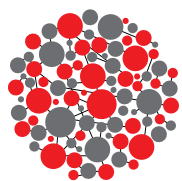


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# RE-IMAGINING A 21ST CENTURY DEMOCRACY



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# RE-IMAGINING A 21ST CENTURY DEMOCRACY

## Introduction to the Journal

It has become in vogue to talk about how the very premise of democracy is at the precipice. We are seeing an emergence of authoritarian leaders emerge throughout the world, undercutting citizen participation as they consolidate power. Polarization has impeded individuals interacting with people who do not agree with them. The concept of a free and fair press is under question and duress, both from leaders who question the media's veracity, and citizens who increasingly accumulate news within echo chambers. The economic and political inequality that has become pervasive has caused citizens to question whether democracy is actually the best way for a country to govern itself. The result is that individuals are abdicating their ability to participate in the democratic process itself.

This is both an American and a global phenomenon. Regardless of our political opinions, we can agree that, perhaps more so than any other time in history, democracy is at risk. And this is not just from an engagement perspective: the values and behaviors that define a deep democracy, like agreeing on a set of facts and expertise, and engaging with people we disagree with, are increasingly in short supply.

When solutions are provided to combat the democratic malaise of our times, many offer top-down structural solutions. We need to combat the scourge of money in politics. We need more honorable politicians, who govern with integrity. We need to end the practice of gerrymandering, in which Congressional districts are drawn up in biased ways that allow one party to consolidate its rule.

This is all true. We do need structural reforms. But at the same time, across this country, and across the world, the fragility of democracy in the current moment has caused a proliferation of innovative, citizen-centric ideas to emerge. Communities and individuals have recognized new and innovative ways to engage in democratic practices, returning the concept to its true roots: the local level. After all, democracy is defined as a system of government in which the individual reigns supreme. If we want to learn how to re-invigorate our democracy, we need to learn from people engaging in democratic practices at the local level, rather than rely on grasstops solutions to the challenges of the day.

“Re-Imagining a 21st Century Democracy” is our attempt to highlight some of these bright-spots in democratic innovation. Over the last year, Brown University's inaugural Higher Education in Democratic Practice initiative has attempted to both discern some of the larger challenges in our democracy, while highlighting and providing specific, locally driven solutions to help rebuild the foundations of our democratic fabric. This journal, in its inaugural version, furthers this effort by showcasing a diverse array of promising democratic-focused initiatives.

In addition to our principal goal of highlighting locally sourced initiatives that successfully promote democratic participation, we also wanted the journal to encourage collaboration between unlikely

bedfellows. Often times, we hear about scholars whose research provides concrete ideas on democratic revitalization. We hear about organizations and practitioners who are doing the hard work of engaging citizens in democracy on the ground. And we hear about young people who are driving change in their community. But we rarely hear about these efforts occurring in coordination.

This journal is an attempt to bring these diverse stakeholders together. We wanted to demonstrate scholars working with students, practitioners working with students- all working together to improve democratic values and behaviors on the local level.

We sent out the call for proposals widely, asking for submissions that would promote a specific idea or practice that has promoted democratic values and behavior in an innovative local way- or a plan for such an idea. We asked for some qualitative or quantitative evaluation, or discussion for future assessment, of the intervention. And we required some sort of partnership between diverse stakeholders.

We received a diverse array of entries from around the world. Through a rigorous selection process, we found the top 12 entries. And we worked with each group of stakeholders to refine, clarify, and improve their ultimate entries.

What follows are the very best of the ideas we received. We're incredibly excited to showcase examples of what a 21st century, citizen-centric, locally-focused democracy can look like. We have examples of universities engaging their students in processes to solve local issues, communities using digital media in new ways to crowdsource common community problems, and solutions, and ideas of how museums can both honor the past, and incorporate present conflicts into their work.

The late former President George H. W. Bush once remarked, "There isn't a problem in America that isn't being solved somewhere." Paraphrasing his remarks, we can find solutions to the thorniest problems in our democracy in communities across the world.

We hope that this journal can help to catalyze a broader conversation. Not just on the challenges inherent in our modern democracy. Those conversations are omnipresent. But rather, on how we can collectively move forward. Our 21st century democracy may look a little different from the democracies of prior periods. But citizens, and communities, will be front and center. Take a look at some of the more promising ideas we have to build towards a stronger, more egalitarian, and more resilient 21st century democracy. We hope you'll be as inspired as we were in reading these entries.



# THE INTERSECTION OF CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY:

Empowering Today's College Students to be  
Tomorrow's Citizens

*Anthony Campbell, Assistant Professor, Tennessee State University  
Department of Public Administration*

*Kelly Baker-Hefley, Public Policy Graduate Student, Tennessee State University  
Department of Public Administration*

*Cara Robinson, Associate Professor, Tennessee State University  
Department of Social Work and Urban Studies*

*Debby Gould, President, League of Women Voters of Tennessee*

## Introduction

Colleges and universities are at the nexus of two important trends in contemporary American society: (1) unprecedented levels of access to resources that can enhance civic understanding, and (2) increased levels of apolitical engagement via social media and “virtue signaling.” The latter trend is especially acute in the post-secondary environment, since individuals ages 18-29 have the highest levels of social media usage – 89% based on 2018 data from the Pew Research Center (Social Media Fact Sheet, 2018). In addition, there is increasing skepticism (Boulianne, 2015) about whether internet-based engagement movements, such as occurred in the Arab Spring, have prolonged positive effects in the U.S. A diminished focus on civic education in K-12 school systems in recent decades has amplified these trends (Giroux, 2015; Sandlin et al., 2012; Shapiro and Brown, 2018).

More than ever, it is incumbent upon higher education institutions, especially HBCUs that serve historically marginalized populations, to be proactive in educating, empowering, and enabling college students to be democratically-responsible citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – fulfilling what John Dewey referred to as the *democratic purpose of education* (outlined in Dewey’s newspaper article from the *New York Times*, reproduced in Schubert, 2009, pp. 11-12). In order to ensure that civic empowerment projects are effective in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they must leverage non-traditional approaches to democratic empowerment and be tailored to the specific interests and passions of the target populations.

Therefore, Tennessee State University’s (TSU) College of Public Service created partnerships between academicians, students, and community action leaders through the Community Democracy Project (CDP). The central goal is to expand students’ meaningful civic participation beyond the initial step of voting. Voting is only one of many potential action-oriented activities of democratic engagement. Such engagement can also include involvement in decision-making, community-based organizing,

policy design, and other activities essential to the governance of a society. The CDP specifically focuses on empowering students to identify issues that impact their lives on-campus and within their larger community. Through surveys, focus groups, and action workshops, the CDP guides students through the process of issue identification, definition, and best practices on engagement within policy-making, governing institutions. TSU's Community Democracy Project is a model of how colleges and universities can design civic empowerment initiatives that are inexpensive, evaluable, and aligned with contemporary democratic shifts.

## The Community Democracy Project

The disciplines of public administration, social work, and urban studies, all housed within Tennessee State University's College of Public Service, attract individuals who desire to make a change in the world, and with current or future careers within nonprofit and public sector institutions. These two qualities color the students' contributions in the classroom as observed by Dr. Anthony Campbell (Assistant Professor, Public Administration) and Dr. Cara Robinson (Associate Professor, Urban Studies). Furthermore, TSU's College of Public Service has several ongoing partnerships with democratically-oriented initiatives, such as with The Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF), and the Vote Everywhere Project. The partnership with AGF is particularly beneficial given that the organization was born out of the legacy of freedom riders, is named after murdered civil rights activist Andrew Goodman, focuses on the importance of civic engagement and voting amongst college-aged voters. These partnerships and the nature of the disciplines within the college, has resulted in both professors having direct exposure to undergraduate and graduate students' perspectives on democracy, how they interact with democratic institutions, the sense of frustration that many students experienced as they sought to affect change in Nashville, and a variety of approaches and perspectives on how to ameliorate discontent and empower college students.

While most students articulated a passion to orchestrate change, many lacked the necessary civic engagement tools beyond voting to bring about change. The CDP was designed in Summer 2017 with three distinct phases: (1) determining students' current political behavior, especially at the local level, and the reasons behind that behavior; (2) identifying and refining what students see as the most important sociopolitical issues for the TSU community; and (3) educating and training students on how to meaningfully and responsibly orchestrate change in a way that allows for democratic values to be harnessed. Recognizing that such a project would only be successful with a broad array of perspectives on how to democratically orchestrate change, the CDP Committee was formed with students from across the college of public service's programs (with ongoing efforts to recruit students from beyond the college), and community action leaders from civic and religious institutions. These students and community leaders have been essential for the project to be designed and implemented in a way that is accessible for students and can ultimately be connected to the unique dynamics of the Nashville community. This focus on Nashville, as opposed to statewide or national issues, is aligned with research that found civic education efforts are more effective when connected to target populations' local communities (Bers & Chau, 2010).

The first phase of the project entailed designing and deploying a survey to TSU's student population, which captured data on their political behavior (e.g. voting in various elections, contacting elected officials), the motivation behind their level of political engagement, and what they see as the most important issues for Nashville from their perspective as a student. The CDP Committee designed an 18-question survey instrument after researching other surveys and filtering language through the student members. It was open for response from November 2017 until February 2018, with 466 out of 8,110 undergraduate and graduate students completing the survey (5.75% response rate). The political behavior section of the survey, highlights of which can be seen in Table 1, enabled the CDP Committee to better

understand the nature of civic engagement among TSU’s students. In addition to asking students “yes/ no” questions related to their political behavior, open-ended questions were employed to capture the motivation associated with their political behavior. This qualitative data proved valuable for determining strategies to potentially enhance civic engagement, such as harnessing students’ recognition that many of their ancestors had diligently fought for minority enfranchisement. Furthermore, it was discovered that many students do not engage due to easily resolved technical issues, such as not knowing how to register to vote when living on campus and not knowing how to secure and submit an out-of-state ballot. Education campaigns are being developed to address these and other issues students highlighted in the survey.

Table 1: CDP Survey Results – Political Behavior Highlights

SURVEY QUESTION	YES	NO
Did you vote in the last Presidential election?	57.02%	42.98%
Have you ever voted in an election for a local office?	51.89%	48.11%
Have you ever voted in an election for a state office?	53.77%	46.23%
Have you ever contacted an elected official?	42.96%	57.04%

In addition to capturing data on political behavior, the CDP Student Survey was designed so that students could select three issues in Nashville that they felt were most important for the TSU community. The options were developed by consulting survey instruments utilized for similar projects, as well as the perspectives brought forward by the CDP Committee members. Ultimately, five issue categories were selected and provided on the survey – Affordable Housing/Rentals, Civil Rights, Economy/Jobs, Public Safety, and Transportation.

Students were also given the opportunity to submit any issue(s) they deemed important, but was not listed. The CDP Committee analyzed the survey results, carefully evaluating if a non-listed item had enough submissions to displace one of the five issue categories. The top three issues identified by the students were Affordable Housing/Rentals, Economy/Jobs, and Public Safety. Recognizing that these three issues were exceedingly broad, the CDP Committee then held multiple focusing sessions across TSU’s campuses, wherein all students were invited to provide specific elements they felt were most important. Focusing sessions were modeled as drop-in sessions where students from across disciplines, both undergraduate and graduate, responded to the three broad policy categories by providing their definitions, concerns, and experiences about the three issue categories. The two-hour sessions were held in easily accessible campus locations, and attracted a large variety of students. While the demographics of focusing session participants were not captured, based on CDP committee members’ perceptions, few participants were from disciplines housed within the College of Public Service. That data is currently being analyzed for incorporation into the Community Democracy Workshops, the third and final phase during the project’s first year.

Based on the data generated via the 2017-2018 CDP Student Survey and the focusing sessions, three Community Democracy workshops, one on each of the three issues identified via the CDP survey, will be held during the Fall 2018 semester. During these workshops, TSU's students, community action leaders (nonprofit and religious organizations), and government officials will be brought together to discuss and explore their: (a) different definitions of the community issue, (b) varied perceptions on what has caused the issue to be in a state where it deserves to be addressed and improved, and (c) perspectives on what would constitute the most efficacious steps to bring about positive change. Utilizing email lists generated via the focusing sessions, and university-wide communication systems, the CDP will recruit students to each workshop – hoping to attract students based on their interest in the CDP's work overall, and the issues associated with each workshop specifically. Recruitment efforts will be focused on getting equal representation from undergraduate and graduate students, with a mindfulness towards demographic representativeness as well. These workshops will be composed of no more than 20 participants (8-10 students, 3-4 CDP Committee members, 2-3 community action leaders, and 2-3 government officials), because of research (Pavelin, Pundir, & Cham, 2014) that has found the most effective workshops allow for networking, group decision-making, and follow-up dialogue – conditions that are much easier to achieve with a relatively small number of participants. However, in order to maximize the impact of these workshops across the institutions, results and strategies will be communicated across the university and via the CDP's forthcoming website.

The design of these workshops is based on the research that illuminates the importance of encountering difference in democratic contexts (Brundidge, 2010; Walsh, 2008), the value of creating a shared vocabulary around an issue (Community Tool Box, n.d.; Charalabidis & Loukis, 2012), and the benefits when young people learn more about how to convert their passion for change into actions that can successfully interface with democratic institutions. These workshops align with research that has found young people are more likely to engage in non-electoral forms of civic engagement (Dalton, 2008), and tend to find it more rewarding when they get exposure to the challenges associated with political systems functioning as problem solving institutions (Feldman et al., 2007; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002).

## Evaluating Impact

The impact of the CDP initiatives will be measured through three methods. The first is the level of participation (i.e. student survey completion, focusing group engagement, and workshop action plan development). The second is the completion of activities and action steps emanating from the issues identification and action plan sessions. The CDP action plan implementation is a direct result of the data and information gathered from TSU students. Importantly, the formation of student and community teams to take action based on the workshops is a key component of evaluating the direct impact of the CDP process on community issues and student engagement in that change process. Participating students and community action leaders have an ongoing process to evaluate all phases of the CDP through informal and formal mechanisms, including open learning dialogue, activity evaluations, and process-oriented problem identification. The third is the post-project survey wherein students across campus will be asked to assess CDP activities and impact.

Using these evaluation tools, we will measure the impact of the CDP on: (1) increasing student participation in community democratic engagement projects and activities; (2) formulating meaningful processes and governance structures promoting partnerships between TSU stakeholders and the community; and (3) motivating change on the issues impacting TSU students. After the completion of the first three phases and their associated evaluation results, the CDP plans to reassess and reformat, as needed, the methods and procedures of the project's activities for the continued engagement of TSU students in the democratic process.



## Lessons Learned

Throughout the project implementation, the CDP Committee members have captured many lessons learned that provide opportunities for continuous improvement. From this experience, the committee has learned to value joint problem solving, to document project best practices and areas of improvement, and to adapt to take advantage of new outreach opportunities and resources. Perhaps most importantly, by capturing lessons learned, program and project collaborators have the opportunity to assist others in doing the important work required for ensuring democratic values are embraced and practiced.

**#1 - Don't Make Assumptions** – Too often programs make assumptions about students. They assume that students care about trending issues and hot topics. However, students are often isolated from the chatter and discord of the world around them. If topics have not penetrated the campus bubble, they may not be relevant to the students. Also, assumptions cannot be made based on demographics. College campuses are often their own ecosystem; allow the students to define themselves. From the onset of the CDP, committee members were diligent about not making assumptions about the student population's perceptions. Instead, the committee realized they needed to capture and illuminate student-provided data via a survey.

**#2 - Let a Survey Lay the Foundation** - Surveying students provides a better understanding of the target populations, and enables the program to be tailored to their specific interests and passions. Surveying also gives opportunities to spot patterns. While some patterns were expected, others were not. With this information, we were able to develop messaging and programs that appealed to the students emotionally and intellectually. Our survey was distributed via the university-developed email list for all students, which nullifies issues of coverage bias. Inasmuch as every student enrolled at TSU during the Fall 2018 semester had an opportunity to take the survey, the survey results are vulnerable to self-selection bias. This explains the considerably higher than average results for respondents' level of political engagement. However, as Bethlehem (2010) offers, it is difficult to estimate the impact of selection bias due to data on non-participants usually not being available, and comparisons between the included and the excluded samples are not feasible. Therefore, it is best to focus on getting as wide a survey distribution as possible, and then supplement that distribution with targeted awareness efforts, such as speaking to classes and using social media – strategies the CDP will grow in the future.

**#3 - Students Often Do Not Vote Because They Are Not Taught How to Vote** - The data also helped us understand the disconnect between registering to vote and participating in elections. We were able to spot common problems, such as not knowing how to register to vote when living on a university campus, and not knowing how to secure and submit an absentee ballot. This information will prove invaluable as different educational programs are developed to provide the technical information on how to vote. In addition, we developed a better understanding of the students' indifference to elections regardless of their voter registration status and address common missteps or misunderstandings in the voter registration process. Additionally, the CDP will be working to develop "student voter guides," wherein students are provided brief explanations about the jobs/positions candidates are vying for, the impact/relevance of that position for a college student, and resources students can employ and trust for political information.

**#4 - Apathetic Students Are Motivated by Issues-Based Change, Not Voting** - While providing technical information on the mechanics of voting assists those who are already motivated to participate in the election process, it does not inspire students who are apathetic to the political process (Manning & Edwards, 2014, p. 39; Pasek, et al, 2008, p. 35). Studies have shown that participation in "political expression" is an effective way to increase electoral participation among young people. By surveying the concerns of students, utilizing focusing sessions, and connecting the students to individuals with the

power to address the issues, we will be able to provide an avenue for political expression (Gershtenson et al., 2010; Pasek, et al, 2008, p. 35) and a way to enhance students' sense of political efficacy (Goel, 1980).

**#5 – Faculty Can Start the Process, but Students Should Lead the Process-** Successful programs meet students where they are. Don't try to force students into a program; instead, design the program to fit the students. Studies have shown that engagement and participation increases with appeals to the students' interests and concerns (Bers & Chau, 2010). After learning what matters to the target audience, programs can be created that capitalize on that information. Ultimately, if students are to be effectively activated as citizens, be it through voting or other modes of democratic participation, they must be engaged beyond the classroom (Callahan et al., 2010; Gershtenson et al., 2010). The CDP not only affords students that extracurricular engagement, it empowers them to design and focus the program based on their unique combination of interests and passions.

**#6 – Partnerships with External Community Action Leaders and Organizations are Essential and Mutually Beneficial** – Most new organizations, projects, and programs suffer from the “liability of newness” (Stinchcombe, 1965), which is characterized by the lack of resources and legitimacy. Partnerships with external individuals and organizations, in our case the League of Women Voters of Tennessee (LWVTN) and Corinthian Baptist Church, afforded the CDP the invaluable resource of past civic capacity building efforts, while also fostering a sense of legitimacy due to the individuals' and organizations' reputation in the region. While many of the academic members of the CDP committee grasp the importance of voter engagement and participation, they do not have the technical knowledge and experience on the nuances and practical realities of voter registration. However, the partnership with the LWVTN has proven highly beneficial because they are dealing with issues like this on a daily basis, and have a “real world” understanding of how to resolve voter registration dilemmas – be they due to apathy or technical misunderstanding. Inviting community leaders and non-profit organizations who focus on voter registration and participation has proven to be essential to our success so far, and will only grow in importance as efforts are made to recruit Metro Nashville's public and nonprofit leaders to the Community Democracy Workshops.

The program partners also benefit by receiving theoretical perspectives on civic capacity building, and access to groups they might not otherwise engage with directly – academicians and students. The key to realizing the potential of these partnerships is ensuring that all parties feel equal and empowered to share their perspective, which ultimately arrives through partnership relationship building. The CDP has an array of partners and committee members who all have different views on what constitutes the ideal way to enhance democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By fostering trust and embracing the process of partnership relationship building (Davenport, Davies, & Grimes, 1999), the variegated perspectives of CDP partners became a strength instead of a liability.

## Conclusion

John Dewey famously asserted that democracy is about more than a form of government- it is about a mode of living. Therefore, as a society changes, so too must definitions of what constitutes ideal democratic behavior. There is no shortage of pessimistic claims about young people's level of political engagement, be it a “democratic deficit” (Schneider, 2013), a “fear of politics” (Hay & Stoker, 2009), or a “crisis of democracy” (Graeber, 2013; Posner, 2010), all largely tied to evidence showing a decline in traditional forms of political engagement – party membership and voter turnout.

However, is it responsible to levy 20th century definitions of democratic citizenship against 21st century citizens?

Through the Community Democracy Project, TSU is empowering students to express their sociopolitical worldviews, while educating them on the importance of embracing civic-mindedness guided by democratic values, and enabling them to be responsible citizens who know how to operate within political institutions and orchestrate change. The CDP is creating an institutionalized, yet living, process for TSU's students to create change in Nashville, and provides a useful example of grassroots, university-based change at a regional, public, minority-serving institution facing the duality of decreasing public funds and increasing policy changes directly affecting the well-being of college-aged individuals.

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# PARTICIPATORY SCHOOL DESIGN TO ENACT AND CREATE DEMOCRACY

Sean M.Z. Anderson & Michael S. McCabe,  
*Community | Learning | Design*

## Authors' Note

Michael McCabe is a dissertating EdD candidate at Creighton University.  
Sean Anderson is a classroom teacher at Edgerton Middle School.

## Summary

This paper presents an emerging model of school design, in which teachers and learners collaboratively deliberate over the form and content of educational practice and establish the day-to-day routines of school. The model presented by the researchers is called Participatory School Design, which is generated by the twin concerns of student engagement in school and citizen engagement in governance. Participatory School Design is described as a reflective practice rooted in the traditions of consensus decision-making, democratic education, and participatory design theory. Initial pilot applications are described and evaluations from the perspective of students, a teacher, and a middle school principal currently immersed in developing a school design framework whereby students design a school through the Participatory School Design process. Recommendations are made regarding the ideal scale for application of the model and next actions steps for research and practice.

