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**Media Contact:**

Suzanne N. Smith

Founder & CEO

Social Impact Architects

214.957.0903 (cell)

**Serial Social Entrepreneur Responds to President’s Call to Action in Action-Oriented Op-Ed**

DALLAS (January 20, 2020) – Serial social entrepreneur, Suzanne Smith, who has worked for decades on social change gives us a glimpse into how newly-minted President Joe Biden can super-charge his efforts and harness the social sector to tackle the challenges ahead. She shares her perspective on the top issues facing the country and identifies “bright spots” that are being driven by an army of better angels.

Dear Mr. President:

Congratulations on a hard-fought race for your first term as president. Your call-to-action in November was inspiring: *“Americans have called on us to marshal the forces of decency and the forces of fairness. To marshal the forces of science and the forces of hope in the great battles of our time.”* In times such as these, I would add an additional group to your list – “[forces of impact](https://socialimpactarchitects.com/social-alchemy/).” Nonprofits in the United States are on the frontlines of all the issues you have articulated (e.g., climate change, health care, racial justice) and can be a great force behind our collective agenda to rebuild the country. You also have an asset that no other president has ever had – four generations of [social entrepreneurs](https://socialimpactarchitects.com/social-definitions/) as well as experienced nonprofit and foundation leaders who are fighting every day to change the landscape of countless [social issues](https://socialimpactarchitects.com/movements/).

As you take office, I hope you will become the nonprofit sector’s “champion-in-chief.” Help us harness the collective power of the [government](https://socialimpactarchitects.com/policy-meeting/) and [individual citizens](https://socialimpactarchitects.com/social-ripple-effect/) to create and sustain the changes needed to tackle the challenges ahead and formulate collective solutions. The good news is that we do not have to start from scratch. Brilliant minds from across the country – both before and during the pandemic – have started the conversations and just need leadership to build consensus and take ideas to scale. To that end, here are what I would call bright spots that are being driven by an army of “better angels” across the country:

***“The battle to secure your family’s health care.”***

**Health**: In 2016, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation set the bar for health through their “[Culture of Health](https://www.rwjf.org/en/how-we-work/building-a-culture-of-health.html)” movement that addresses the “disjointed system of health care that does not systematically extend beyond the walls of medical offices to the places where people live, learn, work and play.” They have created action areas to promote health, increase access and bring together disparate sectors and systems to improve well-being. In each of these areas, they have identified clear drivers and followed through with outcome measures. In addition, they looked at health not only by including traditional health measures and partners, but they also dug deeper into issues of [equity](https://socialimpactarchitects.com/equity/) and access to further [engage sectors](https://socialimpactarchitects.com/collaboration-commandments/), such as education, housing and environmental health. **By “tearing down the walls” between health care, public health, physical health and mental health, we are homing in on healthy habits that lead to quality of life, well-being and longevity.** I encourage your team to look at this work and find ways to take it to [scale](https://socialimpactarchitects.com/scaling-hugh-obrian/).

***“The battle to build prosperity.”***

**Education/Workforce**: As I am sure First Lady Dr. Jill Biden can attest, our rapidly changing economy necessitates a direct connection between our education and workforce strategies. In fact, I would argue that they are now twin strategies that should be integrated into one collective system. Andrew Carnegie once said, *“The best means of benefiting the community is to place within its reach ladders upon which the aspiring can rise.”* We currently have an education system that is struggling to keep pace with change and is fatigued from managing the shifts needed during the pandemic. We have a workforce system serving hard-working Americans that are underprepared for a new global economy. **I encourage you to gather a task force of experts, led by our First Lady, to quickly usher in a new blueprint for preparing our youth for the future, retooling our existing workforce for living wage jobs alongside our businesses, and building support systems, such as early childhood education and financial aid to help them ladder up to success.**

***“To make America respected around the world again and to unite us here at home.”***

**Civics & global education and engagement**: In order for America to be successful both globally and at home, we need to gain a better understanding of our democracy and global peers. In the 18th century, we had an Age of Enlightenment, when science and reason helped societies, including our own, exchange ideas and advance on a number of fronts. **Today, we have an opportunity to rise to the challenges facing us globally and create our own “Age of New Enlightenment.”** For our “better angels to prevail,” we need Americans to become engaged citizens – both as Americans as well as citizens of the world. We know there is a correlation between high-quality civic learning programs and civic engagement and equity. I encourage you to look at the recent [Brookings Report](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/BrookingsPolicy2020_BigIdeas_Winthrop_CivicEducation.pdf) and to convene educators and nonprofits to redefine our needs around civics, global education and engagement.

