



# Big Citizenship: How Pragmatic Idealism Can Bring Out the Best in America

*Alan Khazei*

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## **Big Citizenship: How Pragmatic Idealism Can Bring Out the Best in America** Alan Khazei

Alan Khazei has pioneered ways to empower citizens to make a difference throughout his life. As a young graduate from Harvard Law School, he turned down lucrative offers from corporate law firms to found a non-profit called City Year with his friend, Michael Brown.

City Year allowed young people to serve their communities—first in Boston, now in twenty cities across the U.S. and in Johannesburg, South Africa, and London, U.K.—through mentoring, tutoring, and leading children. It also allowed Khazei to be at the forefront of a generation of innovators who invented new methods of social entrepreneurship.

Khazei not only built and ran a hugely successful organization with Brown, he explored how social change could be achieved through Congress, popular movements, and motivated alliances of groups. Khazei led the effort to defend AmeriCorps and then through his second organization, Be The Change, Inc., worked to secure its longterm future through the passage of the bipartisan Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. This journey—from the most local of grassroots engagement to the halls of Washington—is extraordinary in itself and a vital model for anyone despairing that change can ever be effected in a sclerotic political system. It can. Khazei has already proved it.

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