AMBASSADOR THEODORE R. BRITTON
Service with Distinction

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Dear Friend,

I am happy to introduce the January/February 2012 issue of Exceptional People Magazine.

The stories in this issue will inspire you to realize your true potential and use it in a way that serves others.

Ambassador Theodore R. Britton shares his remarkable story of being among the first group of African American recruits to enter the Marine Corps between 1942 and 1949. We appreciate his military service and his continued commitment to serving mankind.

The New Year has arrived. Most of us have set new goals and have begun planning to accomplish them.

How prepared are you to fulfill your dreams and visions in 2012? Preparation and proper planning are necessary for achieving success, whether personally or professionally. It means having the right people on your team to help you make the best decisions.

I am thrilled to be able to highlight the accomplishments of 20 top business icons that have been featured in Exceptional People Magazine over the past two years. Each of these individuals achieved success because they built a team of people who helped them plan for success. Their advice, principles and philosophies enabled them to greatly impact the business world, as well as individual lives.

As you begin your journey to achieve personal and professional success, ensure that you have people on your team who believe in your vision and are committed to helping you fulfill it.

With every good wish for great achievements,

Exceptional People Magazine is not just a magazine. It is a life-changing experience.
AMBASSADOR THEODORE R. BRITTON
SERVICE WITH DISTINCTION
His incredible achievements and accolades are too numerous to reference here. However, an achievement that deserves top billing is that Ambassador Theodore R. Britton, Jr., and fellow Marines who served with him during World War II were recently selected as recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor, the nation’s highest civilian honor for distinguished achievement.

I will begin with his service to his country as a U.S. Marine during World War II, where he participated in the staging for the invasion of Japan.

His record speaks for itself, but I will elaborate on just a few of his accomplishments. He has become a part of history that has helped shape America’s opportunities for Blacks to serve in the military; in particular in the Marines.

It was in 1942, that President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a directive, allowing Blacks to be recruited into the U.S. Marine Corps. As part of a large group of black men who entered the Marines during that time, Britton, made the decision to serve his country. It was a time when segregation was still active but that didn’t deter Britton from his desire to serve.

Between 1942 and 1949 Britton and about 20,000 other black men received training at Montford Point, at Camp Lejuene, North Carolina. They were the very first group of Blacks to enter the Marine Corps.

From that point forward, Britton has served his country with honor and distinction. The men came from every corner of America, and they each fought for the rights of all Americans, even though their personal rights were curtailed by racism. They laid the foundation for greater equality and opportunities in the military for African Americans and other minorities.

Britton and the other men of distinction who trained at Montford Point and served in the Marines during that time were honored in August of 2011 at Montford Point for their dedicated service.

After World War II, Britton returned to civilian life but was later recalled for the Korean War. After serving a short stint during that war, he elected to be discharged so that he could continue serving his country as a civilian.

As a civilian, Ambassador Britton has been dedicated to serving others in ways that have produced remarkable results.

Britton has always had a life-long interest in diplomatic and international affairs which led him to become involved in many programs within the U.S. Information Agency beginning in 1971.

From 1974 to 1977 Britton served as Ambassador, (Chief of Mission) to Barbados and the State of Grenada, while simultaneously serving as the U.S. Special Representative to the States of Antigua, Dominica, St. Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla, St. Lucia and St. Vincent.

As a specialist in housing and finance, his civilian service also includes a career at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

His degrees in banking and finance enabled him to serve as an officer and director in the savings...
and commercial banking arenas. He earned a B.S. degree and graduate diploma from New York University and from the American Savings and Loan Institute, respectively.

He is a life-time supporter of education and has lectured at colleges and universities throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, the U.S., Central America and the Caribbean.

It was truly an honor and pleasure to have the opportunity to speak with Ambassador Theodore R. Britton, Jr., about his experiences at Montford Point and his dedication to serving mankind.

Monica: I want to congratulate you, on being awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for your service as a member of the Montford Point Marines.

Ambassador Britton: As you know, the Mint has to design and strike the metals, and there will be a presentation later in the year. I don't know whether it will be the White House or the Marine barracks. I do keep in close touch with the commandant of the Marine Corps. And by the way, he tells me it’s the highlight of his career.

Monica: That is wonderful. What does it mean to you to receive this recognition?

