERS**

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Georgetown University
Washington, DC

Educating Leaders Who Change the World

THE CENTER FOR PUBLIC & NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP

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PROGRAM

◆ *Welcome* ◆

Kathy Kretman

Director, Center for Public & Nonprofit Leadership

◆ *Moderator* ◆

E.J. Dionne, Jr.

**Columnist, *Washington Post*, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution, Professor,
Georgetown Public Policy Institute**

◆ *Keynote Speaker* ◆

Wendy Kopp

President and Founder, Teach For America

◆ *Panelists* ◆

Cheryl Dorsey

President, Echoing Green

Cecilia Muñoz

Vice President, National Council of La Raza

Chris Murphy

Executive Director, City Year Washington, D.C.

◆ *Closing* ◆

Kathleen Maas Weigert

Executive Director, Center for Social Justice Research, Teaching & Service

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

MODERATOR

E.J. DIONNE, JR. is a Senior Fellow in the Governance Studies Program at The Brookings Institution, where he co-chairs the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. He has written an op-ed column for the *Washington Post* since 1993 that has been syndicated to more than 90 other publications. He published his best-selling book, *Why Americans Hate Politics*, in 1991. Before joining the *Washington Post*, E.J. spent 14 years with the *New York Times*, reporting on state and local government, national politics, and from around the world, including stints in Paris, Rome, and Beirut. E.J.'s most recent book *Stand Up Fight Back: Republican Toughs, Democratic Wimps, and the Politics of Revenge* was published in 2003. That same year he joined the Georgetown Public Policy Institute as a University Professor. E.J. received his B.A. from Harvard and his Ph. D. from Oxford University.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

WENDY KOPP proposed the creation of Teach For America in her senior undergraduate thesis in 1989 and has spent the last 16 years sustaining and expanding the organization. Teach For America aims to build the movement to eliminate educational inequity between low- and high-income areas by enlisting some of the nation's most promising future leaders in its national teacher corps. Since its inception Teach For America has fielded more than 12,000 outstanding recent college graduates as teachers in low-income rural and urban communities. For her work with Teach For America, Wendy – the youngest person and first woman to do so – received Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson Award, the highest award for an undergraduate alumnus. *Time Magazine* identified her as one of the 40 most promising leaders under 40 in 1994. Wendy has also received honorary doctorate degrees from Drew University, Princeton University, and Smith College.

PANELISTS

CHERYL DORSEY is the first Echoing Green Fellow to serve as President of the organization. Echoing Green is a social venture organization that has awarded more than \$22 million in start-up capital to over 400 social entrepreneurs worldwide since 1987. Cheryl received her Echoing Green Fellowship to launch “The Family Van”, a community-based mobile health unit that provides basic medical and outreach services to at-risk residents of inner-city Boston neighborhoods. As a Special Assistant to the U.S. Secretary of Labor and Special Assistant to the Director of the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Labor Department during the Clinton Administration, Cheryl advised federal officials on health care issues and developed family-friendly workplace policies. Cheryl holds a B.A. in History and Science from Harvard-Radcliffe Colleges, an M.D. from the Harvard Medical School, and an M.P.P. from the John F. Kennedy School of Government.

CECILIA MUÑOZ serves as the Vice President for the Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation at the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the largest national civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States working to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. In this role, she oversees all legislative and advocacy activities conducted by NCLR staff covering a variety of issues of importance to Latinos, including immigration policy, civil rights, employment, farmworker issues, education and health care. Cecilia also serves on the Executive Committee of the National Immigration Forum and the U.S. Advisory Committee of Human Rights Watch. In 2001, the Mexican Government presented her with its Ohtli award for her work advancing the cause of Mexicans living and working in the United States and *Washingtonian* magazine named her one of eight women to watch. She was also a recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship for her work on immigration and civil rights in 2000. Cecilia received her B.A. from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and a M.A. from the University of California at Berkeley.

CHRIS MURPHY in 2000, as an alumnus of the first-ever City Year corps in Boston seventeen years ago, left private practice at the downtown law firm of Hogan & Hartson to return to City Year and found the Washington, DC site. City Year is an 'action tank' for citizen service that works to demonstrate, improve and promote the concept of voluntary citizen service as a means of building a stronger democracy. As Executive Director of City Year Washington, DC he is responsible for raising the site's \$1.8 million budget and oversees the program's service, recruitment, training, and evaluation components. Murphy has also served on the Youth Services Steering Committee of the local American Red Cross chapter, the Independent Sector's John W. Gardner Leadership Award Selection Committee, and currently serves as the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps. In 2001, Chris was named to *Washington Business Forward Magazine's* Next Network, a list of the top 40 young executives to watch in Greater DC. Murphy received his B.A. from Harvard University and his J.D. from the Georgetown University Law Center.

INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this, in all likelihood you either have a career that matters, or you long for one. You long for the “day job” that is a “calling.” Work that is energizing and rewarding. Work that leaves you feeling satisfied – not in a smug way, but in a thankful way.

Don’t all of us long for this? Perhaps not. Some people, I believe, may find their reward in personal achievement, or in competitive advantage, or in financial success – and certainly the world we live in today demands people so motivated.

But then there are those of us who, they say, “have stars in our eyes,” who see the possibility of changing the norm, righting things that are off-kilter, of enabling the disabled, uplifting the downtrodden, embracing the marginalized, making more of a whole out of the pieces.

It is the voices of those that we hear in this forum – the voices of individuals who not only have made a career that matters for themselves, but whose work has mattered for their communities and their world.

Wendy Kopp, founder and president of Teach For America. Cheryl Dorsey, president of Echoing Green. Cecilia Muñoz, vice president of National Council of La Raza. Chris Murphy, executive director of City Year Washington, D.C. – theirs are the voices of experience. And they are generous in sharing their experiences – and the lessons they have learned on their incredible journeys; lessons taught over decades of trial and error, of seeking down blind trails, of stumbling but always getting up again.

Their lessons are powerful and, not surprisingly, they reflect much introspection. In fact, introspection is at their core. To summarize:

Lesson No. 1 – Master Thyself. Become aware of what matters to you. Follow your curiosity. Acknowledge and move through your fears. Accumulate real experiences.

Lesson No. 2 – Be willing to take risks. Seize those moments of accident and chance.

Lesson No. 3 – Build good, practical skills. Be or train yourself to be a great networker. Learn to say “no.” Value good management.

Lesson No. 4 – Appreciate the context. The nonprofit world and the for-profit world must co-exist. Acknowledge the value of time spent in the for-profit world. Get comfortable with the realities – particularly the financial realities – of the nonprofit world.

Lesson No. 5 – Know where your voice is strongest, where you can best contribute. Know where, within the continuum of work, your skills are best used and you are most comfortable.

Wonderful lessons, all. Lessons not just for work, but for life.

But perhaps the most important lesson of all is highlighted by Wendy Kopp, who took her first-hand college experiences and acted on them; who saw challenge and had the naiveté and determination to tackle the challenge and believe she could overcome it. Her lesson:

Not only should the world be different, it could be different.

But only if we make it so.

Kathy P. Kretman, Ph.D.
Director
Center for Public and Nonprofit Leadership
Georgetown University

PROGRAM

KATHY KRETMAN: Welcome every one. I'm Kathy Kretman, and I am the Director of Georgetown University's Center for Public and Nonprofit Leadership. On behalf of our center and our co-host – the Center for Social Justice Research Teaching and Service – it is a pleasure to welcome you to Georgetown and to today's panel discussion, *From Passion to Profession: Making a Career that Matters*.

Putting this event together was a labor of love for our planning committee, which consisted of undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty and staff. The topic resonates with each of us. It is about those who are beginning their career and starting down their career paths, and those of us who are responsible for developing the next generation of public and nonprofit leaders.

Every day I come into contact with people in nonprofit organizations who are absolutely passionate about their work. Whether working in local social service organizations like D.C.'s Bread for the City or global organizations like Conservation International, these individuals are committed to making their organizations more effective and their world a better place. And at the same time, I have daily conversations with students and recent college graduates, and they, too, are passionate about a need they see in the communities they serve, an issue they've worked on in an internship or a research project; they, too, want to make a difference in the lives of others and to find meaning in the work they do.

