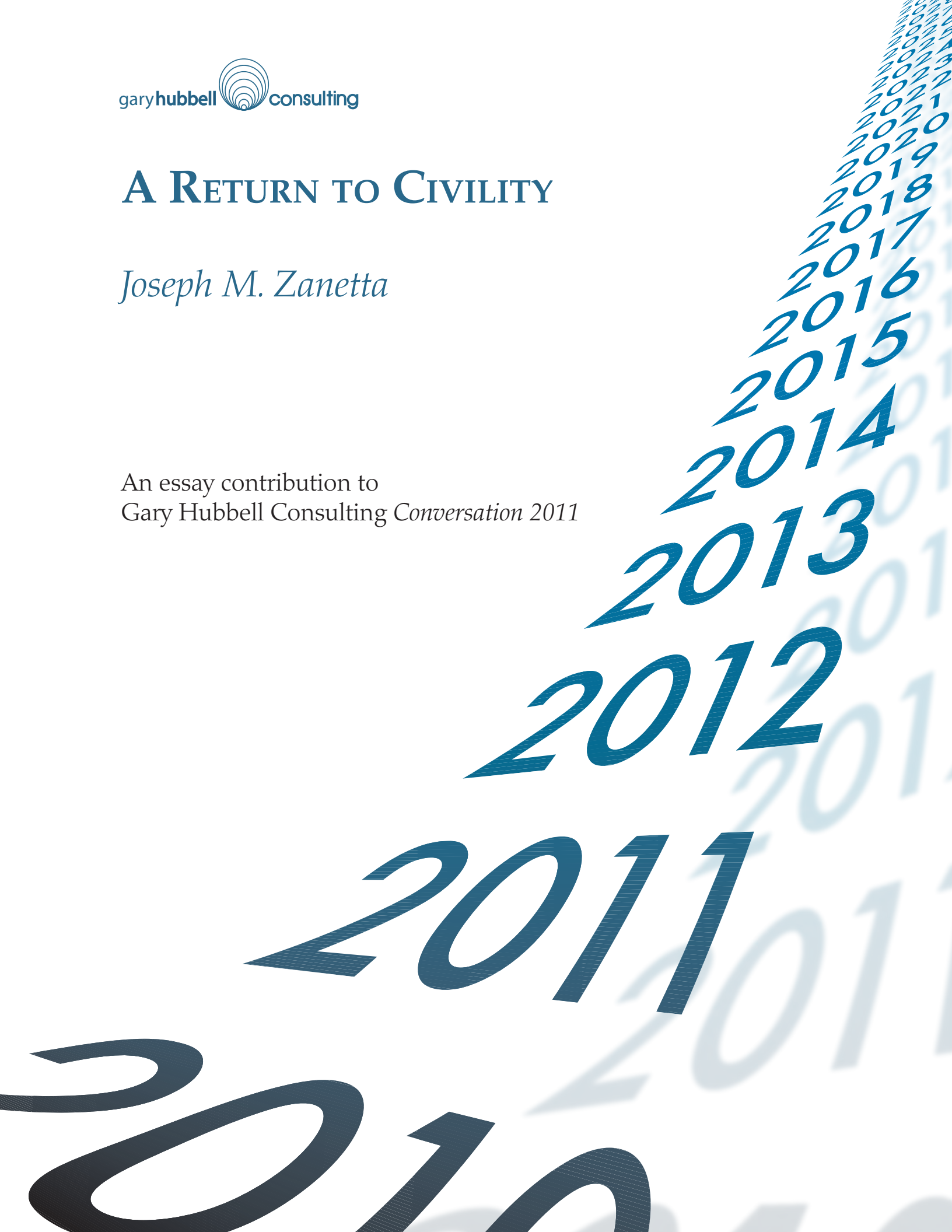


A RETURN TO CIVILITY

Joseph M. Zanetta

An essay contribution to
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ABOUT GARY HUBBELL CONSULTING CONVERSATION

Annually, Gary Hubbell Consulting convenes and hosts a small hand-picked group of social sector professionals from throughout North America for three days of intense dialogue and critical thinking. We strive to create a thought-provoking, mind-opening, and stimulating conversation about philanthropy, organizational leadership, and social sector change. This deep exploration of the nature and challenges of the philanthropic environment is intended to engage, inform, and inspire senior leaders to be catalysts for change in their own organizations and communities of influence. With each *GHC Conversation*, we seek to establish the seeds of a continuing and enriching network that nourishes us as individuals and helps each of us change how we converse, inspire, and seek new dimensions of philanthropy.

Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversation 2011*



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Joseph M. Zanetta, J.D., is the President of the Providence Little Company of Mary Foundation, a not-for-profit, integrated health care system comprised of more than 25 health care sites throughout the greater South Bay, Harbor and Palos Verdes Peninsula communities of Southern California. A member of Providence Health & Services, the organization has five medical centers throughout Los Angeles County. Zanetta was appointed to the position in December 2001. He recently concluded the foundation's most ambitious fund raising effort to date – the successful \$50 million Legacy Campaign.

Zanetta has over 25 years of experience as a fundraising professional. His career has included leadership and fund development responsibilities as:

- Vice President for Advancement, Whittier College;
- Executive Director Planned Giving; and Executive Director, Office of External Affairs, School of Business Administration, University of Southern California;
- Director of Development, Belmont Hill School;
- Director, West Coast Regional Office, Cornell University.

Zanetta received his undergraduate and law degrees from Cornell University located in Ithaca, New York, and is a member of the New York State Bar. He is active in many civic, professional and community organizations. He is Chairman of the Board of Holy Family Services Adoption Agency, member of the Board of Directors of the Robert H. Jackson Center and a member of the Board of Regents at La Salle High School. Zanetta has served as Chairman of the Pasadena Enterprise Center, and was a long-time member of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education District Board. Zanetta is a well-known speaker on philanthropy and consults with non-profit organizations in fund raising and board development. He has been interviewed on topics related to charitable giving and philanthropy in the Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, American Benefactor, Dallas Morning News, Pasadena Star News, and Whittier Daily News. A resident of Altadena, California, he is the proud father of sixteen-year-old Samuel Leggett Zanetta.

Joe had to withdraw prior to our gathering. We invited his colleague, Braden Hammer to attend.

A RETURN TO CIVILITY

By Joseph M. Zanetta

When I was a child, my parents used to comment about “the good old days.” Now that I am well into middle age, I find myself harkening back to those times as Camelot-like. As a child I grew up watching *Leave it to Beaver*, *Father Knows Best*, and *Ozzie and Harriet*. In all of those television shows, civility was the primary emotion of the time. Everyone was courteous, polite and thoughtful. No one appeared to be mean-spirited or overly controversial. Well, maybe there was one exception: Eddie Haskell!

In the 21st century, I believe we have lost that level of civility in most areas of our life. The President of the United States gave his State of the Union speech and a member of Congress stood up and screamed “You lie.” A public figure, an actor, a politician, a philanthropist might make a verbal gaffe in a public setting and within seconds it is sent via You Tube and FACEBOOK to millions to criticize.

In 2010, forty of the wealthiest Americans agreed to give away at least half of their fortunes. They committed half of their wealth by signing The Giving Pledge. Inspired by the mega gifts made by Bill Gates and Warren Buffet, this decision by these uber wealthy citizens was probably the major event in philanthropy in the year just ended. Yet, it also generated a great deal of discussion and even criticism, since many of these wealthy donors have also participated in public policy and political discourse.

According to a recent article in the *New York Times* (November 11, 2010), “the pledge has not yet visibly inspired new major gifts or attracted additional signatures – Mr. Buffet said he expected more soon – but has surely created discussion and debate, about the wealthy, their giving and what it says about our society.” The article went on to a discussion and

debate of the decision by these super wealthy to sign The Pledge. Several commentators were very negative and criticized these philanthropists because it called attention to the income disparities in our society.

The Giving Pledge points out the fact that we continue to have a huge concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. But this debate is not new: indeed, the industrial tycoons who created the first wave of philanthropy (Andrew Carnegie, Andrew Mellon, John D. Rockefeller, to name a few) created tremendous wealth and provided incredible gifts to many of our cherished American institutions.