Ambassador Britton: Well, as I told the commandant, the medal sounds fine and I watched the reactions of the 120 or so old-timers who were at the Marine Corps barracks in August as his guests for breakfast. I said the idea of him standing there -- and as each one of these old-timers came up, sometimes in wheelchairs, sometimes with canes and so forth -- and he not only shook hands but then embraced them. His wife was standing a few paces in back of him. She too shook hands and sometimes embraced them. That did more for the Montford Point Marines than anything that anyone could ever do, be it metal or precious stones. This was from the heart.

So that was really something. For many, it was their first and last time to set foot in that place. Three of them have died just last month.

The medal will come along, and many of the 20,000 have long since gone. But the point is the interest of the commandant, James F. Amos. I have to mention that. It will always endure in the hearts and the minds of those of us who are alive.

Monica: In 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued the directive giving black men the opportunity to be recruited into the Marine Corps.

Ambassador Britton: And President Truman issued the Executive Order 1981 that ensured that they would be included. After World War II, the Marine Corps had planned to go back to being all-white again. But President Truman stopped that, and he made sure that it became one Marine Corps, which it is today. In fact, the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Marine Corps is a Lieutenant General who is black, Willie Williams from Savannah Georgia. That shows how far it’s come.

Monica: How did the opportunity to serve in the Marine Corps during World War II as a black man change your life?

Ambassador Britton: That's an interesting story. I went overseas and spent the first eight months overseas in Guadalcanal in the British Solomon Islands. Because we were in a support and supply unit, I had access to all of the literature coming in, and I got what amounted to a college education. Number one, of course; I roomed with medical corpsmen, who were the most educated guys in the outfit but then again, my officers were all very supportive, so I got a thorough education. It completely changed my life. I look upon those as eight of the most glorious years of my life. I'm a great reader. It was like a book lover's heaven.

We were not in combat at the time and so the question was, what do you do? For some people they might have been bored to death, but not me. I read everything I could get my hands on.

Monica: Education is powerful.
Ambassador Britton: Yes, and reading is fundamental as they say.

Monica: Yes, it is. During your training at Montford Point, blacks were not allowed on the main campus without a white escort. How did that affect the emotions and the mental stability of black men who were serving at that time?

Ambassador Britton: Well, keep in mind that one, for what reason would one want to go to the other camp? Transportation was not as accessible as it is today and the Montford Point camp was several miles away from the main camp. So in order to go there, you’d have to have some kind of transportation. Then again, since they were all white and we were all black, we really didn’t know anyone there by and large. So the question was why you would want to go over there in the first place, not that you shouldn’t want to, but it just never occurred to us.

Secondly, we were so busy right after boot camp, which is recruit training. Many of us then began advance training preparatory to going overseas. I came in the 29th of January 1944 and three months later, I would have been finishing boot camp. But then I went into a training camp, which ultimately meant that by July 3rd I was on a ship headed out to the South Pacific, a 33-day trip on a ship.

So it sounds very demeaning, and I’m sure it was for those persons who might have had reason to go to the main campus. But by and large, I don’t know that it was necessarily something that was high in the psyche of all of us at the time -- of any of us at the time.

Monica: What were the conditions for Blacks serving in the Marine Corps during that time? What were some of the things that you had to endure?

Ambassador Britton: By the way, I was born in the South although most of my years were spent in New York City. But I knew what some of the practices were. For those who never experienced segregation or discrimination, it hit them hard. For those who were accustomed to it, it was almost like something that permeated everything they did. To go out of the camp meant that you went into Jacksonville, which was very racist at that time. Many of us just didn’t have an inclination to go out.

I served twice in the Marine Corps. The second time was in Korea where things had changed somewhat. In fact, one incident came up where I reported directly to the general in charge of the camp. They were attempting to segregate black visitors from white visitors. White visitors could go to the hostess house. Black wives and relatives were sent over to what’s called NCO quarters, staff NCO quarters. When I told the general about the discrimination going on there, he put a stop to it that same day.

But as I say, going back to World War II, there were many more pressing things that preoccupied us. Many of the things that affected us we only learned of later. When I was in the Pacific, I read regulations stating that any time a black person and a white person served in the same outfit, the lowest ranking white person would always be in charge, no matter the rank of the black individual.

This brings me back November 10, 1945. The first black officer was commissioned in the Marine Corps, and on the same day, he received an honorable discharge and was transferred to the Reserves. Now one would wonder why they would commission him and, at the same time, transfer him to the Reserves, the inactive Reserves. The reason is simple. If he stayed in, he would be in command, or he would come into contact with white Marines. They would have to salute him and respect him and if they were in the same organization, they would be subject to his command. So this was one way of making sure that that policy of white superiority was continued.