Which brings us to why we're here today.

We carefully selected this group of nonprofit leaders because of their unique experiences and their willingness to share not only the challenges, opportunities and pleasures of working in the nonprofit field, but also some of their personal stories, lessons they've learned, and advice they would offer.

Our moderator today is E.J. Dionne, Jr., columnist for the Washington Post. I started reading E.J.'s columns way back in the early '90s, when he was an op-ed columnist for the Post. Back in those days, if you read a good column and you were teaching, you would clip out the column. I had volumes of his columns. And one in particular really informed what I did in class. The column was about the reform generation – people 18 to 24 years old who cared about society, wanted to serve and wanted to tackle public leadership. I have that column with me to this day. When planning this event, I couldn't think of anyone who would be better at moderating than E.J., because he is as passionate about this work as we all are.

In addition to writing a column for the Post, he also is a senior fellow at The Brookings Institution, and he is also a professor, I'm delighted to say, and a colleague here at Georgetown. The two latter institutions are nonprofit, I might add. So without further ado, let us welcome E.J. Dionne.

(Applause)

E.J. DIONNE, JR.: That's actually one of my favorite columns, because it really said that the people under 30 are potentially the great reforming generation in our country's history, especially if you all figure out how to bring your passion for service together with a different kind of politics. And I urge you all to do that. I know I'm in the right place whenever I see a bunch of AmeriCorps folks in their red uniforms there. Bless you guys for what you do.

Let me say a few words about the problem that people who are engaged in this kind of work face, because I think the biggest problem the service movement faces is that people think it's just *nice*. Now nice is good; in fact, nice is a lot better than the alternative. But when people write the service

movement off as nice, they don't look at the importance of the movement and the work to our country.

My friends Will Marshall and Mark McGee argued that the service idea could be a departure comparable to the breakthroughs in earlier eras that created a strong sense of citizenship, like the settlement houses and night school, which helped America absorb waves of immigration. They have written that national service opens new paths of upward mobility for young Americans and the people they serve and, like the GI bill, national service could be seen as a long-term investment in the education skills and ingenuity of our people.

And what if service is a means to strengthen the ties that bind us together as a nation? What if it creates bridges between groups in our society that have little to do with each other on any given day? What if service can bring people out of isolation and into community? What if it fosters political and civic participation in a society that, until recently, and perhaps still to this day, seems to hold the arts of public life in less than high esteem? In short, what if service is not simply a good in itself, not simply nice, but a means to many ends?

My friend Jane Eisner, who now works at the Constitution Center in Philadelphia, argues that service can and should produce more than individual fulfillment for those involved and temporary assistance for communities in need. It should, she said, lead to an appetite for substantive change, a commitment to address the social problems that have created the need for service in the first place. And she suggested that, as a nation, we should embrace service as a way of enhancing political participation in the very processes that govern public life.

This argument, this discussion, is really about how we Americans think of ourselves as Americans. It's a debate over how we're going to solve public problems. It's a discussion about what we owe our country, our communities and each other. And I think if our nation is to continue to prosper, it is a discussion we'll have in every generation. Because if we decide that there are no public things on which we are willing to spend some of our time and some of our effort, not to mention our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor as our founders did, then we'll be breaking faith with our experiment in liberty that is rooted in mutual assistance and democratic aspiration.

I am very grateful that we have people here today who are keeping that experiment alive and well.

We will begin this morning hearing from Wendy Kopp, our keynote speaker. After a few questions, Wendy will have to leave – it's very kind of her to make room in a complicated schedule for us today. After we hear from Wendy, we will hear from the others on our panel and then we will open the conversation up to the audience.

Wendy Kopp is president and founder of Teach For America, an organization inspired by her senior undergraduate thesis in 1989. She has spent the last 16 years sustaining and expanding the organization. Teach For America aims to build the movement to eliminate educational inequity between low and high income areas by enlisting some of the nations most promising future leaders in its national teacher core. Since its inception, Teach For America has fielded more than 12,000 outstanding recent college graduates as teachers in low-income rural and urban communities.

For her work, Wendy was the youngest person and the first woman to receive Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson award, the highest award for an undergraduate alumnus. *Time* magazine identified her as one of the most promising leaders under 40 back in 1994. She received honorary doctorates from Drew University, Princeton and Smith College.

I think many people in this room have known people who have been in Teach For America and have been touched by this amazing program. We all wish Wendy well in her efforts to expand it. One of the things we are going to discuss is how you expand a great program and still keep its sense of mission. Teach For America is, I think, an example where expansion and mission have actually held together.

Wendy, my late mother was a teacher, my sister taught for many years, and so I have a special affection for the work that you do. Thank you, Wendy.

(Applause)

WENDY KOPP: Thank you so much. I am praying I can live up to that and come through here. This is really a much more diverse audience in terms of stage of career than I expected.

I agree with Kathy and E.J. in thinking that young people are actually uniquely positioned to make a difference in the face of some of our country's most entrenched social problems. I've come to believe that all the more deeply as every year in our work passes. In many ways, Teach For America is not only my story, which I'll share, but of the story of many, many recent grads who have done this. Their individual stories demonstrate the power of bringing to bear a fresh perspective, a level of idealism and energy and inexperience, honestly, which can be a huge asset when looking at problems that a lot of adults (excluding the adults in this room) have given up on. So I'm excited to have the chance always to talk with young people, because I think your choices at this stage do matter, given your unique potential.

Kathy asked me to talk about how we can act on our convictions in a way that really matters and that makes immeasurable difference; how we can sustain ourselves in this very difficult work; and many other equally lofty questions. Honestly, I don't have the answers, and many of you in this room are certainly as well equipped to offer the answers as I am. But as a way to at least raise some of the issues, I'll tell a little bit about the story of our last 16 years.

This idea of Teach For America was a product of a couple of things coming together. I had been very focused on the issue of educational inequality in our country, just the fact that where kids are born does so much to determine their educational prospects and, of course, in turn, their life prospects. As a public policy major and a concerned college student, I was doing what college students do when they're interested in issues: taking classes on it and organizing a conference on it.

At the same time, on a totally different level, I got to my senior year and needed a job and started trying to figure out what to do with my life. At that time, our generation had been labeled the "Me Generation." I don't know if anyone here remembers that, but supposedly all we wanted to do was go to work on Wall Street or in management consulting firms. I was struck – as a college senior at Princeton, a liberal arts major – by the fact that there was really only one kind of recruiter out there. It wasn't so much that my friends and I just wanted to go to work for these two-year corporate programs, it was just that that was it; those were the options.

I found myself just searching for something I wasn't finding. I started thinking that there were thousands of other talented, driven people out there who were searching for an option that would enable them to assume the kind of responsibilities these corporations were offering but would also make a real impact on some of our country's biggest domestic challenges. And that really is what led me to the idea of Teach For America: why aren't we recruiting graduating college seniors as aggressively to teach in low income communities as we were being recruited by business at the time?

The minute I thought of it, I became obsessed with it. I was so convinced that this would have both immediate impact because of all the energy and talent and commitment that the people we would recruit through such a corps would have in the lives of kids in our country's most under-resourced communities, but also because I thought (and this is such a conceptual thought at the time) that the experience would change our country's consciousness.

I had watched my friends from older years at Princeton go off, not necessarily because they loved high finance or business (some of them did, which is great) but because those were the options. They all went to business school and back into those firms. I thought how powerful would it be if your first experience out of college was teaching in our country's lowest income communities? I thought that would change career paths, change convictions, and ultimately change our priorities as a country.

So I became obsessed and, of course, did the obvious thing: write a letter to the President saying that he should really start this! You know, it's the Peace Corp of the '90s! I got a rejection letter back in the mail. Clearly my letter landed in the wrong stack in the White House. I decided, Okay, I've got to try to make this happen.

I had a few things going for me.

