

Tisch, J., & Weber, K. (2010) *Citizen you: How social entrepreneurs are changing the world*. New York: Random House. 247 pp.

Review by Michael Fortunato

The message conveyed in each chapter of Jonathan Tisch's book, *Citizen You: How Social Entrepreneurs Are Changing the World*, is as clear and simple as it is important: A global movement is underway, and Jonathan Tisch wants you to be part of it. *Citizen You* is a highly readable and timely amalgam of narratives, personal anecdotes, and pertinent calls to action; a short volume that speaks to any professional, inside or outside of the academy, who craves a deeper sense of satisfaction from their work than earning a mere paycheck. While loosely-assembled at times and drawing heavily from personal anecdotes and the experiences of acquaintances, Tisch weaves an elegant argument for the benefits of personal transformation toward a life of citizenship and service, perhaps even solving the world's most pressing problems. The author's centrality in a network of socially-minded thinkers and doers, and his own expertise as a leader in socially-responsible business practice, offers the reader a refreshing glimpse of the stories and thoughts of a cohort of individuals who have successfully bridged from the for-profit world to the for-humanity world, all the while deeply improving their own life's satisfaction and sense of world citizenship.

The first chapter sets the tone of the rest of the book, capturing the reader's attention quickly with personal narratives to which readers can easily relate. Woven amidst these narratives, Tisch quickly lays out the seven transformations that describe this "global movement" of new activism: from volunteerism to active citizenship, from charity to social entrepreneurship, from targeted philanthropy to systemic change, from helping a few to building to scale, from lobbying governments to energizing the private sector, from modest reforms to entirely new models, and from paternalism to community-based action. Tisch points to the coming rise of the Millennials and their culture – young people born from 1978 to 2000 – as being the most civically-minded and well-networked generation in history, and at the vanguard of the movement of new activism, pointing to events like the Twitter-fueled youth rebellion against the most recent presidential election in Iran (the book antedates the Arab Spring of 2011). But, Tisch makes it very clear through the remainder of the book that anyone, not just the Millennial generation, has the power to change their

lives mid-stream and find new ways of rediscovering active citizenship without upsetting the apple cart.

After the first chapter, each following chapter contains a different “angle” on how any person can rediscover and reengage their citizenship in different ways. Chapter 2 begins with social entrepreneurs, and contains inspiring stories from a wide range of socially-minded new businesses launched to solve a social problems. Examples include launching a business to working with disadvantaged kids to write in school newspaper, learning important journalistic skills; to Mercy Corps, a company developed to help ravaged societies through microfinance, conflict management, environmental protection, and the development of sustainable energy sources. Other chapters relate to ways that working professionals can make their businesses more socially-conscious, how governments can stimulate better citizenship through more engaged programs, and techniques for building citizenship online. Tisch continues with stories of how corporate executives have attempted to make their companies more like active citizens, and provides strategies for how to “bridge to act two,” or how to “start your life anew” as an engaged citizen. He illustrates using one particularly interesting story of an IBM executive who became the unlikely Chief Operating Officer of the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE). If this were not enough grist to jump out of one’s chair and get started, the book ends with 52 specific websites to visit, each with a different way to sign up and join the global movement of new citizen activism. The not-so-subtle message: Armed with all this information, and inspiring stories from key difference-makers, there is no excuse not to put down the book and do *something* to reaffirm your sense of citizenship and responsibility to making the world a better place, even in a small way.

Researchers and professionals who are looking for a systematic approach to entrepreneurship, the effects of social entrepreneurs on society, or a distillation of best practices in social entrepreneurship may be disappointed in this book. The title is even somewhat misleading: *Citizen You* is about much more than how social entrepreneurs are changing the world. The knowledge in this book is not organized categorically, nor is it overly synthesized, and its analysis is overlaid by Tisch’s overt and unfettered enthusiasm for citizen engagement and its benefits. The central argument is crafted anecdotally, and Tisch makes heavy-handed use of stories from places he knows well, like Tufts University (home of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service), Loews Hotels

(for which he serves as co-chairman of the board of directors), and the New York City government (where he lives and works).

However, such a personal approach should not deter researchers and professionals from the book's essential wisdom. *Citizen You* reveals, through careful pairing of narratives and ideas, deep insights about reflexive practice, and how anyone, in any position, can contribute to the book's stated goal of encouraging citizen activism. Tisch's familiarity with successful social entrepreneurs and their stories, and his commitment to the cause of citizen activism, presents a clear bias. It also presents a rich display of personal and citizen expertise, as Tisch winds the reader through richly-descriptive personal testimonies and stories of everyday citizen heroism from his own life, and the lives of his acquaintances, that are as thought-provoking as they are inspiring. Perhaps most practically useful, Tisch offers a boxed section at the end of every chapter called "Food For Thought, Seeds For Action," which offers realistic, pragmatic opportunities for engaging in citizen life, and real strategies for thinking reflexively and critically about what you, yourself, have to offer your fellow citizens that you may not have even realized.

In summary, Jonathan M. Tisch pulls no punches in *Citizen You*. From the early pages, any reader can expect to be drawn in by the book's inspiring stories, and its reaffirming tone that all of us, deep down, crave human interaction, and the chance to live harmoniously in a caring and committed world community. This book is an excellent choice for anyone who seeks such transformation or connection in their own lives, paired with down-to-Earth suggestions of how to make it happen. By the book's end, it is possible that even you could play an integral role in the global movement toward citizen activism (if you do not already).-

About the Reviewer

Michael W-P Fortunato is an Assistant Professor of Sociology, Engaged Scholar, and Research and Development Specialist with the Center for Rural Studies at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, TX. His research focuses on developing local and regional strategies for supporting entrepreneurship and innovation, and on removing barriers to local collaboration for social and economic development. A former entrepreneur and long-time professional musician, Michael enjoys drawing inspiration from across the arts and sciences to develop creative approaches to solving vexing social problems. Michael earned an M.S. in Community Economic Development and a Ph.D. in Rural Sociology from Penn State University.

