

## Why Service Matters

There are problems government can't solve, so it's up to the rest of us—before it's too late. BY COLIN POWELL

**N**OT LONG AGO, I VISITED a Boys and Girls Club in a poor area in Florida. I was talking to a group of kids sitting on the floor around me about my own childhood. My family wasn't rich; in fact, we lived in a tenement in the Bronx. But, I told the group, my parents had created an enveloping family environment that gave sustenance, structure and discipline to our lives. We were taught to believe in ourselves. As I spoke, a 9-year-old boy raised his hand. "General," he asked, "do you think if you didn't have two parents you would have made it?"

That kid cut me right to the quick. He was saying, "This isn't my world you're talking about. Can I still make it?" My answer was: "Yes, you can." That boy may not have had what I had growing up, but, I said, "there are people here who care for you, who will mentor you, who will watch over you and teach you right from wrong."

As I began traveling around the country in retirement, my own interests turned inward,



Call to arms: 'I have seen divides that are deeply troubling'

from national security and cold war to what is going on here at home. I have seen social, cultural and racial divides that are deeply troubling. These are problems government can't solve, so it's up to us to get on with it. Last Friday we started: I had the unusual privilege of standing in the White House beside two of the presidents I had served—Bill Clinton and George Bush. One

had defeated the other at the polls, but old rivalries are giving way to a common purpose. We were together to announce the Presidents' Summit for America's Future, which will be held in Philadelphia on April 27-29. Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter and First Ladies Hillary Clinton, Lady Bird Johnson and Nancy Reagan will be present to welcome the delegations

from every state and hundreds of volunteer groups. The goal is not just to celebrate "service" but to encourage corporations and nonprofits to further mentoring, skill training, child health care, service to community and safe places for children.

It won't be easy. In my travels, I have met many youngsters. Too many of them are in despair. I saw for myself during 35 years in the military what happens when you take young people, provide a nurturing, structured environment and give them leaders to look up to. I've since wondered what would happen if only we could make that model available to every kid.

I find that so many people are anxious to do more, if only we can help them channel their time, energy and treasure. There's no reason every company in the country can't take one kid, 10 kids or 100 kids and teach them about the workplace. There's also a place for local government. Look at California, where Gov. Pete Wilson has created a program to recruit 250,000 mentors for at-risk youngsters by 2000. Each of us who has been blessed must reach down or reach back and lift up somebody in need.

**POWELL**, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs, is general chairman of the Presidents' Summit for America's Future.

# Clinton, Bush and Powell Join in Plan to Promote Voluntarism

By TODD S. PURDUM

WASHINGTON, Jan. 24 — In a ceremony suffused with the soft glow of bipartisanship — and the electric crackle of what might have been — President Clinton announced today that he, George Bush and the other living former Presidents would hold a three-day summit meeting on community service in Philadelphia this spring, to be headed by Gen. Colin L. Powell.

With Mr. Bush on one side of him in the East Room of the White House and General Powell on the other, Mr. Clinton presented the conference as a blend of Mr. Bush's emphasis on voluntarism and his own Americorps program of community service. It was the President's latest effort to present himself as a conciliating force above the partisan fray as he begins his second term.

"Citizen service belongs to no party, no ideology," Mr. Clinton said in his brief ceremony announcing the summit meeting, which drew an eclectic audience of politicians, corporate executives and communitarian advocates, ranging from Ariana Huffington, the conservative writer, to C. DeLores Tucker, the founder of the National Political Congress of Black Women. "It is an American ideal, which every American should embrace," Mr. Clinton added.

Officials said that former Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald R. Ford had also agreed to participate in the conference, to be held on April 27-29 in Philadelphia, and that Nancy Reagan and Lady Bird Johnson could lend their support, with Mrs. Reagan standing in for her husband who has Alzheimer's disease.

General Powell, who retired from the Army in 1993 after serving as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the goal was to organize various citizens groups, foundations, corporations and the Government to scale-up and leverage-up volunteer programs around the country.

"This is about Americans getting off the sidelines and getting on the playing field," General Powell said. At the conference, and its designation as a "summit," amounts to Mr. Clinton's latest effort, begun in last year's campaign, to invest a panoply of small ideas and initiatives with the aura of big events.

