



DEMOCRACY DEFENDERS

Concerned Citizens Defending Democracy

Promoting Democratic Institutions, Deliberative Dialogues, and Racial Justice and Reconciliation

By Building Bridges and Strengthening Partnerships

<https://www.cddus.org/>

February 2022

Events of Interest

[Getting at the Root: Perspectives on Global Justice, Truth Telling and Accountability](#)

Monday, January 31, 2022; 12:00-1:00pm ET

Through a lens of accountability, we will explore what scholars have learned from cases of truth commissions and repair mechanisms from around the world. Hosted by Harvard Institutional Antiracism and Accountability Project.



[Reclaiming Populism: How Economic Fairness Can Win Back Disenchanted Voters](#)

Tuesday, February 1, 2022; 12:00-1:15pm ET

This forensic book demonstrates that illiberal populism strikes hardest when family origins decide success rather than talent and effort. The authors, Eric Protzer and Paul Summerville, propose a framework of policy inputs that instead support high social mobility, and apply it to diagnose the differing reasons behind economic unfairness in the US, UK, Italy, and France. Hosted by Harvard Center for International Development.



[The Party of Trump](#)

Tuesday, February 8, 2022; 6:00-7:00pm ET

The Republican Party has undergone a huge shift—from the party of Lincoln to the party of Trump. What does this mean for the Grand Old Party, and where does it go next? Hosted by Brennan Center for Justice.



[Fighting Disinformation](#)

Tuesday, February 8, 2022; 7:00pm ET

Chuck Newman will describe how and why the left has to drown out the flood of misinformation and disinformation that has so distorted the narrative about science, politics and our confidence in our democratic institutions. Hosted by Indivisible.



[Why the Mississippi Delta Matters](#)

Tuesday, February 15, 2022; 4:00pm ET

An author and a journalist, W. Ralph Eubanks focuses in his work on race and culture in the American South. His most recent book is *A Place Like Mississippi: A Journey through a Real and Imagined Literary Landscape*. Hosted by Harvard Radcliff Institute.



[Democracy Program Bulletin](#)

Ash Center will host a range of public events this month that address the profound challenges to American democracy. Check their website for updates.



[23rd Annual White Privilege Conference](#)

March 9 - 12th in Charlotte, NC (In-Person/Virtual Options)

One of the premier anti-racism conferences in the nation. This year's theme is "White Supremacy, Religion and Reciprocity" and features keynote author Resmaa Menakem; filmmaker, musician, activist Bree Newsome, among others. The conference is organized by Dr. Eddie Moore of The Privilege Institute.



Opinion

[Learning Democracy is Just as Important as Learning Math](#)

By Sam Smith

While we repeatedly discuss the problems our country faces, we pay little attention to how we teach our children to deal with these matters as they grow up. A Brookings Report described the issue well:

The [2018 Brown Center Report on American Education](#) examined the status of civic education and found that while reading and math scores have improved in recent years, there has not been the commensurate increase in eighth grade civics knowledge. While 42 states and the District of Columbia require at least one course related to civics, few states prioritize the range of strategies, such as service learning which is only included in the standards for 11 states, that is required for an effective civic education experience. The study also found that high school social studies teachers are some of the least supported teachers in schools and report teaching larger numbers of students and taking on more non-teaching responsibilities like coaching school sports than other teachers. Seventy percent of 12th graders say they have never written a letter to give an opinion or solve a problem and 30 percent say they have never taken part in a debate -- all important parts of a quality civic learning.

That wasn't my experience because I grew up with a father who had worked for the federal government and then became involved in Philadelphia local politics. At the age of eleven I was stuffing campaign envelopes for a guy successfully running for city treasurer. I also took part in a presidential campaign debate at my elementary school. And if I had any doubts about politics, they vanished when some candidate came to a gathering at our house and stood on a nice living room chair to give his talk. To this day, I remember looking over at my mother and seeing a smile on her face. If he can get away with standing on one of her chairs, I thought, politics must be really important.

As we get older it's easy to discount such youthful experiences but just like math and spelling, democracy is something you have to learn in order to use it. And it's hard thing to learn when so many of our leaders are teaching us that working well with others is far less important than one's own competitive success.

It's not just in the classroom where we could change things. Schools, libraries, museums and churches, for example, could open their gathering spaces for more public debate and discussion on local and national issues. They don't need to take sides; they just need to host the gathering. For example, among the important meetings in church basements I attended back in the 1960s was one planning opposition to extensive new freeways in our city and another that kicked off the DC statehood movement.

