

It Is Never Too Late Until It Is.

Victory takes many forms in the open marketplace of social change.

The other day I was browsing through an old conference brochure and came across a treasured quotation. “Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity,” said the American educator Horace Mann.

As social entrepreneurs, the victory is different for each of us. The disappointment, of course, is that oftentimes only leaders who run front-line organizations get credited with the honorific “social entrepreneur.” How narrow and silly is that?

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Regina Starr Ridley and Eric Nee edit and produce the Stanford Social Innovation Review. It is unimaginable to think we could live without it. I read it with religious devotion.

Jerry Hildebrand innovatively directs the Global Center for Social Entrepreneurship, School of International Studies, University of the Pacific. The students there are the diversity of our future and our aspirations for a world chock full of ventures built on conscience.

John Rosser convenes the first annual Social Venture Capital/Social Enterprise Conference next week in Miami. The focus and purpose is to spur social investment in the Caribbean and Latin America. I will be there to keynote. I hope you will join us.

Theresa Fay-Bustillos just launched IdealPhilanthropy which, leveraging off her years as CEO of the Levi-Strauss Foundation, is entrepreneurially and smartly identifying solid social change programs and high-impact grant-making strategies for clients.

James A. Richardson and Mario Gutierrez of the nonprofit National Rural Funders Collaborative operate a virtual mini-conglomerate of philanthropic initiatives for families and communities in regions with persistent poverty, especially areas where concentrations of poverty and communities of color overlap. To read the NRFC website is to see “in action” the real world of social entrepreneurship.

Sara Olsen and Melanie Moore Kubo of SVT Group and See Change, respectively, are about the business of keeping the methods employed by social entrepreneurs aligned with their missions. No small feat, but these two women (sometimes competitors, sometimes collaborators) are about the accountability we insist on from others and often neglect for ourselves.

Kerry Olsen and Peter Laugharn run the Firelight Foundation which takes on the toughest problems in the toughest neighborhoods in the world. Defying the artificial metrics of scale and “efficient” leveraging, they provide high-touch, long-term and true neighborhood empowerment in Africa.

I have a longer list, but you get the gist. Social entrepreneurs come in all sizes and shapes and do good for humanity under many legal formats. Hail to them all.

Meet social entrepreneurs of all kinds next October at the Opportunity Collaboration, or just look around you. Even better, claim your own victory for humanity. It's never too late until it is.

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