***“The battle to save the climate.”***

**Climate Change**: Amid the uncertainty of a global pandemic, we also have another worldwide disaster – global warming – happening. I grew up in the 1980s when we collectively tackled the ozone hole. Consumers and businesses came together to “stop using the spray can.” While the issues ahead are not that simple, we can once again build public support and business involvement in the solutions. We can have productive conversations, like we did in my hometown of Dallas, on climate-related risks, impacts, and meaningful mitigating and adaptation strategies. **As we found in Dallas, building public support comes down to 1) ensuring messages are data-driven,**[**motivational**](https://socialimpactarchitects.com/social-marketing/)**and easy to understand; 2) showing a clear return on investment; and 3) focusing on low-hanging fruit while building toward success over time.** I encourage you to look at examples, such as Dallas’ Comprehensive Environmental & Climate Action Plan, which was passed unanimously by our City Council, to develop a strategy for encouraging Americans to embrace their role in creating a healthy, safe and economically vibrant country.

***“To offer hope and laughter to ourselves.”***

**Arts**: One of the top moments of the inauguration festivities was the recitation of “[The Hill We Climb](https://thehill.com/homenews/news/535052-read-transcript-of-amanda-gormans-inaugural-poem)” by Amanda Gorman. It spoke volumes about what we have gone through and why we must climb the hill ahead. Poetry and the arts can transfix us in a way that nothing else can. One of the causalities of the pandemic has been its impact on our artists and our arts institutions.**I encourage you to appoint a Special Advisor to the President on the Creative Economy to ensure that the creative industries, which was a $800 billion industry in 2019, can bounce back after this crisis.**

***“We must make the promise of the country real for everybody — no matter their race, their ethnicity, their faith, their identity, or their disability.”***

**Social Justice & Technology**: At the intersection of all of these and other social issues stand technology and social justice. **Today, access to technology stands in the way of achieving the American dream. And, equity now must be consciously addressed in everything we do.** There are countless examples of foundations and businesses working collaboratively with schools and libraries to get Wi-Fi and computers to those who need them. There are also many organizations working hard to advance equity. I encourage you to elevate these bright spots as best practices for everyone to follow.

**To change means letting go of old ways of operating and welcoming new ways. Native Americans have coined this concept:**[**survivance**](https://socialimpactarchitects.com/nonprofit-trends-2017/)**.** It means redefining ourselves by holding onto our principles, while still embracing change. For our nation, it means re-fashioning our culture to meet the demands of today. I believe in the words National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman spoke today: *“For there is always light, if only we’re brave enough to see it, if only we’re brave enough to be it.”* With your help, our nonprofit executives and social entrepreneurs can be this beacon of light and build an even stronger, more resilient “union with purpose.”

**About Social Impact Architects**

Social Impact Architects® is a social change agency that provides consulting and learning experiences to changemakers working alongside them to design creative and transformative solutions to social issues.

**About Suzanne Smith**

Suzanne Smith, founder of Social Impact Architects, has been reshaping the business of social change for more than two decades. As an educator, writer and [blogger](https://socialimpactarchitects.com/), [TEDx speaker](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJOonQUXL0E), and coach to social sector organizations, she pioneers meaningful and sustainable social solutions to create real, scalable impact. Suzanne holds an MBA from Duke University’s Fuqua School of Business and teaches at Pepperdine and the University of Texas at Arlington.

Headshots Available:

Full - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/zt6zysqbjw10r1d/DL12884%20Smith_0531_web.jpg?dl=0>

Partial - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/nojlb1ngysj426p/DL12884%20Smith_0580_web.jpg?dl=0>

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