*Keywords:* Participatory Design Theory, formal consensus, agency, student academic engagement, school design

To believe in *democracy* is to believe that people are able to work together to make important decisions about how they live. It is to have faith in the wisdom of experience, and to put trust in one another to care for the shared and collective goods of life. Democracy understood this way stands in contrast to authoritarianism and oligarchy, of course, but also *technocracy*, in which expert opinions are valued above common understandings. To live with democracy is to express regular, collaborative control over the institutions which structure your life. It is, rhetorically at least, the public purpose of education to prepare people to live in this way.

## A Problem of Democratic Engagement

But right now too many people are not able to participate meaningfully in the decisions that frame and guide their lives. Abysmally low participation rates in elections are relatively well-known, but deeper measures of engagement are more illuminating. Recent polling on this presents a confounding picture. The Pew Research Center (2018), for example, found that, although “the public places great importance on a broad range of democratic ideals and principles in the United States today,” less than 15% of adults

have either attended a local government meeting, attended a political rally or event, or contributed to a political campaign. Similarly, “The Harris Poll” of happiness and its contributing factors found that 73% of respondents agreed with the statement that, “I feel my voice is not heard in national decisions that affect me” (Steinberg, 2016). The implication of these poll results is clear: people value democratic principles, and want to participate democratically, but do not find themselves able to contribute meaningfully. This calls into question not only how effectively our institutions allow for democratic participation, but also how well prepared we are as individuals and communities to enact the possibilities of democratic engagement.

To live in a democracy that actively invites our meaningful engagement, we need a vision deeper than our present practice of periodically casting ballots for representatives in government bodies. Though there are many threads to draw together, a catch-all term for this vision of engaged, agentic, collaborative control over the institutions of our lives might be *participatory democracy*. In this conception, democracy is about an emphasis on *process*, and a celebration of the possibilities of “slow,” intentional face-to-face deliberation, as proposed by Clark & Teachout (2012). It is about the intrinsic value of engagement in governance, as suggested by Lerner (2014), who argued that democracy can be not only “participatory,” but also *fun*. This democracy, as defined by Boyte (2005), is about a distinction between democratic “government,” which views citizens as semi-passive occasional voters, and democratic *governance*, which allows citizens to act as “problem solvers and cocreators of public goods” (p. 537). Finally, as West (2004) asserted, an authentic participatory democracy is one that must be nurtured at the concentric levels of “democratic individuality, democratic community, and democratic society,” rather than an abstracted public performance (p. 203). We hold that this vision for participatory democracy is not only a moral good (that people have a right to control the conditions of their lives), but it is also a pragmatic good in governance: Carcasson (2017) claimed that the “wicked problems” that seem to defy solution are actually a “call for creativity and collaboration,” which deliberative, participatory democracy can deliver, so long as we are prepared to enact it.

Schools are supposed to be the places where we learn how to live in our democracy. The “public purpose of education,” according to Barber (1997), is to provide “institutions where we learn what it means to *be* a public... they are the forges of our citizenship and the bedrock of our democracy” (p. 22). And yet, student academic engagement rates in schools are as discouraging as democratic engagement rates. The Gallup Student Poll (2017) found that only 47% of students identify as “engaged” at school, while a full 24% report being “actively disengaged.” Perhaps more disturbingly, only 46% report being “hopeful,” while 20% say they are “discouraged.” It has long been known that student academic engagement is a key factor in learning (see Greenwood, et. al, 2002). If students are not engaged in Barber’s “forges of our citizenship,” it is no wonder that we have not learned how to “make our voices heard” in our democracy.

## School Design Solutions

To begin to solve these problems, schools can become places where we practice democracy. To create the democracy we aspire to, our institutions need to become open sites of democratic participation, and we must enter those sites well-educated in the values and practices of deliberative, collaborative decision-making. If schools can be opened up as sites of legitimate peripheral participation in these democratic values and practices, we will begin to address both aspects of this challenge. First, one key institution which frames the lived experiences of so many of us will be democratized. Second, our learning of democratic skills and aptitudes will be more engaging, resulting in a deeper learning for all. To accomplish this, schools need to be designed for democracy.

Whenever people make decisions about how a system or process should work, we call that *design*. Design is an intentional, creative act, and in its best interpretation it is an on-going process of reflective evaluation and iteration. Design as a process, however, tends to be reproductive of its own conditions: technocratic design processes led by experts tend to result in systems that are dependent on technocratic expertise. Schools are designed systems, created very much in the technocratic vein: what is experienced in classrooms each day is the culmination of many decisions, almost all of which are driven by a belief that experts in the field, be they teachers in classrooms, principals and other administrators, academic researchers, or government policy-makers, know best what constitutes an effective school design. Our vision for a participatory democracy requires a contrary commitment: that the people most impacted by a school design process are the ones who know best what makes an effective and impactful school design.

As a partnership between an academic researcher and a classroom teacher, we at Community | Learning | Design have been creating a process to do school design as a democratic act, taking precedence from a tradition of theory and practice called Participatory Design. Robertson and Simonsen (2013) defined Participatory Design as “a process of investigating, understanding, reflecting upon, establishing, developing, and supporting mutual learning between multiple participants in collective ‘reflection-in-action’” (p. 2). This tradition recognizes that the *users* of a system themselves possess a unique expertise which technical experts lack: first-hand, experiential expertise from their own lived conditions. For us, this means that students have a knowledge about school and their needs within it that even the best school designers lack.

Our practice, called *Participatory School Design for Participatory Democracy* (Anderson & McCabe, 2017) is a *curriculum* as Pinar (2004) defined the word: a “plan for an experience” (p. 26). It is a democratic document, in that it clearly recognizes what Freire (1973) calls for: the blurring of the lines between a teacher/student and student/teachers, as all involved are learning from the process and from each other. The central goal of the experience proposed by this curriculum is the empowerment of students to make real, important decisions about their own learning, by bringing “school design” down to the level of a classroom practice and placing teachers as equal co-designers in a deliberative consensus-driven process about all the questions that make up a plan for learning.

This way of designing gives shared responsibility for all the decisions about school to a team made up of young people who go to the school and adults who work there, obligated to make decisions together that everyone is happy with. The experience of Participatory School Design is a creative act, in which the team engages in a series of Phases of Action, each of which builds on the previous phases to culminate in a detailed, written plan for their own teaching and learning. These phases include actions toward collective dreaming, Youth Participatory Action Research to define design criteria and constraints, ideation and evaluation for developing concepts, enacting teaching and learning plans as prototypes of a design, and collaborative evaluation of the results of the process. “Circle processes,” adapted from the world of Restorative Justice, combined with Formal Consensus, as outlined by Butler and Rothstein (2007) for all decision-making, aim to make the process a living, vibrant practice in hands-on democracy.

## Piloting a Curriculum for Participatory School Design

To date, we have piloted this way of designing in one Middle School Design and Technology classroom, in a series of four trimester-long iterations. Each iteration consisted of one course section (between 18 and 25 students) of 7th and 8th grade “Tech Ed” students. We found that, though initially difficult to grasp by some students because it is such a radical departure from their dominant classroom experiences, the process itself became a meaningful and enjoyable experience, and the resulting classes, once designed,

were rigorous but engaging. Some evaluative comments from student participants on the process and product of their experience in Participatory School Design include:

- “It was fun and creative”
- “Everyones’ [sic] comments and ideas seemed to count”
- “It was refreshing to have a little bit of our school day agenda controlled by the students”
- “[I wish] People would have fought less, but I guess that was inevitable”
- “I wish that it had not taken so much time, and that we would be solving a lot of proposals at the same time.”
- “I wish we would have had more time to do this longer”
- “We designed a class in which we could be happy”

In an effort to evaluate the impact of the curriculum on student aptitudes for (and attitudes toward) democratic engagement, reflection was prompted with the question, “Could you use this consensus decision-making process again in the future? Where? When? How? Why?” Typical responses (positive and negative) included:

- “Well anywhere, it’s a great way to make people feel more confident in the end result as long as they don’t mind a little squabbling along the way that is.”
- “I might be able to use this in the future, but I don’t really know where. Maybe with my family...”
- “Yes, anytime I needed to make a decision with lots of people. This is especially helpful when there are a lot of opinions and concerns.”
- “You could use this when you have a job. It could really help chose things.”

What is most notable about these responses is their lack of connection to the “political” realm. Instead, students clearly saw the applicability of this deliberative, participatory, democratic process in a variety of *institutions* ranging from the workplace to the family. This is a strong commendation towards the vision of democracy with which we started this article, though long-term studies of civic engagement rates for students who have had these experiences are clearly needed to determine if the impact is long-lasting.

## Limits and Possibilities

Contemporary schools function as sites of bureaucratic authoritarian decision-making, built on a foundation technocratic design. Leaders make decisions and delegate authority from the top down. Students, who are at the bottom of the pyramid of authority, receive policy, instruction, learning goals, and assessments of their learning from all the actors above them. The “hidden curriculum” (Kentli, 2015) learned through this context is anti-democratic: there are hoops to jump through to satisfy the requirements dictated by those with more power than you. Or, considered as an instance of “legitimate peripheral participation,” (Lave and Wenger, 1991) young people “apprentice” in the role of following directives of authorities while in school, until they become “old-timers” in the community of anti-democratic practice. Because Participatory School Design seeks explicitly to disrupt this reproduction, and instead attempt to reproduce skills and aptitudes for participatory democracy, it is naturally limited in its application within the traditional school environment.



The most impactful application of the Participatory School Design framework is in creation of an entirely new school, from the ground up. This is a possibility that our collaboration is presently pursuing, and which informs our “theory of change.” By opening a school built on the democratic practice and values of Participatory School Design, we hope to provide a “hidden curriculum” and “legitimate peripheral participation” in participatory democracy, and in doing so help to bring about that type of democracy that is slow, deliberative, about governance, and appreciative of the individual, community, and society.

The critiques of this idea are readily apparent and worth considering: are students developmentally ready for this work? Do they really learn necessary skills this way? Can they really be trusted to create schools that will leave them “college and career ready?” Regarding the first two points, Kuhn (2011) and Reznitskaya, et. al. (2012) each present compelling evidence that, not only can even very young children engage in meaningful dialogue and deliberation, but that this type of experience transfers deep learning to other domains. Regarding the final point, our initial pilot application of the curriculum demonstrated to us clearly that students do not by default take “the easy way out” when given the opportunity, but rather engage sincerely in the work of designing learning that is meaningful but challenging. This may be, in part, due to the inclusion of one phase of action in the curriculum which requires the design team to define “criteria and constraints” through consultation with community stakeholders. It may also be due to the required consensus of “co-designers” that include teachers and students. Our preferred analysis, however, is that young people (like all people in an authentic democracy) know what they need from a situation and, when trusted to create the conditions they desire and require, rise to the challenge.

This, in turn, highlights the development of *agency* of school aged youth within this process, which creates *engagement*, and finally *learning*. We extrapolated three modes of agency from Bandura (2001) and developed a “Can Do” list for students as school designers. The list is (1) Direct personal agency – “I can”; (2) Proxy agency, relying on others to act on one’s behalf to secure desired outcomes, traditionally the role of parents - “They” said I can; and (3) Collective agency exercised through socially coordinated and interdependent effort - “We” can. Cohorts of youth serving as design teams to make school-wide decisions through formal consensus is a small step towards unchaining authoritarianism in schools by developing deep collective agency. Finally, the “design of design” in which students are perpetually directing activities through creating and changing their environment, curriculum, and learning goals is known as meta-design (Ehn, 2008). DiSalvo and DesPortes (2017) recently demonstrated how meta-design activities fit into a curriculum they chronicled as *value-driven learning* (p. 179). Once the first step is completed, and a design cohort of youth have successfully created and implemented a school; the perceptual process of redesign has the potential to break down the bureaucratic regime of mass education and create a democratic learning space.

The long-term objective of democratizing schools through participatory design is to help young people grow into community members who expect a politics, an economics, and a culture that are deliberative and democratic, and further to equip them to agitate and organize to bring these into being where they are found to be lacking. In other words, the goal is to demonstrate with young people that if an institution like their own school can be brought under collaborative community control through design, then any and all institutions that structure their lives might also be brought under democratic authority. Imagine a generation that believes that the police, their healthcare, and their garbage collection should all be controlled democratically. Bringing youth into the educational and school decision-making arena is a positive first step to showcasing the fruits of democracy. That’s the work of Participatory School Design. Our schools must become vibrant laboratories of participatory democracy if we want our community lives to be lived in vibrant participatory democracy.

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# YOU'RE ON THE AIR!

## How Government Access Television Enhances Public Engagement

*Larry Schooler, National Civic League Senior Fellow and former manager of the public engagement division for the City of Austin*

As a champion and innovator of public engagement, the City of Austin, Texas takes bold strides towards the true promise of democracy - enabling all of those affected by a decision to affect that decision. As part of the City's Communications and Public Information Office, the engagement team currently includes two full-time public engagement professionals, who work collaboratively with communications professionals in more than 30 City departments, and who benefit from as many as five student associates per semester. The City has invested time and dollars to ensure that its residents have a say in the public decisions that impact them. Investments include the City's award-winning online engagement site "SpeakUpAustin.org;" a new collaboration with other public agencies known as "Conversation Corps," which uses volunteer facilitators to expand the reach of public engagement across the City; and a text-message based engagement platform allowing for citizens to provide input via SMS.

The engagement team has engaged the public around important issues like household affordability; mobility and transportation; sustainability; parks and recreation; and land use. The near constant and exponential population growth in Austin makes an embedded public engagement team a vital component of the City's ability to serve its population effectively.

However, in many of the original public events hosted by the engagement team, the City realized that significant swaths of the Austin population had chosen not to participate. The effort to participate required attending in-person meetings coupled with the courage required to speak in public or among strangers, limited the appeal that such meetings could have. Thus, in an effort to help give voice to those whose voices had been muted by existing engagement platforms, the City began to explore other ways to connect the public to local government.

### Why Expand Public Participation?

Public participation is the heart of the City of Austin's democratic character. Austin has evolved differently than many other cities in Texas and elsewhere, both politically in terms of its relatively high ratio of Democrats or progressives to Republicans or conservatives, and in terms of its focus on environmental regulation and sustainability. Austin citizens have played a critical role in shaping its future—particularly in terms of a balance between environmental protection and urban growth.

With a citizenry that seems to wield significant influence over elected officials, manifest by how those elected officials will frequently change course in the face of a large public outcry, city staff have subscribed to a holistic approach to public engagement based on several principles, including:

- Incorporating the knowledge and experience of more than a few people improves the quality and creativity of public decisions;
- Increasing the number of people who understand and accept a public decision increases the number of people who are willing to help implement the decision;
- Increasing the number of people who understand and accept a public decision improves the likelihood that the policy will be implemented consistent with the original policy goals.

## Examples of Austin's Engagement Models

The City has adapted a number of engagement models to expand the opportunities for public participation. Following a paradigm established, in part, by the "Spectrum for Public Participation" from the International Association for Public Participation, the City has developed innovations to inform, consult with, involve, collaborate with, and empower the citizenry. In addition to examples mentioned above, the City has developed highly interactive public workshops that involve collaboration between small, random groups of citizens in making difficult funding and land use choices. The City also makes extensive use of facilitated advisory and stakeholder groups or task forces to find consensus between opposing interests. The "Meeting in a Box" model initiated in 2009 provides needed to facilitate in a package for neighborhood groups, professional organizations, or even families to host on their own. During "Speak Week", initiated in 2010, staff and volunteers bring tablet computers, displays, and other tools into public spaces to solicit quick input from passers-by. SpeakUpAustin.org, a website designed in 2011 to solicit ideas for improving the city in a social ideation and crowdsourcing platform, combined with a discussion board for posing specific questions to the public.

## Expanded Use of the City's TV Station

More recently, city officials leveraged Austin's television station to enhance engagement in ways that would not only scale public participation but also prove cost-effective and less labor-intensive than other engagement methods. ATXN, Austin's television station, has steadily worked for the last five years to increase interaction between residents and the city. Many of the nation's public access television stations only broadcast council meetings. Austin took this idea one step further.

Austin's city station (ATXN) has redefined what a government access channel should be. The station produces public information programs that truly reaches and engages city residents. For example, recently the station produced "On the Job," a show designed to give the spotlight to front line employees doing interesting jobs throughout the city that most Austin residents do not know exist. Another program, "Dare to go Zero," featured average families who were challenged to rethink solid waste. The show was designed to educate the public on the Austin Resource Recovery Office's zero waste initiative. These programs have been designed based on the idea that watching real people from their communities in action will be more interesting to the public than listening to a lecture from a city official or executive.

ATXN also produces short videos that play throughout public meetings and inform the public on the issues and situations up for discussion. These videos are always posted to YouTube and to other social media before the meetings to ensure that all are informed. The videos help ensure that the public receives concise and consistent information in layperson's terms, enabling a wider audience to comprehend the information and offer input. Based on a resident survey from 2013, 34% of Austin residents watch ATXN at least once throughout the course of the year, with many likely tuning in regularly for City Council and other meetings, as well as original programming. Instead of solely reprogramming city meetings, the station is producing original content and changing the way the channel is utilized as an engagement tool.

## The Show is On, Starring the Community

ATXN has now produced a unique kind of broadcast known as an “Interactive Community Conversation” or “TV Town Hall,” with a model that has, and could continue to be, scaled in other communities. As effective as such productions and programming can be, live programming offers additional opportunities to capture input from large audiences in real-time—particularly audiences who might otherwise not be able to attend meetings or go online to provide input. The “Interactive Community Conversation” is designed, instead, to give audience members multiple ways to participate. The model involves the live broadcast and webcast of a community meeting.

Open to the public and televised around 7pm local time to maximize the number of people who can watch and participate from home, TV Town Halls give people of all income levels a means of participating—whether in-person or watching elsewhere. No form of identification was requested of participants other than their name and what part of the City they live in or are calling from. While watching the meeting, the “TV Town Hall” offers several options for participation. The public may attend in person and participate on site, much like a more traditional town hall meeting. Participants can also engage remotely via a toll-free number. After dialing in with a touch-tone phone, they are able to make comments, after talking to a call screener who provides brief summaries of their topics for the meeting moderator to view on a private screen. A second phone line is also available for additional languages (Austin has used Spanish). Others can participate in polls and provide comments using SMS/text messaging, or make comments using a pre-announced suffix on Twitter (e.g., #austinparks, #bostonpolice, etc.). The use of these technological approaches enables the convening city or agency to connect with thousands of participants at random to allow for broader and wider participation.

Additionally, the City can randomly dial tens of thousands of Austin households and invite them to participate in the meeting. Such an invitation has proved highly effective at engaging populations who otherwise did not know of the participation opportunity and, if not for the TV Town Hall, could not have participated. For those participating by phone (the majority of participants), they can offer their comments live during the meeting through a call screener, who provides notes to the facilitator before recognizing the person to speak. These “robocalls” helped increase the diversity of participants to include citizens of all ethnicities and Council districts.

Interaction between participants is largely based on comments made by asking to be recognized in-person, speaking to a call screener on the phone, texting, or tweeting using the appropriate hashtag. Small group deliberation using customized telephonic technology, as well as numbered hashtags and specified text message codes, is planned for future TV Town Halls.

Austin has conducted TV Town Halls for a number of issues including how the City Council planned to structure itself, whether and/or how to restrict the use of plastic and paper bags, and where future mass transit investments should go.

### Case Study: Austin Aquatic System

In a recent TV Town Hall, thousands of Austin residents had the opportunity to speak with city officials about the beloved local aquatic system. Known best for the natural-flowing Barton Springs, which attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors a year, Austin’s municipally-run pools have been a staple of local living for nearly a century. Particularly given the unbearably hot conditions for much of the year, the pools provide a free (or, in a few cases, very low-cost) recreation option for those in search of relief and recreation. Unfortunately, the pools’ popularity has contributed to the aquatic system’s more recent struggles, and a consultant’s review found that as many as one out of every three pools could be in danger

of closing if the City could not find adequate new funding to maintain, repair, renovate, or rebuild them. According to a consultant's report:

*The demographics of Austin have also changed since many of the pools were constructed. The population of the City has grown from under 200,000 to over 800,000 in approximately 50 years and is expected to continue to grow. The proportion of the population over 65 is growing, while the proportion 19 and under is declining (but growing in absolute numbers). Austin is a “majority-minority city” with increasing Hispanic and Asian populations. Fewer families are located in the urban core as urban sprawl is intensifying with much of the wealth moving to the suburbs. These demographic shifts have led to a changing of needs for aquatic services in Austin.*

For this TV Town Hall, calls went out to several thousand Austin residents, who were then invited to listen in and participate via telephone in the Aquatic Assessment Town Hall. Most participants were contacted on the day of the event by phone. However, there were some people who participated as a result of the Town Hall's marketing, which included outreach through traditional and social media; fliers at City libraries and recreation centers; emails sent to thousands of Austinites subscribed to City e-newsletters; and messages sent via large community organizations, like the Austin Neighborhoods Council and the Boy and Girl Scouts.

The meeting was facilitated by the manager of the public engagement division, who rotated between a panel of stakeholders in Austin aquatics. Participants were made up of members of the live audience, while other participants joined the meeting via telephone and Twitter. These participants then shared survey responses and discussion questions, and their views were then broadcast live onto the projected screen. On the phone, the meeting was broadcast in Spanish and English. At its peak the meeting had at least 6,000 residents engaged either in-person, by phone, via text message, or social media; this figure excludes other viewers of the telecast (since the government access channel is not able to measure viewers through traditional ratings systems).