One was that the timing was absolutely perfect. I really believe that at some level the startup of Teach For America was so circumstantial. It's hard to describe. At that time, it almost seemed like this idea was so obvious that someone else must have been doing it somewhere. I would float the idea past people, and they would say, "Doesn't that already exist?"

It was a product of its time. On one level there were tremendous needs for teachers and huge teacher shortages in school systems. Headlines reported Los Angeles and New York, for example were a thousand teachers short. There was a front page article in *Fortune* magazine saying that corporate America wanted to invest in education reform. And there was a mood on college campuses that was absolutely conducive to this. I really was right to think I was one of thousands of people who were searching for something that they weren't finding. It was an idea that magnetized people.

Finally, and not insignificantly, I really believe that my youth and inexperience was a huge enabling force in this. If I had known what I know now I would not believe this could happen. My thesis advisor thought that I was absolutely out of my mind. Part of the thesis was a plan for making Teach For America happen and for the first year inspiring thousands of people to apply and selecting and training and placing no fewer than 500 of them. There was a budget indicating it would cost \$2.5 million. My thesis advisor called me into his office and tried to tell me this was just absolutely crazy, and he tried to explain how hard it is to raise \$2,500, let alone \$2.5 million. (Which, of course, is right.) But I was undeterred. It just went in one ear and out the other. And thank heaven for the asset of literally not knowing at some level how the world works.

Long story short: Teach For America did get off the ground. I spent my summer working with a seed grant meeting anyone and everyone who would meet with me, anyone in the educational world and the funding community, to try to test out this idea. Everywhere I went people said, "This is a great idea." The hitch? They did not believe that college students would do it because we were the "Me Generation." I mean, people were just absolutely laughing me out of their offices. The plan became to show these people that the college students would want to do it, on the theory that everything else would come together.

In the first year after I graduated, working with a group of other recent college graduates, 2,500 graduating seniors responded to a grassroots (essentially flyers under doors) campaign. A group of teachers and Peace Corps returning volunteers drove around the country interviewing them.

Teacher educators and experienced teachers came together, really inspired by the outpouring of idealism of all these folks to say we want to get together and train them. School systems in six areas across the country agreed to hire them and corporate America donated \$2.5 million dollars.

One year after I graduated, I was looking out on an auditorium full of 500 Teach For America corps members – 489 to be exact – people who were about to embark on their first year.

Most people only think of the story of the startup of Teach For America – that first-year story. But it's what came afterward that speaks to Kathy's point: making it happen in the way that I envisioned it, sustaining it over time, making it better, and ensuring that it was effective was much, much harder work than that first year.

We went through massive learning curves. It would be impossible to describe them in 15 minutes. Huge programmatic learning curves. We were taking people straight out of college and placing them in the most under-resourced communities in the country and the most challenging positions and expecting them not just to survive but to excel, and to leave more committed and not more disillusioned. How do you recruit and select and train and support people to be effective?

At the same time there was the organizational learning curve of figuring out how to manage this on a significant scale and how to sustain it financially beyond the \$2.5 million of startup support, which came from people who really were not intending to do anything more than give us startup grants.

Stepping back from it all and thinking about what we went through in our first decade, I'll just mention two salient learnings.

No. 1 – My first summer, I met with Michael Brown and Alan Khazei who had started City Year. Michael gave me one piece of advice, which didn't mean so much to me then but I now realize was the salient learning of our first decade: learn to say no. Learn To Say No. I didn't understand at the time. What he was saying and what I learned was the importance of discipline and focus, of remembering what it is that we were trying to do and what our particular mission and theory of change is and staying the course and not getting distracted. I can't tell you how important we found that to be.

As a group we were, and certainly I was, idealistic with lots of ideas and desire to solve the problems that we were trying to address. Honestly, that almost led to the demise of Teach For America – doing things that weren't deeply grounded in the mission and the theory of change that we were trying to accomplish.

No. 2 – I started out thinking I had no time for the mundane details of management. I honestly thought that it would be completely unnecessary given what we were doing because, you know, the people that would be drawn to Teach For America would all share the same convictions, the same ideals. Why would we even have to have a hierarchy? Literally, that was what I thought. I learned the unbelievable Importance of Good Management. I learned this lesson the hard way. I'll spare you the details, but there were many coups and this and that – it was just a total disaster. In our fourth year I finally stepped back and realized: “We are not going to fulfill this mission if I don't learn how to be a good manager.” (Of course, I could have said “if I don't find a good manager,” but it was so inconceivable to me that I could persuade anyone to take over this mess of a ship that I had built that I thought I better learn it myself.) I went through these learning curves around all the basics: how do you attract talent at every level of an organization (because that's the key to everything); how do you build a strong culture with shared values; how do you have systems for accountability and continuous improvement so that you can, in fact, have measurable, consistently improving impact.

By our tenth year we actually had a solid foundation, after going through many near-death experiences and lots of stress and never missing a payroll (which is probably the greatest accomplishment of our first decade given the circumstances). At that point, we had 1,000 Teach For America corps members across the country. We had a \$10 million budget, a sustainable budget, a very diversified budget. Our programmatic indicators were strong. Even our staff satisfaction was high. The difference between where we were at year 10 and where we were at year seven was like looking at a different organization.

We were feeling good. But once we got there, we were like, now what?

We stepped back and asked ourselves, how can we build a truly effective movement? That's how we view our mission: to eliminate educational inequality, to expand educational opportunity. That question led us to the conclusion that we had to become bigger and better.

This was a product of great debate about whether it was important to grow or in fact important not to grow. I believe strongly that we have a moral imperative to grow, that given the enormity of the problem we have to grow. In our particular mission and our particular theory of change, it's a numbers game: every additional recruit is an additional teacher who can have a huge impact and an additional future leader who can have a huge impact based on what they learn through that experience. Also, I believe that there are certain powers of scale in attaining critical mass.

We set out to try to take what we were doing to a higher level and developed a five-year plan with very clear priorities and clear goals. We just wrapped up that five-year plan. There has been tremendous momentum. The number of people applying to Teach For America grew in that time from 4,000 people at our 10th year to 17,000 people last year. Our corps grew from 500 people coming in for a year until last year 2,000 people coming in and a full corps this year of 3,500. Measurable indicators of corps member impact on student achievement and of our alumni impact grew by the same factor. Even as we were able to grow we were able to increase the measurable impact of our corps members and alumni. And our funding base grew from \$10 million to \$40 million.

In many ways what we were doing in the last five years was just acting on all those lessons that we learned the hard way in our first decade. We spent a lot of time during the last year asking ourselves what we believe the possibilities are, and how far can we push our impact by 2010, which will be our 20th anniversary?

We've come together around a plan to grow to what we believe will be the optimum scale for Teach For America, which will be the point where we're the top employer of top recent college graduates. It is our aspiration to get to the point where 4,000 people a year are joining Teach For America, where we have 8,000 corps members at any given time. We want to reach that point while at the same time maximizing the impact our corps members have on their students' achievement so that on average they're moving their students forward 1.5 grade levels, meaning a year and a half's progress in a single year's time. And we also want to do more to foster and cultivate the leadership of our alumni, people who have taught through Teach For America, as a force for change.

I believe that we have an incredible window of opportunity right now to build on the momentum that exists around Teach For America, on everything we've learned to this point, to really push our impact to the point that it does have a fundamental impact on public education in our country. I think about where we'll be if we can reach these goals. We will reach 700,000 kids a year, which will make us one of the largest scale interventions in today's public system. At the same time we'll build a pipeline for leadership in education that I believe is unprecedented in our country. And we aspire to

reach the point where not just a few but many of our future leaders have this experience in common and have the insight and conviction that comes along with it.

Just to bring that point to life quickly, we did a survey. There's a Gallup poll every year that asks the public why we have an achievement gap in America. And the public's answers are 1) lack of student motivation, 2) lack of parental involvement and 3) home life issues. The public believes we have gaps in educational outcomes because of larger societal issues that have nothing to do with schools. We asked the same question of our corps members at the end of their two years, and their answers on the same question with the same choices are: 1) teacher quality, 2) school leadership and 3) expectations for kids. This is a group of people who believe we can solve this problem, that this problem is within our control. We think about the power of getting to the point where not only leaders in our education system but leaders at every level of policy, in every sector, in business, in journalism, etc. have that insight and have the conviction of having seen that first hand in the lives of real kids and families.