As an individual who has devoted thirty years of my lifetime serving non-profit organizations, I believe that we should applaud the Giving Pledge and use it as a way of modeling behavior. In my work at the college and university level, at an independent school, and in the health care arena, the board and executive leadership is always trying to make connections with those individuals who are capable of making the biggest impact on an institution. The various fund-raising consultants are always pointing out that the vast majority of gifts to an institution often come from a handful of major donors. It seems to me that the Giving Pledge should be embraced and used as a modeling of behavior, rather than subject the signatories to criticism. There should be nothing evil or sinister in wealthy citizens stepping up to support a charitable organization that they believe in. When John D. Rockefeller created the Rockefeller Foundation with an initial gift of \$100 million in 1913, he stated that its purpose was nothing less than “to promote the well-being of mankind throughout the world.” Of course John D. Rockefeller had a controversial career in business and his influence on the nation intersected politics, public policy and society in general. However, it is so comforting to me to recognize that the same issues we are debating in 2011 were exactly the issues discussed on editorial pages and in the halls of Congress one hundred years ago.

The debate centers on the influence that wealth has in this country today. Are wealthy individuals too involved in the political process? Is it appropriate that wealthy individuals create organizations to reflect their political views? Should wealthy individuals continue to speak up on issues of public policy? The New York Times quoted an individual who stated that these philanthropists have so much wealth and power that they can decide what’s good and what should be promoted.

Let us return to the example of the Rockefeller Foundation and recognize how the goals of the organization “to promote the well-being of mankind throughout the world” have

evolved as circumstances have changed. The Foundation today has taken on a more “liberal” philosophy and perhaps the founder would not approve of many of the initiatives. But there can be no doubt that it is honoring its charter to promote the well-being of mankind.

A similar discussion is occurring in Los Angeles in 2011 – nearly one hundred years after John D. Rockefeller created his signature foundation. One of the wealthiest individuals in California is Eli Broad, who is one of the original signatories on the Giving Pledge. Broad is an incredibly wealthy individual who has publicly endorsed candidates for political office, conducted vigorous disagreements with the former Mayor of Los Angeles and the Roman Catholic Cardinal, but in the end has been one of the most generous donors of the century. He single-handedly provided significant gifts to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (now housing the Broad Collection), the Museum of Contemporary Art, and recently committed \$150 million to construct the Broad Museum in downtown Los Angeles. There is criticism that he is too involved in these projects, that he “rolls over” city and state officials to obtain entitlements, and that he is “too involved” in the political process. Sound familiar? Those are the same criticisms leveled at John D. Rockefeller one hundred years ago.

But I would argue that the landscape in southern California is much more attractive due to the incredibly generous gifts made by Eli Broad to a variety of institutions. Does he have an ego? Is he used to getting his way? Yes and yes. But is Los Angeles a better place due to his generous support of numerous non-profit organizations? Certainly.

I think that we have come to the place in our history, where the political discourse has gotten too polarized. As an amateur historian, I cannot help but reflect on the fact that John D. Rockefeller would scream at President Teddy Roosevelt, but then have dinner with him the next day. The great “trust busting” President was a person who kept the lines of communication open even with his critics and detractors. The social contract of one hundred years ago was such that there was a standard of interaction that was fueled by social graces and class and dignity. I recently read David Eisenhower’s book on life with his grandfather (*Going Home to Glory*) and was so pleased to read of Dwight Eisenhower’s affection for John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

As a former President, he would meet with and provide advice to his successors who treated him with civility and respect. Somewhere along the way, during the past twenty years, we have lost that ability for government leaders to have affection and respect for political opponents.

In politics, political commentators on both sides of the political aisle have gone beyond disagreeing with each other and now “go for the jugular.” The sad shooting in Arizona in my view reflects the breakdown of government leaders debating great issues and doing their best to solve problems. Instead, people talk in military terms of “targeting” your opponent, and doing your best to “destroy” and “smash” the opposition. Recall that after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law by President Johnson, those who opposed the bill met with the President to make sure that it became the law of the land? Compare that with the failure of the opposition party to embrace the newly enacted Health Care Reform Law passed in 2010.

