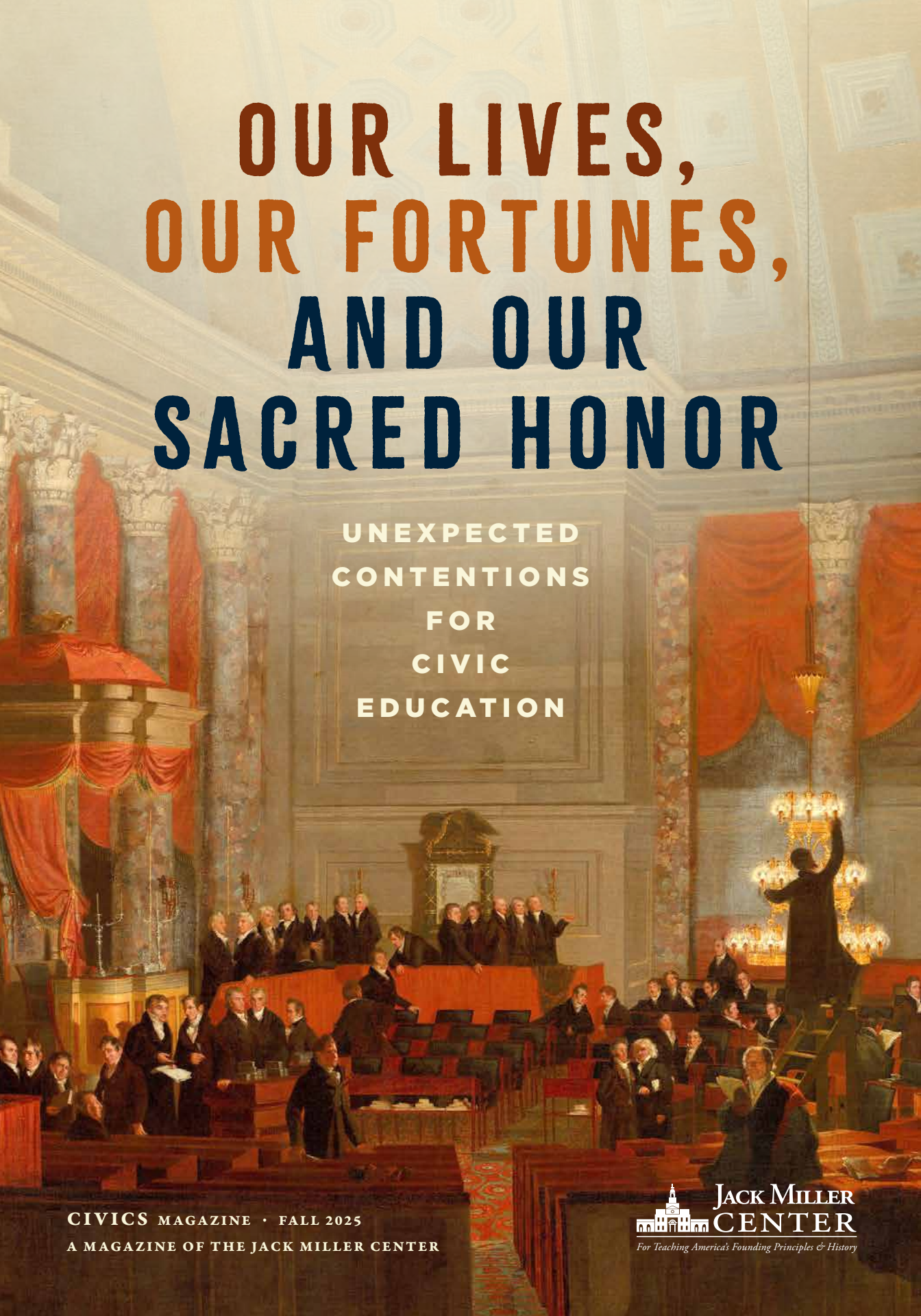
OUR LIVES, OUR FORTUNES, AND OUR SACRED HONOR

UNEXPECTED CONTENTIONS FOR CIVIC EDUCATION



CIVICS MAGAZINE · FALL 2025
A MAGAZINE OF THE JACK MILLER CENTER

JACK MILLER CENTER
For Teaching America's Founding Principles & History

COVER IMAGE *The House of Representatives, 1822* by Samuel F.B. Morse

The artist spent four months in Washington painting the individuals seen here: congressmen, staff, Supreme Court justices, and press. At the far right in the visitors' gallery is Chief Petalesharo (Pawnee Nation), who visited President James Monroe in 1821. Petalesharo is isolated from the other figures, echoing the oppression and displacement of Native Americans. Morse toured the painting in 1823, but it did not draw much attention. He went on to pursue scientific interests, becoming famous as the primary inventor of the telegraph.

Image and caption courtesy National Gallery of Art

JACK MILLER CENTER

For Teaching America's Founding Principles & History

The Jack Miller Center is a Philadelphia-based educational nonprofit committed to solving the national crisis of uninformed citizenship by teaching America's founding principles and history.

