



DEMOCRACY DEFENDERS

December 2021

Concerned Citizens Defending Democracy

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

By Building Bridges and Strengthening Partnerships

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

Events of Interest

Technology, Inequality, and Democracy

December 8, 2021; 11:00am-12:30pm ET

Advances in digital technologies and artificial intelligence hold great promise to boost economic prosperity. But as these technologies transform nearly every aspect of business and work, they are reshaping growth and distributional dynamics in ways that can increase economic inequality. Rising inequality and related disparities and anxieties have been stoking social discontent and are a major driver of the increased popular disaffection and political polarization that are so evident today. Hosted by Brookings.



The State of Redistricting and the 2022 Elections

December 8, 2021; 4:00-5:00pm ET

We are in the midst of one of the most rancorous redistricting sessions in our country's history. Partisan officials -- mostly but not only in conservative legislatures -- are using the drawing of new congressional, state and local election districts to amass disproportionate power for themselves. Meanwhile, the many independent/nonpartisan commissions established in states in recent years were meant to help avoid this problem. Which ones are working and why? Hosted by Harvard Ash Center.



Reducing Harm on Social Media: Research & Design Ideas

December 15, 2021; 3:00-4:15pm ET

When social media platforms first launched, they were seen as a way to connect with family and friends, learn and explore new ideas, and engage with social and political movements. Yet, these same platforms have become vectors of misinformation, hate speech, and polarization. With attention around social media's impact on society at an all-time high, this event will discuss various approaches and interventions to make social media a safer and more civil place. Hosted by NYU's Center for Social Media and Politics.



Depolarizing Within

December 4, 2021; 2:00-5:00pm ET

This workshop teaches participants: (1) How to be more aware of their own "inner polarizer." (2) How to be critical without demonizing, dismissing or stereotyping large swaths of the population. (3) Strategies for intervening constructively in social conversations with like-minded peers when these conversations veer into contempt and ridicule for people who hold other political views. Hosted by Braver Angels.



Opinion

Recapturing James Baldwin and the Moral Crisis at the Heart of American Democracy

By Deborah A. Wilcox, PhD, Confluency Consultants and Associates

I had the distinct opportunity to witness and listen to one of the nation's most prominent scholars, Dr. Eddie Glaude Jr. -- an author, political commentator, public intellectual, and passionate educator -- who examines the complex dynamics of the American experience through the literature and lens of the unbending prolific author and social justice scholar James Baldwin. This experience was sponsored by the [Taft Lecture Series](#), that honors the community leadership of Charlie P. Taft II, who was known for integrating sacred and civic values. As the son of U.S. President William Howard Taft, he devoted his life to public service -- as both a member of city council and mayor of Cincinnati, Ohio, and as the 40-year warden of Christ Church (now Christ Church Cathedral) and co-founder of the World Council of Churches.

Dr. Glaude's address was threaded through his new book [Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own](#). He challenged all of us to examine our collective American conscience, "not to posit the greatness of America, but to establish the ground upon which to imagine the country anew."

In recapturing James Baldwin's insights and critical inquiry on American democracy he spoke about America's aversion to history and how the stories the country told itself about its past corrupted any genuine understanding of the present. "In the effort to deny from whence we came," Baldwin declared, "we've had to make up a series of myths about it."

Dr. Glaude quoted Baldwin's admonition as it related to confronting the historical lies America has told itself about democracy and being *the shining city on the hill or redeemer nation* and that our story should begin with those who sought to make real the promise of this democracy and put aside the fairy tales and illusions of America and recast the idea of perfecting the Union not as a guarantee of our goodness but a declaration of the ongoing work to address injustice in our midst.

What brings tears to my eyes, stated Dr. Glaude, is Baldwin's call to America to reimagine the nation: *To create ourselves without finding it necessary to create an enemy*. We need an America where *becoming white is no longer the price of the ticket*. Instead, we should set out to imagine the country in the full light of its diversity and with an honest recognition of our sins and confronting our national trauma, if we are to shake loose from this moral crisis of deception and embrace the truths about the historical traumas of lynching (i.e., [Lynching Memorial](#)), cultural genocide and white supremacy.