The conference is to be sponsored by a group of foundations, and some corporations have pledged to step up their own efforts at voluntarism, but the organizers of the conference made it clear today that many details remained to be worked out.

For Mr. Bush, the ceremony was a sentimental return to a setting and a subject dear to his heart. In his 1988



Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

President Clinton, Gen. Colin L. Powell, former President George Bush and Vice President Al Gore met in the Blue Room of the White House yesterday before announcing plans for a conference on voluntarism.

*'Citizen service belongs to no party, no ideology.'*

acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, Mr. Bush depicted the nation as a network of charitable organizations "like a thousand points of light in a broad and peaceful sky." Two years later, the private Points of Light Foundation was established by a group that included Raymond G. Chambers, a Republican investment banker and longtime friend of Mr. Bush's.

White House officials said today that in their limousine together on the way to Mr. Clinton's first inauguration four years ago, Mr. Bush asked Mr. Clinton to continue Fed-

eral support for the program, and that the Administration had done so.

Several associates of Mr. Bush said the former President was at first concerned about attending today's ceremony, lest he be seen as lending support to a partisan effort by Mr. Clinton, but had been persuaded that the President was sincere, and that final arrangements for today's ceremony were ironed out on Thursday.

Today, addressing a roomful of old friends, Mr. Bush turned to look at Mr. Clinton and said, "I'm very proud to be a part of this, and proud to be at your side in this noble effort."

For his part, Mr. Clinton said of his 1992 rival, "He understood that so much of what is good in America has to be done, and is being done, by people who are outside Washington."

Mr. Bush's former spokesman,

Marlin Fitzwater, said the former President "does feel strongly about Points of Light, and I'm sure that's his motivation for doing it."

Noting that Mr. Clinton's community service program has come under frequent attack by Republicans in Congress, Mr. Fitzwater added, "It seems like the President is looking for a little cover for his own program."

Harris Wofford, the former Democratic Senator from Pennsylvania who now heads the Corporation for National Service, which runs the Americorps program in which students earn college tuition for community service, said the summit meeting was the brainchild of George W. Romney, the former Governor of Michigan and onetime Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, who proposed it shortly before his death in 1995.

For months, Mr. Wofford has been working with the Points of Light Foundation to develop a five-point list of goals for the conference, intended to promote mentoring relationships between adults and teenagers, provide immunization and other health services to children, encourage education and job skills, provide structured recreational activities and opportunities for community service by young people themselves.

Mr. Wofford said General Powell, who has been active in recent years as a board member of the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, was recruited for the job by Mr. Chambers. Associates of Mr. Powell said he was enthusiastic about the project and intended to devote one day each week to it in the coming months.

Mr. Clinton's advisers have made no secret of the awe with which the President regards General Powell's potential political appeal. Indeed, in today's ceremony, it was clear that while the Republicans in the room applauded longest for Mr. Bush and the Democrats for Mr. Clinton, all applauded long and hard for General Powell, whose entrance was greeted with the sort of standing ovation generally reserved for the President.

Some of the general's associates said today that while he had been more than willing to take the job, some in the Administration, including Vice President Al Gore, appeared reluctant to let him take such a high-profile assignment.

In an apparent effort to balance out the team, Mr. Clinton named his outgoing Secretary of Housing, Henry G. Cisneros, as vice chairman of the conference, and repeatedly listed him today in the same breath with General Powell as central to the project's success.

# The NonPROFIT TIMES

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COMMENTARY • ROBERT GOODWIN

## Coming Together

*Volunteerism is vital element to saving communities*

Sister Helen Prejean, whose story was the basis for *Dead Man Walking*, recently gave NBC News her prescription for how to "fix America." She said: "...to heal America one of the first things ... would be to have a way that we could be a community and be in connection with each other again. We're too separated from each other. We distrust each other. Rich are separated from poor, black from white."

She was describing what we have come to call disconnection, a fundamental and growing problem of our society that underlies many of our most pressing human and social problems. Disconnection can be seen in the lives of those who have been pushed to the margins of our communities -- those who are isolated, alone; those who live invisible lives of desperation; those who are abused, exploited, endangered.