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UNEXPECTED CONTENTIONS FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

CIVICS MAGAZINE

Fall 2025

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HANS ZEIGER

INTRODUCTION

We are soon to celebrate America's quarter-millennium anniversary. This is an exceptional milestone. There was no guarantee that our "experiment" in self-government, as it has often been called, would work out. We've been through a lot as a country over 250 years, and we have our share of challenges now, but I think it's fair to say that we have a lot going for us. Among our national advantages: the enduring words of the Declaration of Independence, which form our national creed.

The staying power of the Declaration's ideas comes from their ability to resonate far beyond the halls of government. Its final words remind us what is at stake: "We mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

At the Jack Miller Center, we believe the ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence are not just political slogans—they are the foundation of our nation. They teach us about the dignity of people and about our quest for liberty and equality. These principles have inspired generations.

It isn't just politicians and professors who should take the Declaration of Independence seriously. After all, our founders weren't just statesmen or

RIGHT ***Talking It Over*** **by Enoch Wood Perry, 1872. The Yankee farmers portrayed here resemble George Washington and Abraham Lincoln and thus summoned up more than simple nostalgic reverie. By seating the two icons of ideal American citizenry in a barnlike interior, Perry honored rural values in the face of the pressures of massive immigration and the unprecedented industrial and economic growth the nation was then experiencing.**

Image and caption courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

philosophers; they were engineers, farmers, entrepreneurs, scientists, and artists. The staying power of the Declaration's ideas comes from their ability to resonate far beyond the halls of government. Its final words remind us what is at stake: "We mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

In this issue of *Civics Magazine*, we turn to today's professionals and exemplary citizens to make a new case for civic education—one grounded in experience, not just theory. These conversations are just the beginning. They will continue at the 2026 National Summit for Civic Education in Philadelphia on May 18–19. We hope you'll join us.

HANS ZEIGER
President, Jack Miller Center

ABOUT THE SUMMIT

NATIONAL SUMMIT ON CIVIC EDUCATION

The 2026 National Summit on Civic Education will bring together civic educators, thought leaders, funders, and leaders in business and civil society for conversations about the Declaration of Independence and its extraordinary relevance in American education today.

This two-day conference will be a celebration of our founding ideals and their power to bring us together as citizens across differences. Leading voices from a variety of fields will discuss bold ideas for reform, and concrete actions attendees can take to their own institutions. Set against the historic backdrop of Philadelphia—the birthplace of the Declaration of Independence—we expect to welcome more than 500 guests for engaging discussion and events on "Words that Changed the World."

Attendees can look forward to a moving naturalization ceremony for 13 new US citizens, an opening luncheon featuring renowned columnist Peggy Noonan, a formal dinner capped by a keynote address from a distinguished national thought leader, and a "Shark Tank"–style competition for catalytic civics projects coming out of 2026. Join us.

To learn more, scan the QR code or visit **jackmillercenter.org/summit**.

RIGHT ***Union Volunteer Refreshment Saloon of Philadelphia (1861–1865)*** **by James Fuller Queen. Despite enlistment in the Pennsylvania Militia during the summers of 1862 and 1863, the artist designed firefighting scenes for certificates and several Civil War related images. His Civil War work showcased his skills for details and he served as the prime artist for most of the fundraising chromolithographs of the era.** Caption and credit courtesy Artvee


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BARRY MELANCON

ACCOUNTING FOR CIVICS

When the American Founders broke away from the British Empire, they declared that they would devote their "lives, fortunes, and sacred honor" to the cause of freedom. Although we may not have to face down a great world-empire like they did, the Founders' pledge is still the gold standard for citizenship. If we intend to preserve the experiment in liberty we have inherited, we all—from scholars and teachers to philanthropists and ordinary citizens—must rededicate ourselves to that cause. This is the truest meaning of civic education.

The practical world of business and industry may seem miles away from the world of theory and ideas that constitutes civic education. But upon further examination, the distance is much smaller than it first appears. Civics comprises the world we live in and the rules we play by invariably as American citizens—everyone needs a mastery of this common knowledge for our society to function properly.

LEFT ***'Wooding Up' on the Mississippi*** **by Frances Flora Bond Palmer, 1863. In the nineteenth century, steamboats provided important and practical large-scale transport of passengers and goods and played a crucial role in the expansion of the American economy.**

Image courtesy National Gallery of Art; caption courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

Take, for instance, the straightforward connection between policy and business. For 30 years, I served as the CEO of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. In that time, I came to understand that, like any other group of professionals in their own worlds, CPAs have an ongoing responsibility to leverage an understanding of American democracy to make informed decisions on the global accounting stage. Civics became a vital part of my day-to-day work.

Civic education is not just for future policymakers. It serves every industry—especially business.

Beyond the need to understand civics, though, I also learned that accountants have something unique to contribute to civic discourse. Our niche expertise in the great marketplace of ideas is to be constantly asking questions: "Is this administrable? Are there issues no one is thinking about? How can we make this more cost effective for American citizens?" Accounting may seem technical, but its insights are civic: rooted in public accountability and service.

Civic education, then, is not just for future policymakers. It serves every industry—especially business.

