

# Frontiers of Democracy Conference

## June 22-24, 2017

### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE, SUBJECT TO CHANGE

#### Thursday, 6/22

- 5:00 PM** Registration and Reception
- 5:45 PM** Welcome and Opening Remarks: **Peter Levine**, Tisch College
- 6:00-7:00 PM** **@Stake: A game for generating ideas and discussion.**  
Introduced by **Becky Michelson**, Engagement Lab
- 7:00-7:45 PM** “**Short Takes**” talks, followed by group discussion:
- Rev. Dr. F. Willis Johnson**, the senior minister of Wellspring Church in Ferguson, Missouri, captured national attention for his leadership in August 2014 after an unarmed African American teenager was shot and killed Ferguson. He will talk about the Injustice of a “Just-Us” Democracy.
- Wendy Willis** is the Executive Director of the Deliberative Democracy Consortium and the Director of Oregon's Kitchen Table at Portland State University. Her talk will be about loneliness, rising authoritarianism, and the implications for a deliberative civil society.

#### Friday, 6/23

- 8:00 AM** Breakfast/logistics
- 9:00-10:30 AM** **Plenary: Framework #1 for Civic Action**  
**Cesar McDowell** is a civic engagement designer and Professor of the Practice of Community Development at MIT. He will present eight public engagement design principles to leverage the public’s voice in five strategic types of public dialogue. When skillfully applied, these principles and dialogue types provide 40 interventions for creating public engagement spaces that invite and support the complex public to struggle collectively to create a future that is an equitable and just improvement on the past.
- 10:30-10:45 AM** **BREAK**

10:45AM-12:15 PM      **Concurrent Sessions.** Choose among:

### 1. Civic Gaming

**Joshua Miller**, University of Baltimore; **Daniel Levine**, Community Mediation;  
**Sarah Shugars**, Northeastern University

Games can be used to learn and practice skills relevant to civic life. Role-playing exercises are already a key part of learning community organizing. In this session, we will discuss this intersection and demonstrate some recent innovations in civic gaming. Participants may also take the opportunity to get up and moving to join in. The session will announce winners of the civic gaming contest launched this year. There will be a discussion and ideally opportunities to play the games.

### 2. How to Teach Democracy in Authoritarian Nations

**Tianlong You**, Arizona State; **Haimo Li**, University of Houston; **Yao Lin**, City University of Hong Kong

The presenters will introduce how they built up a 100-plus-member team, used various forms of media formats to reach out to their audience, managed to get assistance from sympathizers including leading Chinese internet giants, organized offline activities in both China and the United States, and survived powerful internet censorship. The session will be composed of three parts: a brief presentation, interactive conversations, and problem-solving group assignments. The goal is to share successful experiences in introducing American politics and elections in China despite of government censorship, nationalist frenzies and skeptical media outlets. These experiences can be used in other countries like Russia, Iran, North Korea, and the like.

### 3. Are We Still Relevant? The role of Democratic Deliberation Innovators in a “Downgraded Democracy”

**Jessie Conover**, Healthy Democracy; **Ashley Trim**, Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership; **Robin Teater**, Healthy Democracy

The Economist recently downgraded the U.S. to a flawed democracy. Many of us were first horrified and then hopeful that our work might get some needed attention and—fingers crossed—funding. But are our reforms still relevant in light of the fundamental issues our democracy faces? Join us for a lively conversation as we face this question with clear eyes. After setting the stage by briefly explaining the work that Healthy Democracy and the Davenport Institute do to improve voter information, we'll open it up with a tough question: Is the work we (in the democratic deliberation world) do relevant? Or should we, and our funders, focus on more fundamental issues such as voting rights, freedom of the press, and election integrity?

### 4. How Do We Midwife the Emergence of Wise Governance Networks?

**Tracy Kunkler**, Circle Forward; **Tom Atlee**, Co-Intelligence Institute; **Steve Waddell**, Networking Action

Are you sensing new patterns of societal governance in multi-sector networks? Are they more diverse and adaptive to the scale/pace of change than governments? Might they become powerful governance structures, growing to include government, but also transcending it? Join us for an inquiry into what is happening and how we can influence the emergence of these to be democratic, powerful, and wise. We anticipate most of the session will be a combination of large group and small group dialogue processes.