For the panel, the city sought a broad range of views by asking for members of the public to nominate themselves for participation by answering questions about their demographic information and their swimming habits. With names redacted, the Public Information Office selected a diverse panel, including highly active swimmers and a non-swimmer, from all over Austin and from multiple backgrounds, to ensure a level of diversity of background and thought. Panelists provided a wide range of viewpoints that helped the City better understand how Austinites felt about their aquatics system. The panel also helped keep the telecast flowing as the audience watching and/or listening at home participated in polls.

The results of polls showed up instantly on-screen for those participating via text and Twitter, and the facilitator could also share results from telephone polls in real-time. More importantly, the host could see which callers wanted to add their comments to the discussion and could incorporate them seamlessly into the meeting, audible to the live audience as well as the viewing audience. Comments came from all parts of Austin, indicating the strength of the technology to grow the audience for a public meeting of this type.

The feedback received during the Town Hall represented a broad spectrum of viewpoints—which was one clear objective of reaching out to a larger audience. Some residents indicated that they preferred that the City focus on adding new, smaller pools in neighborhoods where the nearest pool was too far for children to walk. Others wanted neighborhood pools closed and the focus placed on larger, “destination” pools that would attract visitors from miles around. Still others wanted to see the system preserved and maintained as is, even if their taxes or entry fees would have to increase as a result. This wide range of feedback reflected the same sort of conflicting viewpoints within the community as a whole, and the feedback was delivered to Aquatic Division officials in the Parks and Recreation Department to determine the most appropriate next steps.

Ultimately, City officials determined that several pools would need significant upgrades and allocated additional funding for that purpose. They also embarked on a full-fledged master plan for the Aquatic system

in order to determine the most effective long-term responses to citizens' input and to the findings of the assessment. They communicated this message through both traditional media, social media, materials placed at swimming facilities, and neighborhood email listservs, among other means.

## Benefits of the TV Town Hall Format

The Interactive Community Conversation gives voice to those who might otherwise feel as if they do not have a voice in their communities. The conversations engage hard-to-reach populations, including those who feel more comfortable in a language other than English, senior citizens, those with mobility challenges, youth and young adults, and other demographics. In so doing, the city gains a clearer understanding of the pulse of the entire community, rather than simply the handful of citizens able to attend a meeting in-person, much less have the confidence to prepare a speech (as is required for a public hearing).

The simultaneous use of these multiple platforms helps engage many populations. While some can easily attend meetings or log on to a website to provide comments, others have only a cell phone and the ability to talk or text. Additionally, some members of the public feel quite confident speaking publicly and identifying themselves, while others might prefer to make their comments anonymously, as the phone polls and text message polls would allow. In essence, the "Interactive Community Conversation" gives nearly every type of participant a chance to engage without having to step too far outside of their comfort zones or go to great lengths to do so.

A more recent TV Town Hall, on the topic of recycling and composting, attracted more than 1,000 participants in a single hour broadcast--far exceeding the turnout at even the most well-attended face-to-face event. While it is difficult to calculate the exact impact that such a large audience has on the City's policy making processes, it seems clear that the telecasts have given a platform to many community voices that the City otherwise would not have heard--thereby enabling the City to craft more inclusive public policy reflective of their needs.

## Limits of the TV Town Hall Format

The new model also brings some compelling challenges. To ensure participation, effective marketing and outreach is needed well in advance to raise awareness of the meetings. The use of auto-dialing random households means that many participants are likely not expecting the call, or mistake it for an advertisement or some other unwanted intrusion. Others who are aware of the meeting and might be willing to participate may hang up if they sense they are simply listening to speakers droning on, without having a chance to engage via polls and comments. Thus, using this telephonic model requires that conveners account for the somewhat shorter attention spans of those who accept calls. Conveners must engage them quickly and repeatedly early in the conversation.

The sheer volume of participants also presents challenges for creating a conversational, deliberative atmosphere of the sort that can lead to community consensus, rather than simply an exchange of views or a sequence of comments. Because of the large number of people want to participate on the panel in person or via phone, text, or social media, it is difficult to arrange for participants to exchange views with one another. Most of the time, one participant after another shares their comments and then is not heard from again.

Future iterations of this model will explore how best to create opportunities for small-group dialogue—for in-person audiences, telephone participants, and even SMS and Twitter participants—while maintaining a compelling broadcast. Conference-calling technology has evolved to the point that large audiences of callers can enter small-group discussions with a small subsection of the overall audience. Online tools such as Google's Hangouts, Adobe Connect, and Citrix's GoToMeeting, also provide ample opportunities for dividing online participants into small groups. SMS and Twitter participation can be segmented based on numbered



hashtags (#austinpools1) or customized SMS codes (text “AustinPools1”) to allow for a smaller audience to connect with one another.

Further thought should be given to the use of a studio audience and what can be done to incentivize in-person participation. It can be challenging to generate large “studio audiences” (i.e., in-person participation) for the Interactive Community Conversation when the public knows it can participate from the comforts of their own homes. It will also be necessary to explore whether in-person participation is vital in a format like this or whether it would work better simply with host, panel, and callers (as well as those who contribute via SMS and Twitter). Partnerships with schools and universities to provide credit for participating would also help generate audiences, as would the use of direct invitations to a random sample of residents with incentives like free refreshments, child care, parking, transit passes, and the like; additional partnerships with local businesses could help make in-person more attractive (on-site food trucks, bands, etc.).

In-person participants may also feel intimidated by speaking in front of large audiences or may feel as if they receive short shrift if the moderator pays more attention to panelists or callers. Special care should be taken to ensure that a) panelists make up a wide range of views and backgrounds, and b) in-person audience members get ample opportunities to participate, even with callers holding.

Many tools have emerged that require Internet access for participation, and while those tools have undoubtedly added to the richness of the public engagement toolbox, their asynchronous nature and Internet placement make the tools alone both difficult to access for many and less like a true deliberative dialogue.

## Conclusion and Replicability Prospects

Despite these challenges, the Interactive Community Conversation holds promise for significantly building the capacity of governmental agencies and even entire cities to engage with the public. The use of multiple forms of live and real-time technology enables much larger audiences to engage in conversation with one another, and the combinations of engagement tools and strategies described here theoretically provide nearly all individuals within a community with a means of participating in public deliberation. Continued application of, and experimentation with, Televised Community Conversations will help sharpen the benefits it provides its users, particularly in relation to obtaining a broader and more complete picture of public opinion and sentiment.

This format can potentially work in any other community or governmental agency besides the City of Austin (it has been tested in the City of Fort Worth, Texas, as well). The key components include the ability to broadcast or webcast a meeting live and the capacity to receive input from viewers--ideally via telephone and text message. It also would benefit from a host who could maintain neutrality and objectivity, given that the topics brought up during the telecasts could prove to be controversial. Several platforms allow for multiple participants to join a call or call in to share their input (such as those used by radio stations), or to text in their input, or to broadcast/webcast a meeting.

One final key component is a well-constructed script that keeps the audience engaged and provides them with enough information to provide input that will be meaningful to the client agency hosting the telecast. With all of those components, it is likely that other public agencies would benefit from this concept.



# THE RAMSEY COUNTY CIVIC PROJECT

*Trygve Throntveit, Dean's Fellow for Civic Studies, University of Minnesota  
College of Education and Human Development*

*Amy Anderson, Executive Director, Minnesota Civic Youth*

*Rebecca Biel, K-12 Social Studies Supervisor, Saint Paul Public Schools*

*Joe Mansky, Elections Manager, Ramsey County, Minnesota*

*With invited critical feedback from Brett Grant, Director of Research, Voices for Racial Justice*

Ramsey County, Minnesota, is at the center of the state's politics, home to its capital, Saint Paul, and thus its legislative, executive, and judiciary branches alongside countless state and local agencies. Yet Ramsey has the lowest voter-registration and voter-turnout levels in the state, due largely to three Saint Paul wards—5, 6, and 7—marked by concentrated poverty and disenchantment with government among their largely African-American, Southeast Asian-American, and Latino residents. The result is that Ramsey County receives fewer state resources than its population and needs merit, with consequences falling most heavily on poorer residents like those of Wards 5, 6, and 7.

To address this problem, concerned stakeholders have launched the Ramsey County Civic Project (RCCP): a collaboration between the County Commission and Elections Office, administrative and teaching leaders in select Saint Paul public high schools, local philanthropic and community organizations, and the University of Minnesota College of Education and Human Development (CEHD). RCCP's purpose is not simply (or even primarily) to turn out voters, but rather to attack the root causes of residents' disaffection from government. Its initial organizers hope to do this by supporting residents' own efforts to make their schools and neighborhoods sites of civic inquiry and activity that compel attention from their public servants.

We plan to pursue this broad objective along two tracks. One involves linking school-based civics education more directly to students' lives, and empowering students to act on their learning in ways they devise and control. The other involves supporting and publicizing the efforts of residents to address community problems and achieve community goals, in part by facilitating non-hierarchical, face-to-face exchanges with their elected officials and other public servants.

In sum, RCCP aims to foster residents' sense of civic agency, their public visibility, and their interest in the connection between their own public work and the work of officials and institutions whom their votes could influence. In turn, we anticipate that residents will make voting a higher priority, and that officials and candidates will less frequently ignore the increased number of votes at stake. Most important, we hope to demonstrate that comparatively resource-rich institutions—whether nonprofits, universities, or arms of government—can be catalysts for civic renewal without dictating specific goals or solutions to disenfranchised communities.

*What follows is our best effort, at the time of writing, to sketch a plan for RCCP that will a) attract the interest, input, and participation of the school administrators, teachers, students, and community members we hope will become our collaborators; b) meet the essential expectations of the County—which initially requested assistance with enhancing the relevance of its electoral functions for residents—and of the funders making this particular experiment possible; and c) allow for adaptation and improvisation as our knowledge is improved and our ownership diversified by the feedback, participation, and creativity of increasing numbers of residents.*

## Civic Learning in Schools

Civic agency is stymied across America. Major indices such as the National Conference on Citizenship's *America's Civic Health Index* and the University of Southern California's *Understanding America Study* reveal that civic skills, dispositions, opportunities, and activities are all in a state of decline. Their findings suggest that many citizens feel displaced from the center of self-government, relegated to the role of consumers rather than co-producers of public policy and political culture. Low-income communities and communities of color, such as those in Wards 5, 6, and 7, are particularly skeptical of the formal political process due to lack of attention and/or follow-through from candidates and officials. Consequently, such communities are often viewed, incorrectly, as political and civic vacuums by outsiders, who overlook the daily work of residents building shared cultural, social, and economic goods together.

Research strongly suggests that high-quality civic learning in schools is one of the best defenses against such civic decline and disenfranchisement. This is doubly fortunate, for such civic learning not only produces graduates with capacity and confidence to sustain, enhance, and advocate for their communities. It also *improves learning across all domains*, both by nurturing critical reflection and by disburdening students of fear and other negative distractions through productive confrontation of tensions and differences. In other words, high-quality civic learning augments students' personal power to influence their world *and* helps them develop the wisdom to use that power for good, by consulting and cooperating with others.

## Civics in the Schools Institute

Because the quality of learning outcomes (civic or otherwise) depends on both design and delivery, two of us (Anderson and Biel) have developed an intensive five-day summer institute for Saint Paul middle and high school social studies teachers eager to enhance their standards-based civics curricula with additional student-responsive and student-guided elements. The CIS Summer Institute (Civics in the Schools) focuses on using culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally relevant topics to promote civic skills and civic agency as part of a standards-based curriculum.

## The C3 Framework

Central to CIS is the C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards. The C3 is the collaborative product of fifteen professional organizations committed to the advancement of social studies education across the United States.<sup>1</sup> Its purpose is to help communities prepare young people for the 3 C's of college, career, and civic life. As the introduction states: "Now more than ever, students need the intellectual power to recognize societal problems; ask good questions and develop robust investigations into them; consider possible

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<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the American Bar Association, American Historical Association, Association of American Geographers, Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, Center for Civic Education, Constitutional Rights Foundation, Chicago Constitutional Rights Foundation USA, Council for Economic Education, National Council for Geographic Education, National Council for History Education, National Council for the Social Studies, National Geographic Society, National History Day, Street Law, Inc., and World History Association.

solutions and consequences; separate evidence-based claims from parochial opinions; and communicate and act upon what they learn. And most importantly, they must possess the capability and commitment to repeat that process as long as is necessary.” In response to these needs, the C3 Framework provides educators and students with “strong tools for, and methods of, clear and disciplined thinking in order to traverse successfully the worlds of college, career, and civic life.”

The C3 Framework takes the form of an *Inquiry Arc*—a set of interlocking and mutually supportive ideas that frame the ways students learn social studies content. By focusing on inquiry, the framework emphasizes the disciplinary concepts and practices that support students as they develop the capacity to know, analyze, explain, and argue about interdisciplinary challenges in our social world. The four dimensions of the Framework’s inquiry arc include:

- developing questions and planning inquiry;
- selecting and applying appropriate tools and concepts from the social-science disciplines;
- gathering, evaluating, and synthesizing sources and evidence; and
- communicating conclusions and taking informed action.

The purpose of CIS is to help participants learn how to apply the C3 Framework to MN State Standards for Social Studies and—crucially—to do so while equipping and encouraging students to relate formal politics to their everyday lives.

## Respectful Conversations in Schools

To assist them in helping students make such connections, participants will be trained in the Respectful Conversations in Schools (RCS) protocol, which is designed to provide teachers and students with a model for approaching controversial public issues. The protocol—a collaboration between Minnesota Civic Youth, the Minnesota Council of Churches, and CEHD—is designed to build empathy, respect, and mutual comfort among secondary students in order to permit discussion of topics that are meaningful, interesting, and perhaps even disturbing to students, but in different ways. Frankly but safely addressing such topics not only disburdens students’ working memory to free energy for learning, but also positively enhances their acquisition of concepts and skills relevant to Minnesota grade-level benchmarks in social studies.

## Experiential Education for Educators

Adult learning, like that of young people, is enhanced by real-world contextualization and application. Thus the current plan for CIS includes two main experiential components. First, participants will visit the Minnesota State Capitol and James J. Hill House, where they will learn about the civic inquiry process used to analyze, collectively, an actual public controversy and solution.

Second, during the final morning of the institute, we plan to have participants engage with local elected officials to deepen their understanding of how these positions serve their communities. Discussion questions might include:

- What is your position responsible for?
- Why should people care?
- What are you currently working on?
- What should community members know about your position?

As of now, we have reserved the final afternoon for a) synthesizing learnings from the week; and b) developing action plans for applying the four dimensions of the C3 Framework to their current curricula as well as for incorporating both the framework and the Respectful Conversations in Schools model into future classroom lessons and activities.

## School-Community Voting Days

We hope the activities described above (or versions of them) will equip teachers to energize students to think of themselves as civic agents and political actors. To enhance that work and connect it to the electoral process, we plan to cooperate with one participating high school in each of Wards 5, 6, and 7 to organize school-community voting days. These are two-phase events:

1. On Election Day 2018, 2019, and 2020, faculty, staff, students—voting-eligible and not—and their parents or other known elders will be invited to the school to cast ballots as a school community. Votes will be tabulated and reported in two simultaneous ways:
  - A. Votes cast by those persons registered in the precinct will be duly reported and counted in the official election results.
  - B. All votes by participants of *any age or legal status* will be tabulated and reported to the current authors and to the principal of the school in which they were cast.
2. Following Election Day, students trained in the RCS protocol will lead a discussion of their respective school-community's election results. During year one we anticipate that these discussions will involve students only, and be run on the RCS model either during class time or after school. During year two, we anticipate enough lead time, principal buy-in, and student interest to plan an evening event at each of the three sites, open to the wider school community and including a buffet dinner. For these events (should they occur):
  - A. Student organizers—supported by RCCP and school-based personnel—will digest the school-community voting results beforehand and determine for themselves how to explain them, invite discussion about them, and recruit their fellow students and their families/elders to participate.
  - B. RCCP personnel—especially County and UMN members and their colleagues—will use their institutional clout to encourage public officials to attend the school-community digests of the election as listeners and respondents rather than as speakers.

## Restorative Justice in the Wards

Despite the inherent, independent value of improved civic learning, the scope of RCCP exceeds school hours and grounds. Civic learning is learning for public work. If the design and delivery of high-quality civic learning in schools is to have its greatest effect, student participants need to believe that their wider environment is one in which their civic knowledge, skills, and creativity are valued.

Unfortunately, too few residents of Wards 5, 6, and 7 feel valued or even recognized as civic agents. In these neighborhoods, civic disengagement and civic disenfranchisement go hand in hand. The causes of these twin phenomena are multiple, but prime among them is a decades-long legacy of mistrust and misunderstanding between public officials on one hand and communities of color on the other. This mutual disaffection creates a stubborn electoral paradox: citizens don't vote when candidates don't talk to them, but candidates don't talk to citizens who don't vote. This in turn creates a second vicious circle, in which fewer public resources are devoted to meeting the needs and sustaining the achievements of low-turnout communities, whose perceived stake in the institutions controlling such resources therefore further declines—along with the time, wealth, education, and economic power to influence resource distribution.

To help break the cycle of mistrust in a manner that empowers residents without demonizing public officials—which would only drive them farther away—one of us (Throntveit) is consulting with community organizations and CEHD colleagues to facilitate a series of *restorative justice dialogues* between residents and public officials. Such dialogues, as currently conceived, are not intended to facilitate consensus or even (at least initially) trust, which must be earned through actions. Instead, their aim is to foster the *empathy* upon which collaborative, trusting relationships must rest in order to prevent their infection by cynicism and manipulation.

The plan as of this writing is for experienced facilitators, connected with the Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking (CRJP) at CEHD's School of Social Work, to moderate one dialogue in each ward, and to train residents in each ward—including, ideally, students participating in the school-based phase of the project—to facilitate further dialogues. It will also be incumbent upon CEHD personnel—as well as RCCP's County and nonprofit organizers—to leverage their institutional clout to augment the voice of residents in calling for the participation of public officials in the dialogic process.

That process, as CRJP staff and affiliates have practiced it for decades, utilizes a “talking circle” format (inspired by the practices of the indigenous people of Minnesota) to create a safe and respectful space for collaborative learning about self and other. Its core aspirations are *egalitarianism*, manifest in the use of a talking piece passed around the circle to flatten the hierarchies that often emerge in conversations; and *fellowship*, manifest in the sharing of a meal among participants. The exact composition of each circle will reflect the input of neighborhood partners as well the unpredictable responses of the public officials they desire to engage and, above all, the residents of Wards 5, 6, and 7.

Should residents and public officials agree to this experiment, there is reason to hope for positive results. CRJP facilitators have worked with groups including the Saint Paul NAACP, Saint Paul Black Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, and Saint Paul Police Department, and not long ago advised and designed a successful reorganization of the city's police-community relations board that removed active officers from the ostensibly neutral body. These and similar efforts led the Ramsey County Attorney's Office to enlist CRJP personnel to facilitate restorative justice dialogues between the Archdiocese of Minneapolis-Saint Paul and victims of clergy sexual abuse.

## Challenges

Careful readers will notice that much of the language of this article is tentative. As of this writing, the authors have received financial commitments from the County and from one major local funder, the Saint Paul Foundation, assuring that the school-based elements of RCCP will launch. Meanwhile, however, we await the decision of another local philanthropy that has expressed deep interest in and theoretical commitment to supporting restorative justice dialogues in the wards, but has not yet committed funding.

Ironically, the fuzzy funding context crystallizes a second and larger challenge. Money is hard to come by when the people it is meant to benefit have not yet “bought in.” But asking members of disadvantaged communities to “buy in” before funding is secured smacks of tokenism. “Write this grant proposal with us! Our interracial case will be so compelling!” Even the opportunities presented by preexisting relationships can pose challenges. CEHD, for instance, is lucky to have faculty who enjoy longstanding, trusting, collaborative relationships with individuals and organizations in Wards 5, 6, and 7. But “CEHD” is not a single person. Even if it was, the plan outlined above began as a direct response by one of the authors (CEHD’s Throntveit) to the concerns of another (Mansky) and other Ramsey County officials, and has thus far evolved in conversation and collaboration with people and institutions already within Throntveit’s relational orbit. Only slowly and imperfectly are the authors earning and incorporating the input of community partners rightly skeptical of their intentions or, more generously, their ability to transcend the structural biases of their institutions.

## Conclusion

The challenges described above are big ones, and they are unlikely to be the only ones the Ramsey County Civic Project faces or will face. Still, we have hope that RCCP will make a substantial and positive difference in the lives of those residing in Saint Paul Wards 5, 6, and 7. And we have at least a vague idea of what such a difference would look like.

RCCP’s main proximate goal is an increased disposition to vote *due to* increased sense of civic agency among student, teacher, and community participants. To that end, we will survey participants before and after each program element in which they participate. We will also survey longer-term participants (those closely connected to our partner schools in Wards 5, 6, and 7) before and after the entire series of activities in which they engage. We will repeat this each of the three (academic) years 2018-2021 and compare results, looking for increases in disposition to vote and sense of political efficacy, as measured by personal historical and attitudinal self-reports. In the case of voting, we hope to see indications of electoral participation move closer to the state average. Our specific targets are to see 50% of participants registering increased disposition to vote and sense of political efficacy, and to see participants collectively surpass their Wards’ 2016 voter participation rates by 10% in the 2020 elections.

Yet the ultimate goal of RCCP is not to encourage voting. Rather, it is to learn about and publicize the civic lives, aspirations, and frustrations of communities to whom the purpose and payoffs of voting are rarely obvious, and about whom public servants are often ignorant, and to build relationships that will conduct such learning and publicity into wider channels of influence. Finally, the goal of RCCP is to affirm and support Ramsey County residents, especially young people, as *citizens* in the largest, truest sense: namely, people who invest in, depend on, and co-create the communities that structure and sustain their lives.