How is this related to The Giving Pledge and the criticism people have leveled at wealthy Americans? My thesis is that we have lost our ability to engage in a thoughtful civil discourse. Reasonable men and women can disagree with each other without resorting to personal attacks, name calling, and disrespect, which is not part of the American tradition of justice and democracy. During the course of the past hundred years, we can point to numerous examples of leaders demonstrating their consensus-based approach. In *Team of Rivals* written by Doris Kearns Goodwin, we learn about Abraham Lincoln’s incredible ability to bring in his defeated rivals to his cabinet. This created a strong sense of purpose, and it led to different voices being heard. I am afraid that the past thirty years has seen a decline in that ability to respect your opponent.

The intersection of public policy and philanthropy is obvious: many of our great philanthropists wanted to “build something for mankind.” Name an American city and you can easily identify major institutions that were created by an act of incredible generosity. Usually these gifts were to “promote mankind” but through the filter of the donor. In southern California, which has been my home for three decades, the culture and fabric of the city has been immeasurably strengthened by the Huntington Library, the Norton Simon Museum, the Wrigley Mansion, the Gamble House, the Getty, the Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Los Angeles Music Center, and the Cathedral of the Angels. All of these magnificent institutions were the result of a generous benefactor deciding to “promote mankind” through his or her own eyes. Critics said that the Disney family should have provided gifts for the homeless rather than erect the magnificent Frank Gehry-designed Philharmonic Hall. But what is lost in the criticism is that it was those very individuals that decided what to promote and it had a huge impact on public affairs. When Henry Huntington decided to give his home and 150 acres to a non-profit that would maintain the gardens, library and art gallery, it was his desire to create such an institution.

We have to return to the social fabric where the citizens applaud acts of generosity. This is related to the civil discourse, wherein leaders in government, the arts, education and business can have civil discussions and actually disagree with each other without resorting to name-calling and mean spirited actions. The distinction between political and government leaders and wealthy individuals who signed “the Pledge” is murky at best. Jon Huntsman is a wealthy business leader from Utah who has given away hundreds of millions of dollars. His son is the former Governor of Utah, current Ambassador to China, and often mentioned as a contender for the GOP Presidential nomination in 2012. Flash back fifty years, and John D. Rockefeller’s two sons – Nelson and Winthrop – were elected Governors of New York and Arkansas respectively. Nelson went on to serve as Vice President of the United States. This is part of our history – wealthy citizens who come from families who encourage public service – and there should be nothing sinister in this. And often times the public service is connected to philanthropy. After World War II, the Rockefeller family, aware of the challenge that faced the nation after the end of the First World War, provided the land and the money to build the headquarters of the United Nations. That is a wonderful example of the intersection of public policy, philanthropy and society. Kennedy. Bush. Harriman. Roosevelt. These families span both political parties, are liberal, moderate and conservative, and all have members that embrace public service and philanthropy.

I think that in this internet guided age where there is instant communication and a “gotcha mentality” people forget that public policy, private philanthropy, success in business, and the social contract are inter-related. And now permit me to preach: citizens need to tone down their criticism of our leaders, be they in government, philanthropy, business and public policy. I have heard folks in Los Angeles criticize Charles Munger, the vice chairman of Berkshire-Hathaway and one of the original signatories of “The Pledge” for giving to wealthy institutions such as Stanford and the Huntington Library. I am not clear why anyone should criticize a donor’s choice of a charity (despite my desire to support less wealthy institutions) but Mr. Munger is also the largest donor to Good Samaritan Hospital. That hospital, located in downtown Los Angeles, serves the poor of the city, and his annual gift essentially permits the hospital to remain solvent. But many of the critics are not aware of his ten figure gifts annually to the hospital that serves the poor and homeless.

The basic tenant of philanthropy is love of mankind. The Rockefeller Foundation was created “to promote the well-being of mankind throughout the world.” Those who have signed “The Giving Pledge” have dedicated half of their hard-earned estates to charity. This is an act of generosity that we should applaud and model. In a way, it is sad that we still

have mistrust towards wealthy individuals who are demonstrating their love of mankind through their generosity. The basic DNA of charitable giving is based on civility and thoughtful actions designed to benefit mankind.

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