We also need to encourage the media to not only report the problems of our society but the positive news as well. In recent decades, for example, the media has become obsessed with ethnic crises yet fails to note that [15.1% of our marriages are now bi-ethnic while only 14.2% are all black](#). Thus, in about one in seven weddings, couples have found assets within mixed ethnicity that CNN has yet to discover. And where are the stories about schools and other institutions with successful multicultural programs that kids and adults like?

I grew up in a family of six kids and so learned early that not everyone in life is going to agree with me. What worked was finding things we shared enthusiasm and interest in common. Larger communities are much the same and democracy is the tool not to beat down the other guy but to find what we can share and do despite our differences.

The important thing is that, just like with math and music, you can't remember how to do it if you don't practice.



Philanthropy & Democracy

[New Profit Civic Lab Application](#)

New Profit's Civic Lab is a leading nonpartisan initiative that invests in and grows innovative solutions building civic trust and inclusive democracy in America. In 2022 they are seeking to invest in 8 innovative nonpartisan democracy-entrepreneur-led organizations. Click link for details.



[Civic Health Project Grants](#)

Civic Health Project is dedicated to reducing toxic partisan polarization and enabling healthier public discourse and decision-making across our citizenry, politics, and media. Through grant making and advocacy, they support initiatives that empower Americans to reject tribal partisanship and come together to solve our nation's greatest challenges.



[How Can Philanthropy Help Rehabilitate US Democracy?](#)

Democracy-Rehabilitating Philanthropy is for philanthropists who seek to repair the flaws in our current civic and democratic institutions.



[Democracy and Civic Life: What Is the Long Game for Philanthropy?](#)

The challenges of our time raise questions about the role of philanthropy and whether the sector has acted aggressively and effectively to stem the decline of confidence in government, institutions, and one another.



Voting Information

[When We All Vote](#)

Leading national, nonpartisan initiative on a mission to change the culture around voting and to increase participation in each and every election by helping to close the race and age gap. Brought to you by Michelle Obama.



[VOTE411](#)

Election information: register to vote, find your polling place, ballot info, etc. Brought to you by the League of Women Voters Education Fund.



[Vote.org](#)

Vote.org uses technology to simplify political engagement, increase voter turnout, and strengthen American democracy.



[The Voting Rights Lab](#)

You can use this site to explore existing laws and pending legislation on voting rights in all 50 states.



CCDD Monthly Takeaways

Given the urgency of the moment and the severity of the challenges facing our democracy we need to increase our activism by:

1. Developing a framing question that helps us determine our goals and objectives and helps us measure our progress.
2. Collectively developing our core CCDD message(s) and collaborating with other key groups on the message development.
3. Publicizing the work of other groups promoting democracy and/or racial healing.
4. Engaging with those holding different views.
5. Continuing our advocacy on voting rights.
6. Supporting advocacy of Jan 6th Committee and Justice Department investigations.
7. Promoting the proposed Department of Democracy & Reconciliation.
8. Appreciating the power of storytelling with a member's story in the CCDD newsletter every month.
9. Acknowledging that all of our work begins at the local level and investigate museums and libraries as entry points.
10. Creating and expanding CCDD subcommittees and partnerships to do this work.

[Call to Action:](#)

PHASE 1: Build Support for the Jan 6th Investigation

- Build a vocal citizens constituency, then use it to publicize the work of the House Select Committee and report every significant revelation.
- In a bipartisan campaign, unite to push the House Select Committee to hold public hearings immediately.

PHASE 2: Institution Building and Racial Healing

- Work with local community groups and grassroots democracy networks to find common ground on a bipartisan basis and reach a shared vision of our country.



Mentioned Resources

[Bridging the Divide](#)

PBS Newshour episode, January 10, 2022



[The Way Out: How To Overcome Toxic Polarization](#)

A book by Dr. Peter T. Coleman that offers insights from leading research on how deeply divided societies can and do change.



[Othering & Belonging: A Framework and Analysis for a Fair and Inclusive Society](#)



[ASO Communications – Several Messaging Guides](#)



[Bridge Alliance – The Fulcrum](#)

Mission of being a trusted platform where insiders and outsiders to politics are informed, meet, talk and act to repair our democracy..



[Research: American Political Violence by Robert Pape](#)

Focuses on 193 suspects charged as a result of the Jan 6th Insurrection.



Please provide any comments or suggestions to:

ccdd.connect@gmail.com

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