# PRACTICING DEMOCRACY IN URBAN SETTINGS:

## A Case Study on Increasing Political Participation in Washington D.C.'s Underserved Communities

*Lauren Grimes, M.P.P., University of the District of Columbia*

*Veda Rasheed, J.D. District of Columbia Office of the Attorney General*

### Introduction

As the United States is a representative democracy, there is an underlying assumption that all Americans are equally represented--irrelevant of creed, color, race, religion, age, gender, or sexual orientation. What is less evident is the prevalence of political inequity, which is the phenomenon that occurs when citizens are not fairly represented in society due to unequal political participation opportunities and resources.<sup>1</sup> Such is the case in Washington D.C.'s most underserved areas, Wards 7 and 8. In 2013, then Mayor, Vincent Gray, Serve DC (the District's official office of volunteerism), and the National Conference on Citizenship (NCOCC) released the District of Columbia's first Civic Health Index. The index notated that overall, the city's civic health, which is "a measure of the well-being of a community, state, or nation" based on five factors: service and volunteering, group membership and leadership, connection to information, social connectedness, and political action, is fairly high on the index.<sup>2</sup> However, despite the high rates of voter turnout and support for volunteerism, data shows a clear correlation between low income, low education and low civic engagement. This correlation is most evident in the underserved, low socio-economic areas of Wards 7 and 8, where 25% of the population resides. It is clear that as political participation varies across the District, so does political equity.

### Research

Interacting with D.C. youth is critical in creating political equity across the District. During the 2014 election, young American voters across the U.S. in the 25-34 age range dominated over seniors within the 65 and older range.<sup>3</sup> This was a tangible example of younger voters recognizing their voice and taking up the call to action to become civically engaged by casting their ballots. Although youth within the 16-18 range tend to pre-register to vote at very low levels, and registered voters 18-24 vote at lower numbers than other groups, it is possible for us to see a change the status quo if we take the appropriate steps to activate our youth. In terms of the number of youth in the District, District of Columbia Public Schools

<sup>1</sup> Political Inequality in an Age of Democracy: Cross-national Perspectives by Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow

<sup>2</sup> Fluker, Clarence. *District of Columbia Civic Health Index*. Washington, D.C. National Conference on Citizenship and Serve DC, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2015/03/09/behind-the-numbers-changing-demographics-and-d-c-voter-turnout/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.37c478d8d1a3](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2015/03/09/behind-the-numbers-changing-demographics-and-d-c-voter-turnout/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.37c478d8d1a3)



(DCPS) data shows that during the 2016-2017 school year there were approximately 2,780 16 year olds; 2,426 17 year olds; 771 18 year olds; and approximately 220 19 year old or older students in grades 9-12. That means that there are 6,100 potential youth voters sitting in our classrooms.<sup>4</sup> Of that total, over 5,000 youth live in Ward 7, which has one of the highest DCPS enrollment levels in the District.<sup>5</sup> It is important to notate that some of these youth have possibly registered or pre-registered to vote, and exercised their right to vote. However data does show that a majority of this voting bloc has not participated in those activities.

## Completed Interventions

To combat these injustices, we created the “Go Out and Vote” initiative (G.O.A.V.) which utilizes social media campaigns and youth citizen-centered programming to further improve democratic practices in Ward 7. To foster unity within a community wrought with strife and discord, we partnered with other local community organizations -- including Ward 7 Democrats, F.O.U.R., Boys and Girls Club of Greater Washington, The Community Enrichment Project, The DeLoren Foundation, and the Go Go to Vote Campaign -- to execute the initiative. The mission of the project was to promote increased political participation in Ward 7 among 16-24 year olds. The G.O.A.V. initiative will take place between January 2018 until November 2018, when D.C. will hold a general election for the selection of its mayor, local Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners (ANCs), D.C. Attorney General, members of the D.C. Council, political party members, and congressional representatives.

In January we launched the G.O.A.V. initiative by releasing our first music video on two social media platforms--Facebook and Instagram. Social media was employed as the first means to reach our target audience because youth have high rates of internet usage for communication and information gathering purposes. According to PEW Research Center, of the various social media outlets available in the U.S., 41% of teens in America use Facebook most often, followed by 20% who frequent Instagram.<sup>6</sup> Thus, we decided those two social media sites would be the best to utilize to ensure an effective social media campaign. Social media is a great tool to use to promote civic activities when used appropriately. Research shows that it is most successful if it completes three stages: low engagement, when information is shared with the public; medium engagement, when content is shared and discussed by the public; and high engagement, when the audience is mobilized to take action.<sup>7</sup> During our initial stage we created one music video that encouraged youth to vote and register to vote. The video gained traction online as the Ward 7 community began to become aware of the G.O.A.V. initiative. Five additional videos were released between February and April. During that time we were able to accomplish medium and high stages of engagement as more people learned about the campaign, shared the videos with others, and most importantly began to take action. In terms of action, community members (such as local leaders and school administrators) started reaching out to us asking how they could support, and proposed opportunities for us to connect with youth. Collectively, the social media videos were viewed over 3,000 times, shared over 100 times, and liked approximately 222 times.

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<sup>4</sup> There is no present data on how many D.C. youth have registered to vote, as age-related voting data is currently unavailable.

<sup>5</sup> <https://dcps.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcps/publication/attachments/FY16%20DCPS%20Budget%20Overview.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> PEW Research Center [http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/09/teens-social-media-technology-2015/pi\\_2015-04-09\\_teensandtech\\_02/](http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/09/teens-social-media-technology-2015/pi_2015-04-09_teensandtech_02/)

<sup>7</sup> Warren, A., Sulaiman, A., & Jaafar, N. (2014). Social Media Effects on Fostering Online Civic Engagement and Building Citizen Trust and Trust in Institutions. *Government Information Quarterly*, 31, 291-301. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0740624X14000367>

Each video included local celebrities and leaders sharing the importance of voting. These captivating media tools have assisted us in achieving our primary goal of creating awareness about the importance of voting and fulfilling your civic duties, even for young people. To increase awareness in a community where political apathy is high, and distrust in politics prevents civic action, videos included individuals who are known and admired by youth throughout Ward 7. While many youth in the targeted communities are untrustworthy of the political system at large, they do hold the individuals featured in the videos in high regard. We were able to redirect negative narratives related to politics by infusing positive imagery into the conversation of voting and civic engagement. Examples of the individuals who made cameos including well known community activists Veda Rasheed, Maleek Sneed, and Silas Grant; retired NFL player Josh Morgan; musician and actor Anwan “Big G” Glover (who is known for his role of “Slim Charles” in the HBO TV series *The Wire*), fashion designer Malik Jarrett; entertainment entrepreneur Le’Greg O. Harrison; ANC Commissioner Ebbon Allen; and motivational speaker Ciera Hosein. Hearing directly from them has definitely helped to awaken a spirit of empowerment in the youth. After watching the videos, they became less skeptical of our political system because they began to realize their own power.

Another primary goal of the G.O.A.V. initiative is to increase youth voter registration. During the June 2016 primary election, when compared to other Wards in the District, Ward 7 had the second lowest number of total ballots cast (10.65% of the total votes cast in D.C.),<sup>8</sup> and during the November 2016 general election Ward 7 had the second lowest number of total ballots cast (10.7% of the total votes cast in D.C.).<sup>9</sup> We hope to see a greater increase in those numbers this June, when the 2018 primary election takes place, and in November for the general election. Thus, the next step in the G.O.A.V. initiative has been to embark on a series of civic engagement sessions at local schools, recreation centers, and clubhouses with special guests and activities for youth. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) has conducted extensive research on youth civic engagement and offered concrete solutions to increase the youth vote. One of the most vital measures that increased encourages youth to vote is by interactive contact. One of the most effective ways to turn out voters is to implement high-quality, face-to-face conversations to urge them to vote. CIRCLE proposes that connecting with youth is very important as “young people who are contacted by an organization or a campaign are more likely to vote. Additionally, those who discuss an election are more likely to vote in it.”<sup>10</sup> This method allows organizers to have a direct, positive impact on community members, who will, in turn, take direct action at the polls.

The community kickoff event was held in February 2018 at the Richard England Boys and Girls Club #14. Veda Rasheed began by addressing the crowd and connecting with the youth. She shared with those in the audience--which included youth, their families, and local leaders--how she became involved in local issues. A couple years ago, one of her son’s started experiencing issues at school, and she was determined to be an advocate for him. She quickly learned that her advocacy skills could be used to help others around her within her community as well. As a result, she hosted her inaugural Peace Rally in Ward 7 in 2016, and the second annual event in 2017. The audience was moved by her story and was even more delighted when she introduced a poet, Ciera Hosein, who performed a piece titled “Sega Genesis” that encouraged young people to pay less attention to games, and more attention to how they can impact

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<sup>8</sup> DC Board of Elections  
[https://www.dcboe.org/election/election\\_info/election\\_results/v3/2016/June-14-Primary-Election](https://www.dcboe.org/election/election_info/election_results/v3/2016/June-14-Primary-Election)

<sup>9</sup> DC Board of Elections  
[https://www.dcboe.org/election/election\\_info/election\\_results/v3/2016/November-8-General-Election](https://www.dcboe.org/election/election_info/election_results/v3/2016/November-8-General-Election)

<sup>10</sup> CIRCLE <https://civicyouth.org/quick-facts/youth-voting/>

the world around them. Her piece ended with these powerful words: “This is just a piece of my own perspective, you must discern your own divine direction!”

After the poetry piece, there was an interactive talk led by two local rappers who often discuss community issues and struggles in their lyrics. They focused on empowering the youth to make better choices and to think beyond the present when they are making certain decisions. This interaction allowed youth and families to take part in meaningful conversations about civic engagement and voting. Next, they were surprised with performances by the two local artists. The most exciting portion was the very end where all of the audience, the performers, and program organizers filmed a G.O.A.V. video together. Everyone, together and on one accord, gathered at the front of the room and chanted “Vote, vote, vote, vote, vote!”. It was one word, but the message spoke volumes. The main purpose of the kick-off was to begin to activate, engage, and encourage youth and young adults to register to vote. It was quite a sight to see so many youth involved in conversations on being active members in their communities. Ward 7 resident Lacricha Paige stated the kick-off “was super informative! I walked away knowing no one will ever deprive me of the right to vote except myself, and the only way is by not voting. I am inspired to be at the polls this election and spread the word to others in my family and community.”

We were successful at gaining so much momentum on social media, that the community was excited to come out and engage during our kick-off. The next step was to continue releasing social media videos and begin to bring the conversation directly to school groups in Ward 7. During each event in the high school tour, students were shown a G.O.A.V. music video featuring local leaders and artists. This opened up for dialogue with the students, where they were able to openly discuss community issues and their thoughts on voting and politics. The students were also allowed the opportunity to get more information on voting and pre-register to vote. The first school presentation took place in April during a local school’s annual Safety and Wellbeing Forum. The event was organized to teach students a host of different topics related to street violence, friendships, and the importance of voting. There, we hosted a presentation in conjunction with Tia Clarke, CEO of (F.O.U.R.) discussing the importance of valuing your voice and your individual thoughts. We encouraged youth to understand that their thoughts and opinions are valuable. They have a right to profess them and use them to make a difference. At the end of the presentation we encouraged youth to register to vote. Almost all of the attendees were unaware that D.C. allows youth as young as 16 years of age to pre-register to vote. There were approximately 30 students in attendance, and as a result of the presentation 14 of them pre-registered or registered to vote! The remainder of the students were mostly too young to register, and a few students were previously registered or declined to register.

## Future Interventions

The next stop in the high school tour will be a presentation at a high school graduation in Ward 7 that will include over 100 graduates and their loved ones. There we will show another G.O.A.V. video and have open dialogue with the students present. It will be a great opportunity to hold those vital conversations and conduct a pre-registration drive after the ceremony. The graduates, as well as other attendees, will have the chance to register to vote. The grand finale of the G.O.A.V. initiative will be a final voter registration drive and an election watch party in November 2018. This event will enable us to accomplish the final goal of the G.O.A. V. initiative: get youth to actually go out and vote. Once our final event is completed, we will review the data we have collected along the way. Thus far, we have assessed that meeting with groups of students in schools, or at currently existing programs at local community centers is a great way to interact with large amounts of youth. It is easier to connect with and advertise to existing youth groups. Another best practice has been to offer presentations and workshops as a part of existing programming. Schools and community centers often have events planned for months in advance,

and schools often have standardized testing and college-related testing in the spring, which can cause difficulties when planning these sorts of initiatives.

The G.O.A.V. initiative was designed as a local-level initiative devoted to extinguishing the false mindset that our community's voice and votes do not count. This innovative program has allowed us to get young people actively involved in democracy, and helped to promote political equity in one of the most underserved communities in Washington, D.C. Overall, the G.O.A.V. campaign promotes civic engagement, voter registration and turnout among our youth, particularly in Ward 7 of the District of Columbia. We truly hope that through our efforts we will see an increase the level of political interest, civic engagement, and individual agency. In a representative democracy, the people that can make a change are the ones that play an active role in society. We must provide civic education and opportunities for all people, especially our youth, to participate in democratic processes. By doing so, we will add scores of new voices to critical ongoing dialogues on democracy and promote political equity for all.

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## **WILDCATS AND WILDKITS:**

### Partnerships for Democratic Engagement in Evanston, IL

*Mary Collins, Community Service Coordinator, Evanston Township High School*

*Kelly Benkert, Director, Leadership Development & Community Engagement,  
Northwestern University*

Evanston, Illinois sits on the shores of Lake Michigan immediately north of the city of Chicago, and is home to Northwestern University (NU) and Evanston Township High School (ETHS), located approximately one mile apart. Evanston is a community that values civic engagement, as evidenced by its activist history (temperance and school integration to note some socially significant initiatives), its long-time support of non-profit organizations, and for the past 25+ years, the funding of a Community Service Department at the public high school. Though the relationship between the city and the university has evolved over time, Northwestern and ETHS have demonstrated a deep commitment to mutuality by supporting the development of a multitude of programs that engage Northwestern and ETHS students, as well as staff, for shared learning over their 135 years of history in this community. Two such programs, Emerge Leadership Program and Social Justice Advocacy Training, specifically and intentionally work to build the capacity of young people for democratic engagement.

The programs stem from a rich tradition of service-learning pioneered in the 1980s and 1990s (Furco, 1996) by engaging students in community-based learning through innovative program structures, curricula, and community partnerships, as well as a demand from students for more experiential learning where they can make an impact on their community. A second layer of partnership between the university and the high school strengthens the programs by utilizing a near-peer pedagogy and modeling collaboration for positive change. Both programs strive to develop students' democratic values, behaviors, civic identity, and commitment to the common good. In this way, both Emerge and the Social Justice Advocacy Training seek to answer the urgent call for educational institutions to re-commit to their purpose of educating students to be active-citizens, as articulated in the report released by the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, *A Crucible Moment*.

### **Emerge**

The Emerge leadership and community development program for high schoolers brings together community leaders, university students and teens in a practical, hands-on experience--working together for the good of all, engaging our citizens in participative roles and action. Launched in 2008, Emerge asks high school, college students, and community members to rethink youth roles and put 15 year-olds in the driver's seat of addressing some of our community's most important issues. The program consists of a retreat, monthly workshops, small group coaching sessions, community partnership projects, reflection, and intentional leadership development.

Emerge begins with a retreat where students meet changemakers, unofficial community “leaders”, and recognized leaders (e.g. school principal, mayor, NU president). The teens create vision statements of what they want to see in their town/school by the time they graduate and then spend the year working with partners from community or school organizations (community assets) addressing issues related to the vision statements. Throughout the year, the 35-70 sophomores in the program meet monthly in a 3-hour workshop to develop skills appropriate for group work and community development work: communication, collaboration, group dynamics, advocacy, community development, and public speaking, among other skills. Outside of workshops, sophomores work collaboratively in small groups to research and identify community partners (including non-profit/school personnel, ETHS or NU student groups) whose work they can and want to support. Students set up meetings, exchange emails and collaborate closely with partners on a project the partner has prioritized and sees as able to be enhanced or improved with the support of ETHS students. An example of one group’s vision statement, “By 2020, we will reduce the stigma of mental illness at ETHS,” articulates the general issue they wanted to address, while another group articulated their vision more specifically: “We will identify current environmental justice issues within our community and present these issues to Environmental Justice Evanston so they can help us take action to eliminate these injustices.”

NU students and ETHS juniors and seniors (collectively known as facilitators) are key partners serving in the capacities of workshop facilitators, curriculum advisors, and executive board members. Each month a group of facilitators reviews and makes changes to the curriculum, trains 16-20 facilitators, and prepares for the workshops. In this capacity, student voice is valued and integrated into the very essence of the program--the workshops. During the student-moderated curriculum and training preparation, NU students bring their unique perspective and experiences while ETHS facilitators share theirs, creating an ever-changing and highly relevant exchange of information and methodology. In the workshops, NU students deliver the content in dynamic and interactive sessions with the assistance of previous Emerge participants called “Junior Facilitators” and support from the ETHS coordinator.

According to NU student, ETHS graduate, and former Emerge participant John Wylie,

“The involvement of Northwestern students in Emerge is an inspiration to high school students that civic engagement does not end with one project or with the town in which you live. NU student engagement in Emerge is a personal development opportunity for NU students looking to make an impact on students in Evanston as well as for us to gain an insight as to where local youth want to see civic change. In exchange, high school students have the space to serve as both ambassadors to their town and learn from college peers that have worked with a wide array of stakeholders across varying communities. NU students lead the workshops and, within project groups, they serve as catalysts for groups to reimagine how they impact their desired audience. Together, Emerge and Northwestern create a symbiotic relationship in which high school students experience leadership development and NU students are pushed to help create the change youth want to see.”

Throughout the program, it is emphasized to students that their role is to support assets already in place, help them further their goals, and learn about the process of affecting change and the responsibility of doing sustainable development. The group addressing mental health partnered with an ETHS health teacher who shared the same vision and already included a mental health unit in her course and wanted to see a more positive culture around mental health in our school population. She had more knowledge about the topic but lacked the time and social media access to students to do more. Together the teacher-student team created a teen-friendly 30-Day Challenge on Instagram (@ethskitscare) that featured activities anyone, especially students, could do each day during a 30-day period ranging from “Keep all meals phone free” to “Take a walk outside.” The student team promoted the event through fliers, their

own social media accounts, and announcements at school. They measured the short-term impact of their project by tracking how many followers their project account had and how many postings were made by those followers. The students and teacher plan to sustain this impact by bringing back the challenge every year in April and identifying younger students who will manage it once the originators graduate.

After each workshop and at the end of the year, all students (participants and facilitators) are asked to contribute their ideas about the relevance and value of the workshops and the program in general by way of evaluations. Specific suggestions made in assessments are used to tweak and change the curriculum and program components as dictated by student voice as well as gauge student perspective on their own civic identity, democratic values, and behaviors. Participants often mention they would like even more interactive (team building and communication) activities and that they prefer workshops where there is more time to work on their projects. In evaluations, facilitators often comment on the behavior of the participants relative to workshop activities that kept them the most/least engaged (communication games and controversial topic debate being the most popular). Additionally, during monthly small group coaching sessions, students are asked to reflect on their roles in their community partnership and the assets they bring to the community. There is discussion of “What is the common good?” and why others care (or don’t care) about the issues being addressed by the student project. Finally, we measure how the (ETHS as well as NU) students develop their civic identities and democratic values by fully engaging them in the design of the program. Through that process, students are pushed to contemplate the relationship between their communities’ values, priorities, assets and areas of opportunity, and the youth citizenry. Then they use those ideas to educate, inform, and inspire the next Emerge class.

Additional assessment comes by way of measuring the sustainability of the partner projects. At the end of the school year, each group of sophomores, with facilitator guidance and input from their community partner, completes a sustainability plan. The plan indicates what needs to be accomplished in order to keep their work evolving and useful to the partner organization. This is a clear indicator of the connection between the students’ work and real-life application. Initially Emerge didn’t have a sustainability component to the projects. Over the years, sustainability plans were informally created, but now there is a structure and guide used to aid students and partners in the process. Both formal and informal sustainability plans that were successfully implemented were ones where the community or school partner was committed to being the “steward” of the program. Because of the transient nature of a student population, it is understandable that stewardship is quite effective when assumed by the more permanent partner and the stakeholders that stand to benefit the most from the initiative.

## Social Justice Advocacy Training

The Social Justice Advocacy Training program, begun much more recently in 2016, was developed to give students the skills to effectively advocate for systemic change on social justice issues. Designed to build their agency and efficacy for democratic engagement, the resulting Social Justice Advocacy Trainings have engaged nearly 50 ETHS students and a dozen NU students. These day-long trainings brought ETHS students to Northwestern’s campus to learn the skills of effective advocacy, connect with NU students who are engaged in advocacy projects, and work with their peers to start building campaigns that could produce change in their community or school. Two trainings have been piloted thus far, and plans are in the works to engage more students in these experiences in upcoming academic years.

The training walks students through a process designed to move them from identifying justice issues in society they care about, to developing policy solutions, power-mapping an arena in which they can make change, developing effective messages, and putting together a plan for strategies and tactics that will influence decision-makers. The process is highly interactive, and students work in small issue groups

throughout the day to build their analysis and plan for action. Students work on issues they identify as affecting their lives - immigration, the environment, mass incarceration, poverty, and other complex issues - and develop policy solutions to address those issues. They learn how to build power, develop messages, and strategically target decision-makers to build support for their solutions. By the end of the day, students are better prepared to engage in the democratic process and are more confident in their own abilities to be part of creating systemic change.