Monica: How did that experience influence your perspective on life from that point on?

Ambassador Britton: To some extent it meant that once we were out --
once I was out, it was just an experience in life. I'll say this, as I began my college years, I expected that at some point I would go back into government service, because I really wanted to be in the Diplomatic and Consular Service. That's what it was called at that time. So I rejoined the Marine Corps in order to get my continuing credits in government service.

One incident came up in 1948 when the Marine Corps did not want to integrate. I mean they wanted to set up a segregated, all-colored trucking company in Harlem. And I said, “Wait a minute. The President is talking about securing rights to integrate everything, and these men have been asking to join the active Reserve units. And instead you're talking about a segregated unit in Harlem no less.”

I contacted Congressman Powell, who got in touch with the secretary of Defense. A letter was received from the assistant commandant stating, “Henceforth, all organizations will be open without regard to race, creed or color.” And at that point integration began.

It came back to haunt me when I applied for a commission during the Korean War. One of the officers remembered my name and remembered that I had previously opposed the Marine Corps’ actions. My oral interview abruptly ended. I received word later that my application had been denied.

Well, at first it sounded like a setback. However, as I think of it -- and I've had friends who served in Korea after that, who talked about how the trucks would come up to Chosin Reservoir loaded with supplies and go back down to headquarters loaded with frozen bodies of Marines who had frozen to death in Chosin Reservoir. That would have been my reward had I been successful in my commission.

Years later as an ambassador, I was able to have Marine security guards in my embassy. As far as I am aware, I'm the only Montford Point Marine to become a U.S. ambassador. I've represented the president and heads of state in foreign countries. So everything works out for the best.

Monica: Absolutely. That is so true. Sometimes we may not see the blessing while we are going through some things, but there is a reason for it.

Ambassador Britton: That's true. And I've come to know some of the top black generals in the Marine Corps. Needless to say, because of my rank and maybe my personality or something else, I have been accorded a number of considerations which don't come to many of the others.

Monica: Was going into the military your only option? Why did you choose to go into the Marine Corps?

Ambassador Britton: Interesting. I was offered the Army or the Navy and I said, “Neither.” Well, needless to say, in New York they say, “What are you, a wise guy or something?” I said, “No, I just think I'd like to try the Marine Corps.” And they said, “Well, their quota is filled.” Along came a gentleman, Sergeant Motere -- I will always remember his name. And he said, “Well, let me see what I can do.” He came back and said, “You're in,” and that was it.

Little did I know how meaningful it would be later in life. I'm sure thousands of African-American men went into the Army, the Navy, even the Air Force. But the Marine Corps is that kind of organization; we're just like a brotherhood and sisterhood whereby everyone identifies. When I wear the eagle, globe, and anchor on my lapel, it is always amazing to me how many fellows come up to me and hug me or shake hands. It crosses all nationalities, boundaries and ethnic groups. It's like a huge social fraternity and sorority combined into one.

At the top, our president -- now-retired president of our local chapter here is a lady who is a retired gunnery sergeant. She has been, as far as I'm concerned, the best chapter president in all of the Montford Point Marine Association.

She went in as a teenager and had to actually sit all day waiting for their attention before they took her into the camp for training. Even then she wasn't wholeheartedly accepted. Actually, black women were not accepted until 1949. We had black
Extraordinary Profiles

women in the Army Air Corps, nursing, the Navy, if I recall, and certainly the Army, and the Women's Army Corps, but not in the Marine Corps until 1949.

Monica: From your perspective what contributions did Blacks who served during that time make to the military? How did they facilitate the process for African Americans to serve in the military today?

Ambassador Britton: Beginning in 1942 or 1941, a commandant said given a choice of 5,000 whites or 250,000 blacks he'd take the 5,000 whites. Well, in the South Pacific, starting with Saipan, he ran out of whites. The Japanese were attacking and ready to take over. One of the commanding officers noted that there were a large number of Marines on the beach waiting for supplies to come in, so they could bring them up front to the guys who were being overrun by the Japanese. And he said in effect, “To hell with that. Get your rifles and get up on the front line.” That's when the black Marines began to show what they could do. They stopped the Japanese advance and began to show themselves as real fighters, which is what we were trained to do.

