



***“WHEN THE PEOPLE
LEAD, THE LEADERS
WILL FOLLOW.”***

So, there you have it: Some—but certainly not all—of the ways in which government can have a positive impact on citizens’ lives.

But government doesn’t necessarily come up with the energy and ideas that lead to those positive impacts. That’s where citizens come in.

Often, those positive impacts begin with an individual—or group of individuals—whose energy, eloquence, and persistence capture the imagination of the public and the attention of elected officials.

A few examples ...

Yosemite Falls, Yosemite National Park, California
Image: Library of Congress



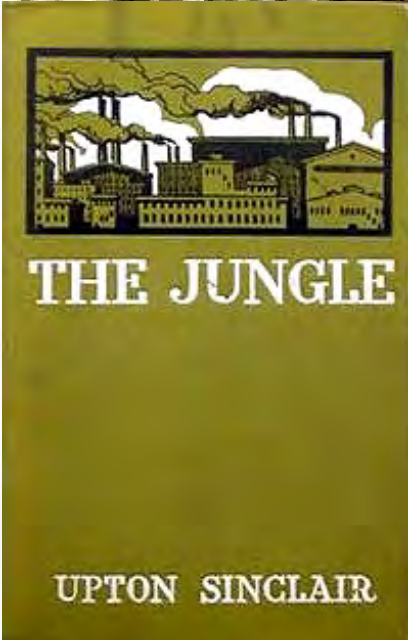
[John Muir](#) loved the Yosemite Valley as much as any human being has ever loved a place. In his quest to protect it and preserve it as a national park, Muir invited [President Theodore Roosevelt](#) on a three-day camping trip to Yosemite. During those three days, Yosemite, with Muir's help, worked its magic on TR, who ultimately supported the inclusion of Yosemite Valley in the Yosemite National Park.



Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir, Yosemite Valley, 1903
Image: Library of Congress



Chicago Meatpacking Plant, 1906
Image: Library of Congress



The Jungle, First Edition, 1906
Image: Wikimedia Commons

[Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*](#), spurred President Theodore Roosevelt to throw his full support behind passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act (1906). More than a century later, the novel's description of conditions in Chicago's meatpacking plants still has the power to jolt readers.

March on Washington, 1963

Image Credit: National Archives



[Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) was the face of the historic 1963 civil rights March on Washington, but one of its principal organizers was [A. Phillip Randolph](#). And in 1947, a year before [President Harry Truman ended segregation in the U.S. armed forces](#), Mr. Randolph organized the “Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training.”

A. Philip Randolph

Image Credit: Library of Congress





Rachel Carson
Image: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The first Earth Day—April 22, 1970—drew huge, exuberant crowds and was a big success, thanks in large part to the efforts of [Senator Gaylord Nelson](#), who had called for a nationwide environmental teach-in. But a case could be made that Earth Day and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (1970) both had their roots in 1962 with the publication of *Silent Spring* by [Rachel Carson](#). Ms. Carson’s book drew public attention to the misuse and long-term hazards of synthetic pesticides such as DDT; another instance in which the energy, eloquence, and persistence of one person captured the public’s imagination and prompted government to act in the public interest.



Earth Day, Flyer for 25th Anniversary Celebration
Image: Nelson Collection, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies & Wisconsin Historical Society