First, all professionals are regulated by laws. If we don't understand how those laws are made, or how policy develops, we can't participate effectively in shaping or responding to them. More profoundly, every profession is tied to a public good. CPAs, for example, produce audits that others rely on to make decisions. Our financial markets flow because of the trust the public places in accountants. Business may feel separate from politics—like a machine that operates all by itself—but it is very tangibly grounded in public interest, influenced by the same negotiations and democratic processes as any other part of society. Business procedures are often designed with the public good in mind.

The work of the business world is not outside of, but instead, inseparable from civic life, which entails endless negotiation about and implementation of the public interest. Regulations and laws don't emerge in a vacuum. They reflect civic priorities, negotiated and implemented through our political system. Understanding these systems allows professionals to better navigate them. To do that, a working knowledge of how our democracy functions is essential.

Perhaps more pragmatically, professionals—businessmen and CPAs especially—are often the most trusted advisors to individuals, families, and businesses. Our role goes far beyond collecting and interpreting financial information. We're confidants, counselors, and guides through a complex economic, business, and personal ecosystem. In a society as diverse and dynamic as ours, helping clients understand how civic issues affect their lives and livelihoods is a vital part of the job. People turn to us for insight on not only their finances, but also how their business is run in this broader civic ecosystem.

In a society as diverse and dynamic as ours, helping clients understand how civic issues affect their lives and livelihoods is a vital part of the job.

If we believe that civics is relevant to business, we must also believe it's relevant to every citizen. In a way, citizenship is a profession of its own. It carries duties, standards, and expectations. Just as architects must understand practical and legal restrictions to build safely, and CPAs must follow auditing standards to ensure reliability, citizens must understand the principles and structures that govern our democracy. Our founding documents are the standards according to which we all operate.

And that is precisely what makes the work of the Jack Miller Center and its partners at the National Summit on Civic Education so vital. This is a network of people who understand the Founders' original pledge to devote their "lives, fortunes, and sacred honor" to a cause much bigger than any one man, or even any one generation. Providing a universal civic education means more than training young people for jobs—it means educating them to understand our distinctive way of life and the self-evident truths about human nature which inspired it.

BARRY MELANCON is the former CEO of the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants and a member of the Jack Miller Center Board of Directors.

JUSTIN SHUBOW

BUILDING CITIZENS

HOW CIVIC EDUCATION SHAPES AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE

Demonstrating a vision both aesthetic and political, Thomas Jefferson envisioned the US Capitol as "the first temple dedicated to the sovereignty of the people; embellishing with Athenian taste the course of a nation looking far beyond the range of Athenian destinies." From the beginning, America's leaders understood that civic education happens in stone and space as much as in schools. The buildings and monuments around us shape how we imagine our country and our place within it. For better or worse, civic architecture teaches citizens what kind of nation they inhabit and what kind of citizens they are meant to be. American political architecture, especially in its classical

RIGHT *House Raising* by William P. Chappel, ca. 1870. This scene takes place on Grand between Eldridge and Allen Streets (in today's Lower East Side). Image and caption courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

tradition, reflects the ideals of a self-governing people and draws all who encounter it into a shared communal inheritance.

The Founders chose classical architecture with care and intention. Their education in the political thought and public aesthetics of ancient Greece and Rome shaped how they understood the visual language of a democratic republic. Jefferson modeled the Virginia State Capitol on the Maison Carrée in Nîmes, a Roman temple he praised for its symmetry and strength. Completed in 1788, the Virginia Capitol was the first American building constructed in a pure classical temple form—it inaugurated a tradition in our nation's architecture that has lasted until today. Jefferson believed his Capitol expressed order, permanence, and civic virtue. Placing it on a hill overlooking the James River, Jefferson hoped to signal Richmond's place in the lineage of classical cities and to inspire a national style rooted in public ideals and adapted to democratic life.

Architecture should embody national principles.

George Washington, also an amateur architect, shared Jefferson's conviction that architecture should embody national principles. He supported Jefferson's vision for the US Capitol as a building of beauty and grandeur, reflecting the noble aspirations of the new American republic. The Capitol's columned façade and planned dome offered a striking new symbol of unity and purpose. Even the word "capitol" was chosen deliberately to recall the Capitoline Hill of Rome, the symbolic heart of republican Rome and the site of its most sacred temple.

This approach carried through the nation's capital and beyond. The US Supreme Court, a "modern" building from the 1930s, is a Greco-Roman temple with a Corinthian portico and grand staircase, which presents a formal ascent flanked by sculptures of "Justice" and "Authority." The National Archives, a veritable temple to history, declares the dignity of public memory. The Lincoln Memorial draws on Greek forms to elevate a democratic statesman to the status of philosophical hero, while the Jefferson Memorial places its subject within the tradition he introduced to American public life.

This educational power of architecture is not incidental. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan liked to quote Jefferson: "Design activity and political thought are indivisible." A well-ordered city of beautiful public buildings reinforces a well-

ordered civic life. It signals continuity among past, present, and future. It suggests that public things are worth making beautiful, and that citizens belong to something enduring and shared.

That sense of belonging falters in the presence of buildings that feel anonymous, severe, or obscure. The rise of Modernist styles in federal architecture in the mid-twentieth century, such as Brutalism, brought forth structures that embody faceless bureaucracy, not America at its best. The Department of Housing and Urban Development's headquarters, with its cold concrete and inhuman scale, communicates distance, impersonality, and unaccountable power. Such buildings sap civic pride and erode public trust.