We were trained to kill people, even with our hands. And so to be waiting on a bunch of boxes when your comrades are up there being overrun by the enemy was something else. So from that point on, the word began to travel through the ranks, and they really began to appreciate us. By the time the guys reached the upper islands, two of them were awarded the Bronze Star Medal. I'm told it was actually the Silver Star, which is the second-highest award in the military, in the Marine Corps.

Gradually the idea of color meant nothing compared to whether a person was able to fight, to use his rifle, his bayonet and so forth, whether he could help protect his comrades. So it evolved over the years.

I have to say that the Marine Corps did a lot for us as young African-Americans -- things that we did not think about at the time. Keep in mind that by the time I went in, in January of 1944, all of the drill instructors were black, which meant that we, in a sense, had big brothers. We were teenagers. We had big brothers training us to be gentlemen, to be respectful, to fight and to handle weapons. We learned that unlike in the South where you looked down, in the Marine Corps you looked a person directly in the eyes. And by the same token, if you're asked a question, your answer should be heard at least half a block away -- yes, sir, or no, sir. Each of us were given a rifle with ammunition, a bayonet and taught how to use them. We were also taught judo, how to fight with our hands.

Think of young black men coming from the South who had been very respectful over the years, because of segregation and other things, suddenly being taught to carry themselves erect, shoulders erect, heads held high, to stride as if you were going someplace and to be ready to speak up and to look directly at a person. That was not something characteristic of the average black person, the black male in the South. So we came out of it an entirely different group of people. We made a great contribution to black people everywhere because of the training we received.

Monica: Your vision or your dream early on was to become a part of the diplomatic arena. What inspired that interest?

Ambassador Britton: When I was in Guadalcanal, I read about the formation of the United Nations. I had read a lot about it because, as I say, I had access to many of the periodicals and so forth. By the way, I was able to have a long conversation with the last surviving signer of the United Nations Charter, Harold Stassen, former governor of Minnesota. He was one of the youngest people at the signing.

I began reading about the Diplomatic and Consular Service and I wanted to join. Initially, my ambitions were thwarted because even though State Department recruitment required that you have served as an officer in the military during World War II, under
federal government regulations, I could not become an officer.

Later on, of course, came the McCarthy years and I became a little disenchanted about it. But interestingly, I started working for the New York City Mission Society in Harlem and later with the American Baptist Home Mission Society. I was very active in my church, which is a very large church by the way, Riverside Church in New York City. Over the years, my sense of public service became stronger. When I finally went back into government at a very high rank, I attracted a lot of attention, especially when I began traveling overseas for foreign research. I was in charge of research and technology, and I began speaking for the embassies. Embassies were very impressed by my attention and support.

Each embassy writes up a report of your visit. My visit reports began to attract a lot of attention from the State Department, the White House, the press, and Jet Magazine. With that, it became apparent that I had more than just a passing interest in diplomacy.

I was asked if I would be interested in a diplomatic post. This was when President Nixon was in office. By the way, my chief supporter turned out to be Senator Strom Thurmond from South Carolina. When he learned that I was doing a lot of things to help South Carolina, he became one of my greatest supporters.

Monica: As a diplomat, one of the missions you served included the Middle East Peace Initiative to Israel and Palestine during 2007. What are your thoughts on the current situation between Israel and Palestine regarding the possibility of achieving peace between the two states?

Ambassador Britton: You know, sometimes you almost feel that no one really wants peace. Peace means giving up something, and sometimes people don't want to give up anything. It's true regarding the Israelis -- many of the Jewish people have been persecuted, and I have followed their history down through the years. They needed a homeland, someplace that they could actually call home, not that they're not firmly involved in other countries as well. They have been very clever and very efficient, so that when they have been attacked by the larger group, the Arab population, they have been able to overcome. But having been successful, it means that they are now reluctant to give up what they were able to achieve by virtue of the failure of others.

Because of violence, they have begun putting up walls to separate themselves from other people at the same time that there are large numbers of Arabs within Israel. And they still have not quite resolved whether these people are citizens because it calls itself a Jewish state. But in the nature of things today, nothing is straightforward. So they have Muslims and they have Christians. And the question is how do you accommodate the Muslims and the Christians in a place that calls itself a Jewish state?

But suffice it to say that the demands of each side are such that it's very difficult to have a meeting ground, a middle ground so that each side gets something, although they don't get everything they want. We have been talking about this since 1948, and here it is moving towards 1218 and we still have not solved the problem of the Israelis and the Palestinians. Yet, they're all very closely related. One is Semitic; one is Hermetic. But they are different.