One final thought: I think the fact that we're regularly stepping back and asking ourselves, "What is the next level?" has been just fundamental to our continuing to be able to operate with an entrepreneurial spirit and a sense of possibility. That is why there is momentum around Teach For America.

I've spent a lot of time talking about the organizational process, because I think that's what this meeting is about. But my colleagues at Teach For America and I feel a great sense of urgency – more so today than ever – and I think that stems from what was my most salient lesson in the last 15 years:

You know, I started out thinking that the world should be different. There was an idealism about it; I thought we shouldn't have these inequities in our country. Now, every day we see evidence that not only *should* it be different, but it *could* be different. Every day in classrooms across the country we see teachers who are proving that when kids are given the opportunities they deserve they can excel and excel on an absolute scale. That's really what fuels our sense of responsibility and our sense of urgency to say we have to do more.

(Applause)

E.J. DIONNE: I, for one, am not surprised that this person in her early 20s managed to raise \$2.5 million because I can imagine if she walked into my office with her warmth, energy and intelligence, I would not say "Should I give?" but "How big a check do you want?" So thank you, thank you so very much.

(Applause)

Let me begin with two quite different questions:

1) I think a lot of us loved your line on inexperience as a huge asset, which is at some level the core idea of this. Yet I think all of us know how hard teaching actually is and that it requires not only skills, but also certain gifts. I think most of us recognize in the great teachers we've had, that it's not just that they knew how to do something, but they had a gift for reaching students. Yet you are taking kids right out of college, students right out of college, and they don't have a lot of teacher training, and you don't even know what kind of teachers they might be. How does that actually work? And, candidly, how many of the people actually wash out early on, because teaching can be a very hard thing?

2) Somewhat related to the experience issue, is the whole sense of public and private. One of the things that sometimes bothers me about the discussion of the third sector is that people think of it as

a false choice: it's either the government sector, or the voluntary sector, when, in fact, what you really need is an interaction between the voluntary sector and the government sector. The government sector needs to be prodded to reform and change; it needs new models. But many of these things can't be done without the public sector. Your folks are teaching in public schools. So if you could talk about the relationship between these two sectors and just how it works.

WENDY KOPP: Let me start with the first question. We have learned so much over time and we did not know any of this when we started out. We have been able to look at what works for the teachers who are getting real results with kids in very challenging, very under resourced communities. What are they doing? Basically they are doing what effective leaders would do in any context.

The fourth grade teacher goes in and has kids who are at the first grade level, which is what all the statistics would predict and, in fact, is what we generally have. The teacher says, by the end of the year my kids who cannot write complete sentences right now are going to write beautiful five paragraph essays, which is what fourth graders should be able to do. And they're going to prove to this school that they can do fourth grade work; every of them is going to pass the fourth grade test.

They have just set a big goal, a big vision. And then they motivate other people, just as great leaders do, to work with them. People initially think the teachers are nuts; the kids think it's crazy and their parents think it's crazy. But these teachers convince their kids that they can do it, that if they work harder than they've ever worked before, they will be able to excel at that level and that it will matter in their lives.

And then they go about it in the most purposeful and relentless way. You walk into these teachers' classrooms and I can tell in a couple of minutes whether the teacher is operating with a sense of purpose and goal orientation or whether the teacher is going through the experience of delivering a lesson plan. You can tell when the teacher is on a mission, thinking "where are my kids now versus where I must get them by the end of the year." They encounter tremendous obstacles, just as any great leader pursuing a great goal does, and they are ridiculously relentless in the face of obstacles. They get the parents to bring their kids early and pick them up late and bring them on Saturdays when they realize they don't have enough time, and that kind of thing.

Seeing that play out over and over and over at every grade level in communities across the country has really informed our approach to selection – finding people straight out of college who already have developed the leadership capabilities to operate in that way. Because if you're not able to do it, it will be a miserable experience and it won't make the same kind of impact. We look for people at the front end who have those leadership skills, and then train them.

We're still learning and have a long way to go in terms of becoming great trainers. But we give our teachers a very intensive pre-service institute and we work to provide an understanding and an internalization of the overarching approach they're going to need to use as well as the basic teaching skills and knowledge.

And we cluster our corps members in schools and have an extensive ongoing professional development program all designed to help pull them back from the realities of what's going on in their classrooms and help them reflect on the root causes of the problems that were playing out in their classrooms so they can operate in the teaching-as-leadership mode.

In terms of the public-private question, let me use a New York example. We have a chancellor, head of the school system, in New York who is undertaking a massive reform of clearly the country's largest school system, a million kids, 1,200 schools. And he is absolutely fixated on making sure that everything that he does impacts the whole system. He is looking for the systemic things he needs to

change to move the whole system forward. And yet in his mind he's also embraced Teach For America and other kinds of outside catalytic forces. He views it as just that – an enabler of the systemic progress that he wants to have happen.

We must find our allies in the system who understand what he understands – the value of private interventions and how they can complement their work. Our folks can be incredibly positive catalytic forces in some of the most under performing schools, and that they can go on and be the real leaders in the school system. Sixty-three percent of our now 10,000 alums are working full-time in education, and even of those who leave, 40 percent have jobs that relate in some way to schools or low income communities because Teach For America is such a transformational experience.

E.J. DIONNE: May I ask two more questions? When you started out pursuing this mission you had something that was on a relatively small scale, now it's become this enormous thing. How do you not lose either your energy and enthusiasm or your sense of mission or your sense of contact with what's going on?

The second one is personal. (Now this is a highly organized person. Wendy's kids are ages 2, 4 and 6 – now that's really organized.) How do you balance your public commitments, your work commitments and personal commitments to your family?

WENDY KOPP: Well, to the first question: I have such a sense of urgency. I think that it stems from what I do. I get to see in so many places and at so many levels Teach For America's mission. Staying personally very engaged in the programmatic side of things and spending time on college campuses, spending time in the classrooms of our corps members, spending time with our alumni who are out there working to effect fundamental change, spending time with our school districts and with school principals has done so much to advance Teach For America and to keep me completely centered and to fuel my sense of urgency.

There is nothing like a school visit, and I try to do them regularly, to fuel my sense of urgency. When I go into schools I see a few things. One is evidence of what is possible. Seeing some of the teachers, like the fourth grade teacher I described earlier, seeing what they're doing, and how they're doing it. Seeing the impact that they are having in kids' lives – that sets the bar, right? But then I'll go into another corps member's classroom, and I'll see something not at that level and that is really what fuels my sense of urgency. Every time I go into a school I see what's possible, and I also see how far we have to go to truly maximize our impact. More than anything, that's probably what has kept me more intellectually engaged and engaged in every way as time has progressed.

Your second question is such a good and relevant one in this sector. It certainly is at Teach For America. Teach For America is such an intense place because most of our staff are Teach For America alumni who feel so passionately about the mission. At some level, you just feel like you have to throw everything about yourself into it. We have a very, very goal oriented and urgent, to overuse the word again, culture. Yet over time I've come to believe this is not a sprint, but a marathon. And we have to figure out how to sustain ourselves.

But this idea of balance that everyone is always talking about – I just can't get my head around that. We've come up with a new term. I'm not sure it's much better, but "personal professional alignment," meaning do your personal life and your professional life work together? And to me the first and most fundamental question that all of us need to ask ourselves is, what do we want our lives to be about?

I feel so lucky to have landed in something that I think is so important. I can't imagine leaving it, and at the same time I can't imagine not wanting to have a family – three little boys. I know that those

things have to work together. And I have certain enablers that enable me to do it. Within Teach For America we are trying to build a culture that celebrates people having personal lives. There is constant discussion about personal goals as well as professional goals, and how can we create a culture and an environment and a setup that allows flexibility so that both can be pursued.

And finally, I have an unbelievably supportive husband and an incredible babysitter. And that's really the key. So thank you all. This was fun to talk to you.