Americans have not been indifferent to this decline. In a 2020 Harris Poll conducted for the National Civic Art Society, 72% of Americans preferred traditional architecture for US courthouses and federal office buildings. These preferences spanned regions, political parties, and racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. And recent legislative efforts, including the 2023 Beautifying Federal Civic Architecture Act and various executive actions taken by President Donald Trump, reflect a growing desire to restore grandeur and dignity to public buildings. These initiatives point toward a shared instinct: that what we build should elevate and unify.

"Design activity and political thought are indivisible."

THOMAS JEFFERSON

The Founders understood this. Jefferson saw that an enduring republic requires buildings that embody the virtues it hopes to cultivate. That we still walk among buildings shaped by his vision reminds us that beauty, rightly understood, carries civic meaning across generations.

JUSTIN SHUBOW is president of the National Civic Art Society and the former chairman of the US Commission of Fine Arts.

JOHN J. COUGHLIN, O.F.M.

ARTISANS OF THE COMMON GOOD

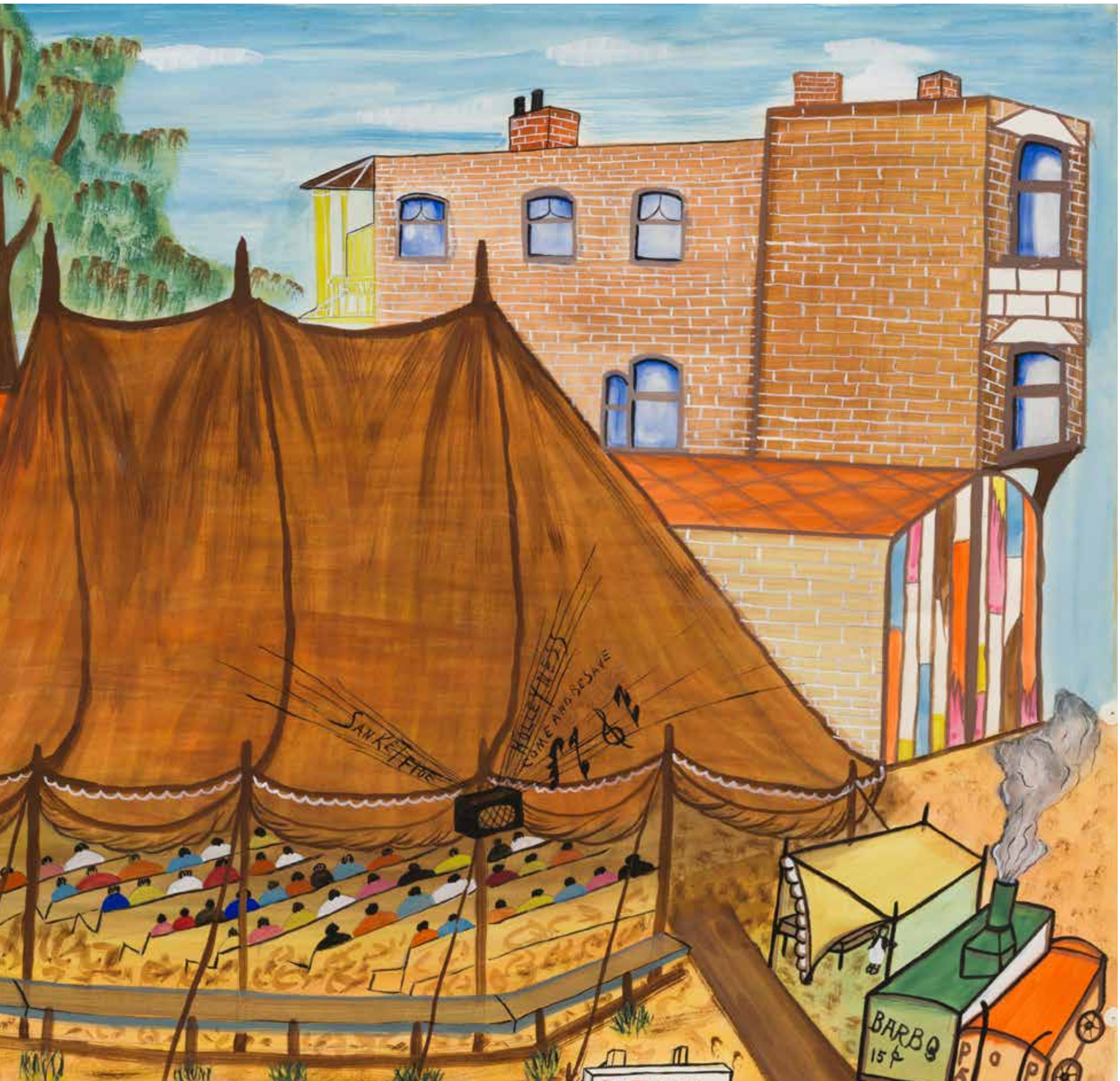
A law professor reflects on the blessing of reciprocal education