I was very close to Malcolm X when he was in New York, and I remember going to a program in which he and the others had been denouncing the white devils. I met Elijah Muhammad, and in came a gentleman from Egypt representing President Nasser of Egypt. He was bringing $10,000 to support the work of the black Muslims in America. He was blond and blue-eyed. His skin was as white as snow, and he was coming in to support the Black Muslims. He was a Muslim himself. I have been unable to determine the reaction of those men who recognized that their brother was one of the white devils they had been denouncing. This goes back to 1957.

They would like to have peace but at their own price and you can't have it that way. It does mean giving up something.
Monica: Your profession is also in banking and finance, and you have served as an officer and director in the savings and commercial banking industry.


Monica: When did you join the bank?

Ambassador Britton: In 1955 after I graduated from NYU. I had already majored in banking and finance. I also served on the board of Freedom National Bank.

Monica: What do you think about the current financial problems that exist today on Wall Street and throughout our economy?

Ambassador Britton: I'm not necessarily an expert, because there are so many intractable problems to it.

I was listening to Congressman Barney Frank recently concerning the new loans on titles and various kinds of financing mechanisms which are totally unregulated because originally we thought only in terms of banking. I belong to a credit union where you have a credit union association, and they are regulated. But many lending institutions are not regulated. I think even Wal-Mart is considering a banking venture.

There have been a number of changes in the financial field that we never considered. We started off talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars. By the time I graduated, we were up to millions of dollar, and by the time I went back into the government, we were discussing billions of dollars.

Ms. Davis, there was a case in point in 1971. President Nixon met with President Pompidou. I think it was in Iceland. At that time gold was being traded by the United States government on the basis of $32.50 an ounce. Americans could not own gold, but foreigners could. So any time a person was ready to present an obligation to the U.S. for payment, that person could demand payment in gold at $32.50 an ounce. Gold at that time was much more than $100 an ounce but President Pompidou announced that he was going to demand payment in gold. President Nixon removed us from the gold standard that night. We would have been wiped out.

I had majored in banking, international banking and foreign exchange. But for some reason it did not dawn on me that the prices of everything in this country would rise, because whereas we had been taking our currency to $32.50 an ounce, suddenly that $32.50 an ounce became something like $232 or $332.50, which meant that all prices were going to go up. I completely missed it.

One guy said, “All right. If you suckers believe that, just pass your wallets to the left.” And we came out of our slumber. The professor, of course, could only laugh. It may have been just paper. It has no intrinsic value at all. It's just paper.” He said, “It’s a medium of exchange or a storehouse of value.” And he continued to talk, and he just really low-rated the bills. Finally, he put them back into his pocket. Well, we freshman sat there. We were stunned. It was like news from Mount Olympus.

I decided to major in banking because it was a respectable type of work, and also I liked the idea of figures, of business.

Houses in Harlem that used to sell for $10,000 -- I'm talking about the middle or the early '60s are now going for $1 million, and one wonders, “Well, what happened? They’re the same houses.” In fact, they’re even older. But it's the monetary mechanism. For those people to understand the monetary mechanism, the exchange rates, the values and so forth, it's amazing.
Monica: I'm sure you made a great contribution to that industry as well.

Ambassador Britton: We became the number one mortgage lender, certainly in the Harlem area. Whenever black people wanted mortgages, they came to us. Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee were some of our customers. Mickey and Sylvia -- I recall so many people, very prominent people whose houses were financed, because the majority of the white-owned banks were not anxious to loan to a black person.

A young lady is now the president of the Carver Federal Savings Bank, and she has really taken that bank to new heights.

Monica: You're also an avid supporter of education, and you have lectured at many colleges and universities around the world.

Ambassador Britton: I'm honorary chairman of Kristal University in Albania.

Monica: When you travel around the world and you're speaking to students, what are some things that you talk about, and what specifically do you want students to glean from your experience and knowledge?

Ambassador Britton: That success is always there. As strange as it may seem, in this country we look upon the differences between the races and the past practices of being limited.

Actually, many of the same practices still exist in many other countries.

Take Albania, which is looked upon generally as 70 percent Muslim. It's not the usual Sunni/Shiite. It's Bektashi but they are 70 percent Muslim. For many years the ruler was very rigid with the people, and those who had offended the state, especially those who wanted to integrate, were considered enemies of the state. That affected their entire families and even their children were barred from attending public schools. They could not go into public hospitals, public clinics or any public building. If they needed to transact business in a public building, a spokesperson would have to go speak for him or her.

