

**Testimony of Frances Hesselbein, Chairman,  
Board of Governors of Leader to Leader Institute to  
Little Hoover Commission, February 27, 2003**

If you share my vision of the future and it is healthy children – all children, strong families, good schools, decent housing, work that dignifies, all in a diverse, inclusive, cohesive society that cares about all of its people, we know we have a long way to go. And leaders in all three sectors share the responsibility for millions of young people, “Young, Jobless, Hopeless”. (New York Times, January 6, 2003.)

From a recent study at the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, in Boston. “Our ability to generate family stability and safe communities is strongly influenced by this,” said Dr. Andrew Sum, director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northern and the lead author of the study, noted: “When you have 5 ½ million young people wandering around without diplomas, without jobs and without prospects, you might as well hand them T-shirts to wear that say We’re Trouble. Without help they will not become part of a skilled work force. And they will become a drain on the nation’s resources. One way or another, the rest of us will end up supporting them.”

In California, with more than its share of the young, jobless, hopeless, who end up in its prisons, little is done for these uneducated youth who swell the numbers of California’s prison populations. Whose responsibility is this? For the children who go to bed hungry, fail in school, drop out in their teens or earlier and go in and out of our prisons, we, who are leaders in all three sectors, share the responsibility for lost and wasted lives, and vast amounts of lost and wasted public monies that come out of tax payer’s pockets. The responsibility is ours.

Corporate, nonprofit and government leaders are called to use their combined resources for the reintegration of young offenders. We must respond. We know that sending a parolee with \$200.00 and a bus ticket back to the old neighborhood where he or she got into trouble is a fool-proof formula for recidivism. We know that a powerful collaboration of business leaders, nonprofit leaders, police and parole officers, educators, working together on intervention, skills-building, housing with counseling and mentoring, is the answer. Education is key: life skills, vocational skills, for every parolee.

I do not describe utopia. I describe what caring communities have achieved. The Drucker Foundation gave its annual Award for Innovation three years ago to the California Transportation Training Program here in Sacramento. A selection committee of distinguished national leaders chose a Sacramento project that takes parolees, gives them life skills and truck driving training for 18 weeks. Good jobs then are waiting for these men and women who drive 18 wheelers, who become taxpayers – not recidivists. In a state where the recidivism rate is 50%, the recidivism rate was less than 7% for the first 1,000 new truck drivers in this proven program for parolees.

This is not theory. It is a documented, live, current example of what can happen when the California Highway Patrol, the California Department of Motor Vehicles, The California Department of Corrections, the California Youth Authority, Sacramento Regional Transit, California State Parks, some local private corporation and the Sacramento City Unified School District partners collaborate to change lives and build the healthy community.

Foundations should be eager to support research on public safety outcomes and cost-effectiveness of current parole policies – both in California and in states that have successfully made this a priority with measurable outcomes. Foundations and other nonprofit organizations already are investing in many ways in a healthy community. We can replicate those models.

We know how to educate and rehabilitate parolees. We ask: Do we have the will? Are we ready to build the alliances, the partnerships, the collaboration that could spell successful integration of parolees? “Taxpayers not recidivists” is a battle cry that we can respond to. Changing young human lives into productive citizens is a bottom line we can aspire to. All it takes is leaders, leading from the front, leaders who care about building the healthy, inclusive, cohesive community that cares about all of its people. That is the challenge. Do we have the courage to respond?

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