In his 2017 New Year's Eve homily, Pope Francis expressed his "great esteem for the parents, teachers, and all educators who . . . try to form children and young people in civic awareness, in an ethics of responsibility...with a style of civic education practiced in daily life." With a beautiful turn of phrase, the late pope described people from all walks of life who quietly "strive each day to do their part to make things a little better" as *"artisans of the common good."*

Remembering my grades 1–12 teachers, I can only share the pontiff's admiration. Although I am an imperfect person, I

RIGHT ***The South Side Religious Tent, Open Air,*** **by Fred Hollingsworth, 1939, likely depicts the All Nations Pentecostal Church, located in Chicago's South Side.**

Image courtesy of Artvee, caption courtesy St. Louis Art Museum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endeavor as a Franciscan priest and university teacher to serve with the same level of commitment. I do my best to express my love for my students by encouraging them to transcend themselves, and as the pope put it "to feel part of, to take care of, to take an interest in the reality that surrounds them."

Over the course of more than three decades of teaching law and theology, I have learned to listen to my students with humility, respect, and openness. When I started teaching law at St. John's University Law School in Queens, New York, the students in my evening classes included inter alia, nurses, police officers, fire fighters, high school teachers, and even a medical doctor. Many of them were married with children, and they worked during the day to support their families while they studied law at night.

As a law professor, I had the legal theory and doctrine down cold, but I gained much knowledge from my students about everyday life. What a blessing it was for me to participate in this reciprocal education. Reflecting the diverse religious, social, and ethnic richness of New York City, the law students taught me a great deal about civic awareness and the common good.

The students in my evening classes included inter alia, nurses, police officers, fire fighters, high school teachers, and even a medical doctor.

The blessing continued for me while teaching at other religious schools. As in New York, I encountered an embarrassment of riches among the many fine students and faculty colleagues I worked with at Notre Dame Law School who enriched my life. I will always remain grateful to them. No small number of them were religious persons whose convictions about the sacred shaped their commitment to the common good. They understood that religious values can foster the self-transcendence that represents the apex of human dignity. Equally important, they appreciated that human dignity depends on freedom of conscience in matters of belief and unbelief.

Their civic-mindedness helped me to develop my own thoughts about the ways that religion can build up the social fabric, as well as about the paramount importance of religious freedom in American pluralistic society. During this time, I also had the opportunity to be a visiting professor of canon law. In this role at the Pontifical

As a law professor, I had the legal theory and doctrine down cold, but I gained much knowledge from my students about everyday life.

Gregorian University in Rome, I taught graduate students, most of whom were Catholic priests. To a man, they exemplified a spirit of service, and in our seminars, I thoroughly enjoyed the questions we reflected upon about law, religion, and the public square.

For the past twelve years, it has been my privilege to serve as a faculty member at a university with an international student body: New York University, Abu Dhabi. As a Franciscan, I knew that the university's venture in global education was a good fit. The students hail from more than 130 different countries, and many of them come from families of limited financial means. Some of these students have been brought up in countries where liberties such as freedom of speech, religion, and association, as well as goods such as nutrition, housing, health care, and education, cannot be taken for granted.

Frequently, our class discussions contrast individualistic and collectivist understandings of freedom. The discussion tends to move beyond a false dichotomy in which individual freedom and communal values are seen as mutually exclusive. We query: what are the optimal legal, social, and economic conditions that support democratic freedom so that both individual initiative and social solidarity are nourished as essential elements of human flourishing?

After more than thirty years in the classroom, I continue to learn from my students. I believe that their deliberations about human dignity, freedom, self-transcendence, and care for others lie at the heart of civic education. I pray that it prepares them to become artisans of the common good.

FR. COUGHLIN is a Global Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies and Law at New York University, Abu Dhabi, who has taught courses in Professional Responsibility, Jurisprudence, Administrative Law, Family Law, Ethics, Canon Law, and Law and Religion.

JEFF SHAARA

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN CIVIC LIFE

These days, it is regrettably easy to disparage the topic of *Civics*. To an enormous number of school boards throughout the country, civics is viewed as a subject to be avoided, lest there be a secret and dangerous lesson that would educate the student, thus producing a threat—possibly a well-educated mind. For the adult watching the evening news, there is the mantra

RIGHT ***My Bunkie*** **by Charles Schreyvogel (1899) portrays an event described to the artist by a veteran frontier trooper he met in Colorado. In the heat of a violent conflict on the plains, a soldier heroically rescues a bunkmate who has lost his mount in a skirmish.**

Image and caption courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

of the politician: "Not to worry; everything is in good hands." Civics lessons are unnecessary, since our system of government is doing just fine. "Trust us."

I'm old enough to remember when lessons of our government, local and national, were passed along by school boards and teachers who saw the value in educating students, preparing them for life in the real world. Those lessons have stayed with me for my entire life. I am deeply grateful.

What happened? Perhaps history will help to answer that. I write historical fiction novels. With that background, I believe I can offer some relevant observations.

When we study these men, rarely do we weigh them as individuals—men with disagreements, with differing opinions, and different incentives.

People of a certain age, like me, were taught about the Founding Fathers. To many, it can be said that those men invented civics. Indeed, our entire system of government has been handed down to us by a relatively small group of men.