## **5. Beyond Novelty: What Sustainable Civic Media Practice Looks Like**

**Eric Gordon** and **Gabriel Mugar**, Emerson College Engagement Lab

Organizations are struggling to adopt innovative practices that meaningfully engage constituents. This session will provide an overview of an emerging field of scholarship and practice called civic media and discuss the real-world implications for organizations as they struggle with assessing value and sustaining innovative civic practice. The goal is to share current research, funded by the MacArthur Foundation, that seeks to guide an emerging field of civic media. The session will begin with a presentation of findings from a study on "civic media innovations" in Boston, Oakland and Chicago. The study looked at how organizations are thinking about the impact and sustainability of "innovative practice," especially novel uses of technology or media. After a 30-minute presentation, participants will break up into small groups and discuss the themes presented and offer themes that may be present in their work.

## **6. Working to Instill Intellectual Humility in our Classrooms and Civic Life**

**Jonathan Garlick**, Tufts University and **Lauren Barthold**, Endicott College and Essential Partners

This learning exchange will help participants better understand challenges that undermine intellectually humble discourse. We will ask: how can we develop dialogic pedagogy to foster humility across difference in college classrooms? We will practice innovative approaches designed to inspire intellectual humility in academic settings to empower open-minded discourse through engaged citizenship. The interactive session will have three parts: 1) General discussion linked to our goals; 2) Exercises to practice pedagogical approaches that will illustrate how intellectual humility can be taught experientially and assessed; and 3) Open discussion and summary of the impact of the dialogic processes on intellectually humble discourse.

## **7. Crime, Safety and Justice: Creating Opportunities for Citizen Decision-Making**

**Amy Lee** and **John Dedrick**, Kettering Foundation; **Carolyne Abdullah**, Everyday Democracy; **Kristen Cambell**, Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement

The issues of crime, safety and justice are at the forefront of the agenda in many communities throughout the nation. They are entangled with issues of race and class and have too often led to unproductive discussions and even breakdowns in community and police relations. But there also exists the possibility for productive dialogues, deliberation and public judgment on these profoundly important issues, as well as community-led solutions. This session will explore work done by the National Issues Forums, Everyday Democracy and members of Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement that address public safety, police and community relations, and equal justice.

## **8. How to Start a Revolution**

**Maureen White**, strategy consultant; **Pedja Stojicic**, Senior Scholar for Stewardship and Engagement, ReThink Health

In today's political climate, how can we resist authoritarianism and uphold democracy? This session will explore the theories of Gene Sharp, foremost expert on the strategic use of nonviolent action. We'll screen the award-winning film *How to Start a Revolution*, which follows Dr. Sharp's work from Serbia to Tahrir Square and beyond, and discuss how it applies to the U.S. under the Trump regime. Through this session, participants will learn about Dr. Gene Sharp's basic theories on strategic non-violent action, see examples of how these theories have been applied by social movements around the world, and consider how Dr. Sharp's theories might be applied in the United States today.

**12:15 PM**

**LUNCH**

1:15-2:45 PM

**Plenary: Framework #2 for Civic Action**

**Donata Secondo**, Manager of Learning and Strategy at the Democracy Fund, and **Joe Goldman**, President of the Democracy Fund, with systems maps for civic renewal. Participants will work in groups of eight to apply the framework and will add ideas to a Google doc.