It also can be seen in the fragmentation of our communities. When we focus on our differences, we forget what we can do when we work together. We lose the ability to create a common vision of our shared future.

Societally, disconnection is reflected in our tendency to identify with our labels. We are rich or poor; young or old; gay or straight; male or female; black or brown or white; liberal or conservative. What appears to separate us becomes more important than what ties us together.

Others believe that disconnection is growing and is a cause of other problems. A 1995 *Newsweek* poll found that 86 percent of those surveyed believed that people trust each other less now than a decade ago. In a *Time/CNN* poll in July of this year, 77 percent of a national telephone survey agreed with the statement, "I wish I had more contact with people in my community."

Nearly 90 percent of the 240 people we surveyed at this year's National Community Service Conference believe that many of

today's social problems are a direct result of disintegration and disconnection among people and in their communities.

In mid-December the Washington Post reported on the development, in the past several months, of at least four new commissions, think tanks, or foundations, with leadership spanning the ideological spectrum, to promote the renewal of our civil society. All are reactions to the growing understanding of the impact of disconnection in our society.

While disconnection hurts all of us, its greatest impact is on the most vulnerable among us, our children and young people. Nearly 40 percent of America's children live in poverty. Between 1992 and 1994, the rate of marijuana use among 12-17 year olds nearly doubled. Since 1980, suicide rates have risen for those under 19, one third of all adolescent suicides are by self-identified gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth.

Sister Prejean says "We have to find a way that we can get our community back, so that people can be connected with each other, know each other's stories, know each other's sufferings."

She's right. And we believe that volunteer service is the best way to build the connections we need.



Jim Joseph, now our Ambassador to South Africa and a founding director of the Points of Light Foundation, described the impact of service in his wonderful book *Remaking America*. Writing of the common heritage of service and benevolence shared by African-Americans and European settlers in America, he says, "...whenever a person's sense of control over his own life is expanded, whenever he sees himself as contributing to his and the community's well-being, his pride increases, his self-esteem grows, and his capacity for caring is enhanced."

All of us know the difference service can make.

An impact study on Big Brothers/Big Sisters by Public/Private Ventures concluded "The most notable results are the deterrent effect on initiation of drug and alcohol use, and the overall positive effects on academic performance that the mentoring experience produced."

Several long-term epidemiological studies have concluded that engagement in the community may be one of the key determinants in

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*Together, we can make "connection through service" a powerful force - to bridge the differences that divide us; to remind all Americans of what we can accomplish when we work together; to get things done for the next generation.*

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the longevity and quality of life of retired men by creating social connections and giving renewed purpose to life.

A study by the Search Institute in 1993 found that 6th through 12th graders who are

involved in service just one hour or more a week are about half as likely to be involved in a variety of negative behaviors.

Our own Family Matters project has documented the impact on family members when they volunteer together. Says one participating father, "Since we have been helping as a family, we have been closer, we discuss things more and our children want to be with us."

Connection through service is the answer to disconnection. That is why The Points of Light Foundation has joined with 28 other national organizations and our inaugural "leadership company," Shell Oil, to create Connect America, a new collaborative effort to remind all Americans of the power of connection through service. Our initial steering committee includes groups as diverse as 100 Black Men of America, Generations United, the YMCA of the USA, Women in Community Service, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

In announcing Shell's support, Philip J. Carroll, their president and chief executive officer said, "We believe Connect America should strengthen everyone's commitment to make a difference in their own community."

We've set three goals for ourselves:

- To increase public awareness of the potential for connection through service to combat disconnection;

- To gain the commitment of 10 million Americans to connect through service focused on the problems most directly affecting chil-

dren and youth; and,

- To create new local "connection initiatives" with documented impact on those problems.

We know that people are more likely to volunteer through those groups of which they already are a part. That's why, in Connect America, we are putting priority on drawing in what we've called "people-based groups" - fraternal, civic associations, religious and educational institutions, business, organized labor. Our greatest impact will come when we combine their people power with the service delivery expertise of our nation's largest and most effective voluntary health and welfare organizations.

Our belief in the power of connection through volunteer service also has led us into partnership with the Corporation for National Service, major foundations and our Connect America partners to sponsor a national "summit" -- to be announced this month -- which will focus on how, together, we can mobilize more people as volunteers, working more effectively, to have a greater impact for children and youth.