Many of us were taught incorrectly that the "Fathers" were a single body: landowners, businessmen, and yes, slave owners. We are taught that 250 years ago, these men (only men) formed our first government, standing up as a single voice, in unity, to preserve this extraordinary New Idea. There are noteworthy paintings of these men gathered in a solemn setting, Independence Hall in Philadelphia, a single body, speaking out against King George, and planting the seeds of Revolution.

Note that "Founding Fathers" is almost always capitalized. When we study these men, rarely do we weigh them as individuals—men with disagreements, with differing opinions, and different incentives to stand tall against the king, or even to remain loyal to England at all. As my friend Ken Burns points out, the founding fathers (lower case) had absolutely no idea they were the Founding Fathers. None of them expected to have statues in their honor.

And they were not a united front. For example, the Carolinians angrily opposed the New Englanders on many of the issues they debated. The Declaration of Independence, though signed by representatives from each of the thirteen colonies, never had unanimous support. Indeed, these men should be congratulated for a

great many things. To me, it should not be overlooked that every one of the men who signed the Declaration, who sat in Independence Hall, who debated the great issues of the day, the moment any one of them walked into Independence Hall, they put their necks in a noose. King George had declared them traitors. That is an astonishing act of courage. Had British soldiers suddenly showed up, there would be no Declaration of Independence, no Ben Franklin in Paris, no George Washington at the head of an army. Carry that analogy forward. There would be no Gettysburg Address, and there would be no such thing as American History, nor would there be any lessons on civics.

As with the Founding Fathers, it's the people—and often, the individual—who creates history.

Another point, that I hope makes sense. I have written novels about the Revolution, the Civil War, World Wars I and II, and more recently the Cuban Missile Crisis (October, 1962). Since I'm writing fiction, my primary goal is to find and tell a good story, while keeping the history as accurate as possible. I focus almost exclusively on the characters and their voices. As with the Founding Fathers, it's the people—and often, the individual—who creates history . So many times throughout American history, our government is saved by extraordinary deeds, usually achieved by familiar names: Washington, Lincoln, Grant, Pershing, Eisenhower, to name a few (of many).

When it comes to civics, if we're to learn the right lessons—especially from our own history—we must understand the power of the individual, the singular deed. What matters most? Honor? Honesty? Courage? Perhaps just simple competence. How hard can it be? If you can't do the job, then step aside.

I regret to point out that not all deeds and actions included within the boundaries of civics are positive, beneficial to the people, or the nation. We must learn to recognize that as well and learn what's wrong, or we're destined to collapse back to the days of King George.

JEFF SHAARA is an acclaimed novelist and historian.

MICHAEL WEISER

THE OFFICE OF THE CITIZEN

We need a new paradigm for educating young people about the rights and responsibilities we have as Americans

"In a democracy, the highest office is the office of citizen," Justice Felix Frankfurter purportedly said. As we approach the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, we find ourselves with a sacred opportunity: to renew our understanding of citizenship as not just a legal status or cultural identity but as a lasting inheritance. Citizenship is America's only lifelong unelected office. And, like any Constitutional office, that entails certain rights and responsibilities. Modern education, however, fails to explain these duties to the young people who inherit this role. Individuals know little about the beautiful history of their station, the power of their vote, and the respect their office demands.

This office is one for which too many young people are woefully underprepared. Voting booths increasingly go empty, individuals lament their perceived helplessness in politics, and ideologues direct their misguided resentment toward the very institutions that guarantee their political autonomy. Many Americans are unaware

RIGHT ***City Watchman*** **by William P. Chappel, ca. 1870. Before New York City established a professional police force in the 1840s, residents relied on a patchwork system of constables, marshals, and watchmen tasked with maintaining order in an increasingly unruly city.**

Image and caption courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

of citizenship's high privileges and responsibilities, and educators now face the consequences of decades of neglected civic instruction.

The higher conception of citizenship inherent to the American political tradition is what has consistently struck the greatest observers of the republic as the most exceptional thing about our way of life. Alexis de Tocqueville, for example, observed that in "multiplying officials" and dividing authority among them, society confers on each man "all the power he needs to do what he is destined to execute." In being his or her own representative, each citizen does not presume a "right to do everything" but indeed accepts "more varied social obligations than elsewhere." Thus, a "well regulated" and "free" society arises. Americans do not have to earn this office, nor can they shed it. It is inalienable.

Young people's ignorance of this station is perilous, but it must not be mistaken for an incapacity to learn. It is the educators, not the students, who are to blame. It is time to equip educators and learners alike with the tools to fully exercise this privilege–both for their own good and for the world they shape.

Unlike mere subjects, citizens are not subordinate to or isolated from their nation's conduct. Instead, they have a direct voice in managing their republic, which they inherit as a treasured right from their ancestors. This right, though, is not one to be taken lightly. Samuel Adams entreated America to remind each citizen "at the moment he is offering his vote that he is . . . executing one of the most solemn trusts in human society for which he is accountable to God and his country." This agency extends far beyond the ballot box, obliging citizens to lead in their communities, steward nonprofits and churches, and guide the moral formation of their families.

