



## CONSTRUCTING ACTIVE

# CITIZENSHIP



**This is OUR democracy. Every person is important.  
We need your input and engagement to build our future together.**

It's clear that the two main political parties in the U.S. – who, by the way, allow for no other parties to participate in a meaningful way – are not at all interested in increasing citizen participation in our democratic process. As we have seen throughout this century and the final quarter of the last, politicians want to tell us what our choices are, rather than hearing from us what it is that we want. It's easy to see the result of his approach: decreased interest in the political process, decreased activity in community-building, greater demand and dependence on government programs, often outsourced to private – even 'non-profit' - contractors, school systems arranged to program robots rather than nourish our precious, developing children, and a war on information, integrity, critical thinking and values through all forms of media.

Who will protect us? We may find one or two politicians who support community, humanity, and 'E Pluribus Unum' but most, even with good intentions, work on 'party-line' projects without thinking or caring about the whole; about all citizens building our communities together.

***Citizens do not live in political parties; we live in families, neighborhoods and communities.***

Politicians want us to hand over our power to them. They want us to believe the solutions to our problems can only be resolved with money or control. They want us to believe we lack the knowledge, the experience and the capacity to oversee or contribute to the remedies. We are undereducated for this moment in time and struggling to figure out who we can trust; who we can follow to a safe place where we can heal and grow. We turn to groups, to ideologies, to politicians and parties to find a safe group.

The two-party system is pitting us against each other and is at the very root of why we are no longer willing or able to work on building our commons together. Are we going to let these two parties hold us back from living a better life? We are smart! We are capable! We care! So why are we becoming less civilized? Isn't this what education is for? We can defend our right to live in a better society. We can solve our problems.

***We have everything we need. We are the "Savers" that we have been waiting for.***

Just imagine how politics could change when we tell the politicians what we want.

## TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITY-BUILDING

ATTENTION  
BIG PICTURE  
CARE  
COMMITMENT  
CREATIVITY  
CURIOSITY  
INTENTION  
LISTENING  
SHOWING UP  
VOLUNTEER

### Conversations and Questions

- + *What do we want?*
- + *What commitment can you make?*
- + Physical + Emotional First Aid Kit
- + Books, webinars, advisors, training



These are just a couple of 'seed' suggestions to start your basic community-building tool kit. The tools, questions, resources, concerns, gifts, wants and needs will change for each community setting. Heck, you can create a reentry organization, if that's what society needs! ~ ; )

## COMMUNITY BUILDING ASSUMPTIONS

- Everyone has an important gift (or more than one!) to share.
- Everyone has a perspective to consider.
- Build relationships to build community. Building relationships builds trust.
- Community members have a lot of power...especially together!
- Community leaders will listen to and contribute to community concerns.
- Asking questions is more effective than giving answers.
- People are better than programs! We can make institutions work for us.

## COMMUNITY-BUILDING AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES



Abundant Community <https://www.abundantcommunity.com/>  
Every neighborhood has all the gifts required to raise our children, be safe, carve out a living, be healthy, care for the vulnerable and end the isolation of all, especially the elderly.

Check out Peter Block's book *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (2018) Berrett-Koehler Publishers

**“Transformation occurs through choice, not mandate.” - Peter Block**



**Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute**

ABCD: local people working together for the well-being of their home place.

Community Building Tool Kit: [www.tinyurl.com/446pj9va](http://www.tinyurl.com/446pj9va)

Videos and Podcasts: <https://tinyurl.com/syue92s>

Online Community Engagement: <https://tinyurl.com/363zvyc8>

Offers resources for these main focus areas: Community Organizing, Disability Justice, Homelessness, Identity, Immigration Rights, Mental Health, Police Accountability, Restoration Practice, Youth Advocacy, Gentrification, Animal Welfare



MRSC: The Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) is a nonprofit organization which exists to serve Washington residents by providing legal and policy guidance on any topic. The org is by and for Washingtonians, but there is a lot of information that can benefit citizens all around the country. They “believe the most effective government is a well-informed local government.”

Community Engagement Resources: [www.tinyurl.com/4vmy6r25](http://www.tinyurl.com/4vmy6r25)

### **ACTIVATE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BY VOLUNTEERING!**

*“The essential challenge is to transform the isolation and self-interest within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole.”*

- Peter Block

*“Which of the most pressing problems can you help to solve using the gifts that are unique to you in all the universe?”*

- Derrick Jensen

*“You’ll never ever be able to convince a person thru logical argument or even brilliant rhetoric that a free and just society is possible. You can show them. You can start doing it.”*

- David Graeber

*“Active citizenship is our only hope for getting a fair shake at life.”*

- Sue Kastensen

***We must act as if our institutions are ours to create, our learning is ours to define, and the leadership we seek is ours to become.” - Peter Block***