(Applause)

E.J. DIONNE: I told you she'd be inspiring. And now we also know that she is well aligned. Thank you. Bless you for what you do.

We have a great panel here which I will introduce briefly.

Cheryl Dorsey is the first Echoing Green fellow to serve as president of the organization. Echoing Green is a social venture organization that has awarded more than \$22 million in start up capital to more than 400 social entrepreneurs worldwide since 1987. Cheryl received her Echoing Green fellowship to launch the Family Van, a community-based mobile health unit that provides basic medical outreach services to at risk residents of inner city Boston neighborhoods. She was a special assistant in the U.S. Department of Labor, special assistant to the director of the Women's Bureau in the U.S. Department of Labor and she holds all sorts of highly distinguished degrees.

Cecilia Muñoz serves as the vice president for the Office of Outreach Advocacy and Legislation at the National Council of La Raza, the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the U.S. that works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. She oversees all legislative and advocacy activities that affect her community including immigration policies, civil rights, employment, farmworker issues, education and health care. She also serves on the Executive Committee of the National Immigration Forum and the U.S. Advisory Committee of Human Rights Watch. Like all of our panelists, she has a whole lot of degrees. She also is the recipient of a McArthur Foundation Fellowship for her work on immigration and civil rights. And we all know from reading the newspapers that makes you a genius. So – it's great to have a genius on this panel.

Chris Murphy is an alumnus of the first every City Year Corp in Boston, that was 17 years ago. He left private practice at the law firm of Hogan and Harts to return to City Year, and found the Washington, D.C. site. City Year likes to call itself an action tank for citizen service that works to demonstrate, improve, and promote the concept of voluntary citizen service. As Executive Director of City Year Washington, D.C. he's responsible for raising this site's \$1.8 million budget. And again he has all these wonderful awards and this wonderful education.

Why don't we start with Cheryl?

CHERYL DORSEY: Thank you E.J. Kathy thank you for doing this. This is an extraordinarily important panel, and I'm quite honored to be with you all this morning.

Let me start by saying that I have the pleasure of working with hundreds of the most passionate social entrepreneurs working around the world today. A great example was Wendy Kopp, who is one of the first Echoing Green fellows, as well as Alan Khazei and Michael Brown, the founders of City Year. So I think I know a little bit about passion. I've worked around a lot of people who have it and who inspire me. I think this topic of finding your passion and making a career that matters is absolutely critical, is seismic. I can think of almost no more important topic of conversation for you as young people in this audience.

You know you are about to embark on the next stage of your personal lives, but also embark on your professional lives. You have the privilege – and it is actually a privilege – of being able to be the author of your own lives. I really hope that you think about it in that context. You happen to live in one of the only countries in the world where you can actually live up to your potential. Now that's truly a gift, and I think that we all take that for granted. But most of your cohorts around the world do not have that luxury, and it's truly a luxury.

I don't know any of you, obviously, but I care deeply that you figure it out. I really hope that you do, because I know what it feels like to be someone you don't want to be. But thankfully I also know what it feels like to finally face who you are, to own your own identity, to truly own it, and I desperately wish that for each of you in this audience.

Let me give you a quick overview of Echoing Green. Echoing Green is the premier angel investor in the social sector. We provide seed capital, meaning start-up monies and technical support, to some of the world's best emerging social entrepreneurs or social change agents. We look for leaders with vision. We look for leaders with passion, as well as entrepreneurial know-how, who have innovative ideas for social change.

Echoing Green fellows are practical idealists who create and test potential solutions to our world's toughest societal problems. We've been at it since 1987, and over the last 18 years we funded more than 400 visionaries working in 30 countries on five different continents.

Obviously you heard Wendy's vision for change – Teach For America. You know about City Year. But our fellows are trying to change the world all over the place. They are in Anacostia, across town, having started the nation's first urban residential public school. Some of you may have heard of The SEED School. They developed one of the first community-based substance abuse treatment models in East Palo Alto, called Free at Last. They brought the first ever case to the Supreme Court suing a multi-national corporation for global human rights abuses and they won – that's Earth Rights International. I think that gives you a little bit of a picture of who these people are and the work for social change that they're trying to do.

Echoing Green as an investor has an extraordinary track record. Eighty-five percent of the fellows that we fund remain in the social sector, so we're creating a vital pipeline of talent into the field. These are folks who could go to Wall Street, as Wendy said, they could go out and be consultants, but they've decided to devote their passion, to devote their intellectual capital to our nation's and our world's most pressing social problems, and I applaud them for that.

Seventy-seven percent of the organizations that we've seeded are sustainable in both the short and the long term. That means we're also helping to build a strong and thriving citizen sector. And as E.J. mentioned, of the \$22 million invested by Echoing Green over time, our fellows have gone on to leverage an additional \$930 million, close to a billion dollars in additional private and public dollars. That's a tremendous 44:1 return on investment in an under-capitalized non-profit marketplace.

I don't know how many of you read *Fast Company* magazine but in January of this year they named the top 25 change-making organizations in this country. Eight out of those 25 came from Echoing Green's pipeline. I think that's a true testament to our model of investing. We back a diverse and committed group of entrepreneurial and passionate leaders who are committed to their cause. We take risks in funding untested ideas and leaders without a track record. We fund programs that fight for equity in this country and globally and we build a supportive community of like minded social change agents.

Entrepreneurial activity, whether it's in the for-profit sector or the non-profit sector, is an extraordinarily lonely business. You're really out there in the wilderness. Your parents think that you're crazy for not going to graduate school or going on the sort of straight and narrow path. You're sort of shaking things up and taking on the status quo, so you appear threatening to a lot of folks in your field. And you're constantly trying to shake things up and that is not an easy task. I can't understate the value of being part of a larger community for change.

I think my value, perhaps, this morning is that the Echoing Green community, our fellows, are sort of the perfect sample set for this particular topic. These are folks who have all translated their passion for social justice and positive social change into careers that truly matter; not only to themselves but to the communities they serve, to the constituents that they serve.

So how did they do it? And what's the one takeaway I want to leave you with this morning? For me, it's really the concept of self mastery. The mental health community would call this "self care." Philosophers from Aristotle to Isaiah Berlin would call this "mastery of skills" or "personal self determination." Ultimately, it's about having the courage to do the work you need to do to truly know yourself and to know yourself completely and deeply, to sort of find that true north star that is your path and it is your reason for being.

Thousands of books have been written about this stuff, so what I'm saying is really nothing new. But the reason that thousands of books have been written on this topic is that it's impossible for most of us to do. It's just that hard. It's scary. It's untested territory. There's absolutely no way to know how long your journey could take or even where you might end up. It's really uncharted territory, and most of us never get there.

In terms of the Echoing Green community, I tried to think of some of the characteristics that may be of interest to you and may be adaptable to your circumstances. When I look at the Echoing Green community, they are some of the most self-aware people I know. They live consciously. They pay attention to all of their experiences and the messages that arise from them.

I actually disagree with Wendy that "inexperience" was an important part of TFA's early experience. Wendy was very experienced. Wendy spent four years studying the issue of educational inequity. She saw her roommate from the South Bronx, who was an incredibly gifted poet but grew up in a classroom that had 40 kids to one teacher, and felt deeply the injustice of that and the difficult path that her roommate had through Princeton. She lived and thought about this every day. She ate it. She breathed it. She lived it. I think the experience truly matters.

I also think you have to listen very closely to your inner voice. You know my friends laugh at me because they think a lot of this is psycho babble, but I'm right about this. I know I'm right about this. In my core, and I've lived it as well, nobody knows you better than yourself. Your instincts are dead on for most things.

The problem is there is so much noise out there surrounding it that most people never hear their inner voice. And whether it's your parent's voice coming in your ear telling you what not to do and why you're screwing things up, or whether it's your academic advisor telling you your thesis is ridiculous, those things prevent you from getting to your true path. I encourage you to not only pay close attention and to grab as many experiences as you can, but also trust yourself.

Social entrepreneurs and people who have found that calling, found that passion, have also mastered their special talents and they're using those talents in service of their vision.