The influence of the American citizen extends far beyond our homeland. America's direct impact on the international stage radically exceeds the influence proportional to a mere 4.22% of the global population. Each citizen's inescapable influence renders him or her an actor on behalf of others—an unelected officeholder, whether they accept it or not. As such, we must teach our young people that citizenship is not a responsibility that can be shed by turning a blind eye to one's duties.

Educators must introduce young people to the power they hold, replacing the growing victimhood paradigm with one of empowerment. Too often, we form young people primarily as individuals, neglecting the deeper formation of their

civic identity. Thomas Jefferson, however, reminded us that "the qualifications for self-government in society are not innate. They are the result of habit and long training." The lack of civic education leads young people into an illusion of helplessness and victimhood, viewing themselves as oppressed, powerless, and too small to influence a system so vast. This could not be further from the truth, and it is through real civic education about the office of the citizen that they might be imbued with the integrity and power their office demands.

So, what is to be done? Civic education programs like Scouting, Boys State, and Girls State are a strong start. These programs focus on the civic education and development of young people, replace helplessness with agency, and cultivate a strong civic identity in young citizens as they learn to take on the responsibilities of their office. This kind of civic education empowers citizens to fight for their beliefs with full confidence that expressing them is a right and a duty that should be cherished across the political spectrum.

A civic education renewal calls upon scholars of the American Founding to embrace their role as civic educators. There is a basic need—neglected for too long—to explain the brilliance of the office of the citizen to our children from the youngest age. Teaching in this way is not merely an antiquarian endeavor concerned with preserving a dead past, but rather, an act of true patriotism that keeps history alive. Without that love of country, scholarship would be empty. But when that scholarship aims first and foremost at communicating the true essence of our shared citizenship, students will wonder at and come to love the magnificence of self-government and the ineffable opportunities it creates.

George Washington said that "a primary object" of our efforts as citizens of the United States "should be the education of our youth in the science of government. In a republic, what species of knowledge can be equally important?" he asked. In recent years, we have lost the art of citizenship. By renewing our understanding of citizenship as a sacred, unelected office, we may yet reclaim the art of self-government, and with it, the republic itself.

MICHAEL WEISER is the Chair of Jack Miller Center's Board of Directors.

MAYA SULKIN

THE WESTERN CANON ANSWERS THE 'WHY' OF JOURNALISM

HOW ONE REPORTER FOUND HER START IN THE GREAT BOOKS

I've never taken a journalism course in my life. That's because I never had much interest in becoming a journalist. My lack of interest in the field was, in part, a result of everyone around me—even my colleagues on my college's student paper—telling me that the industry was dying, and that there was no use in pursuing a job as a writer or reporter. It wasn't until I was halfway through college that I changed my mind. And it was changed by dead people. Let me explain.

RIGHT ***The True American*** **by Enoch Wood Perry, ca. 1874. The concealed heads of the people in the composition here are a comment on the willful ignorance of the voting population in the United States during the Reconstruction era.**

Image and caption courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art


THE TRUE AMERICAN

Halfway through my sophomore year of college, I switched from a political science major to a history major because I was bored of regurgitating what my professors wanted to read in exchange for a good grade. Ultimately, that's what I thought journalists did: opine on political movements they didn't know much about so that the people reading their words felt vindicated, more certain of themselves than they did before encountering the op-ed or feature or report.

Through reading the Western canon, I understood what it meant to seek truth.

In my debut as a history major, I took the most obscure course I could find (other than *Merchants, Pirates, and Slaves in the Making of Atlantic Capitalism*, which was a real course offering). The course was on Western Canon, and I chose it because its description sounded like the opposite of what my college coursework had been like up until that moment.

In what became the most meaningful semester of my life, I read the works of Dante, Saint Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Aristotle. They ultimately, without my knowing it at the time, became the greatest journalism professors one could ask for. The course taught me more about journalism than any course in the actual journalism school would, like a class titled *Fire & Voice: Justice Journalism with Style*—another real course offering. And that's because, through reading the Western canon, I understood what it meant to seek truth. And shortly after, I understood that that's the journalist's job, too.

From Thomas Aquinas, I learned about Jacob's ladder—each rung bringing us closer to God, closer to perfect understanding. We never reach the top, but the climbing itself is sacred work. This became my understanding of journalism: not the arrogant proclamation of having found the truth, but the humble, relentless pursuit of getting closer to it with each assumption challenged.

Aristotle taught me about the cardinal virtues, and I learned that courage is the first virtue because it makes all the others possible. Without courage, you cannot be temperate, just, or prudent. And journalism, I realized, is fundamentally about courage—the courage to be wrong, to ask uncomfortable questions, to challenge popular narratives, to sit with uncertainty rather than rushing to judgment.

This is the opposite of what passes for journalism today—and why I never thought about the profession seriously before. But real journalism requires what Socrates called "learned ignorance"—knowing that you don't know and being brave enough to keep asking questions anyway.

So, despite never having taken a journalism course—where I'd presumably learn the "how" of journalism, like the basics of reporting—I did, by accident, learn the "why" of journalism. The Western Canon taught me that the "why" of journalism is inseparable from the American project itself. The American project depends on truth seeking, rigorous debate, and the courage to be wrong.

