

Are you Paying Enough Rent?

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As a nation, we have become in many ways, conscious advocates for the respect of individual and collective rights. As a result we live in a society where pets, trees, and humans all seem to have the same rights. The advantage is that this heightened awareness of the boundaries of respect that we should have for fellow humans, animals and nature has made us more compassionate and more aware of the need to protect the rights of the vulnerable amongst us. As an outcome of this heightened empathy, the development of organizations that seek to provide protection through education and advocacy for the rights of specific groups is on the rise. Nevertheless, we sometimes seem to forget that responsibilities are a fundamental part of rights. We cannot defend or protect rights without establishing responsibilities. Doing otherwise contributes to injustice and creates imbalance. The following quote by Child-Family Advocate Marion Wright Edelman sums up the type of responsibility we should all be concerned about: *“Service is the rent we pay to be living [on this earth]. It is the very purpose of life and not something you do in your spare time.”*

The recent announcement from the Nobel Prize Organization that The 2011 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded jointly to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee of Liberia, and Tawakkul Karman of Yemen has been an encouraging occurrence for the world. According to the Nobel Prize Organization, the three women’s rights activists were chosen, *“for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women’s rights to full participation in peace-building work.”*

The story of the life of each of these women testifies of their personal commitment to working for the rights of women in their nations. More than mere duty, their causes have become a purposeful responsibility for each of them

President Johnson Sirleaf, valiantly spoke truth to power from her early days as a high school student and joined revolutionary movements against the violence and corruption in her country. Exiled on several occasions, she went back to her country after the ousting of a long-time

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warlord and became the first democratically elected female president of Africa. Under her instrumental leadership, Liberia has become exemplary in the region for its peace and nation-building initiatives.

Leymah Gbowee, was not scared to break with social norms in her race to peace. She called for women to withhold sex from their men until peace broke out. Not all the men thought that abstinence was funny, but some of the women did, as did many around the world. Gbowee even threatened, in a rage of passion, to remove her clothes at a meeting between government leaders and rebels if the peace talks did not advance. Her tactics worked.

Tawakkul Karman, head of Women Journalists Without Chains, was part of the now famous Arab Spring and continues to play a leading part in the struggle for women's rights and democracy and peace in Yemen. Karman accepted her prize on behalf of all the uprisings throughout the Middle East stating, "I'm so happy with the news of this prize," she told the [BBC in Arabic](#)

. "I dedicate it to all the martyrs and wounded of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and Syria and to all the free people who are fighting for their rights and freedoms."

All three women were brave enough to do whatever it took, including offering their lives in service, for the improvement of the lives of others. Their sacrifices were not easy. Their commitment to this cause means that there are high prices to pay for advocating for rights. The loss of privacy, the hours of personal and family time invested in working for the cause, the threats to personal safety are but a few of the many sacrifices these women have had to endure. However, their sacrifices have been worth the while; their efforts have brought hope to many in their countries and to many around the world who follow their stories and believe in their course. Undoubtedly, these three women have paid more than their share of the rent for living on this earth. The Nobel Prize is certainly not the culmination of their work but it is an affirmation of their services to mankind.

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Are you involved in the social issues and concerns of your community? Are you sacrificing a little of your time or talent to help alleviate someone else's pain? Are you paying enough rent for living on this earth? If your answers to these questions is "no", I invite you to consider two options. First, look for and join an organization that is really committed to making a tangible difference in this world. Volunteer your time and service to the ideals of this organization. Second, if you are not able to commit the time, your financial donations are valuable. Your donations can become the lifeblood of service.

In addition, encourage your children to also systematically give back part of their time and money to helping others. Teach your children early that life is a gift and everything that they possess is an additional blessing to this gift. They are not entitled to anything and no one owes them anything. Cultivating this conscious awareness in your children will help them to grow up to become compassionate humans and benevolent citizens of this world.

The need for hope in this world is great. People become depressed, commit suicide, become violent, render themselves powerless, and even die because they lack hope. You can help break the cycles of hopelessness that exist in the life of so many in your community and around the world. Your systematic financial donations and moral support can help to provide some form of hope. Never underestimate the reach of your monetary contribution. No matter how small, it can make a huge difference in the life of many. The fact is that one dollar can go a long way in the life of someone who is impoverished. There are many organizations that will be more than willing to become your personal conduits of service. When you and your family support a trust-worthy organization that advocates for hope, you are making a wise investment in purposeful service; it helps pay your rent for living on this earth.

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