I bet a lot of the angst in this room has to do with the conflict or the tension between who you are and what you do. And often the twain shall not meet. Echoing Green fellows have actually navigated successfully this conflict and they've made those two realities seamless. And, in fact, they are living lives of balance (or maybe, as Wendy would say, alignment).

I'm going to offer four thoughts to serve you as you go about finding a fulfilling career. And I really spent time thinking about this for the young people in the room and, in fact, for all of us, because the stakes are so very high. This is your life we're talking about. You've got one shot. There's no do over. This is it. This is what we get. And I really hope that you at least take a little bit of time to think about it and perhaps you'll even take some of these things to heart.

The first one: become hyper aware of what matters to you. Again, it's that inner voice. Whether it's your pulse quickening when you read a particular book, or being unable to sleep at night after being confronted by an injustice that outrages you. That's a sign and it's a telling sign, and please, please be aware of it.

Second, I would ask you to follow your curiosity. It's a phenomenally powerful sign that you are intrigued and interested in something and that you need to learn more about whatever that is.

Third, acknowledge and move through your fears. Fears are real. They're scary. They prevent us from moving forward and having impact in our personal and professional lives. Whether it's fear of failure, whether it's fear of ridicule, whether it's the fear of your parents yelling you at you when you get home after graduation or during the summer, it's okay. You can live and walk through the fear.

Lastly, accumulate real experiences. You've got to live this stuff, you've got to work it, you've got to study it. There are many legitimate paths to getting there. Wendy spent a lot of time studying, but she wasn't a teacher, she had no Masters in Education, but I think she was incredibly qualified and experienced to take on educational inequity in this country.

And please, while you're in the midst of that experience, stay attuned to what you're learning. Whether you journal it, whether you spend time in self reflection every day, whether you talk to your friends as a mirror to what you're doing and what you're feeling – it all matters.

I'm going to make a little plug for Echoing Green. As we approach our 20th anniversary, we thought hard about how to leverage the stories of our social entrepreneurs. In the fall we are going to be publishing a book that incorporates 15 of the stories of our social entrepreneurs, from Wendy to Michael Brown at City Year, because I think their journeys will have some relevance and maybe some interest to you. We will publish it on our website. We'll have hard copies. If you remember, please check it out in a couple of months because I think it's potentially a powerful tool, not only for self reflection, but also for mobilizing and unleashing the tremendous power of young people.

Quickly, I want to return to one of my first remarks – that I know what it feels like to live a life out of balance. As the president of Echoing Green – and I've been running the organization for the past five years – I now have the privilege and the luxury of living my passion and purpose every single day. I can't wait to get to work in the morning.

This is probably a bit of a stretch, and I'm sort of doing this dramatic effect, but if my board called me and said we're not going to pay you any more, we're sorry it's done, I would still show up to work on Monday. I would still show up. Finding a passion for something, finding a passion for your work, actually generates significant psychic income. And that's real currency, and I hope you won't discount that. It really took me about 15 years to get to this place in my life, in my professional and personal life.

I went to medical school when I really didn't want to. I won't go into all the reasons, whether it's from family pressures or self-imposed ones. I selected a number of jobs because of what society tells us about what is important, whether it's status, whether it's upward mobility, whether it's job security. And I didn't take the time to really think about what I believed in, what my core beliefs were and also what was I really good at, and what I thought I had to offer to the world.

It took me 15 years to get to the point, but I really finally stepped up and I fought for my life and for my purpose and the journey was worth it.

E.J. DIONNE: I just want to ask a quick question: Echoing Green sounds like two environmentalists repeating each other. And I don't think that's what it means. I assume Green refers to money. Could you briefly tell us where the name comes from?

CHERYL DORSEY: Echoing Green was started by a very successful private equity firm close to 20 years ago called General Atlantic, and they still are our largest corporate supporter. The head of General Atlantic at the time was a real renaissance guy, he was phenomenally good at making money, but he was also a painter, loved philosophy, read Rumi. Echoing Green actually refers to the title of a William Blake poem, and it was just something that mattered to him, something that he was passionate about. I read the poem every year. I still don't understand it, still don't understand the relevance to Echoing Green, but we are all attached to the title and the name.

E.J. DIONNE: Thank you. I'm glad I asked. Cecilia, thank you for being here.

CECILIA MUÑOZ: Thank you so much. This is such an inspiring panel; it's more than a little humbling to be part of it. Thank you so much Kathy for putting this together and thank all of you for being here.

My organization actually was founded and is based on an influential 1925 essay by José Vasconcelos. I work for the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and people often ask us what the word La Raza refers to. The term "*La Raza*" has its origins in early 20th century Latin American literature and translates into English most closely as "the people," or, according to some scholars, "the Hispanic people of the New World." Some people have mistranslated "*La Raza*" to mean "The Race," implying that it is a term meant to exclude others. In fact, the full term coined by Vasconcelos, "*La Raza Cósmica*," meaning the "cosmic people," was developed to reflect not purity but the mixture inherent in the Hispanic people. This is an inclusive concept, meaning that Hispanics share with all other peoples of the world a common heritage and destiny. The concept is about transcending race and coming together as a community.

Yesterday in Milwaukee they had the largest march in the city's history – 30,000 people turned out. Mostly immigrants, perhaps many undocumented, but also people of faith – people of all walks of life turned out and marched through the city of Milwaukee yesterday on behalf of immigrant rights and in objection to a terrible immigration bill passed by the House in December. They were expressing their hopes that the Senate will pass something better.

A week before that, Chicago had the largest march in its history – hundreds of thousands of people turned out for a march that was 2 ½ miles long, completely stunning its organizers. It was more than double the turnout they had expected. It was a tremendous community outpouring.

A week before that we had a march in DC and a rally at the U.S. Capitol that organizers were hoping would attract 20,000 people. There were somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000 people who turned out from the community for that march.

Saturday, tomorrow, in L.A. organizers are trying to exceed the number of participants in the Chicago march. And when you walked in today you received a flyer about events on Monday. There is a small, but important vigil that is going to be taking place with clergy from all over the country and from every denomination. This vigil will be followed up by rallies in a number of cities around the country, including Washington, DC, on April 10th. All of these events have been organized around the question of immigrant's rights – and respect for the role that immigrants play in our society.

I mention that because right after my family, the greatest joy and privilege of my life is my ability to be connected to this work in some small way. I don't have much opportunity to do the "cool" part of this work, which I think is the community organizing piece. My organization is a national organization. I have been there 17 years and I am essentially a lobbyist. Not the Abramoff style of lobbyist, but rather the kind of a lobbyist without money. Hopefully I am a lobbyist with some influence.

We represent this constituency and this energy. We are having an amazing civil rights moment right now across this community. It's incredible and exciting. And the little piece of work that I do is in Washington, where I'm trying to be a voice on behalf of the community. I present information and knowledge about what goes on in this community and the implications of policy proposals that are presented. And as you may know, there is occasionally arm twisting and yelling that goes on in the way that we do this work.

My job is to work with a staff of wonderfully dedicated, really smart, and incredible people. Together we try to be the policy voice – reflecting what goes on in the community through research, data and reports. That is the think-tank piece of our work. But I also try to be a voice for the community in advocating for change by helping to identify the opportunities and targets for change. We do this by making the connection between what goes on in the community itself with what goes on among people who are providing services to the community and what is possible in the policy-making world. That is how we try to bring about change on behalf of our community.

I'm a lobbyist. I spend time on Capitol Hill. I'll be at a [meeting] on Monday where many big decisions affecting millions of people may or may not get made. My job is to make sure that the process is as well-informed about what really happens in my community as possible.

Maybe the one insight that I can add to this conversation (in addition to agreeing with everything that Cheryl just said about listening to your inner voice, and the things that Wendy said about staying focused and learning how to say no, and about aligning who you are with what you do) is that I see the range of ways that you can make a difference as a continuum, a continuum in which everything is connected.

