Two Years of Our Lives

 Suppose at age eighteen you had to work for low wages in a poor area of your state for two whole years. Before you say “No way!,” think about this two years as a gift to your country and to yourself. What if all citizens of the United States were obligated to give two years of their lives to help make the country a better place, to learn job skills, and to earn some money for vocational or college training? In my opinion this would make Americans less self centered, more empathetic with the poor, and ready for work or schooling. A person could serve in the military or in an organization like Americorp.

 The benefit of this service to the country could be tremendous. If we all gave two years, the citizens of this country would become more informed about their communities and about the problems, like poverty, that plague our nation. By learning more about others, we would be less focused on ourselves and on the lives of celebrities. Our own lives would have more meaning. For example, when working in a program for the homeless in Seattle, I learned that going hungry one afternoon at my job was nothing compared to the discomfort and stress felt by a woman I met who ate one meal each day and worried about her safety on many cold and wet nights. By each of volunteering to help those who need it, there would be more help in programs that are often not funded well by tax dollars. In fact, taxpayers would pay less for these programs because volunteer help is cheap, even if volunteers were paid less than minimum wage while career workers in such programs continued to be paid.

 Through volunteering for public service jobs, young workers would get work skills that they could not otherwise get. For example, if I wanted a good paying job as a referee at a Recreation Center, I might never get the opportunity to learn the necessary skills; I would need experience. Volunteering for work in community recreation would give the opportunity to get the job I dream about having. Since dependability is employers’ number one listed job skill, by volunteering for a full two years, I could demonstrate that I am reliable. Also, if I need “hard-skills,” like experience with technology, then I can learn this on the job instead of having to go to a vocational program to learn it. In fact, if I want to increase my knowledge of technical skills, the money I save while volunteering—assuming that volunteers might be paid like those in Americorp, I would have the money to take further vocational training.

 Volunteering for two years would be similar to serving in the military, but citizens would have an option. For example, if I do not agree with the politics of a war that is being fought by this country, I could choose to give my talents in other ways like working at a summer camp for foster children or painting murals on buildings in a city neighborhood that is being revitalized.

 If I were eighteen again, I think I might object to leaving home to volunteer somewhere else in the country. However, as a mature adult I understand that the choices made early in life affect the quality of our later lives. Learning important job skills early sets us up for success. Giving to others gives our lives meaning and gets us out of a self-centered way of thinking. In my opinion US citizens would benefit as much as their country if they were required to give two years of their lives to public service. In fact, this should be an option for Americans, no matter what their age.

**Title and Introduction—Paragraph 1**

 Two Years of Our Lives

 Suppose at age eighteen you had to work for low wages in a poor area of your state for two whole years. Before you say “No way!,” think about this two years as a gift to your country and to yourself. What if all citizens of the United States were obligated to give two years of their lives to help make the country a better place, to learn job skills, and to earn some money for vocational or college training? In my opinion this would make Americans less self centered, more empathetic with the poor, and ready for work or schooling. A person could serve in the military or in an organization like Americorp.

**Paragraph 2—The first support paragraph**

The benefit of this service to the country could be tremendous. If we all gave two years, the citizens of this country would become more informed about their communities and about the problems, like poverty, that plague our nation. By learning more about others, we would be less focused on ourselves and on the lives of celebrities. Our own lives would have more meaning. For example, when working in a program for the homeless in Seattle, I learned that going hungry one afternoon at my job was nothing compared to the discomfort and stress felt by a woman I met who ate one meal each day and worried about her safety on many cold and wet nights. By each of volunteering to help those who need it, there would be more help in programs that are often not funded well by tax dollars. In fact, taxpayers would pay less for these programs because volunteer help is cheap, even if volunteers were paid less than minimum wage while career workers in such programs continued to be paid.

**Paragraph 3—the second support paragraph**

Through volunteering for public service jobs, young workers would get work skills that they could not otherwise get. For example, if I wanted a good paying job as a referee at a Recreation Center, I might never get the opportunity to learn the necessary skills; I would need experience. Volunteering for work in community recreation would give the opportunity to get the job I dream about having. Since dependability is employers’ number one listed job skill, by volunteering for a full two years, I could demonstrate that I am reliable. Also, if I need “hard-skills,” like experience with technology, then I can learn this on the job instead of having to go to a vocational program to learn it. In fact, if I want to increase my knowledge of technical skills, the money I save while volunteering—assuming that volunteers might be paid like those in Americorp, I would have the money to take further vocational training.

**Paragraph 4—the third support paragraph**

Volunteering for two years would be similar to serving in the military, but citizens would have an option. For example, if I do not agree with the politics of a war that is being fought by this country, I could choose to give my talents in other ways like working at a summer camp for foster children or painting murals on buildings in a city neighborhood that is being revitalized.

**Paragraph 5-- Conclusion**

If I were eighteen again, I think I might object to leaving home to volunteer somewhere else in the country. However, as a mature adult I understand that the choices made early in life affect the quality of our later lives. Learning important job skills early sets us up for success. Giving to others gives our lives meaning and gets us out of a self-centered way of thinking. In my opinion US citizens would benefit as much as their country if they were required to give two years of their lives to public service. In fact, this should be an option for Americans, no matter what their age.