2:45-3:00 PM

**BREAK**

3:00-4:15 PM

**Plenary: Framework #3 for Civic Action**

A “Fishbowl” Discussion of a draft Strategic Framework from Civic Nation + Co., moderated by Edna Ishayik of Civic Nation. A group discussion will follow after the panelists speak. In the fishbowl:

- **Jeff Coates**, National Conference on Citizenship
- **Felton (Tony) Earls**, Harvard University
- **Lewis A. Friedland**, University of Wisconsin
- **Edna Ishayik**, Civic Nation
- **Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg**, Tufts University
- **Taeku Lee**, University of California-Berkeley
- **Carmen Sirianni**, Brandeis University
- **Janet Tran**, The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute

4:15-6:00 PM

**“Short Takes”** talks, followed by group discussion

**Hardy Merriman** is President of the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict. He will talk about key attributes of effective civil resistance movements that are struggling for rights, freedom, and justice around the world.

**Rekha Datta** teaches Political Science at Monmouth University and advocates girls' education and students' active engagement to empower and learn from local and global communities. She will discuss what being an immigrant means in a democracy, especially in light of shifting identity from a member of a majority to a minority group.

**Ashley Trim** is the executive director of the Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership at Pepperdine University. She will talk about the importance of genuine pluralism at the frontiers of democracy and the value of seeking out civil disagreement.

**Carol Rose** is the Executive Director of the ACLU of Massachusetts. She will talk about the role of citizen-activists and the courts in the defense of civil rights and civil liberties.

**Saturday, 6/24**

8:00-9:00 AM

Networking breakfast

9:00-10:30 AM      **Concurrent Sessions.** Choose among:

### **9. Teaching Youth Participatory Politics in Higher Education**

**Chaebong Nam**, Harvard University

In this interactive session, the presenter will discuss key issues and practices of teaching participatory politics in a digital age. The target audience is professionals who engage in a wide range of civic education in settings ranging from the formal to informal. “The Ten Questions for Young Change Makers”—developed by the MacArthur Foundation’s Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics—will be introduced as the core construct for the session. A reflection-action framework, the Ten Questions are designed to help young people cultivate successful civic agency in a digital age. For a tangible example, the presenter will show how her college students applied the Ten Questions to case study projects. During the breakout session, participants will think about how they might use the Ten Questions frame in their own contexts and share their ideas of how civic educators can help our young people successfully grapple with current challenges. For more details, see [yppactionframe.fas.harvard.edu](http://yppactionframe.fas.harvard.edu).

### **10. Working in and with Faith Communities in Times of Democratic Crisis**

**Elizabeth Gish**, Western Kentucky University; **John Dedrick**, The Kettering Foundation

Historically, churches and other religious organizations have played an important part in creating and envisioning American democracy. Building on this tradition, this workshop discusses possibilities for strengthening faith communities as sites of democratic deliberation and civic repair. We want participants to leave with a sense of possibility for religious communities to contribute to a vibrant democracy. Participants will learn about how religious communities have used deliberative democracy to develop the civic capacity of members, as well as to strengthen the communities where they are located. Participants will leave with a stronger understanding of deliberative dialogue as a way to address contentious issues in and with faith communities.

### **11. The Battle for the Soul of Our Republic**

**Adam Eichen** and **Laura Brisbane**, Small Planet Institute

This short talk on the history of the Anti-Democracy Movement and the emerging Democracy Movement to claim citizen power will focus on policy solutions to our ailing democracy and how involvement in pro-democracy struggle allows participants to meet deep human needs for power, meaning, and connection. During the interactive discussion, the audience will be tasked with identifying aspects of protest, politics, and democracy that inspire them emotionally, and how to translate these feelings for someone who has never felt them and may not share the same political beliefs. Participants will gain information and tools to discuss the structural, deliberate assault on democracy over the past 40 years and how to best move forward. This will include information about specific policies as well as the emerging Democracy Movement, one embodying a "movement of movements" approach that is already achieving major success across the United States. The information will be based on the soon-to-be-released book, *Daring Democracy* by Frances Moore Lappé and Adam Eichen (Beacon Press).