The trainings are partly facilitated by Northwestern students who previously participated in a similar program. The near-peer teaching model is promising as it develops another layer of learning for the NU-student facilitators, and allows the ETHS students to see civic participation and advocacy models in action from people who are only a couple of years older than them. As we continue to build the number of participants, we hope to engage ETHS students as peer educators, as well. This shared teaching approach models the added value of collaboration to communities working to achieve a goal. The layers of collaboration, from the NU and ETHS staff collaboration, the institutional partnerships, and the shared teaching approach, shape the expectations to work in small groups throughout the training to work toward systemic change collectively. The participants, therefore, engage in democratic practice while they work to understand how to shape their democracy through advocacy.

Based on our limited assessment, we know this training and the subsequent follow up with students achieves some of our learning outcomes related to understanding the advocacy process for systemic change. Unfortunately, due to timing with bus transportation, the students did not complete formal post-training evaluations, which limits our ability to measure student learning. However, during a follow up meeting at ETHS, we created an informal opportunity to review key concepts, discuss ways that students have put the training into practice, and offer an opportunity for feedback on their experiences. The majority of student participants expressed increased efficacy and commitment to action in their final reflections. One such quote illustrates a typical response: "I think before I felt more helpless and useless on certain issues. Because so many people are vocal about their political positions, it's easy to think that everyone is already active members in making change, but now I see that that is not the case, and that I have to be someone to mobilize change." We have not formally tracked whether any of the students enacted their advocacy plans or have put their skills to use beyond the training. One important goal we share is to nurture a culture of engagement and student voice in our schools and consistent with that objective, we have observational data that show some students at ETHS have used their skills to advocate for changes in school policies on issues such as protecting undocumented students, updating the dress code, and supporting transgender and gender non-conforming students.

Given the fixed high school bell schedule and the timing of bus transportation, we realized we had too much content planned for the amount of time in the day. For future iterations of the program, we plan to revise the curriculum to focus more sharply on issue and power analysis, messaging, and strategies and tactics for mobilizing change. We believe these skills will have the greatest immediate value and application for the students. We hope to create more intentional and long-lasting connections between the NU students and ETHS students, along with 2-3 additional touchpoints during the year so they may support each other in their campus or community advocacy campaigns. Pre-post assessments and plans for a 6-8 week follow up focus group have already been developed and will be implemented in future trainings. Through the use of these tools, we hope to better understand this program's impact on students' civic learning, democratic values, and democratic practice. Depending on the age of the student when they participate in the training, we can also begin to track longitudinal changes in behavior.



## Conclusion

Re-imagining a 21st century democracy requires that we embrace the complexity of our communities and work together to educate students so they can think critically, collaborate, and make positive change on issues that affect their lives. Through the Emerge and the Social Justice Advocacy Training programs, students are growing in their commitment to the common good, learning effective collaboration, and developing efficacy and agency. Both programs put students into conversation about pressing justice issues in their own communities and support them in developing the skills to engage effectively with others in addressing those issues. While the students may not solve the issues, they gain experience in the messiness of relationships, power dynamics, and executing change. The relationships and conversations between NU students and ETHS students allow them all to work out and develop their ideas in a mentoring space, rather than the traditional format of a classroom.

We recommend best practices in our programs that have been highly effective in our own collaboration between NU and ETHS:

- Identify mutual interests and benefits for all collaborating institutions
- Support assets that each partner can contribute
- Focus on student-driven interests
- Research existing community assets
- Understand and support of value of collaborations
- Implement a sustainability plan
- Evaluate program delivery and impact
- Reflect and celebrate successes

The partnership between NU and ETHS models for students the mutual benefits of collaboration. The histories and futures of Northwestern, Evanston Township High School, and the city of Evanston are intertwined. Working together to engage students in the work of democracy is critical for the survival of our communities. Through these programs, the reciprocity of our institutional relationships extends beyond individual initiatives to equip students with the tools to be active citizens who shape the future of this community to be more equitable. When our students are more civically and democratically engaged, we all benefit.

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# #STICKYQUESTIONS:

## Art and Public Space for Good

*AJason Wyman, Collaborating Artist*

*Ryan Harsono, Art Speak Intern at the Asian Art Museum*

*Triana Patel, Educator, Youth and Family Programs at the Asian Art Museum*

### Introduction

Over the last two decades, there has been a strategic weakening of public spaces in San Francisco, a trend that is especially notable in the Civic Center area. In 2004, a new law was adopted and signed to make it easier to establish Community Benefit Districts, which grant private business partial control over public space; Civic Center CBD was formed July 1, 2010. Another instance of weakening of public space was a policy change at the San Francisco Recs and Parks Department in 2006 that systemically prioritizes fee-for-service programs within their parks. A final example is the rezoning of Civic Center Plaza to a park in 2014, which has led to the ability to ticket people sleeping in the park and to increased private uses of Civic Center Plaza.



Additionally, Civic Center Plaza is currently zoned for redevelopment through the Civic Center Public Realm Plan. According to its website and public meetings, the purpose of the plan is to “create a unified vision for medium and long-term improvements to Civic Center’s plazas, streets, and other public spaces. Official documents also claim, “the Public Realm Plan is part of the City’s larger Civic Center initiative to improve the area as both a neighborhood gathering space and public commons for all San Franciscans.”

Given the context of the Civic Center neighborhood, #StickyQuestions, commissioned by the Asian Art Museum, is a public art installation that addressed the core inquiry in the Civic Center Public Realm Plan: How do we cultivate a neighborhood gathering space and public commons accessible for all San Franciscans? Or in other words, how do we revive civic life?

For the artists, Art Speak interns, and Asian Art Museum staff working on #StickyQuestions, this meant not starting with the visual art installation but rather starting with relationships, inquiry, and conversation, and calling all of that art.

This shift in perspective resulted in a participatory mural in which multiple people, including Civic Center Commons Stewards (aka community docents), those who call the streets around Civic Center home, Bay Area youth, Tenderloin neighborhood residents (the neighborhood surrounding Civic Center), and, even tourists felt ownership of the art.

By the time of deinstallation, the #StickyQuestions team facilitated seven inquiry and design workshops with Tenderloin residents and youth to both identify the core questions of #StickyQuestions and iterate components of the final installation, conducted one prototype installation in the entryway of CounterPulse (an art and performance venue located in the Tenderloin), planned and hosted four community activations at the final installation site, and collected over 2000 responses to the questions painted on the mural.

What follows is three different stakeholder perspectives regarding #StickyQuestions. First is an overview of the relational history (and possible futures) that made #StickyQuestions manifest by collaborating artist Jason Wyman. Then, Ryan Harsono, an Art Speak Intern at the Asian Art Museum, shares a reflection on #StickyQuestions' impact on his development and insights on what could come next. Next, Asian Art Museum Educator Triana Patel reveals the underlying shifts within the Art Speak Internship Program that cultivated institutional conditions amenable to #StickyQuestions. Finally, there is a summary of larger insights and the reflections from two Civic Center Commons Stewards who tended the installation over the course of three months.



## Jason Wyman, Collaborating Artist

“See the world as your self. | Have faith in the way things are. | Love the world as your self; | then you can care for all things.”

— Tao te Ching by Lao Tzu,  
translation by Stephen Mitchell.

Relationships are at the core of civic life: how we tend to the ones already established, how we cultivate new ones,

how we practice strengthening them. Without people we don't have civics, for we are the ones that make up our cities, our towns, our states, our institutions, and without us they cease to exist.

The health of civic life can be seen in how we treat each other in public. Do we acknowledge each other's existence as we walk down the street? Can we find humanity in someone other than our self? Are we willing to be vulnerable and take risks in sharing who we are with others in front of others? Or are we walking with eyes down and hearts closed and fists clenched?

#StickyQuestions asked bold, thought provoking questions on a giant mural across from City Hall on the corner of Fulton and Larkin Streets in San Francisco's Civic Center neighborhood, and asked any and all passersby to respond to them, read others' responses, and strike up conversations with the stewards who tended them or a neighbor next to them. It was an act of public discourse about how one heals when someone hurts them, what they would change about their neighborhood, and what they would say to the ocean. Through simple, open, and direct inquiry people of all ages began sharing deeply personal stories

about the pain caused by sexual assault, the movement of migrating bodies, and desires for all to have shelter. It was a call for understanding and empathy; it was love made public.

The installation is also the result of almost two decades of slow, intentional relationship-building between neighbors in San Francisco. It started almost 18 years ago, unbeknownst to me at the time, when I worked at the OMI / Excelsior Beacon Center, a community center at Denman Middle School. It was there I learned how to honor and center those who call San Francisco home, especially those who've been pushed to economic and political margins. I bore witness to the power of art, inquiry, and story as a means to tear down walls, build bridges, and create opportunity within public schools and neighborhoods in San Francisco.

It was at the Beacon Center that I met a teacher, who would later introduce me to Allison Wyckoff, Associate Director of Public and Community Programs at the Asian Art Museum. It was Allison that brought me in to do a one-off workshop at the museum, which both introduced me to Triana Patel and then led to an invitation to develop a larger public activation and installation.

During our initial meeting in Fall 2016 regarding the project, I challenged Allison and Triana asking them, "Why me? I'm a white guy that doesn't live in the neighborhood." They responded, "We know you'll bring the right people on board, you'll work well with our interns who we want shaping this project, and you can meet our timeline and budget."

I immediately halted further conversations until I could pull together a team of artists that would better represent both the institution and the neighborhood. I reached out to a fellow San Francisco artist, Celi Tamayo-Lee, initially. I met her thanks to work I had done with the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, engaging teens about their stories of belonging and displacement. Celi was born and raised in San Francisco and is the child of Chinese-American and Filipino-American parents. Celi's work in civic engagement and art brought on board Mary Claire Amable, an artist and Youth Commissioner representing the exact neighborhood in which #StickyQuestions would finally be installed. Claire was born in the Tenderloin neighborhood and raised in the Tenderloin and SOMA neighborhoods. Her parents are Filipino immigrants to the United States. It was only once we had our team together, that #StickyQuestions was able to be born.

Once the team was together, Triana Patel supported the relationship building between the #StickyQuestions artists and the Art Speak interns, including Ryan Harsono. This included facilitating five workshops with the Art Speak interns over the course of seven months to help conceive the project, identify core questions, and design public activations.

At the center of #StickyQuestions is a network of relationships that honor the intentions set during the initial Fall 2016 meeting: intergenerational (Claire, Celi, and me), youth co-producers (Claire and Art Speak Interns), rooted to artists of the Asian diaspora (Celi, Claire, and Art Speak Interns), and inclusive of Tenderloin and SOMA Residents (Claire, neighborhood-based workshops, and CounterPulse installation). It took 18 years to manifest #StickyQuestions, though it looked simply like a three-month installation.

Now, #StickyQuestions is evolving into a mobile / digital platform that seeks to continue cultivating relationships through inquiry, reflection, and data collection and sharing. This, too, is the result of deep, continuous relationship building that wouldn't be possible without the support of Kelly Burlingham at ThoughtWorks, a global technology company in San Francisco. I met Kelly's partner, Midori, almost a decade ago through queer, socially-engaged performance. It was Kelly who heard about #StickyQuestions

and invited me in to present at ThoughtWorks about the project because their company's practice is also rooted in inquiry, relationships, and engagement.

This opportunity and partnership is opening up a myriad of possibilities for #StickyQuestions to imagine and prototype tools to move cities and municipalities to be more responsive to their neighbors. We believe that open-ended questions asked and answered in repetition, which encourage and facilitate "users" (aka neighbors) to ask new questions of themselves and their neighbors can provide insight for institutions on how to meet the needs of those they are meant to serve. What's most exciting to me about this is that the tool is not being developed by city government or even the Asian Art Museum. Rather, it is being developed by artists, technologists, designers, and neighbors who want their localities to listen.

What comes next is still unknown for #StickyQuestions evolves slowly. But regardless of the technology or art form, the relationships tended, cultivated, and strengthened through this art project are reviving civic life.



### Ryan Harsono, Art Speak Intern

I was raised in an average household in an average suburb. But after my freshman year in high school, I realized that I wanted to be different, I wanted to stand out, and I wanted to try as many new things as possible.

Without my parents' knowledge, I applied and then transferred to a brand new charter school, Design Tech

High School. It was there that I learned about the Art Speak Internship. Although I had no formal art experience, I was excited to learn more about the world of art, which led me to this wonderful, eye-opening internship.

Through Art Speak, I was guided to the realization and the awareness that there is widespread oppression across the city, mainly fueled by capitalism. In workshops led by Jason, Celi, and Claire, I was able to deepen my understanding of social problems and their effects. Personally, these were fantastic learning experiences as I was able to hear what my fellow interns had to say and develop my own opinions on these issues.

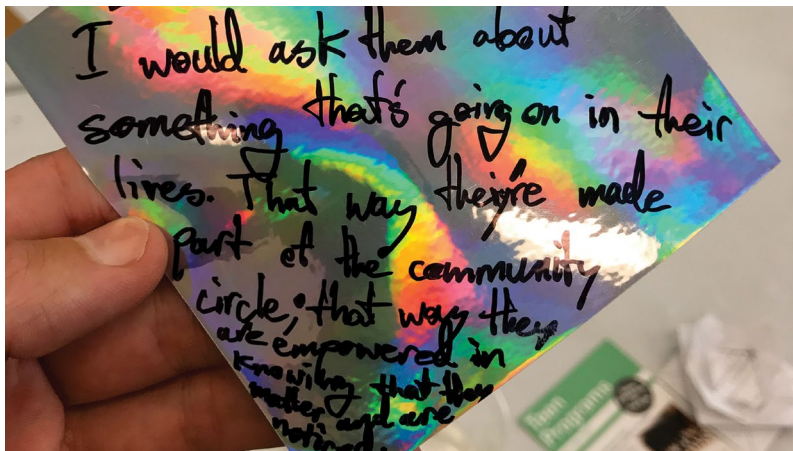
Regarding the installation, #StickyQuestions was a bright, shiny, and attention-garnering sticker wall that featured six questions for the Tenderloin community and visitors at the site to answer. These questions were hard-hitting and required critical thinking as they attempted to address difficult problems that the community faces, such as gentrification and mental health. It was a place for people to discuss social issues, a place for people to convey their frustration, and a place where people were free to express complex emotions. In the fast-paced, ever-changing atmosphere of San Francisco's Civic Center, this 'suggestion box for the city' enabled people to take a step back from their hectic lives, slow down and have moments of reflection about the problems that affect such a large portion of the community.

Since #StickyQuestions, I have definitely taken a different approach on seeing things. When I look around, I look for different and the unique things that people can offer / do and what makes them special. I look

beyond what they look like, approach them, and ask them how they are doing or how they feel. I am more confident and feel more empathetic toward other people.

#StickyQuestions has enabled me to open my eyes and I become further aware of the numerous social problems that our world is facing. Because of the devastating implications that may result from the lack of awareness of such problems, I strongly believe that social justice issues should play a more prominent role in teachers' curricula in schools. In my opinion, it would take little effort to integrate discussions about social justice into high school history classes, making them the most logical subjects in which to integrate the topic. I believe history classes are the perfect place to start, especially since the widely agreed upon objective of history classes is to educate students about the mistakes of the past so that these mistakes are not repeated. By educating high schoolers about things like the systematic racism put into place by the U.S. government, we would produce more aware and more empathetic human beings in society, which accompanies the mission of schools flawlessly.

Finally, I think #StickyQuestions is really good for a town undergoing redevelopment. I can't think of a better way to engage the community and ask them what they are feeling, which is a step in the right direction. It is a very good way to solicit feedback, and making it anonymous means people don't have to feel ashamed for what they are saying.



### Triana Patel, Educator, Youth and Family Programs at the Asian Art Museum

Three years ago I began working at the Asian Art Museum taking over the museum's high school internship program, Art Speak, a paid, year-long internship for public high school students in the Bay Area. Interns focus on learning about Asian art and culture, developing basic and advanced job skills, introducing museum work as a

viable career, exploring issues of social justice and engaging in civic / social work. Art Speak is currently in its 10th year at the museum; over the years interns have developed and facilitated the museum's suite of family programs, collaborated with artists/organizations on various projects, and have explored and strengthened their own skills as neighbors, artists, and creators.

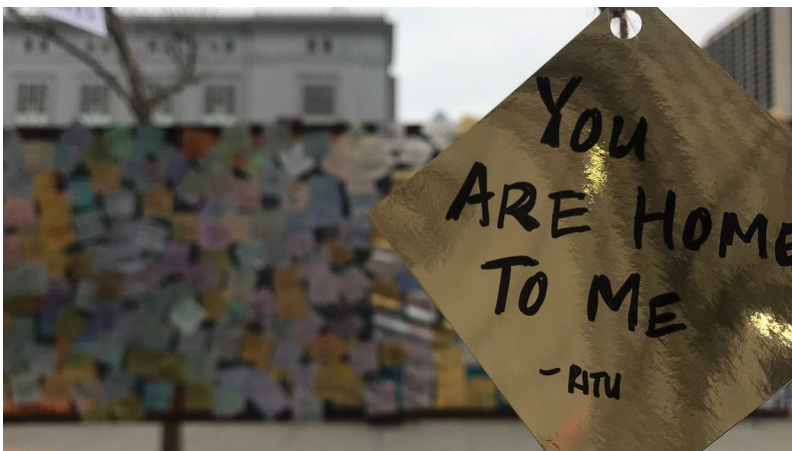
The same time I took over Art Speak, I began researching topics for my graduate thesis. It made sense to connect my two worlds; I would write about engaging teens in social justice and practice in museums. This helped ensure that my interns would continue to explore and learn about issues of social justice and how they affect themselves, their communities, and their future.

However, institutionally, I hit a fork in the road that would join back together before splitting off again. On one side arts and museum education, on the other social justice and practice. Art Speak's basic foundation isn't social justice nor is it that of the museums - though it's implicitly laced through the work we do and the topics we cover, and it affects the communities we serve. I kept asking the questions, how do I effectively combine both sides and how can I get the museum to support this work?

This is where the Village Artist Corner and #StickyQuestions play a role. The Village Artist Corner is a program developed as a part of Groundplay, a City collaboration co-led by the Mayor's Office of Civic Innovation, San Francisco Planning, and the San Francisco Arts Commission. Physically, it is a large-scale, abstract dragon sculpture with a double-sided 30-foot wall that features rotating murals, including #StickyQuestions. Allison Wyckoff, Associate Director for Public and Community Programs, and I decided that one of the mural / project rotations would be youth-led; this is where we brought in Jason. His inquiry-based practice was appealing and I wanted to do more than introduce him and his work to the Art Speak interns; I wanted them to learn from and delve into his process.

This collaboration and process allowed us to take the "museum experience" outside of the museum and to connect to our neighborhood. The interns and museum staff were witnessing civic life, contemplation and conversations of change every time they walked by #StickyQuestions. It was evident by the growing number of stickers on the wall every week that people were beginning to pay attention to the corner of Fulton and Larkin. With the layering of responses and stickers, it was easy to see the connections that were forming. People, our neighbors, had powerful responses to the six questions: emotions, thoughts, stories and solutions to how the city can effectively be a place for all of its inhabitants and institutions can be a place for those they serve.

#StickyQuestions offered the museum a chance to connect with its neighbors. To open up to the idea of interactive public art that brings a different kind of museum experience outside. To hone in on how they can help better civic life for their neighbors. I hope this experience opens doors at the museum; that it continues to understand and acknowledge that youth / local artist-led projects can be that step in the right direction to making civic and social change.



## Conclusion

#StickyQuestions briefly revived civic life<sup>1</sup> at the corner of Larkin and Fulton across from City Hall. It actively changed behaviors on that corner and cultivated a deep sense of public ownership of the art object.

Robert Grey, a Civic Center Commons Steward who tended the installation said, "I think the corner of Fulton and Larkin and #StickyQuestions was me. A lot of things I'm struggling with,

like, there was a question 'What gives you life?' And for me it was just simply working, being successful, making money. And that's not it; that's not what gives you life, you know? And it wasn't until I read some of the answers that people put up there to the questions where it made me start questioning what is giving me life? And you know, coming back into community and still redefining who I am, the new me, it was very inspirational. So I would say the corner of Fulton and Larkin represents me to the fullest."

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<sup>1</sup> We define civic life as neighbors engaging with each other in public regarding the histories, conditions, affairs, and futures of each other, a neighborhood, a community, or a country. This is contrasted with private life, which is devoted solely to the pursuit of private interests and which may not concern itself with others. This definition centers the public, the spaces and places both physical and virtual in which *all* neighbors can interact and find both commonality and difference.

And he continued, “I had several people that were homeless who would come up and do #StickyQuestions, and the first thing they’d ask is ‘Can we do this?’ And I’d say, ‘Why can’t you?’ ‘Well, we’re homeless,’ [they replied]. I said, ‘But this is your community, this is your home, this is your front yard, this is your backyard, this is your bathroom, unfortunately.’ I said, ‘Yes you can do this.’ I think one of the most important things is: #StickyQuestions humanized everybody, because they read those things, and some people were ashamed that they weren’t doing more. ... I think it changed everything, because people had a place to leave their voice, to leave their memories, to leave their thoughts, to leave their pains.”

The biggest lesson from #StickyQuestions stems not from the final installation but rather from the long process it took to manifest itself. It is a reflection of the ethical decisions made at the start of the project. This included forming the right team that best represented both the demographic of the Asian Art Museum’s collection (art created by peoples from the Asian diaspora) and the location of the installation (Civic Center, Tenderloin, and SOMA neighborhoods). It also included engaging Tenderloin residents and the Art Speak interns in the co-creative process. This lesson is crucial to understanding why it was also so successful in cultivating civic life.

Finally, Steven Klass, another Civic Center Commons Steward, said, “In the last 3-4 months I’ve personally grown because I’ve been able to open up to people more. For me this job that I do here is a weekend gig, a second of three jobs, and it allows me community interaction and something wholesome that allows me to be kind to people and engage in fulfilling the needs of others without really having to work. I can just be me. So it lets me really open up.”