Together, participants from local communities, states and national organizations will affirm specific goals that, when achieved, can make a real difference for kids. They will join with our most respected national leaders to challenge Americans to respond through a renewed commitment of their time, talent and energy.

Voluntary organizations can no longer afford to build walls between themselves. Today's problems call for new, collaborative solutions, not for more competition or duplication. The stakes for the country are too high. If we are truly to fulfill our respective missions then we must find new ways to combine our efforts for greater impact. Agreeing on specific goals is the first step. From that must grow joint planning for the actions that each of us can take to achieve those goals.

We invite all of you to join us. Connect America and the "summit" will have their greatest impact when leadership and ownership for their outcomes are widely shared. Let's make effective collaboration to achieve shared goals our most important new year's resolution for 1997.

Together, we can make "connection through service" a powerful force - to bridge the differences that divide us; to remind all Americans of what we can accomplish when we work together; to get things done for the next generation.

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*Robert Goodwin is chief executive officer of the Points of Light Foundation in Washington, D.C.*

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AP/WIDE WORLD



BY FRANK JONESTON—THE WASHINGTON POST

Former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Gen. Colin L. Powell discusses April volunteerism summit in Philadelphia as former president George Bush, President Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, from left, listen.

# Clinton, Bush and Powell Join Hands

*President Wins Two Republicans' Backing in Call for Volunteerism*

By John F. Harris  
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton's call for bipartisan cooperation won two of the nation's most prominent Republicans yesterday as recruits. Former president George Bush and retired Gen. Colin L. Powell came to the White House to announce they would work with Clinton to promote volunteerism.

It made for a striking tableau at an East Room ceremony: Clinton and Vice President Gore sharing the podium with the man Clinton defeated to win the presidency and another man who some think could be Gore's opponent in the race to succeed Clinton in 2000.

But both Republicans said they agreed with Clinton that the cause of more volunteerism and promoting community spirit override partisan concerns.

Bush has agreed to serve as co-chairman with Clinton at an April summit in Philadelphia to encourage volunteers to help the needy. Powell will be the event's general chairman. Former housing secretary Henry Cisneros will be vice chairman.

It was the second event this month that featured Clinton embracing a

vanquished GOP rival. A week ago, Clinton lavished praise on 1996 Republican nominee Robert J. Dole, and awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Yesterday it was Bush's turn to come to the White House to be showered with praise, courtesy of a man against whom he campaigned in an unusually sharp and personal terms.

"When President Bush held this office," Clinton said, "he understood that so much of what is good in America has to be done, and is being done, by people who are outside Washington and outside the federal government."

"When it comes to addressing many of the problems we face as a nation," Bush said, "it isn't a question of partisan politics, of one side against another, it's a question of all pulling together for the common good."

Organizers said the idea for the summit was pushed by former Michigan governor George W. Romney (R) shortly before he died last year. It came to a fruition as a joint project by Corporation for National Service, which runs the AmeriCorps and was started by Clinton, and the Points of Light Foundation, started by Bush. Former presidents Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan

have pledged support. Ford has said he will attend, as have former first ladies Lady Bird Johnson and Nancy Reagan.

The White House announced that some commitments from the private sector already have been made as part of summit preparations. LensCrafter's will provide 1 million needy people, especially children, with vision care by 2003 and Columbia/HCA Healthcare Corp. will immunize 1 million children by 2000.

"This is about volunteerism," said Powell, the former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman who joined the GOP in 1995, adding, "This is about each and every one of us who have been blessed by the wealth of this country sharing that blessing by reaching down and reaching back and lifting up somebody in need."

But for the Clinton White House the event was about something more. It was another opportunity to show Clinton reaching out to the opposition—after a reelection campaign in which he profited by depicting Republicans as hard-hearted ideological zealots.

# The Washington Post

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BY FRANK JOHNSTON—THE WASHINGTON POST

## SPIRIT OF COOPERATION

Former president George Bush chats with first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton at White House yesterday during an announcement by President Clinton

that Clinton, Bush and former chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Colin L. Powell will lead a summit on volunteerism in April. Story on Page A6.