I know where my little piece is on the continuum. I'm an advocate. It is the place on that continuum where my particular voice is strongest. But there are plenty of other places on that continuum, all of which matter. You need somebody at each point along the continuum if you are actually going to bring about change. That includes people who are doing community organizing – people who are organizing the event on Monday and on April 10th – and whose job it is to help others find their voice and their place on the continuum. It's not the work that I do, but I'm connected to it and I respect it tremendously, because without it nothing else is possible.

That connects to the work that my organization's Affiliates do. We serve nearly 300 community based groups around the country. They are our direct constituency. Some of them provide child care, some of them run charter schools, some of them build low-income housing, and some of them

run health clinics. They do a variety of different things. The incredible people who do that work every day have found their voice through their services. They go about making change in their way by helping people day in and day out, and then, ultimately, by acting as advocates and leaders in their own communities. That's a piece on the continuum.

That is actually the place where I started. After graduate school I ended up as an organizer working for the Catholic Archdiocese in Chicago, and through a very strange set of circumstances, I ended up running a program to help immigrants get legalized after the '86 immigration reforms. I was involved in providing direct services and learned a lot. I developed tremendous respect for the people who do what they can, with what they have, to make sure that people have enough to eat, that they have the legal services they need, and the housing they need.

One of the things I learned personally was that wasn't where my voice was strongest. I went home every day with the faces of the people that we had to say "no" to because the law didn't provide an avenue for them. That was very difficult for me. I developed such respect for the people who can work within those boundaries and who work to change them every day. I got a sense of how hard it is.

That led me to the next place that I see on the continuum, which was as an advocate. I worked in Chicago as part of an immigrants' right coalition that still exists – that was involved in organizing that march last week – as a local advocate trying to bring together and build coalitions of different ethnic groups, different faith groups, the business community, and the labor movement. It was an interesting dynamic – all folks who shared the same set of values and who wanted to raise their voices toward the same end. That work brought me to Washington as an advocate.

Through these experiences, I learned to identify the one place where I can make the biggest difference in the lives of others. As a result, I've been able to continue my work at NCLR for more than 17 years, being inspired every day by the people I work with and around. I am excited every day by my chance to be connected to the people who are doing the organizing and the direct service. And I am inspired and excited by my chance to interact with people who found another place on the continuum – people who work in government or in the public sector – because that's where their voices are the strongest.

You need people just as committed, just as focused, just as excited about trying to make change in that sector, in foundations, in corporate America, as you need every other place on the continuum. You need all of it to be focused. You need all of those folks to be rowing in the same direction and to maximize the extent to which we share a common vision of where we want to go and how we want to get there and what role we each play in getting us there.

It is important to figure out where your voice is strongest, where your capacities make you best able to contribute. Not only is that the place where you are going to be the most effective, it is the place where you are going to be happiest. And it is the place where you will be most likely to succeed at juggling and struggling to align your life and your work – because you are where you belong. That makes it easier to make the kind of judgments and choices and tradeoffs that you need to make every day – in my case, to be a spouse and a parent and a member of a community and also be engaged in this kind of work as a professional.

To echo Cheryl, that involves some reflection. Reflection is sometimes the hardest thing to get to in this kind of work because there is so much that we need to do. But without reflection, you can lose your way. You need a sense of who you are and where you belong and where you have a voice – that is the way I understand it.

My voice is strongest in this crazy town, in the crazy environment around legislators. My friends and family think I'm absolutely nuts to battle with people who say some of the craziest things about immigrants and Latinos that have been said in the Senate Judiciary Committee meetings. But that is where I belong. It's where my voice is strongest. I have a capacity to make a difference there.

But my work is connected to the organizers who are putting together these events, the service providers who are doing that work day in and day out, and the really good people who work in government who are helping us make a difference.

(Applause)

E.J. DIONNE: Thank you for that inspiring talk. When you were talking about immigrants at the beginning, and this new battle we have, I was reminded of a great moment: Franklin Delano Roosevelt spoke to the Daughters of the American Revolution in the '30s. Some of the oldest, wealthiest families in America belong to the DAR. He looked out at the crowd and said, "Fellow immigrants..."

That's how he started his speech. Everybody who cares about immigrants has always taken inspiration from that and will take it from you, too. Thank you very much.

Chris Murphy, thank you for being here.

CHRIS MURPHY: Good morning, everybody. We're in the seventh inning stretch and in true City Year fashion I have a little warm-up that I want to start with. So if you will indulge me, I want to find out a little bit about who's in the room. Let's get to know each other a little bit better. We're going to do something called stand up/sit down. Now that should be fairly self-explanatory, but let me explain it anyway.

I'm going to read a series of statements. If you feel it applies to you and you are comfortable sharing it, please stand up. When the question is done you can sit down. If you can't stand up, feel free to raise your hand.

Stand up if your birthday is this month, is in March. Remain standing if your birthday is today. Anybody? (Applause) Happy Birthday.

Stand up if you've heard of City Year before today. That's great. It will save me some time. Thank you.

Stand up if you are affiliated with Georgetown, either as a student, a faculty member or work here as an administrator. A good number. Okay, remain standing if you are a student graduating this spring, everyone else can sit down. Some. Remain standing if you know what you're going to be doing next fall. Everyone is very envious of you right now. (Laughter)

Stand up if you are the oldest child in your family. Thank you.

Stand up if you pay for cable or satellite TV at home. (Laughter) Stand up if you've ever watched the TV show The Enterprise. (Laughter) Okay, remain standing if you think Donald Trump's hair is actually real.

(Laughter)

All right, stand up if you currently serve or ever served in City Year. (Applause)

Remain standing if you could, or stand up if you ever served in another AmeriCorps program. Stand up if you were in the Peace Corps. Can everybody just remain standing for a moment? Any Peace Corps, returned Peace Corps volunteers? Anyone serve in the military? If everyone can remain standing for a second. I thank you for your service to our country. I just want to acknowledge that. Thank you. (Applause)

Stand up if you are disturbed by the Tom Cruise, Katy Holmes relationship. (Laughter) Surprised that we didn't get more for that.

Stand up if you can't imagine a morning without your Starbucks Frappacino, Mochacino, whatever it is expensive drink. Got a lot of students. (Laughter)

Stand up if you speak at least one language other than English. Could you remain standing if you speak two or more languages other than English? Could you remain standing if you speak three or more other languages other than English? Could you remain standing if you speak four languages or more other than English? (Applause)

Stand up if you're a Red Sox fan. (Laughter) Thank you. Stand up if you're a Yankee's fan. I'm a born and raised Red Sox fan so I got to know who my enemies are in the room. (Laughter) Stand up if you hate sports. Got to give everyone a chance to express that. (Laughter)

Stand up if you're in love. Thank you.

Stand up if you were born in another country.

Stand up if you ever loved a movie, a book or a CD that someone recommended to you that you had never heard of before. Thank you.

And finally stand up if you aspire to a career that allows you to make a difference in the world. That was the only real trick question. So thank you very, very much. Thank you for indulging me in that.

Thank you Georgetown, thank you Kathy and Kathleen for having me here today. I think I'm the only Hoya on the panel. I graduated from the law school in 1998. So I feel especially proud, thank you, to be with you today. (Applause)

I want to share with you some thoughts about how I ended up where I am. And I'm going to be pretty personal about where I am and how I got here.

First, I want to debunk the notion that a lot of young people have that careers are linear. They look at people in careers and it looks so logical that they got from point A to point Z. When you are living your career, I promise you, it does not feel that way at all. It feels messy. It feels random. Probably all of our panelists ended up where they are more by chance, by luck, by accident. One of the things that you need to be ready to do is to seize those moments of accident and chance.

The first step to having a career that matters in the public sector is to know that you can have a career that matters in the public sector. When I was your age, I didn't know that, so you're already way ahead of me. I didn't know that until I joined City Year. All of a sudden, my eyes were opened to the power that I had to make a difference, the possibility that I could make a difference. It was an incredibly profound experience for me and it's why I came back to the organization to make the experience possible for this sample of great young people here and the other great young people who are in City Year around our city and around our country.

I found out about City Year as a kind of lost 20-year old. A family friend happened to mention it to me. That's a good example of accident: I didn't seek it out, but when I heard about it, I jumped at the chance. I remember a brochure that asked, "Do you want to change the world?" I said, "That's a question that I want to see the answer to." I knew my answer was yes, but I wanted to find out more. So I opened the brochure. Today, 18 years later, you can trace my career back to that moment in time.