# **SANFA PROJECT:**

## A Community Engagement Initiative in Cleaning the Environment

*Alexander K. Edwards, Ed.D*

*Prof. Kolawole Raheem, Ph.D*

*Patience Nukpezah, Ph.D Candidate*

*University of Education, Winneba – Ghana*

### Abstract

*SANFA engaged the Apam fishing community in Ghana to find and implement grass-root solutions to sanitation problems. This marked a collaboration between the University of Education, Winneba scholars and a local NGO – SHAPE Attitude Ghana. SANFA brought together over 300 community leaders, government officials, and fisher folks at a durbar to engage in mutual dialogues. Using outdoor pedagogy in the form of Theatre for Development (T4D), three real life scenarios were presented for participants to reflect and discuss upon openly. The results were a form of democratic open criticisms of the failures in government officials to deliver, and the subsequent description of the systemic approach to sanitation as abhorring among the participants. Recommendations from citizens included increasing the supply of waste bins, requiring taxis to carry waste disposable bags, and placing of the rubbish dumps at the reach of children. T4D was significantly effective and therefore open discussions are also highly recommended for the re-imagining a 21st democracy in emerging democracies and economies.*

### Introduction

In a 21st century democratic dispensation, listening to others' challenges in terms of decision making is one form of demarcation of the level of civility in a given society. Many leaders take decisions that affect others without any form of consultation, even in democratic dispensation, especially in developing countries with emerging democracies. But the level of civility of our society is weighed by the engagement of people, the community members, and citizen involvement in the decision making process.

Ghana is ranked as seventh in terms of good governance within the sub-Saharan African countries (IIAG, 2015), which determined a good governance index through four main categories with 100 indicators. Yet as an emerging democracy, the practice of democratic engagement is in need of re-imagination: most Ghanaians do not participate in solutions for problems, they instead wait for government initiatives.

According to multiple analyses of the most recent 2016 Ghanaian Elections, voter apathy persisted because citizens at the grassroots level felt left out of the discussions between the two party system. Thus,

out of 15,703,890 registered voters, only 10,108,149 (64.37%) voted. The current President was elected by a significant majority (53.83%) of voters.

Despite this lack of voter engagement, Ghanaians crave for recognition, space and time in any societal engagement as part of their democratic rights. At the community level, people are sensitive to policies that relate to them and even their families.

With such a widespread sentiment of democratic sensitivity, the challenge is that most community interventions fail in obtaining results because they do not adequately engage the people themselves. Issues such as promoting a clean environment should not present a problem if the people are initially involved in the processes. However, currently, most beaches in Ghana suffer from open defecation and improper waste disposals into the sea.

Relatedly, media reports have indicated that most community members are alienated when it comes to seeking solutions to sanitation problems that affect them (The African Report, 2013). Without community engagement, this alienation of the citizenry creates a withdrawal of altruistic values and behaviors that are necessary in sustaining initiatives among citizen groups.

It is believed that by reasoning with people, appealing to their consciences, and providing a dialogue for their values, voices, and opinions, it is possible to unleash an indigenous 'know-how' to forming the bedrock of democratic dispensation. People need to understand, buy into ideas, and accept the socio-moral responsibilities to attain social engagement. Otherwise, moral leaders may roll off the preference for a social value, hinder respective roles, and disperse commitments in people to their peril. A lack of listening to citizen input bleeds apathy and passivity.

To combat this issue, SANFA is a pilot project intended to provide a new approach for discussions and a re-engineering of grass-roots democracy towards democratic sensitization and problem solving. SANFA, which literally means 'Go Back for It' (in Ghanaian language) is an attempt to engage communities in a democratic discourse to explore sustainable solutions focused on sanitation. This pilot initiative was held on May 1st, 2018, in Apam Township among the Fishing Community, which is within the Gomoa West District. The overarching question was: How do we get the people to accept the responsibility of a clean environment as their own responsibility?

#### *Collaboration:*

The initiative was founded amongst a group of University researchers at the Institute for Educational Research and Innovation Studies (IERIS) in collaboration with a local non-governmental organization, *SHAPE Attitude Ghana (SAG)*. A plan was developed to explore grassroots democratic engagement through theatre and drama practices. SAG is a non-profit organization which seeks to shape a positive citizen attitude towards a clean environment. The organization targets indiscriminate littering and dumping of refuse, as well as open defecation. SANFA therefore became the beginning of a campaign against uncleanness in most communities, stemming from citizen attitudinal change.

#### *Apam Project Site:*

Apam is a historical town at the coast of Ghana predominantly occupied by a fishing community. The men go to sea, the women smoke the fish, and children hawk and trade the fish to nearby communities. It is a district capital with a secondary school. The beach has public toilets and rubbish dumping facilities. Yet, rubbish dumping and open defecation at the beaches are seen as common and problematic in Apam.



Photo 1: Fisher folks



Photo 2: Rubbish close to the beach

## Conceptual Framing

Certain concepts informed the project, including a dialogue education, which espouses that when people are given the chance to suggest what they want to learn, as in adult learning, it propels learning towards change in behaviors (Vella, 2002, 2004). According to Vella (2004), one of the principles for adults learning and retaining concepts includes them expressing their ideas, feelings, and actions. When people are democratically encouraged to share ideas and their feelings, it positively affects their learning behaviors. The University community believes in engagement as part of its corporate social responsibility (UEW Strategic plan. 2014-2019). Thus, scholars engage the community through outdoor activities as a form of the 'open space' learning.

Outdoor pedagogy is referred to as the use of the open space, people, and engagement of people at their local and indigenous knowledge level. According to Akashoro, Kayode and Husseini (2017), "outdoor pedagogy is to teach concepts and values that are otherwise difficult to extrapolate using ordinary taciturn strategies for community to relate" (p. 107). This technique takes the form of Theatre for Development (T4D) and is applicable and necessary in such a fishing community, where literacy is low and there is a significant deficit in learning behaviours, but not in terms of their indigenous taciturn knowledge (Okpadah, 2017).

Another practical engagement is borrowed from the application of *Open Space Technology (OST)*. According to Owen (2007), this technique is commonly used by organizational change practitioners in a whole system change to effect ownership and ideation. The advantage is that ideas are generated from participants leading to buy-in and ownership. The application of outdoor pedagogy enhances the engagement of the community. OST helps mobilizing the fisher folks at Apam around an issue by giving voice to their concerns, and generating ideas from amongst them as part of a new paradigmatic shift in nurturing authentic and effective democratic engagement.

Therefore, the SANFA initiative is framed with a combination of both scholarly and practical dialogue focused on localizing a democratic dispensation to support initiatives and provide solutions. The dialogue education is intended to respect tacit indigenous knowledge, and the outdoor pedagogy is to apply an unconventional use of theatre for development (T4D) at the community level. These concepts create a synergy for citizenship awareness, practical solutions, and potentially, a lasting change of behavior.

## Methodology

### *Design:*

SANFA is designed primarily to generate citizen ideas and commitment by operationalizing grass-roots democracy, creating a forum for a socio-moral engagement, community ownership, and solutions from the people themselves. The design is based on a new thinking about dialogue, open space technology, and outdoor pedagogy using T4D approach.

In addition, the approach mimics an action research paradigm, whereby the researchers are part of the activities with an agenda to conceive a future workable intervention. These multiple approaches were appropriate because the researchers have to avoid an 'all-knowing' mindset. The people know what is to be done in their own communities, and by engaging them in the discourse, the researchers are just facilitating and consolidating their ideas.

### *Participants:*

There were approximately 300-350 participants, congregated at a public durbar ground in front of a Methodist Church. The participants included the Chief Fisherman, the Akwamu Town Chief, Government Officials, and the larger community. Participants also included students and school children as well, with a majority (60%) of children of school-going age. The congregated also included shoppers, traders, taxis drivers, vendors of mobile phones, fish-smokers, and fish sellers. Some of the slum dwellers were passive observers who were involved at a distance.

We also had 15 opinion leaders, including the Chief Fisherman, the village chief, the Assembly presiding members, the only elected constituency woman representative, and the environmental officers of the district. The drama group consisted of 20 students, with their lecturer directing their efforts. We also had the director of a local NGO - *SHAPE Attitudes Ghana*, who came with an assistant to explain the concepts and vices that were for discussion.



*Photos 3 and 4: Section of participants*

## Results

### *Participation:*

In addition to the almost 350 active participants present, over 200 passive observers stood far from the main durbar ground to hear and enjoy the activities. We encountered an initial open resistance surrounding the banner depicting open defecation. Some citizens complained that the banner was inappropriate depiction of the 'commoners' who are fond of engaging in that behavior. Even though the

chiefs did not reject the banner, it was quickly removed. This was taken as a positive reaction, because the people voiced an opinion, and observed concrete results.



Photo 5: The Initial banner rejected.



Photo 6: Conflict resolved peacefully

The drumming and dancing with traditional music attracted many participants with time, including taxi drivers. Few participants, however, offered to grant face-to-face interviews regarding their opinions as part of the OST to dialogue with the people. The critical data sets came from the use of photography. The techniques to gather the data included mimicking photo-voicing technique in the democratization processes.

The drama students in their T4D performance used three scenarios to engage the people. The students engaged the participants by inviting volunteers to partake in the scenarios starting with real life questions as part of the drama.

## Qualitative Data from Scenarios

### Scenario #1:

A gentleman was in a coat and well-dressed. He finished a bottle of water and dropped the empty bottle on the ground.

The participants were then asked if that behavior was acceptable or not. The majority shouted NO! The children were asked to describe such behaviors. Over 90% of the children shouted: *“that is not acceptable... and that is a filthy educated man”*. (See photos 7 a, b, & c). We then ask what the solution should be.

The participants answered affirmatively: *“He should Go Back for his Rubbish”*. This was an affirmation that the project: SANFA has created a sense of awareness of good and bad behaviors.



Photo 7a, b, & c: Argument about bad behavior of a gentleman

### Scenario #2:

Somebody came home from the capital Accra. A woman received bad news from the city that her son, the only bread-winner, had died as a result of a flood in his house. The flood was caused by a choked gutter (a choked gutter is caused by rubbish blocking the free flow of drainage) in the capital.

The participants' reactions were the focus for discussion. Again, majority shouted that: *“that’s not fair ... he should not die because of city folks’ behavior of throwing rubbish in gutters.”*

Solutions were solicited and participants mostly agreed: *“No More Rubbish in gutters”*. The discussions continued and many elaborated their concerns. *“The same can happen here in Apam,”* one leader lamented. *“Rubbish in running gutters can be dangerous ... please let’s stop”*, citizens continued.



Photo 8: News after the flood



Photo 9: Dispose of rubbish appropriately

### Scenario #3:

We asked whether the Rubbish Bins are intended to keep our environment clean. Many of the participants agreed that it is a better way than throwing rubbish on the ground. So even in a taxi, drivers were advised to provide containers for disposables (a sample was supplied and demonstrated by SAG as seen in Photo 9).

Next, the open space discussions ran into criticisms and suggestions. Some of the participants were openly frustrated, criticizing the public system that has failed to deliver, especially on the cleanliness of their environments.

Even though the District officials were present, the majority were very openly critical of the government. They represent *“failure and incompetence”* (as one participant puts it). An invitation was provided for opinions regarding what to do.

A man was bold enough to attack the system of consistent public failures, conclusively. Another woman was opinionated and directed her attacks towards the District Assembly, those elected, she said *“have failed”*. A man reiterated same sentiments: *“The assembly should have the rubbish containers all over town”*, he said.



Photos 10 a, b, & c: Participants expressing their opinions and suggestions

## Further Discussions and Implications

The SANFA initiative was successful by four main indicators:

1. The level of participation,
2. Diverse socio-demographic backgrounds of participants (see below),
3. The reasonable engagement of opinion leaders, and
4. The resolve emanating from the participants,

### *The Level of Participation:*

The SANFA project attracted very important dignitaries from the community including the District Chief Executive, The Chief Fisherman and Environmental Project Officer, and the Akwamu Town Chief. There were over 300 active participants and more than 200 passive observers.

### *Diverse Socio-demographics Background of Participants:*

The program attracted many diverse participants. The fishermen, traders mostly women, and the school-age children were all engaged substantively in the drama and discussions. The affluent, the educated, the illiterates, the fisher folks, traders, taxi drivers, students were significantly present and engaged. The Government Officials were enthused about SANFA, collected t-shirts, and echoed their drive to “Keep Ghana Clean”. The two main elected leaders gave their solidarity messages. Additionally, the fishermen and the chief were all entrusted with spreading the change in attitudes.

### *Reasonable Engagement:*

Practically, everybody that attended was reasonably engaged. A local language was used because the MC was a local council member. The visual data, the creative survey by researchers’ interactions and questioning yielded a significant show of higher level of appreciation. The District officers requested a return in two to three weeks to re-evaluate their resolution and performance after this SANFA session.

*“I have been blessed by the drama students telling us that we should not litter around. I am guilty of such activities myself”* (Opinion leader and a Fisherman).

On this basis, the use of drama or T4D can be an effective communication tool for the *Re-Imagining a 21st Century Democracy*. Communication in English as an official language can be a major problem in a democratic expression among most developing countries. The outdoor pedagogy experimented yielded results because it uses local ingredients including language (Akashoro, et al., 2017). It brings reality home in drama.

Secondly, when ordinary fisher folks are respected and their opinions are heard, it can generate self-reliance and motivated spirit to seek results. Most people have expectations that government will pay attention to their perspective. But when the decision is remotely taken, it can cause ethical issues, provoke apathy and defect altruism. The study participants knew exactly what ought to be done, yet refrained to show any altruistic or paternalistic values, behaviors and even love for their ‘own selves’ until their opinions were heard. “*They don’t care about us ... look at our gutters*”, remarked a 12 year old boy who later volunteered to be a SANFA Ambassador.

## Implications:

Governments have to re-engineer their concept of democratic participation by listening to the people. Politicians have to approach the citizenry with respect and value for their preferences. The majority of the citizens in Ghana deserve better involvement and respectability in matters of social dimension. Like SANFA, rather than the egoistic expression of “*I have all the solutions*” democracy should create significant awareness, new thinking, and education among citizenry so as to challenge the processes. One of such methodology could be using the T4D methodology in developing countries for maximum citizen participation, understanding, and to demonstrate commitment to hearing from all citizens.

Finally, the outdoor pedagogy and OST speak louder than printed words to these constituents. The dramatized scenarios can be ‘real’ life experiences; people can relate well, and their ideas welcomed. These practices can be used as we *Re-Imagine a 21st Century Democracy*. The approach is simple and universal; it can also be socio-culturally sensitive based on indigenous knowledge.

The SANFA initiative is intended to promote democratization and sensitization, especially in sanitation throughout the nation. Its embodiment is weighed against democratic engagement, grassroots mobilization, and growth in altruistic values through re-imagining and a translation of scholarship to citizenship.

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# MUSEUMS AS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CATALYSTS

*Collaborators:*

*Samantha Perlman: Program Associate & FAO Schwarz Family Foundation  
Fellow at Generation Citizen*

*Kagiso Tshole: Honors student in education at the University of Cape Town*

*\*Samantha studied abroad at University of Cape Town where she met Kagiso Tshole.*

## Background

Democracy necessitates more than a one-sided story. In order to effectively engage citizenry in connecting the past to the present, we need museums to offer programming that is culturally responsive and adaptive to the surrounding community. What is stopping the museum from crossing into the unknown but necessary territory of being a “community catalyst?”<sup>1</sup> We recommend that museums and communities should have an *interactive* and symbiotic relationship that fosters sustainable skill development and civic education that the public identifies as effectively addressing their community issues. Often, museums occupy an outsider role as independent entities that preserve history or art rather than engaging in “public debate about difficult issues.”<sup>2</sup> Instead, museums should be communal education centers and pioneers of civic inquiry. Through this lens of democratic engagement that we propose, museums become spaces for scholarship, communication and learning. Described as having “anchor institution”<sup>3</sup> components, based on their fixed location, dedication to the pursuit of public information and resources, museums are “community assets.”<sup>4</sup>

To those who believe museums should only be artifact preservation spaces, we argue that museums are not currently doing enough for the community, since they have immense resources and untapped capacity for community change. Many museums in both the United States and South Africa do not fully realize their potential assets to the communities they reside in, and only share the beginning and end of a historical arrow in their engagement with information. In this way, ordinary museums do not fully serve the public because they are isolated in a particular period of the past, without trying to solve the systemic challenges that lead to a current moment.

One type of museum that is becoming more commonplace is the community museum, which plays a cardinal role in the development of democracy through educating and collaborating with the public.

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<sup>1</sup> Paula Gangopadhyay, “Evolving with Time, Museums from Community Anchors to Community Catalysts,” Institute of Museum and Library Services, February 22, 2016, <https://www.imls.gov/blog/2016/02/evolving-time-museums-community-anchors-community-catalysts>.

<sup>2</sup> Jasper Visser, “Creating Trustville – A museum as community centre for cultural and social development and activity,” The Museum of the Future, July 4, 2010, <https://themuseumofthefuture.com/2010/07/04/creating-trustville-a-museum-as-community-centre-for-cultural-and-social-development-and-activity/>.

<sup>3</sup> Michael H. Norton and Emily Dowdall, “Strengthening Networks, Sparking Change: Museums and Libraries as Community Catalysts,” 2016, 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

Co-founders of the Network of Community Museums of America Cuauhtémoc Camarena and Teresa Morales assess unique attributes of community museums as specifically accounting for the needs and wants of the community members themselves, and empowering the public to have control over one's future.<sup>5</sup> In this article, we will examine how community focused museums/exhibits in the United States of America and South Africa utilize their position as community assets to achieve democratic introspection, real-world application, and critical analysis of national identity.

Research Professor Thomas W. Thurner asserts that community based museums primarily focus on heritage, reinvention of social memory, contribution of regional social-development programs, nation building, identity building, and communal centered values on a smaller scale.<sup>6</sup> Anthropologist Chaparukha M. Kusimba suggests that community museums primarily focus on local and ethnic histories.<sup>7</sup> Unlike national museums that focus on large-scale nation building programs, projects and histories, community based museums can propel small-scale interaction with surrounding communities and social-unit groups. In this case, the nature of community museums is characterized by community based educational projects/programs aimed at developing social coherence and cultivating preserved heritage in surrounding communities, particularly in the presence of 21st century democracy. Hence, we argue that the function of museums on small-scale community building programs should not only involve preserving history, but also allow currently unfolding issues to be housed as progressive history. Communities should not only reflect on stagnant history, but should be able to collaborate with museums to address current issues they face as citizens. Community museums have a unique ability to honor the past, while learning from the present.

In order to understand the context of the community museums we will discuss, it is crucial to understand some similarities and differences between the U.S. and South Africa in terms of social liberation. Challenges with regard to race relations are evident in South Africa and the United States as black people in both countries experienced a similar historic systemic and racial discrimination that continues into the present day. Current government and systemic structures in both countries propagate policies that continue to alienate these populations and other groups of color from fully contributing to the practice of democracy such as voting, voicing their public opinions and equal representation in government. The government's disempowerment and disinvestment in these populations for so long has led to a disconnect between the community and government.

Currently in South Africa, it is not a priority to the majority of South Africans, especially the youth, to be active participants in mainstream democracy. Professors Tony Binns's and Professor Ross's research survey on youth democratic participation demonstrates that in post-1994 democratic South Africa, an alarming percentage of 62% in an interview responded negatively towards question about elections and democracy, "46% said that voting in local government elections was 'not at all important.'"<sup>8</sup> According to an article written by South Africa's Parliament Liaison Office research intern, Lindokhuhle Mandiyoli found that youth participation during the 2016 local government elections, where "the eligible youth

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<sup>5</sup> Cuauhtémoc Camarena and Teresa Morales, "Lessons Learned in the Principles and Practice of Community Museums," In *Remix: Changing Conversations in Museums of the Americas*, edited by Holo Selma and Álvarez Mari-Tere, 29-33, University of California Press, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.emory.edu/stable/10.1525/j.ctt19rmbt3.9>.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas W. Thurner, "Company Profile: Searching for Relevance: Survival Strategies of Museums During Times of Political Uncertainty in South Africa," *International Journal of Arts Management* 15, no. 3 (2013): 67.

<sup>7</sup> Chaparukha M. Kusimba, "Archaeology in African Museums," *The African Archaeological Review* 13, no. 3 (1996): 165.

<sup>8</sup> Tony Binns and Ross Robinson, "Sustaining Democracy in the 'New' South Africa," *Geography* 87, no. 1 (2002): 33.

population was 11.8 million,” only a mere “6.3 million registered (58%).”<sup>10</sup> These statistics clearly display the lack of participation from youth in the practice of the democracy in South Africa.

In South Africa, the state itself has not been fully involved in the advocacy of political education in museums. As noted above, youth participation in 21st democracy is minimal, and therefore exacerbates a lack of interest among the youth. Hence, the state continues to miseducate community members on the true sense of the practice of democracy. In the context of South Africa, there is a continuous struggle in the transition from minority rule to majority rule. Thus, one effective solution, not *the* solution, to combat elitist power and promote democratic values is to return the pursuit of knowledge to the people through community museums.

Similarly, American citizens overwhelmingly disengage from political and civic life. Based on initial calculations following the American 2016 election, only 55% (126 million) of eligible voters actually voted which is a 20 year low,<sup>11</sup> especially shocking if we consider the high media publicity of that election. In the 2016 election, voter turnout among Millennials was only 51%, “meaning that Millennials accounted for a lower share of votes cast” when compared to 69% of Baby Boomers who voted.<sup>12</sup> Museums can address this void of democratic participation by becoming facilitators for community action. Museums can transform into forward-looking centers for youth development and political education that propel more equitable democratic participation in countries with high rates of income inequality. The public should view museums as prolific space for the emergence of an informative, progressive, educational, historic and cohesive democracy.

