



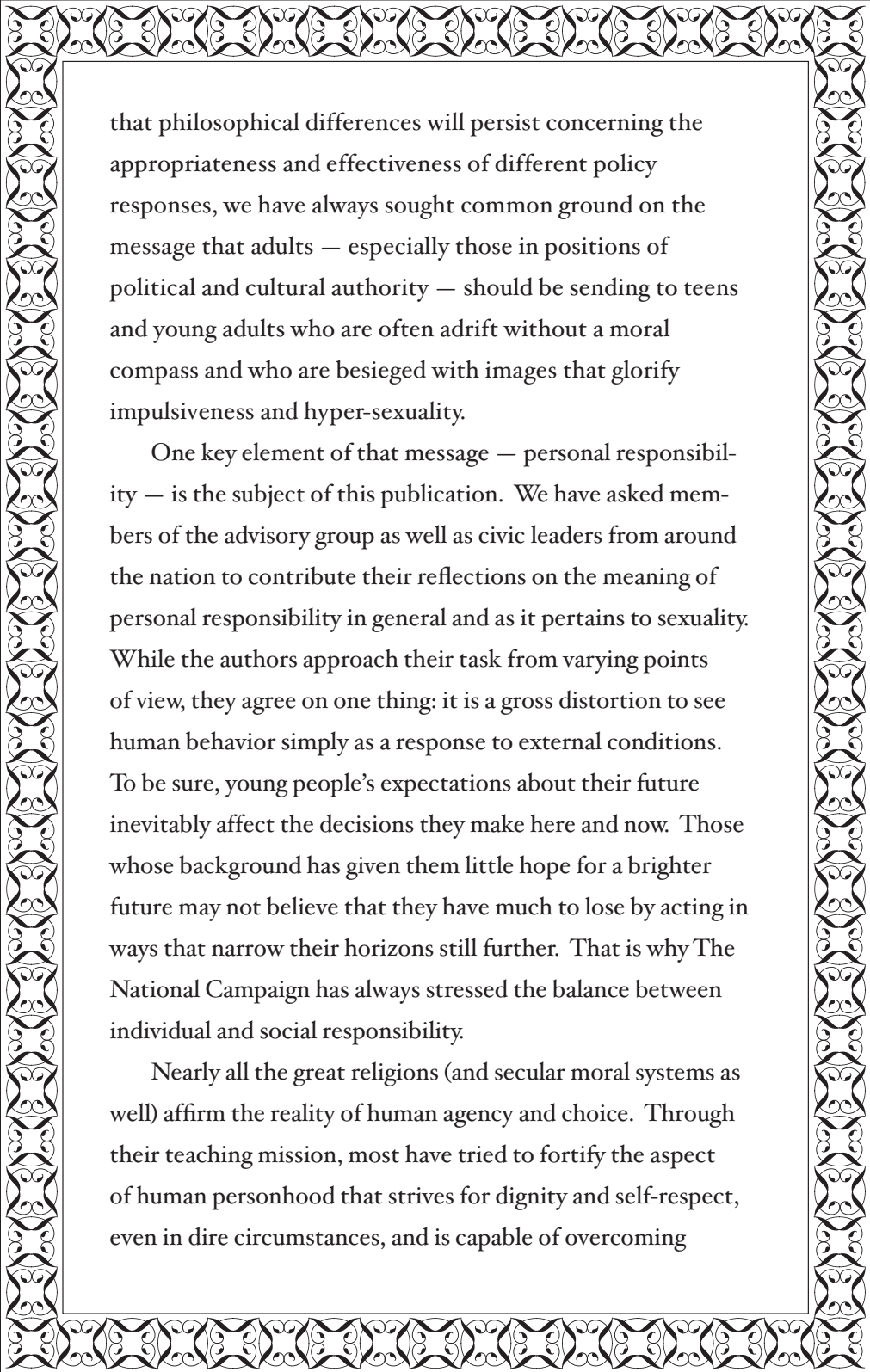
Foreword

BY BILL GALSTON AND VIVIAN BERRYHILL



From its beginning more than a decade ago, The National Campaign has viewed teen pregnancy as a complex, multi-faceted human issue, and the recent expansion of the Campaign's mission to include unintended pregnancy among individuals in their 20s has added new dimensions of complexity. Attempting to address these issues without looking at family background, social and economic factors, cultural signals, and public policy responses would be, at best, a misleading exercise. On the other hand, it would be a mistake to ignore what lies in the hearts of those individuals who at various stages of maturity are making decisions that will shape their lives. We have no choice but to engage the profound, often mysterious phenomenon of human personhood and agency.