Today on the panel, I am playing two roles. One is that of someone who was in the private sector and left to move to the public sector. The other is that of someone who is working in a very intensely community-based organization.

When I say I represent someone who was in the private sector and left, I feel that I'm a bit of an imposter. I spent a grand total of 18 months in a law firm, working down the hall from now Chief Justice John Roberts. I also worked for the mayor of Boston. I worked Ted Kennedy on Capitol Hill. I worked for Eli Siegel, who was President Clinton's point person to create AmeriCorps. I spent most of my career in the public sector, in the public realm.

But in my late 20s I felt the need to go to grad school, so I went to law school. I graduated with a whole lot of debt. It made sense to go to a law firm. I knew that I could pay off my debt, and figure out how I was going to manage those resources. And it would give me a chance to spread my wings as a baby lawyer. And it did that. It absolutely did that. But I always knew that I was probably going to last about two years at the law firm before I figured out what came next. After a year I said to myself, "If you're going to be out of here in two years, you better start thinking about this." So I did.

Six months later, I was at a fifth anniversary party for AmeriCorps at the White House and afterwards a whole bunch of us went over to Old Ebbetts Grill just to catch up. Someone said to me, "You know, City Year is thinking about coming to Washington, D.C." I thought, "Maybe I'll be on the founding board." I thought I could help them raise some money. I didn't really think about it for a couple of days. I don't know if this ever happens to you, but my brain sort of solves problems in my sleep. I woke up one morning, literally, and I said, "Why don't I go try to run the thing?"

I called Michael Brown and Alan Khazei, the cofounders of City Year, and asked if they had anyone in mind. At this point, I had lived in D.C. for about 12 years. "I'm looking to get out of this law firm thing," I told them, "what do you say?" They took me up on the offer. I had never run anything in my life. They asked, "Can you raise money?" "I think I raised \$2,500 for the AIDS walk within my law firm," I said, "I'm sort of the point person on that." And they said, "That's close enough."

Again, an example of accident and chance: I heard about the job from someone in my network, someone I casually knew, but I was ready to seize that moment.

As I look back on all of this, there are five quick lessons that I can draw from it and share with you.

First: Spending time in the for-profit world isn't such a bad thing. I'm not saying you have to do it, but it's not necessarily a bad thing. Our free market world tends to validate people who are in the private sector, and tends to put a premium on the private sector. In the myth of America, people who take a step away from the private sector to go to the nonprofit sector are ascribed a certain nobility, whether it's justified or not.

(A TV piece that was very embarrassing profiled me and my work. The announcer's intro was, "Why would a Harvard and a Georgetown educated lawyer leave a law firm to go work and help make a difference in the lives of young children in D.C.?" As I showed this video to my board, one of my

board members who was a partner at a law firm said, “Clearly [the announcer’s] never spent time at a law firm.”)

But the reporter picked up on that for-profit validation. That is not a bad thing. It also is a valuable experience, you do learn things.

Second: You must either be or train yourself to be a great networker. I heard a statistic recently, I don’t know if it’s true or not, that 75 percent of the jobs in this country are never posted. They are filled by either people within a network or within a company or an organization. You can’t necessarily rely on the idealist.orgs of the world to help you find that job.

You may already be a terrific networker, but if you’re not (and frankly I don’t think I am) you must force yourself to be. If that pushes you out of your comfort zone, do it! Go to whatever world you want to be a part of, make sure that you’re at these kinds of events and hanging out after them and at the receptions and when you get an e-mail, saying there’s a speaking opportunity, or there’s a reception or there’s a panel or something make sure you’re there, because that’s where you will begin to run into the same people and you will begin to expand your network that will help you find that job.

Once you get that job, part of being a social entrepreneur – perhaps 99 percent of being a social entrepreneur – is who you know or who can know. You may not know the mayor of Washington, D.C. personally, but you probably know someone who does and has influence in his work or perhaps inner circle. I cannot underestimate the importance of being in a network.

Third: Get comfortable about the money. Unless you get lucky with the lottery or marry very well, I am here to tell you this unfortunate truth: you will not do as well financially as your friends who go off into the private sector. That’s just a reality. It doesn’t necessarily mean that you have to live in poverty, but it means that you have to be comfortable with that decision, and you can’t make the decision and then second guess yourself endlessly about it. Sure we all wish that we might have a little more money but ultimately we have to be happy and satisfied with those decisions or else we’re going to go crazy.

This is especially true when you have children. You start to worry about whether you’re giving your children all that they need to grow into successful and healthy adults. I think it also gives you an opportunity to reflect on what it really means to you to raise a successful child. My wife and I, my wife who actually teaches at the law school and runs the domestic violence clinic there, have decided that the love and values that we can provide to our son are far more important than any sort of material benefits that some of our peers who are in more lucrative professions are providing for their kids. So you make this choice.

It means three things. It means you will have less disposal income than some of your peers. Accept it. It also means that you will feel a whole lot better about your job and your life choices than those peers probably will. And it means that when your friends who make more money than you complain about how underpaid they are, you will want to wring their necks.

When I hear people say, “Can I go this route and still pay my bills?” the question is, “What are your bills?” If you expect that \$4 frappacino every day, maybe this isn’t the career for you. But if you can live without that, if you can live with over-the-air television or Net Flicks instead of an \$80 a month cable bill, if you can live without those things, then you’re in the right frame of mind.

Fourth: The most rewarding careers are those where people take risks, they really take risks. I learned that from Michael Capalis, who was the CEO of Compaq, went on to be at HP and MCI, and then to Verizon.

For me leaving a law firm and going to City Year was a risk, it was a leap of faith. When I got the offer, I will be honest, I waited five days to call them back because I was unsure. I didn't know where it was going to lead me, and, frankly, I still don't know. I've been doing it for six years and it's been the most rewarding experience of my life professionally. But it was a leap of faith. You risk much and the payoff is that much sweeter.

Finally: Understand why it's worth taking risks. Working for a mission-driven organization is about the most rewarding thing that you can ever imagine doing with your life. That's certainly been my experience. Whether it's about community change, national change, international change, it's more fun, it's more entrepreneurial, it's more creative, it's more alive, it's more meaningful than anything I ever could do in the private sector.

I want to close with this invitation, on behalf of the local grassroots folks here in D.C. A lot of people come to D.C. to be involved in public service because they're drawn here to the nation's capitol. I want to encourage all of you, as you think about this, to think about the local community based work that we're doing here in the District. The beauty of D.C. is its size. It is a city where change is possible and we have the opportunity to devote resources to this city to make positive change. Some of that already is happening, but with more bright energetic idealistic passionate minds like yours I know that we can do even more.

So thank you very much

E.J. DIONNE: Chris, I want to thank you for showing this entire crowd how wonderful Red Sox fans really are. Now stand up if you've been inspired by this panel.
(Applause)

KATHLEEN MAAS WEIGERT: Hello, everyone, I'm Kathleen Maas Weigert. I'm the Executive Director of the Center for Social Justice, the other co-host for this wonderful event. I would like to thank, on behalf of our two centers, E.J. for his wonderful job of moderating our panel. I would like to thank Cheryl, Cecilia and Chris for their insights, and our wonderful Steering Committee, whom I'd just love to have stand (their names are in the blue brochure). You know how much work this takes to pull off, so where's the Steering Committee and would they be willing to stand wherever they are? Wonderful job!

(Applause)

Second, we want you to know that there is information in the brochure about the centers that Kathy and I are privileged to direct. We have websites listed there as well, so please check them out; we'd love to have you learn more about the work we do.

Third, as it says in the program there will be a transcript of this event, which will be on Kathy's website sometime in May and we'll have a link to it from ours.

Finally, for those of you who do have specific questions, our wonderful panelists have agreed to answer some of them, so please feel free to come up. We want to thank you all for coming. This has

been I think for all of us an inspirational experience and it won't be the last that our centers co-sponsor.