



Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America

Lisbeth Schorr

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In her previous book, *Within Our Reach*, renowned Harvard social analyst Lisbeth Schorr examined pilot social programs that were successful in helping disadvantaged youth and families. But as those cutting-edge programs were expanded, the very qualities that had made them initially successful were jettisoned, and less than half of them ultimately survived. As a result, these groundbreaking programs never made a dent on the national or statewide level.

Lisbeth Schorr has spent the past seven years researching and identifying large-scale programs across the country that are promising to reduce, on a community- or citywide level, child abuse, school failure, teenage pregnancy, and welfare dependence. From reformed social service agencies in Missouri, Michigan, and Los Angeles to "idiosyncratic" public schools in New York City, she shows how private and public bureaucracies are successfully nurturing programs that are flexible and responsive to the community, that have set clear, long-term goals, and that permit staff to exercise individual judgment in helping the disadvantaged. She shows how what works in small-scale pilot social programs can be adapted on a large scale to transform whole inner-city neighborhoods and reshape America.

On the heels of the federal government's dismantling of welfare guarantees, *Common Purpose* offers a welcome antidote to our current sense of national despair, and concrete proof that America's social institutions can be made to work to assure that all the nation's children develop the tools to share in the American dream.

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