

OPPORTUNITY COLLABORATION

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Colloquium for the Common Good 2010 Delegate Study Guide

“Leading from Poverty”

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I. Introduction: Colloquium Purpose and Format

The Colloquium for the Common Good is a key element of the Opportunity Collaboration. It provides one of several avenues for you as participants to connect with others who work in your field, and enables you to reach across specialties and organizational divides. A single set of readings insures that everyone attending the Opportunity Collaboration has common ground for discussions with both strangers and friends, regardless of your background. The Colloquium takes you out of your familiar environment, and invites you to look afresh at what you do, in the company of others who are similarly motivated and empowered.

Attendance at the Colloquium is mandatory. You will be assigned to a group of 20-25 participants, and will stay with that group and its moderator for the four sessions of the Colloquium, beginning Saturday, Oct. 16 and ending Tuesday, Oct. 19, for two hours a day; the schedule of meetings will be available during Opportunity Collaboration, and is also available on-line, along with moderator bios.

This year’s syllabus again adopts the Aspen Institute principle of the Great Conversation, using classic works of fiction and non-fiction to explore the debate about philanthropy and social enterprise. The Colloquium asks that each participant:

- 1) speak up: your thoughts on the material matter, even when others think the same
- 2) listen as well as speak: you can only respond effectively to others’ ideas if you have heard them, and reflected on what you have heard
- 3) embrace the reality that our exchanges may raise more questions than they answer, and that we hope most of all to raise a general consciousness of the issues

The following pages offer a series of questions for each session. We hope that as you answer them, you will see the big picture of the Colloquium, step confidently into your seminar room on Day 1, and leave it at the end of Day 4 fulfilled.

II. Study Questions

Saturday, 10/16, 9 am: Leadership and Human Nature

- Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham City Jail” (essay)
 - The Brothers Grimm, “The Wonderful Musician” (story)
 - Anne Sexton, “The Wonderful Musician” (poem)
- 1) What kind of document is “Letter from Birmingham City Jail”?
 - 2) To whom does King address the “Letter”?
 - 3) What kind of leader is King? Have you seen his equivalent in your own arena?
 - 4) What does it mean to be human, for the Grimm Brothers?
 - 5) Why do they choose to portray animals first as being charmed by the musician?
 - 6) How does Sexton adjust the Grimm Brothers’ fable? What does music mean to her?
 - 7) Who are the poet’s “sisters,” as she addresses them at the beginning of the poem?
 - 8) What forms of leadership actually work in the domain of poverty alleviation?

Sunday, 10/17, 9am: Speaking Truth to Power

- *Antigone* (play)
 - Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (essay selection)
- 1) What drives Creon’s edict that Polyneices shall not be buried?
 - 2) What drives Antigone’s commitment to bury her brother?
 - 3) How does Creon see human nature?
 - 4) How does Antigone’s family history affect her?
 - 5) Who is the chorus, and what role do they play in the action?
 - 6) Could Creon and Antigone have arrived at a less fatal solution to their differences?
 - 7) Could you live by Woolf’s four guiding principles: poverty, chastity, derision, and freedom from unreal loyalties?
 - 8) Can we speak of a feminine leadership style and specifically female rights?

Monday, 10/18, 9 am: My Values, My Practice

- *Giving Voice to Values: “A Tale of Two Stories.”* The questions for this module are included in the exercise itself (see the text on-line).

II. Study Questions (continued)

Tuesday, 10/19, 3 pm: Poverty and Freedom

- Frantz Fanon, "On Violence in the International Context", from *The Wretched of the Earth* (essay)
 - Hernando de Soto, "By Way of Conclusion," from *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else* (chapter from study)
 - H.D. Thoreau, "Economy," selections from *Walden* (essay)
- 1) What is Fanon's final solution for poverty, and how does he justify it?
 - 2) *The Wretched of the Earth* was published in 1961: have conditions changed in the developing countries of which Fanon writes?
 - 3) What should we make of Soto's commitment to the system of laws that he believes must underpin a successful capitalist economy?
 - 4) How do we derive social enterprise from Soto's world view?
 - 5) Based on your experience, is capitalism a cultural affair?
 - 6) How does Thoreau define poverty?
 - 7) Based on the texts in these four modules, who are the poor, and what is the value of poverty, if any, to them and the larger society?
 - 8) Looking back across our four modules, can you develop a better model for institutional intervention than you already have in your work?

III. Conclusion: Next Steps

We look forward to our conversations in Ixtapa, and thank you, on behalf of the Opportunity Collaboration, for contributing your wisdom to this endeavor.