Now just think about the South where black people were barred from some places, including libraries and many other public places. There is no difference. You may talk about the enemy of the state, but in the South you were not called an "enemy of the state," you were just called "colored." If you went to a waiting room, there was a colored waiting room and white waiting room.

I've gone to maybe 30 or 40 African countries where oftentimes a tribe may find itself in difficulty because another tribe is in charge. Then I go to a place like Belgium where you have a problem between the Flemish and the French-speaking people. In many other places there are differences, including China where I observed some real differences.

I was invited to the Berlin Senate in Berlin, Germany to speak about social conditions and minorities. Their minorities were men who had come in as guest workers, but they were not allowed to bring their families in. They lived in what were formerly Army barracks. And any time you get a group of men in a situation like that, you have some unruliness and undesirable behavior. They talked about minorities, and they wanted me to compare the minorities here to the minorities here in the States. I had to point out that here we are families. We are citizens. We were not aliens, and we can protest. We can picket. We can sue the city. We can sue federal officials. We can sue each other; however, these people don't have such rights.

I had to remind them that things in this country are changing drastically. The courts are ruling in favor of those who are seeking rights within our cities, something that didn't exist within their country. Well, I'm not certain whether it's because of my speech, but more and more of those people have become citizens of Germany. I'm talking about Turks, Greeks, Hispanics and many people from Africa.

Monica: What has been your greatest reward in serving as an ambassador?

Ambassador Britton: I think it was the ability to take my family out of
the country, to see them living on a better scale. It lasted less than three years, but for those members of the family who experienced it, suddenly they were in a mansion with a swimming pool. They had a butler, maids, and security guards. Their father was the number one American on the island. They were the number one American family on the island. And so this was something that I always think of leaving as a legacy to my children. Unfortunately my oldest son never experienced it. He was in the military at the time, and he lost his life before I left.

But this is the legacy that I leave to the children, and I'm so happy that I was able to do it. The entire family flew to Barbados as the arriving first family. We all traveled first-class. It was the first and only time that the family has ever traveled on an airplane together. This is something that they may take for granted, but for me I'll always remember it as something very special, even my little grandson who now works on Wall Street.

**Monica:** What branch of the military did your son serve in?

**Ambassador Britton:** He was in the Air Force. He drowned in an accident of some sort.

**Monica:** I'm so sorry to hear that.

**Ambassador Britton:** My other son served in the Air Force as well. My younger son was in the cadets in Barbados, and my younger daughter was also in the Navy. So we've had some military experience.

**Monica:** I want you to give me your thoughts on this quote. A woman by the name of Pearl S. Buck once said, “To serve is beautiful but only if it is done with joy and a whole heart and a free mind.” What are your thoughts on that?

**Ambassador Britton:** She's right on the money, Pearl S. Buck -- The Good Earth and so many other wonderful books. I think it epitomizes what good public service or good service to humanity ought to be about. It's an open mind. It's a good heart and hopefully without any expectation of return. I’ve found that a lot of people say, “They never said, ‘Thanks.’” And sometimes I have to ask them, “Did you do it just for that?” You do good things because they are things to be done to help people, but not necessarily for the reward that you get. Otherwise, it's not exactly straightforward.

Yesterday I was going into Kroger, and I stopped to put in some money in one of the Salvation Army canisters. The fellow who was collecting and I got into a conversation. He said, “That lady came here, and she just stuck a dime in the can.” He said, “Should I have been offended?” And my answer was no. I said, “The mere fact that she came may have inspired others, including me, to come here,” because I didn't know how much she put in. It was less important. I'm not trying to match her. I said, “But the important thing is she stopped. So many people go right past you and never stop or do anything.” So believe me, the person who puts in a little is as important as a person who puts in a lot, because you never know how much it takes from that person to give even a small amount.

I was at a retreat recently, and at the end they asked for contributions. They began with 25,000, then 15,000, 10,000 and 5000. Well, I'm not necessarily in that league, but afterwards I said, "Well, I got to give something," so I gave something. But I don't think that we should measure the return that we get for the good work that we do. I think that Pearl Buck in a sense epitomizes by suggesting that what you do and how you do it, is less important than what you get in return. Quite often, for a well-to-do person to help a poor person or a less well-to-do person, it has to be without expectations of any return.

We say a quid pro quo. So it's something that we do because it's the right thing to do and not because it's something we are forced to do or where we have expectations of receiving something in return.

She was one of my favorite writers. ♦