Welcome to the 17th annual edition of the International Journal of Servant-Leadership!

First, an introduction to this volume, from Dr. Jiying Song and Dr. Shann Ray Ferch.

For those of you who are just beginning to enjoy the pursuit of servant-leadership and want to learn more, there will be plenty to explore and begin to gain understanding about in this volume. Some of you have more experience in the pursuit, as well as in encountering the theory and practice of servant-leadership. For you, this volume can be a springboard to look more deeply at the crucible of human existence.

Press, 2011). We hope your path with servant-leadership helps you engage the physical, emotional, and psychological facets of your individual and collective leadership that may have remained elusive to you in the past, but for which you have yearned to find more resonance.

There is something very communal to the art of servant-leadership. As you attend to a life of servant-leadership and engage with the articles here or the chapters in the anthologies, we encourage you to engage with generosity, grace, patience, and a life-affirming essence. Life is shot through with the art and science of servant-leadership, and once we encounter it we see just how directly servant-leadership informs, deepens, and shapes us here and now. As for our mutual quest for the essence of servant-leadership, let’s show care for each other and our work. Sisterhood. Brotherhood. Good intention and good humor. As we apply goodness of heart and strength of mind to our journey, we hope to help build a community of trust and kindness.

What does it mean to be a servant-leader? What does it mean to be an artist, a scientist, a practitioner, an individual, a part of something greater than ourselves, a sister, a brother, family member? Humility keeps us from foreclosing on a single answer. Greenleaf held as foundational to servant-leadership the work of Hermann Hesse, the writings of Albert Camus, and the poems of Robert Frost, among others. Van Gogh said, “Art is to console those who are broken by life.” Nietzsche said, “The essence of all beautiful art, all great art, is gratitude.” Joy Harjo, the first Native Nations U.S. Poet Laureate, said, “There is no poetry where there are no mistakes.” She also said, “It’s possible to understand the world from studying a leaf. You can comprehend the laws of aerodynamics, mathematics, poetry and biology through the complex beauty of such a perfect structure.” Servant-leadership, in its core of mystery and beauty, is akin to the
study of poetry, and to the study of science, just as Joy Harjo conveyed.

Each person, once they have lived for a length of time, has experienced the depths of shadow and the radiance of light. Harjo takes as her mission in life something of the furtherance of love despite the hardest conditions, and this too is servant-leadership. “Bless the poets,” she says, “the workers for justice, the dancers of ceremony, the singers of heartache, the visionaries, all makers and carriers of fresh meaning—We will all make it through, despite politics and wars, despite failures and misunderstandings. There is only love.”

Considering the breadth and depth of genocidal history not only in America but worldwide, it is a bright mystery to hear one of our leading poets say, “There is only love.” This may remind one of Herman Hesse’s famous quote from *The Journey to the East*, “Children live on one side of despair, the awakened on the other.” Something is implied here, a human passage we face sometimes knowingly, sometimes unknowingly. We must pass through darkness. Monsters from the deep dwell there: fear, rage, violence, abandonment, hatred. A poet’s work, in Joy Harjo’s vision, and a servant-leader’s work, in Robert Greenleaf’s vision, is to make that passage not only with bravery and courage, but with love, and to do so not alone but in the company of others. In their conception, we might forward a love great enough to shake the dust from our souls and help us sing, even in darkness.

Servant-leadership, an amalgam of beauty and legitimate life-giving power requires time, devotion to craft, reading, writing, practicing, serving, leading, living, and hope. Gratefully, servant-leadership is not simply the providence of the masters, the gifted, or the talented. Servant-leadership can be learned, and like anything of
great meaning, it requires a form of intimate and humble devotion. Let gratitude be our grounding, and gentleness our way of encountering servant-leadership. The timeless poet, John Milton, said, “Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world.” In joining you here over the current volume of the IJSL, as editors of the IJSL we are reminded of one of Robert Greenleaf’s most fulfilling and fierce admonitions, one he famously borrowed from Camus and positioned in his original essay “The Servant as Leader” as the final clarion call to servant-leaders everywhere:

Create Dangerously!

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