## 12. Democratizing Our Schools

**Roshan Bliss**, National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation; **J.A. Strub**, Students Organizing for Democratic Alternatives; **Shari Davis**, Participatory Budgeting Project, and others

Our society needs a public education system that teaches young people to participate in, shape, and even defend democratic systems, yet many schools function more like dictatorships. We will learn about efforts to transform student governments into deliberative, participatory, democratic spaces where students learn to do democracy, thereby helping younger generations become democracy's defenders. This session will be organized with an initial set of framing remarks, commentary from the panelists giving an overview of their work democratizing student governments at the K-12 and higher ed levels, followed by a facilitated discussion with the learning exchange participants about their reactions to the ideas presented and, hopefully, a formulation of action steps for how we can advance the conversation and the work needed to create the change we would want to see beyond the conference.

## 13. How might citizens use principles of opening governance to confront authoritarianism?

**John Harlow** and **Erik Johnston**, Research Network on Opening Governance, Arizona State University  
Center for Policy Informatics

This design thinking workshop will explore the potential roles for opening governance in confronting authoritarianism. Participants will engage narratives of citizens living in authoritarian regimes, consider three short cases in which open governance helped citizens exercise power (e.g. Flint, MI citizen science), and discuss how opening governance principles might be applied to facilitate citizens' articulation of power. Discussion will cover potential methods for citizens to collect, analyze, and publicize their own data and stories, and consider how opening governance principles might be applied under various authoritarian conditions.

## 14. How to Make Public Engagement Truly Engaging

**Maureen White**, Former Public Engagement Campaign Manager, Go Boston 2030

What would it look like to create a public engagement campaign that was truly engaging to the public? In 2014, Boston decided to find out. Through a unique partnership with the Interaction Institute for Social Change, it launched a groundbreaking campaign to engage the public in its 15-year transportation planning initiative, Go Boston 2030. By using new, experimental methods of engaging people beyond just "the usual suspects," the project reached unprecedented levels of participation and is credited with changing the way City Hall thinks about planning. This session will offer a case study of Go Boston 2030's approach and an opportunity to look at participants' own engagement initiatives through a new lens. It will begin with a quick presentation on Go Boston 2030 followed by questions and small-group discussion, with opportunities for participants to workshop their own initiatives.

## 15. Putting Democracy to Work: Community Action that Binds, Not Divides

**Rob Jones** and **Meagan Picard**, Founding Forward Democracy Labs

This interactive workshop will explore how community bridge-building work can lead to a different kind of organized community action. Participants will discuss how to bring people together across difference and experience strategies for building empathy through story, establishing common ground and generating organized community action rooted in that common ground. Interactive workshop conducted in small-group format. Interactive components will include discussion that elevates the wisdom in the room as well as practice finding common ground across difference and igniting cross-group community action, utilizing story, empathy-building and common visioning tools to build platforms for action.

## 16. Social Emergency Response Centers

Kenneth Bailey, Lori Lobenstine, and Ayako Maruyama

Social Emergency Response Centers (SERCs) are temporary, emergent, and creative pop-up spaces co-led by activists and artists around the U.S. They function as both an artistic gesture and a practical solution. As such, they aim to find the balance between the two, answering questions like: “How will we feed people—and their hunger for justice?” This session will review SERCs happening nationally and internationally and consider SERC as a case for civic participation and engagement

## 17. Leadership Styles and Phases in Social Movements

Hardy Merriman, President of the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict

Making social change from the grassroots requires several different forms of leadership, which play different roles as a movement grows and develops. Local engagement may be prioritized during one phase of a movement and national engagement may be highlighted at another phase. Likewise, nonviolent direct action may be most important at one point and engaging in institutional means of change (such as elections) may be crucial at another point. In this workshop we will discuss four different forms of leadership in social movements, and eight different phases of movements, which were developed by the practitioner-scholar Bill Moyer over his lifetime of organizing in nonviolent movements struggling for human rights.

10:30-10:45 AM      **BREAK**

10:45AM-12:15 PM      **Plenary: Framework #4 for Civic Action**

Participants will work in groups of eight to apply this framework and will add ideas to a Google doc:

# How to Respond



By Peter Levine  
www.peterlevine.ws  
Originally published 11/11/16

12:15-12:30 PM      **Closing Remarks**