In his closing remarks Dr. Glaude communicated Baldwin's preface as it were his last will and testament:

We are living in a world in which everybody and everything is interdependent. It is not white, this world. It is not black either. The future of this world depends on everyone in this room. And that future depends on to what extent and by what means we liberate ourselves from a vocabulary which now cannot bear the weight of reality. Liberation from languages and categories that box us in requires that we tap the source of it all, free ourselves of the lie, and start this whole damn thing over.



Please click the following link to contribute content to the newsletter: [Newsletter updates](#)

CCDD Monthly Takeaways

What we learned from the November 6th elections in Virginia:

- The majority of voters in Virginia do not see the world in the same way that many of us do and there are many conflicting narratives. We need to try to understand their perspective(s), especially those of White women, the demographic that swings elections, and reach out to them through trusted sources and our concentric circles.
- Education has become a national flash point, especially Critical Race Theory (CRT), which is not taught in public schools in Virginia or many other states. The concept of CRT has become a subtle code to prevent an accurate teaching of U.S. history which includes slavery and displacement of native populations.
- To advance our goal of racial justice and reconciliation we need better messaging and social media strategies.

Letter campaigns are very important right now:

- The Freedom to Vote Act (FTVA), which replaced H.R.1 and S.1, and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act were both passed by the House, but failed in the Senate on procedural votes. We should continue to write to Members of Congress in support of both Acts.
- Discussion on amending the filibuster continues, so we need to continue the letter campaign for filibuster carve-outs for FTVA and the John Lewis Act.

Voting Information

VOTE411

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



Voting Rights, Reforms, and the Democracy Crisis

Robert Berg discusses the status of U.S. voting rights, what is being done to address these challenges and provides some suggestions on what we can do.



Resources on redistricting

National Democratic Redistricting Committee PAC (re: legal action)



Princeton Gerrymandering Project (re: grading)



538 (re: state tracking)



Key legislation

The Freedom to Vote Act of 2021 (S.2747)



The John Lewis Voting Rights Act of 2021 (H.R.4)



Please provide any comments or suggestions to:

ccdd.connect@gmail.com

News from Members & Partners

San Francisco Black-Jewish Unity Coalition

Criminal Justice & Prison Reform Committee focus is to advocate for changes in the law, in prison operations, and in how the reentry process is operated in California. Their goals are:(1) To create and expand alternatives to prison; (2) To make all California prisons places for healing and rehabilitation; and (3) To change the reentry process to have formerly incarcerated people working inside and outside the prison as navigators and mentors to increase the likelihood that people discharged from prison will live successful lives and never return to prison.



Interwoven Congregations

Interwoven Congregations supports partnerships between pairs of diverse faith communities. Their recent newsletter featured an interview between the pastors of two Baptist churches in Washington D.C. who provide a very personal view of the partnership that they have developed in recent years to promote racial justice and healing. The issue also includes a photo essay of an effort to build bridges across race, religion and culture an ocean away.



Additional

NYU's Center for Social Media and Politics

Social media has transformed politics around the world and the way we receive and engage with information. NYU's Center for Social Media and Politics (CSMaP) is an academic research institute dedicated to studying how social media impacts politics, policy, and democracy.



International Corner

The current challenges to democracy are a global issue.

The Global State of Democracy Report 2021: Building Resilience in a Pandemic Era

The world is becoming more authoritarian as non-democratic regimes become even more brazen in their repression and many democratic governments suffer from backsliding by adopting their tactics of restricting free speech and weakening the rule of law, exacerbated by what threatens to become a "new normal" of Covid-19 restrictions. For the fifth consecutive year, the number of countries moving in an authoritarian direction exceeds the number of countries moving in a democratic direction.



President Biden's "Summit for Democracy"

December 9-10, 2021

President Biden will host the first of two Summits for Democracy, which will bring together leaders from government, civil society, and the private sector to set forth an affirmative agenda for democratic renewal and to tackle the greatest threats faced by democracies today through collective action. With 110 delegations invited, the summit is expected to focus on three principle themes -- defending against authoritarianism, addressing and fighting corruption, and promoting respect for human rights.