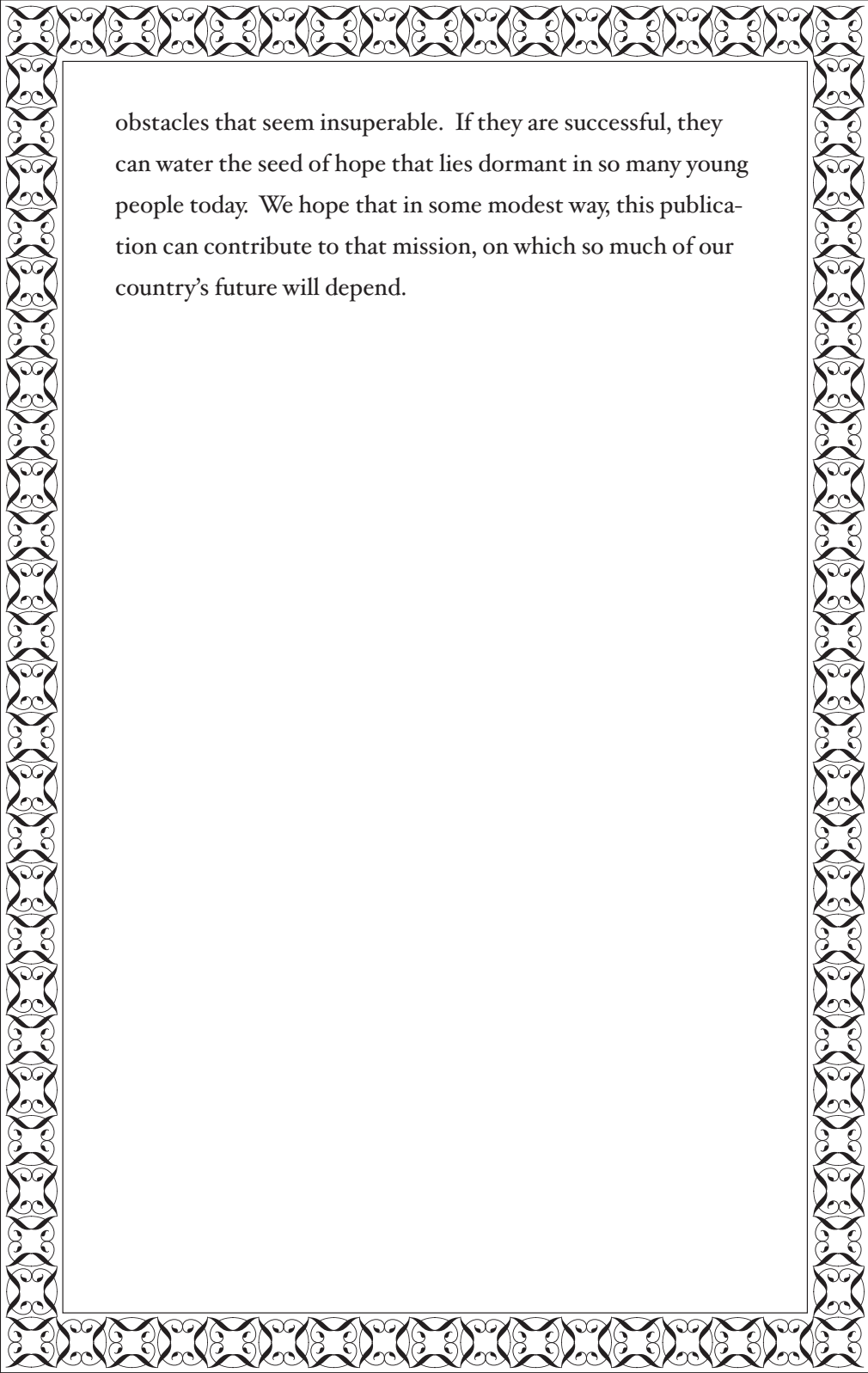
It was to that end that The National Campaign established a task force (now an advisory group) on Religion and Public Values as one of its founding endeavors. From its inception, this group, which brings together representatives of different faiths as well as scholars and practitioners who grapple with the central moral issues of contemporary culture, has searched for a path beyond the culture wars that have dominated the past generation of debate about social issues. While we know



that philosophical differences will persist concerning the appropriateness and effectiveness of different policy responses, we have always sought common ground on the message that adults — especially those in positions of political and cultural authority — should be sending to teens and young adults who are often adrift without a moral compass and who are besieged with images that glorify impulsiveness and hyper-sexuality.

One key element of that message — personal responsibility — is the subject of this publication. We have asked members of the advisory group as well as civic leaders from around the nation to contribute their reflections on the meaning of personal responsibility in general and as it pertains to sexuality. While the authors approach their task from varying points of view, they agree on one thing: it is a gross distortion to see human behavior simply as a response to external conditions. To be sure, young people's expectations about their future inevitably affect the decisions they make here and now. Those whose background has given them little hope for a brighter future may not believe that they have much to lose by acting in ways that narrow their horizons still further. That is why The National Campaign has always stressed the balance between individual and social responsibility.

Nearly all the great religions (and secular moral systems as well) affirm the reality of human agency and choice. Through their teaching mission, most have tried to fortify the aspect of human personhood that strives for dignity and self-respect, even in dire circumstances, and is capable of overcoming



obstacles that seem insuperable. If they are successful, they can water the seed of hope that lies dormant in so many young people today. We hope that in some modest way, this publication can contribute to that mission, on which so much of our country's future will depend.