Humans developed museums initially as safe havens for artifacts that also led to the perpetuation of a subjective historical memory. One of the oldest museums on record existed c. 530 BC known as Princess Ennigaldi-Nanna’s Museum which held artifacts of an earlier period.<sup>13</sup> Despite the wide range of artifacts present and a clear layout for viewing, this was a private museum.<sup>14</sup> Many early museums showcased artifacts quite similarly, by utilizing “so-called *wonder rooms or cabinets of curiosities*,” demonstrating that they were only intended for viewing by a select group.<sup>15</sup> As *Museum Questions* blog writer Rebecca Herz points out, museums were intended to preserve “objects [which] is related to perpetuating a hierarchy of what is worth protecting.”<sup>16</sup> In Herz’s interview with Andrea Jones, the Director of Programs and Visitor Engagement at the Accokeek Foundation in Maryland, both noted the increased need for museums to provide specific services and skills trainings to visitors and the community.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Lindokuhle Mandyoli, “2016 Local Government Elections An Examination of Youth Participation,” Southern African Catholic Bishop’s Conference, Parliamentary Liaison Office, Briefing Paper 416, (November 2016), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>11</sup> Gregory Wallace, “Voter Turnout at 20-year Low in 2016,” CNN. November 30, 2016, Accessed May 18, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2016/11/11/politics/popular-vote-turnout-2016/index.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Cilluffo and D’Vera Cohn, “7 Demographic Trends Shaping the U.S. and the World in 2018,” Pew Research Center, April 25, 2018, accessed May 18, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/25/7-demographic-trends-shaping-the-u-s-and-the-world-in-2018/>.

<sup>13</sup> “The World’s Oldest Museums,” Museums.eu, Accessed May 17, 2018, <https://museums.eu/highlight/details/105317/the-worlds-oldest-museums>.

<sup>14</sup> “Early Museums - The First Public Museums,” Early Museums - Museum of Alexandria and the Oldest Public Museums, Accessed May 17, 2018, <http://www.historyofmuseums.com/museum-history/early-museums/>.

<sup>15</sup> “The World’s Oldest Museums,” Museums.eu.

<sup>16</sup> Rebecca Herz, “What is the relationship between “community need” and museums?,” *Museum Questions*, April 18, 2016, <https://museumquestions.com/2016/04/18/what-is-the-relationship-between-community-need-and-museums/>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

## Comparison of Museums in the United States and South Africa

In the following section, we will provide examples of how particular museums have engaged with community members in an organic and collaborative manner. One example of a museum effectively providing for the community is evident in the Noguichi Museum in New York. This museum responded to an immediate public request by helping ten women in the community acquire pinata design skills for financial independence within their community.<sup>18</sup> In this way, the museum staff provided a niche training to people based on a community established interest rather than assuming what the public wanted to learn about or needed. The Noguichi Museum staff showed an interest in the wellbeing of the surrounding population and became a center for future progress rather than being stagnant in the past. Thus, they utilized their status as a community asset to allocate museum resources to a community-identified need. Another example of how a museum engaged with the community is evident in the Oakland Museum of California, where the museum participated in conversations with the public about neighborhood planning of the Lake Merritt Cultural District.<sup>19</sup> With the museum staff's involvement, the museum opened their resources and time to contribute to localized community investment.

Museums can also engage in community projects that address youth needs and are well positioned to provide resources to the surrounding community. The New Bedford Whaling Museum in Massachusetts responded to low high school graduation rates in the surrounding population. Directly addressing the public need, the museum successfully partnered with New Bedford High School to create an apprentice program, offering diverse workforce skill-based training and encouraging completion of a high school diploma.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, the Queens Museum of New York successfully collaborated with local community members to find and develop museum exhibit material. By working to create long-term partnerships, a female immigrant organizing group *Mujeres en Movimiento* assisted the Museum in designing a whole exhibit based on their work with corresponding walking tours.<sup>21</sup> The reason for the success of the Queens Museum in engaging its community members is the same reason why democracy is instilled in the process: there is a clear desire to form a lasting relationship while simultaneously embracing the social and community-based challenges in the surrounding area to the museum.<sup>22</sup>

Museum engagement also manifests when finding lost information that when uncovered improves the community. Coinciding with a museum's social responsibility, the Worcester Art Museum recently showcased an exhibit entitled "Rediscovering an American Community of Color: The Photographs of William Bullard."<sup>23</sup> Bullard was a photographer during the late 1800s and early 1900s and the exhibit showcased a large series of negatives developed into photographs of the Native American and African American Beaver Brook community of Worcester, Massachusetts.<sup>24</sup> The Worcester Art Museum staff did not just reiterate facts but actually uncovered the lost stories of individuals in the photographs and contacted their descendants. Clark University Professor Janette Thomas Greenwood and her students

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<sup>18</sup> Rebecca Herz, "What is the relationship between "community need" and museums?," *Museum Questions*, April 18, 2016, <https://museumquestions.com/2016/04/18/what-is-the-relationship-between-community-need-and-museums/>.

<sup>19</sup> Norton and Dowdall, 22.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> "Rediscovering an American Community of Color: The Photographs of William Bullard," Worcester Art Museum, accessed April 2018. <http://www.worcesterart.org/exhibitions/william-bullard/>.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

partnered on researching the families with photo owner Frank Morill. In describing why the museum participated in connecting the families to this research, co-curator Nancy Kathryn Burns stated:

*“We wanted the descendants to feel like – the community to feel like – these photos belonged to them... This is a really important group of photographs for the history of this city. We didn’t want it to just be our voices, or the Clark student voices. It was really moving. There were people seeing their relatives for the first time. The people in the community felt that connection and we had some really powerful moments.”<sup>25</sup>*

One particular descendant, Benetta Kuffour shared the images with her 94 year old mother for the first time. Kuffour shared the impact of this information the museum uncovered with the *Boston Globe*: “She could identify, ‘This one babysat for me, she was so-and-so’s sister... There are stories I never knew until these photographs triggered conversation. It’s all a blessing to me.”<sup>26</sup> Without the museum participation in investigating the individual narratives of each person in the photographs, Worcester residents and descendants would not know about their rich history.

Museums becoming community assets is also a practice with which South Africa grapples. Art Historian Elizabeth Rankin and colleague Carolyn Hamilton assert that in the context of South Africa, museums face “tremendous challenges”<sup>27</sup> that involve a transitional conflict in the shift from minority white rule to majority black rule. The yearn and struggle for civil rights, an equal society and a democratically elected state came later when compared to the United States. During the 19th century, museums in England and Europe substantially advocated for ideologies of “imperialism and industrialisation”<sup>28</sup> in colonies, and South Africa was subjected to these ideologies. Furthermore, the apartheid regime echoed the preservation of a settler’s identity and heritage in museums, which meant that the indigenous people had no vacancy under the banner of South African museums during the 19th century. In the early 20th century, there was a slight shift in this hierarchy, though the role of museums in South African society, particular in indigenous communities, remained strained.<sup>29</sup>

Hoping to mediate the strained relationship between the surrounding community and documenting the country’s heritage, the public and local leadership developed a museum dedicated to the history of the forced relocation of South Africans in an area of Cape Town known as District Six. Historian Layne demonstrates how a community centered project can propel a forward-looking mission of museums toward the involvement of substantial communal contribution, particularly in a 21st century democracy.<sup>30</sup> Historian Ballantyne reaffirms that the District Six Museum’s location “was declared a ‘white’ area under the Apartheid Group Areas Act (1953).”<sup>31</sup> Prior to this event, the area (District Six) housed a population of “mixed-race”<sup>32</sup> South Africans who were later forcibly removed outside the region into concentration camps.

<sup>25</sup> Joshua Lyford, “Rediscovering an American Community of Color,” *Worcester Magazine*, December 21, 2017, <https://worcestermag.com/2017/12/21/rediscovering-american-community-color/56181>

<sup>26</sup> Cate McQuaid, “Opening a window to Worcester’s past,” *Boston Globe*, September 8, 2017, <http://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/specials/fall-arts/2017/09/08/opening-window-worcester-past/IdGyUHKZIG7eR6Sb2V4MkI/story.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Rankin and Carolyn Hamilton, “REVISION; REACTION; RE-VISION; The Role of Museums in (a) Transforming South Africa,” *Museum Anthropology* 22, no. 3 (1999): doi:10.1525/mua.1999.22.3.3, 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Rankin and Hamilton, “REVISION; REACTION; RE-VISION, 3.

<sup>30</sup> R. Ballantyne, 1998. Interpreting “visions”: Addressing environmental education goals through interpretation, In *Contemporary Issues in Heritage and Environmental Interpretation*, ed. D. L. Uzzell and R. R. Ballantyne. London: The Stationery Office, 1998.3.280.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

Historian Layne further points out that the District Six Museum was largely established and built through communal efforts in 1994, marking the end of the formal apartheid regime that had enacted ruthless policies of racial segregation. Layne presents “The Hands Off District Six Campaign” as an influential point of departure toward the establishment of a museum that would represent the stature and history of the evacuated communities of District Six.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, Layne highlights two major resolutions which were a result of the campaign. One being that the discussion about the establishment of a museum must take place only in the context of a democratic climate of the country, and that the removed people be the cardinal focus of the representation of the museum.<sup>34</sup> Layne’s observation echoes our concern regarding the role community members play in the discourse of nation building on a local level.

Moreover, our concern emphasizes how museums should be educational and productive spaces for youth empowerment programs that provide a pedagogical outlook on the improvement of 21st century democracy. Citizens intended to promote an integrated representation of the removed people of District Six through the creation of the museum.<sup>35</sup> Layne adds that the museum not only seeks to revive the history of evacuations, but its vision also informs the purpose of the “reconstruction of the community of District Six museums and Cape Town by drawing on the area’s of pre-apartheid heritage of non-racialism, non-sexism, anti-class discrimination movements, and by the encouragement of open debate about the past, present, and the future.”<sup>36</sup> This highlights three key responsibilities which we have found significant to the influential role that museums play in their surrounding communities: role of education in the community like in District Six and Noguichi Museum, role in the integration and advocacy of an equal society such as with the New Bedford Whaling Museum, and to preserve national identity that propels non-racial heritage, as described by Layne.

Other museums in the history of South African democracy, such as the Hector Pieterse museum located in Soweto, a township south of Johannesburg, and the Apartheid Museum, located at the Gold Reef City, also face similar attempts to engage with the local community.<sup>37</sup> Both these museums were established post apartheid. Historian Newbury argues that the presentation of photography within museums as an instrument to display the “historical narratives about apartheid South Africa,”<sup>38</sup> is significant to the development of a more democratized institution, in that they promote the black consciousness agenda that fueled the eruption of most acts of retaliation and protest against the apartheid regime. Furthermore, he draws close attention to the “pedagogical framework” intended to further educate the black youth about the political struggle, and to divulge to white South Africans the socioeconomic conditions that the Apartheid government forced upon indigenous people.<sup>39</sup>

Events displayed in both these museums predominantly represent the period from 1948 to 1994.<sup>40</sup> What about events that occurred post 1994? To this question, writer Crampton examines the role of museums in developing national identity during such a tumultuous period.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, he focuses on the ongoing

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<sup>33</sup> Valmont Layne, “The District Six Museum: An Ordinary People’s Place,” *The Public Historian* 30, no. 1 (2008): 54, doi:10.1525/tph.2008.30.1.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>37</sup> Darren Newbury, “Lest we forget’: photography and the presentation of history at the Apartheid Museum, Gold Reef City, and the Hector Pieterse Museum, Soweto.” *Visual Communication* 4, no. 3 (2005): 260.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Andrew Crampton, “The Art of Nation-building: (re)presenting Political Transition at the South African National Gallery,” *Cultural Geographies* 10, no. 2 (2003): 227. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44250923>.

debates of how museums can best articulate the importance of “democratization”,<sup>42</sup> “nation building”,<sup>43</sup> and identity in rapidly transforming ‘new’ South Africa”<sup>44</sup> Crampton argues that with the process of nation building, particularly in culturally diverse South Africa, museums leave their usual role as galleries with stagnant historical images behind.<sup>45</sup> He suggests that museums can become democratic institutions that perpetuate and propel the objective of serving communities that they represent.<sup>46</sup> Crampton’s viewpoint addresses our concern regarding the democratization of community museums: as cardinal players in the reformation of an integrated and cohesive mode of democracy in both South Africa and the United States.

Additionally, the Hector Pieterse Museum missed an opportunity to educate the community about democratic challenges and successes in the present day. This museum commemorates students who fought against the apartheid regime via the 1976 “Soweto Uprising” and holds a primary role in the history of South African liberation. However, the museum portrays democratic struggle as stagnant and does not further educate the surrounding South African community about the practice of *contemporary* democracy. What about the young people in South Africa who in 2015 fought for the decolonization of their universities? Which youth centered museums will preserve or document continuous struggles that black students endure in the 21st century democracy of South Africa? It is in this undefined area of museums in relation to the present public, that the necessity of community engagement comes to the forefront.

## Best Practices and Recommendations

Based on this initial assessment, we recommend that in order for museums to become community assets and effectively serve the public, they must educate the local community about how present day youth exercise free speech and to organize in a democracy as they advocate for free education. Without connecting the museum’s archive of past history to present organizing, the museum becomes a tombstone engraved with irrelevant history.

In order for democracies to remain healthy, vibrant and forward-looking, museums must be committed to engaging in the present discussions around current events and youth participation. We recognize that museums should allow for community interpretation, immense access and fostering of public discussions. We acknowledge that this is a developing but necessary field of research and that fostering organic relationships between museums and the people takes time. We hope that others join us in conducting comprehensive research on this topic. Democracy should promote the involvement of even the smallest segments of communities in a country and museums play an untapped role in that conversation.

Based on a study from the Museums & Community Initiative of the American Association of Museums, the leadership concluded that “every museum has a unique and essential civic role and a responsibility to contribute to the health and vitality of the community.” Furthermore, the idea that museums have a civic role is often seen as revolutionary but in many ways addresses the foundational premise that museums exist for the people. The advocacy of nation building through community museums that we suggest forms the beginning of meaningful change in the creation of an educated youth outside of the formal school structure.

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<sup>42</sup> Andrew Crampton, “The Art of Nation-building, 227.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

Further areas of research that would build out this community model will require qualitative interviews with museum leadership, staff and community members that access these resources. The type and structure of this study should include all types of museums, whether they are art or history or community-oriented. Questions that are helpful to ask include:

- How often people access museum resources
- The identity of the constituent
- The type of programs that are most pertinent to their daily life
- Whether they are art, history or community oriented

Furthermore, subsequent analysis should encompass whether people associate democratic or civic activities/values with museums or other local institutions as well as how museums can propel communal activism. If a local museum wants to shift their paradigm to embrace a community strategy, the staff should start by attending local meetings, speaking to members in public spaces and sending surveys to those who attend the museum regularly. Depending on interest, museum staff should facilitate a focus group centered on what the local community wants out of their museums. This would transform the power dynamic to empower the public's participation in shaping their communal institutions from the bottom up. Based on this research, the museum can map out a strategy of community building that seeks to address systemic issues about which the public is most passionate. To ensure that the museum reflects the community, museum boards should rethink the ratio of external foundation and donor money to ensure that the community itself has ownership over the programming. One of our concerns is the extent to whether museums are tied to their funding and whether their programs are for the public or merely accomplish what external and more affluent individuals want rather than the community.

In 2010, writer and social innovator Jasper Visser wrote that museums in 2020 will become transformed entities that extend into the public sphere and have “more awareness of the social responsibilities of an institution.”<sup>47</sup> When museums in South Africa and the United States authentically engage with the public and are communally responsive such as through offering workshops based on a communal interest in financial independence, uncovering lost ancestors of community members or collaborating with disinvested populations, we see the success of museums as community assets. Even though many museums have yet to fully embrace their potential for civic engagement, we are confident that Visser's 2020 vision is possible, and that museums can serve as entities that authentically and effectively catalyze democratic values, reflection, and participation.

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<sup>47</sup> Jasper Visser, “Creating Trustville – A museum as community centre for cultural and social development and activity,” The Museum of the Future, July 4, 2010, <https://themuseumofthefuture.com/2010/07/04/creating-trustville-a-museum-as-community-centre-for-cultural-and-social-development-and-activity/>.



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# HOW COMMUNITIES CAN INCREASE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BY PROTECTING THEIR STUDENT JOURNALISTS' RIGHTS TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES

*Frank LoMonte, director of the Joseph L. Brechner Center for Freedom of Information*

*Sophie Gordon, senior at Ball State University*

*Piotr Bobkowski, Associate Professor in the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas*

Journalism-related activities, such as working on the school newspaper or the news website, engage students in current community issues and can nourish a lifetime of civic engagement. Student journalists are more likely to be civically engaged during the years following high school than their peers who do not participate in high school journalism (Bobkowski & Miller, 2016). Formal journalism education is well established in the U.S. schools: about 90 percent of public high schools sponsor some type of journalism activity (Bobkowski, Goodman, & Bowen, 2012). Robust student journalism also can support the civic development of students who do not take journalism classes, by informing school activities that have been shown to encourage civic participation, including class discussions of current and controversial issues, participation in school governance, and the simulation of democratic processes (Gibson & Levine, 2003). Non-journalism students can benefit from observing and using their peers' journalistic work, thus coming to understand and appreciate the fundamental role that unfettered journalism plays in a democracy.

Tapping students' creative energy is doubly important now that mainstream media coverage of local schools and colleges has been hollowed by news industry downsizing. In 2014, for instance, there were 38 percent fewer newspaper journalists working in the United States than a decade before, and 9 percent fewer daily newspapers being published (Barthel, 2016). Communities can improve the quality of school decision-making by affording students a meaningful voice through journalistic media. While much recent attention has been paid to the importance of teaching "media literacy," classroom instruction alone is unlikely to produce lasting benefits. Schools need new thinking about the role of students as content creators, not just consumers, to reinvigorate young people's appetite for fact-based information about contemporary social and political issues.

Student journalists' capacity to express themselves freely plays a pivotal role in the relationship between journalism participation and authentic civic engagement. The ability to report on issues that matter, even if these issues are sensitive or controversial, allows student journalists to make a difference in their communities through the work they publish. Like their professional counterparts, student journalists can inform members of their communities – students, parents, taxpayers – of important issues in their

schools and neighborhoods, and mobilize these constituents into action. Most schools, however, have not protected student journalists' speech rights. Administrators or teachers regularly prevent students from pursuing stories students think are important to cover in their student media (Bobkowski & Belmas, 2017). Stories that administrators deem either to be controversial or to put the school in a negative light, are most likely to be restricted. Such censorship short-circuits journalism education's civic benefits for student journalists, their schools, and their communities.

In this paper, we discuss two routes that can be forged at the local level to protect student journalists' expression rights, thus advancing these students' civic engagement. The first route is legislative, and consists of grassroots activists (i.e., students, educators, professional journalists and attorneys) successfully lobbying legislatures to pass bills that extend First Amendment protections to student journalists.

The second route focuses on the local school level. Some student journalists in the 36 states that continue to lack protections against censorship nonetheless function as a free press. We discuss three themes that emerged from interviews with principals and teachers at six Indiana high schools where, despite an absence of legal protections, student journalists' speech rights are protected through educational practice.

We conclude the article by discussing two survey-based instruments we have used to gauge the extent to which student journalists exercise free expression, and by outlining a dialogue that student journalists can initiate to advance their rights.

## The competing *Tinker* and *Hazelwood* standards

While the First Amendment forcefully prohibits government interference in news publishing, constitutional protections diminish in the school setting, particularly when students are using a vehicle provided by the school to convey their message.

In its landmark 1969 *Tinker* ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court famously declared that students do not leave their free-expression rights at the schoolhouse gate, and that schools may not prohibit or punish student speech unless it portends a serious disruption. *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*. 393 U.S. 503. Supreme Court of the United States. 1969. The Court's opinion set forth a vision of schools as places of participatory learning in which students develop citizenship skills through self-expression: "In our system, students may not be regarded as closed-circuit recipients of only that which the State chooses to communicate" (p. 511).

But two decades later, the foundation shifted. In *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, a more conservative Supreme Court recognized a much-diminished level of protection for school-supported publications. 484 U.S. 260. Supreme Court of the United States. 1988. Under the *Hazelwood* exception to *Tinker*, administrators need not demonstrate that journalistic speech portends disruption before censoring it; rather, they may freely censor for any educationally reasonable purpose. While *Hazelwood* purports to enable schools to protect students against stories unsuitable for young audiences, in practice censorship authority regularly is used instead to protect the image of the school. A principal in Flushing, New York, for instance, halted publication of the student newspaper – which he called "negative and disparaging" – because a news article quoted a student saying that the perennially low-performing school lacked teachers with effective motivational skills (Edelman & Klein, 2017).

The journalism education community has unanimously decried the *Hazelwood* level of institutional control as detrimental to effective learning. The Society of Professional Journalists, in a 2013 resolution marking the ruling's 25th anniversary, said that the *Hazelwood* standard "impedes an educator's ability to

adequately instruct and train students in professional journalistic values and practices, including the right to question authority” (Society of Professional Journalists, 2013, para. 7).

## Grassroots legislative change

Because *Hazelwood* denies students recourse in federal court, journalism advocates have worked since 1988 to convince state legislatures to enact statutes enabling censored students to protect their rights in state court. The first such law was enacted in Massachusetts in 1989. But progress on the reform movement largely stalled until 2015, when the New Voices of North Dakota Act became law, unleashing a wave of copycat “New Voices” campaigns across the country.

Campaigns to protect student journalism have traditionally been led by journalism educators and state newspaper associations, but the New Voices movement in Rhode Island was different. There, the youth-led Providence Student Union (“PSU”) took ownership of the campaign, under the leadership of a 16-year-old high school junior, Yanine Castedo, who was not a journalist but an advocate for youth civic participation.

Providence Student Union was formed in 2010 at Hope High School as a vehicle for students to organize to influence school scheduling decisions. From that start, it grew into a citywide movement across the Providence city school system, obtaining nonprofit status and hiring a full-time staff in 2016.

Castedo launched a New Voices movement in 2016 as an externship project during her junior year at Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center. She sketched a draft bill based on examples from other states, and researched the members of the House Judiciary Committee to find a supportive sponsor. Castedo was the lead witness when the bill came before the Judiciary Committee, and she recruited high-school and community-college journalists to testify about their own adverse experiences with administrators. Witnesses from the Student Press Law Center and the ACLU of Rhode Island testified in support, with no one testifying in opposition.

But creating a sense of urgency behind student journalism proved elusive, and the bill never advanced beyond the committee.

Castedo built relationships with local news media to bring allies into the fold, most importantly with influential Providence journalist Edward Fitzpatrick. He published a pair of supportive columns, one in 2016 and one in 2017, that were republished in community newspapers throughout the state, reaching many legislators in their hometowns.

In 2017, Castedo and PSU made the tactical decision to press the bill in the Senate instead, where they found a committed advocate in Sen. Gayle Goldin, a Providence Democrat. The bill survived two eleventh-hour scares, passing on the last night of the session after it appeared that a rift over taxes would force a premature adjournment. Then, Gov. Gina Raimondo waited until the last day of eligibility to sign it. Rhode Island Gen. Laws 1956, § 16-109-3 (2017).

With the governor’s signature, Rhode Island became the 13th state with a statute protecting the independence of student journalism, joined in 2018 by Washington as the 14th. Rhode Island extends legal protection even to private-school students, making its statute arguably the strongest in the country.

While social media was a helpful campaign tool -- Castedo created a Facebook group that attracted 50 followers -- its usefulness proved to be limited in working on a “niche” issue for which broad public support was improbable. Castedo found that building personal relationships with the leaders of existing grassroots networks with credibility at the statehouse, including the ACLU and the Rhode

Island Press Association, was the decisive factor. This experience demonstrates the value of identifying adult “validators” who can speak for the interests of young people in ways reassuring to skeptical authority figures.

She also found that legislators responded best to talking points about youth civic participation, rather than about journalism or newspapers, emphasizing that teens use media to refine their ideas as future voters. “Educational institutions don’t make students stronger by preventing them from speaking their minds freely,” she told Fitzpatrick. “They make students stronger by embracing the voices of young people and supporting their right to free speech.” In urging Gov. Raimondo to sign the Rhode Island bill, a coalition of free-expression and journalism organizations made a similar point, explaining that the bill “invites the discussion of substantive public issues into the newsroom and into the school day, where students can practice the civic-engagement skills preparing them for a lifetime of participatory citizenship” (Gordon, 2017, para. 4).

### *Local relationship building*

Despite the recent wave of legislative change, most student journalists do not live in states with laws that protect their speech rights. Some school administrators in these states, however, who recognize the civic value of a free student press, choose not to interfere with the work of their student journalists. To learn what it takes for a school administrator to let student journalists function like a free press, one of our co-authors, Sophie Gordon, interviewed 15 principals and journalism teachers at schools across Indiana, a state that does not protect its student journalists’ speech rights.

An expert informant—a retired and nationally respected Indiana journalism teacher named Kim Green—helped Gordon identify schools in the state in which the administration did not practice prior review or censorship. In her interviews with the teachers, Gordon confirmed that their students’ newsrooms operated free from administrative oversight.

The interviews revealed three characteristics of how school administrators and journalism students who function as a free press relate with one another. These characteristics focused on building a relationship of trust between administration and students rather than civic engagement because, at the local level, while administrations may understand that journalism advances students’ civic engagement, they want to first trust their students to produce appropriate content. For those schools that operate with press freedoms, the administration has already established that relationship, and trusts its advisers and students to make content decisions that are purposeful and ethical. Students in schools that still practice pre-publication review and censorship may benefit from the following three characteristics when they develop a better relationship with administration.

### *Show the administration your process.*

In order for administration to trust the adviser and students of an organization, they must understand how the news producing process works. Rachel McCarver, media adviser at Columbus North High School in Columbus, Indiana, suggested inviting principals into the classroom to see what is being taught and how the media is being produced.

“I think it would be a good thing if students don’t have the [best] administration relationship ... is to maybe start slowly,” McCarver said. “Maybe invite the principal in to see what they do. Maybe invite the principal to go to another school with them and say ‘Hey, they do that, and it’s OK. It’s all going to be OK.’ Show them what they learn with law and ethics, and show them that they do have that foundation.”

The idea is for principals and other administration to see that students are being taught the lawful and ethical boundaries of journalism. Hopefully, encourages them to trust their students to practice ethical journalism as they produce student publications. Ideally, a principal would not exercise prior review because they would want their students to be able to truly practice journalistic skills—from assigning the story to defending the content if necessary.

*Have an open dialogue.*

A number of advisers mentioned giving their principals notice if a more controversial story was coming up in the next publication, either giving them a heads up or allowing them to comment if the story requires.

“[We] aren’t asking permission,” said Mark Haab, a publications adviser for 39 years. “We’re saying ‘Here’s a story we’re doing, and what can you contribute to it?’ So we usually present that. And, again, part of it is just so he’s not surprised, so nothing comes out and he kind of knows, and ... he’s most of the time very, very supportive.”

Dave Worland, principal at Indianapolis Cathedral High School, said his adviser will also sometimes give him a heads up. Though he appreciates it, Worland said it is not necessary because he trusts his adviser and students.

“If you have that trust with each other ... then I don’t think there needs to be anybody looking over shoulders or monitoring what’s going to be written because there’s already going to be a checks and balance,” Worland said. “If he wants to give me a heads up, fine, but if he doesn’t, then I trust him. And he trusts his editors, and his editors trust the writers. So that’s kind of my philosophy I’ve used for 30 years in two different schools, and I haven’t had one problem.”

*Know your purpose.*

Oftentimes, principals censor more controversial stories because of how they believe the community will react to such topics. One way for students to combat this fear of backlash is to have solid reasoning for covering a story.

“If your defense of your article is ‘Well, because I can. Because free speech,’ that’s not a good enough reason,” Carmel High School adviser Jim Streisel said. “I think having a journalistic reason for telling a story is the key, and if you can communicate that with an administrator, and the administrator understands that that’s the process—that that’s the standard—then I think that you have fewer problems.”

Streisel, the 2013 Dow Jones News Fund National High School Journalism Teacher of the Year, explained how communicating this purpose with administration helps build trust and respect. When principals are not blindsided by a story topic and know that their students have a good reason to cover it, it is much easier to handle any concerns from the community. It is also important for student media operating as a free press to understand that these community concerns should be directed to their own editors because they are responsible for the content.

The hope is that by following these tips, which arose from principal and adviser responses, students will be able to establish more free presses in schools and censorship of student publications can be a problem of the past.

## Assessment

We have used two simple survey instruments to gauge the level of student journalists' free speech, and its relationship to students' civic engagement. The first instrument consists of two questions: "Have you been told by a school employee not to discuss a topic or issue in your student media?" and, "Have you refrained from discussing a topic or issue in your student media because you anticipated a negative reaction from the school?" In a survey of student journalists in one state that does not provide legal protections for journalist students' speech, 33 percent said "yes" to the first question, and 84 percent of those said "yes" to the second question, suggesting that most journalists acquiesced to their administrator's or teacher's request (Bobkowski & Belmas, 2017). Thus far, these questions have not been replicated in other states or settings.

The second instrument measures students' media civic efficacy, which is the extent to which students feel they can use their student media to effect change (Bobkowski, 2015). In this assessment, students first are asked to identify an issue in their communities that they think needs to be changed. A series of questions then probe the students' comfort with using their media to address this issue, and whether their efforts would be effective. Preliminary analyses suggest that less oversight of student work by the journalism teacher is related to students feeling more confident in their civic effectiveness.

## Implications

The PSU case study and the interviews with Indiana principals and journalism teachers suggest the following lessons for high school journalists, journalism teachers, and advocates of student free speech:

Grassroots-initiated legislative action that protects student journalists' free speech is possible.

State-level change starts with coalition-building that includes students, teachers, professional journalists, advocacy organizations (e.g., Student Press Law Center), and sympathetic legislators.

At the local school level, a mutually respectful dialogue with the principal is the starting point for environments where student journalists' speech rights are protected.

The goal is a trusting relationship between student journalists and the principal, in which the principal is not blindsided by potentially controversial stories, and trusts the journalists' skills and judgment in covering such stories.

In addition to initiating action in support of student journalists' speech protections, it may be worthwhile for schools and communities to deliberate the following questions in light of journalism's fundamental role in democracy:

What speech rights protections should students have in schools? What should they be able to write, say, and wear?

What role should student journalism play in schools and neighborhoods? What resources might be needed to support this role?

What role should school administrators play in student journalism?

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## Collaborators:

**Frank LoMonte** is a First Amendment lawyer who served for nine years as Executive Director of the Washington, D.C.-based Student Press Law Center, a nonprofit advocate for the rights of student journalists nationwide. Since August 2017, he has been director of the Joseph L. Brechner Center for Freedom of Information, a think-tank on journalists-rights issues housed at the University of Florida, where he teaches media law.

**Sophie Gordon** is a senior at Ball State University, studying journalism and philosophy. She serves as a copy editor for the undergraduate international philosophy journal, *Stance*, and works as the contest coordinator for BSU Journalism Workshops. During 2016-17, she was one of five inaugural participants in the Active Voice fellowship program, sponsored by the Student Press Law Center to train college undergraduate women as mentors to high-school girls experiencing press-freedom issues. After graduation, she intends to pursue a career in First Amendment law.

**Piotr Bobkowski** is Associate Professor in the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas. A former high school journalism teacher, he researches the developmental role of media among adolescents and young adults, focusing on youth journalism and civic engagement, information literacy, and data literacy.

# DELIBERATION AND DIALOGUE ON A DIVIDED CAMPUS

*Jin-Mi Sohn, Middlebury College '18*

*Sarah Stroup, Associate Professor of Political Science, Middlebury College*

## Democratic Commitments at a Liberal Arts College

Middlebury College is a private residential liberal arts college in rural Vermont (US) with roughly 2500 undergraduates. Despite its remote location, Middlebury draws students from around the US and the world and offers an intimate setting in which to practice the habits of inquiry and action necessary for democratic communities. In the college's most recent mission statement, Middlebury makes an explicit commitment to "foster the inquiry, equity, and agency necessary for [our undergraduates] to practice ethical citizenship at home and far beyond our Vermont campus."

This work happens in and out of the classroom and depends on skills of both listening and action. When it comes to action, students at Middlebury are engaged in a wide array of civic and affinity groups. Such student organizations include American Enterprise Institute Club, College Democrats, Debate Society, Feminist Action at Middlebury, Middlebury College Republicans, Middlebury Young America's Foundation Chapter (YAF), Model United Nations, Open Campus Initiative, Sunday Night Environmental Group, Student Government Association, and more. In a 2017 survey of the student body by the Student Government Association, 39.63% of Middlebury students self-identified as "currently holding a leadership position in a student organization."

Our students are also highly engaged with civic and political causes beyond campus. According to a recent report from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement, 58.1% of our students voted in 2016 (compared to a national average of 50.4%). For a week in February, students design and lead trips to six different locations to learn about and serve in those communities. Our students volunteer in local shelters, start their own nonprofits, and get out the vote.

In short, our ambitious and accomplished students are quite practiced at action. They reflect the culture of the hardworking faculty, staff, and administrators that are good at moving fast and getting many things done. As we saw over the past year and a half, however, our culture of busy-ness does not always prepare us for the slow and difficult process of communicating across differences.

## Fragmentation over Free Speech

In the spring of 2017, the Middlebury College community became deeply divided over a campus visit by Charles Murray, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). Murray was invited by the AEI student organization at Middlebury. Murray's lecture was billed as a discussion of his recent book, *Coming Apart*, but he is best known for his controversial statements about race and IQ in his co-authored

1994 book, *The Bell Curve*. The heated debates around Murray's visit over free speech and inclusion reflected long-standing concerns for our small liberal arts institution. Tackling these complex topics proved incredibly difficult given the national political context and the personal harms felt by some in our community. These divides were quite stark for both of us – Sarah Stroup is a member of the department that sponsored Murray's talk, and Jin-Mi Sohn plays a leading role in student government. Our campus is not alone in struggling to balance the democratic values of free inquiry and equity, but the stakes have felt particularly high in our small rural community.

The intimacy of our small environment does not guarantee that we connect with one another or engage in productive disagreements. According to research by our colleague in psychology, the Middlebury students that feel most isolated report higher stress levels. Two months after Murray's visit, Stroup surveyed the fifty students in her two political science classes. Two thirds of the respondents said their level of concern about the events surrounding Murray's visit was still high or very high. Half the students reported that their biggest concern moving forward was *community*, closely followed by *listening* and *inclusion*.

This heightened concern has continued through this academic year. Hundreds of students, staff, and faculty came to a November 2017 community conversation convened by our president and student government leaders, and the hall for Murray's talk was packed for a February 2018 faculty panel on white supremacy on campus. The high interest in these all-campus events showed the community's level of willingness to engage in these topics and helped to provide a gauge of the campus climate throughout our project. Alongside these large gatherings, many new initiatives on campus hosted small group discussions to find a way forward.

## Deliberation and Dialogue

In an attempt to address these divides, we designed a series of “deliberation cafés” at the end of the 2017 spring semester to host in the next academic year (2017-18). We drew inspiration from a variety of models, including the world café method and the civil conversations project. The basic impulse of these models, shared also by the restorative practices model, is that longer conversations in small groups help build understanding and accountability among those involved. The goal of these deliberations is not to *win* or find the *right answer*, but rather to identify the issues at stake, the points of consensus and disagreement, and possible ways forward.

To reflect on our ethical commitments and strategic choices, we consulted a number of books. First, we thought about the social context of our students. In *#Republic*, Cass Sunstein shows how social media limits our exposure to a diversity of viewpoints. In the context of campus conversations about free speech and First Amendment, Bert Neuborne reminded us of the equal importance of the rights of hearers. The speaking and listening inherent in dialogue is essential for participatory governance, a point eloquently made by Peter Levine. When discouraged about our agency and capacity in the face of vast divides, Duncan Green's *How Change Happens* reminded us that positive social change requires power.

The cafés meet three times a semester for roughly 90 minutes each. We provide food, introduce the topic and a set of ground rules for engagement, and facilitate small-group discussions. We had three basic rules: (1) proceed from a position of equality, not hierarchy (faculty and older students have no special role or power), (2) this is a deliberation, not debate (no winner, as described above), and (3) the first step of dialogue is careful listening, so you might respond to the first comment you hear with “what I hear you saying is...” The small group conversations did not have individual facilitators, but Stroup, occasionally with another faculty colleague (not necessarily an expert on the topic), introduced the questions for

small groups and facilitated the large group conversations that followed. We secured funding from the Middlebury Fund for Innovation and included regular feedback mechanisms (follow-up surveys, focus group discussions) to improve the design of the cafés over time. Sohn was paid as a student assistant for the project, and the remaining funding went to food and drinks for the cafés.

The Fall semester cafés were connected to a political science senior seminar, and the eighteen students enrolled attended all three, modeling the ground rules of constructive dialogue. Our first café tackled the role of spiritual and religious life on campus and invited students from religious studies classes. For the second iteration, the students chose the topic and the participants, and we tackled the question of “should we tolerate the intolerant?” The third café partnered with the campus-wide Committee for Speech and Inclusion (formed in the wake of Murray’s visit) for a breakfast and dinner, and we had almost 100 participants at each.

After the fall semester, we revisited the follow-up surveys and experimented with some new models. We set up a website to share information about the cafés. Our fourth café on social media’s effects on our community was designed to engage a wide variety of campus groups, but it turned out that our participants consisted almost entirely of members of the men’s baseball team. We pivoted, and instead of talking about dialogue across difference, we explored how athletic teams are robust communities but also often stereotyped and isolated from other campus groups. Our fifth café was a dinner for two dozen juniors in which we brainstormed ways to maintain diverse spaces for students while creating a shared sense of community. Our final event was a happy hour for seniors on the last day of class. We asked them to bring a faculty or staff member that they respect and to reflect on how they will describe Middlebury once they leave. This was an opportunity for both students and faculty/staff to express their thoughts about the institution outside of the conventional hierarchical settings such as classroom and workplace.

The cafés are a small step towards reclaiming a climate in which students and faculty can “try on” new arguments, trusting that members of their community may not share the same ideas but do share a commitment to making our ideas stronger. For example, when we explored “should we tolerate the intolerant,” many students who had been on one or another side of the Charles Murray visit presented and discussed the best argument that they heard from the “other side.” While many conversations on campus have tackled the issue of free speech, these cafés try to shift the perspective from speaking to careful listening. Some of the conversations have been quite heated, but we have admired the way in which students and faculty have committed to these discussions and worked to maintain relationships. Our survey data indicates strong support for extra-curricular settings for difficult dialogues, and the responses to open-ended questions have yielded a number of helpful suggestions for facilitating respectful and productive disagreements.

## Outcomes and Lessons

As we reflect on a year of convening and facilitating these deliberation cafés, we have a wealth of feedback on our successes and failures as well as suggestions for moving forward. After the first five cafés, we asked attendees to fill out a post-event follow-up survey, in which we asked the same five questions: How satisfied were you with the overall event? Did you hear a variety of perspectives in this discussion? What is your one tangible takeaway from this event? How comfortable do you feel talking about this subject on campus with others? Do you have any suggestions for how this event could be better?

We gathered 103 responses. On average, participants’ level of satisfaction was 4.145 on a 5-point scale (with 5 being most satisfied). The attendees report being moderately comfortable talking about these subjects (inclusion, speech, religion, social media) on campus (average response 3.7, with 5 being most

comfortable). This suggests to us that the cafés were a useful exercise for participants. One concern that drove this effort was our interest in creating spaces on our campus for diverse voices to be heard. Of 103 respondents, ten said they did not hear a variety of perspectives, and often followed up by suggesting different groups that could be added to the conversation. Still, 90% of participants agreed that there was a variety of perspectives in their discussions at the event.

When asked in an open-ended format to report a tangible takeaway, students touched on multiple themes. The most frequent takeaway was a stronger sense of community and empathy afterwards. Many attendees also noted that they had witnessed community, and wanted more of these conversations and events to take place at Middlebury College. As one participant said, “people are willing to listen. Differing points of view can be worked out and debated without conflict.” A handful of attendees noted how the discussion captured larger divides at Middlebury. A few attendees mentioned a discussion technique they learned or suggested continuing the conversation. For example, one respondent suggested that, “I think it would be great to meet with the same people (groups of faculty, staff, and students) once a month or so and use that space as a place to talk about these issues...”. A final theme that emerged was uncertainty and a need for further inquiry. As one attendee at the second café (on tolerating intolerance) stated, “almost no one feels like they have an answer to this question.” Our anonymous surveys yielded helpful and quite open responses.

We ended each survey by asking for suggestions and feedback. The responses to this final question revealed helpful insights for designing future cafés. Below, we highlight six themes:

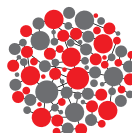
- **Flexibility**- allow the topic to evolve with the discussion. At one deliberation café, we quickly found that religion wasn't personally salient to most of the students assembled, but they did have strong opinions on a recent campus controversy about religious clubs.
- **Faculty roles**- in the café setting, the role of the faculty member is different from the classroom. The faculty member is not an expert that requires deference but simply another member of the campus community, ready to engage.
- **Small groups** - breaking big groups into 4-5 people to start resulted in deeper conversations. Some participants suggested switching the small groups throughout the event, giving people a chance to meet new people and hear more diverse views.
- **Anonymity** - we are still uncomfortable with confrontation, and a few participants asked for confidentiality (beyond the room) and anonymity (within the room). As one suggested, “I also think that it may be helpful to allow people to respond anonymously using post it notes or placing index cards in a box for some discussion prompts. Even though there were clear instructions to allow for open, honest, respectful dialogue, I was concerned about how my words would be perceived.”
- **Inviting participants** - we chose fairly simple methods to solicit participation, but turnout was uneven across our different events. Having people first RSVP and then show up to the event was sometimes a challenge. Personal invitations were more effective, but also reflected our individual social circles on campus.
- **Repetition** - many attendees mentioned how they “wouldn't mind doing this once a month, or perhaps once or twice a semester, for this coming year” or “institutionalizing these discussions in some way by scheduling them on a regular basis...so that they become a regular part of campus discourse.” Perhaps that regularity might address the turnout problem discussed above.

## Conclusion

The cafés have been personally rewarding, as we have met new members of our community and joined them in open but respectful dialogue and disagreement. Happily, we are not alone in supporting democratic practices and values on the Middlebury campus. Inquiry and equity is practiced inside classrooms through programs such as first-year seminars, “discussion-oriented courses with an intensive writing component to help students make the transition to college work.” Outside the classroom, a group of faculty, staff, and students are continually revising the content and methods of JusTalks, a retreat for first-year students intended to foster habits of empathetic listening and to develop greater awareness of how to contribute actively to building an inclusive community. Our hope is that our cafés have made some small contribution to a more robust college community and added to our collective toolbox of democratic practices - careful listening, inclusive participation, and the collective identification of ways to move forward.

For those who might experiment with this approach in the future, the biggest challenge we see is getting people in the room – both in terms of numbers and diversity. Many of us might make abstract pleas for the important of dialogue, but few of us carve out time in our day for such efforts. Small nudges – like professors who make attendance in a deliberation café part of the class participation grade – can disrupt our normal routines, get new groups of people in a room together, and foster new relationships and conversations. At the end of day, this is a community effort that requires action beyond verbal commitment to democratic practices on our respective college campuses.

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