The Western Canon taught me that the "why" of journalism is inseparable from the American project itself.

Dante's journey through the *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* taught me that seeking truth is not a comfortable endeavor. It requires descending into dark places, facing uncomfortable realities, and being guided by those who have walked the path before us.

The crisis in American journalism stems from reporters who have forgotten that their ultimate loyalty must be to truth rather than tribe, to citizens rather than activists, to the hard work of understanding rather than the satisfaction of being right. A civic education grounded in first principles and the great books of the Western tradition provides what journalism schools cannot: a philosophical foundation that makes the technical skills meaningful. It teaches you that pursuing truth is not just a professional obligation but connected to the deeper American project.

MAYA SULKIN is a reporter for *The Free Press*, covering breaking news, higher education, Gen Z, and culture.

AXEL RAMIREZ

THE DUTY OF TEACHERS TO FOSTER CIVIC DISPOSITION

Early in my career, my district focused on making sure that every teacher, regardless of content area, was involved in literacy instruction. The phrase "every teacher is a teacher of reading," was continually heard in district trainings. In today's world, we need every teacher to remain a teacher of reading, but they must also be teachers of civics—which means that civics training needs to be a part of teacher education programs. Understanding basic civic knowledge helps future teachers better understand their profession and will help them build the civic dispositions of their future students. Graduate level courses in civics create civic liaisons to policy makers while equipping educators to teach stronger civics in the classroom.

RIGHT ***Red School House (Country Scene)*** **by George Henry Durrie, 1858, depicts a one-room schoolhouse in Connecticut.**

Image and caption courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

A few years ago, I was asked by a state legislator why I teach federalism in my college-level Introduction to Education course. My response was that my students coming into the course did not understand the impact of federalism on funding and policy for local education. They had learned about federalism in the abstract, but did not see the specific role it played in their chosen careers.

Many teachers believe that civic dispositions, like active citizenry, are only the domain of social studies teachers, but that is not the case.

It became imperative that my college students learned how to find and contact their local and state representatives. I explained that as government workers, they are affected by current legislation and policy while at the same time, they are also citizens who can affect change through their own legislators. Because I continue to see the necessity of this kind of basic civic instruction, I continue to make sure these fundamental concepts are understood while also discussing the duty that we have as teachers to foster civic dispositions.

Many teachers believe that civic dispositions, like active citizenry, are only the domain of social studies teachers, but that is not the case. Teachers in all grades and content areas need to understand the role they play in the civic dispositions of our students. While there really is truth that many of our positive dispositions go back to what we learned in kindergarten, civic dispositions are embedded into content objectives across grade levels and content areas for the purpose of inculcating strong civic individuals.

For example, a civic disposition that we can all hope for in our communities is civility during sporting events, from both athletes and spectators. This ideal is actually part of the Utah Fitness for Life teaching standards. A similar standard in the fine arts asks that students understand the protocols of audience behavior. Accounting students are asked to explore ethical situations within their career areas, and future welders are asked to engage in teamwork. No content area is void of the necessity of explicitly teaching civic dispositions, which means that schools of education should continue—or begin—to make explicit the importance of civics education.

Consequently, it makes sense for schools of education to sponsor graduate-level programs in civics education, since only basic civics instruction and dispositional teaching is discussed in undergraduate teacher programs. Teachers who deeply understand student, parent, and teacher Constitutional rights can best intercede at the local level too, so that Constitutional issues do not escalate. As legislatures increase civic requirements and programs, who better to inform districts than those who have studied under scholars who approach content from a non-partisan perspective?

Finally, all teachers know that a teacher can only differentiate learning to the highest level of their personal understanding. Teachers who have advanced training in civics will better challenge our students, who come to class with so much potential information at their fingertips. Schools of education that promote a deep understanding of Constitutional law, government, and history will increase the depth of learning for teachers, who can then pass on this rich understanding to their own students.

Teachers who have advanced training in civics will better challenge our students who come with so much potential information at their fingertips.

All teachers need civics and are teachers of civics, but schools of education must make that explicit for undergraduate students and give practicing teachers the tools to extend their knowledge, influence, and skill through graduate programs in civics.

AXEL RAMIREZ teaches elementary social studies methods classes for the Utah Valley University School of Education and was formerly a middle school social studies teacher.

PATRICK MURPHY

COULD CIVICS COMPETITION HELP OUR POLITICS?

HOW CIVICS EDUCATION HELPS US THRIVE

Once a year, hundreds of middle schoolers descend on Washington, DC, to participate in the National Civics Bee national championship hosted by the US Chamber of Commerce. Each state sends one finalist to face off against other students in a battle of wits on their knowledge of government. From the expertise shown by the students in the room, you would never know that the state of civics education in the United States is in such decline.

While being around these state champions inspires me, much like my days teaching at the United States Military Academy at West Point, or even now at the Wharton Business School, the statistics tell a more dire story: 34% of Americans cannot name all three branches of government. Only 40% know freedom of religion is

LEFT ***Soldier*** **by Malvin Gray Johnson, ca. 1934. This painting was made for the Works Progress Administration, created during the Great Depression-era to provide relief for out-of-work American artists and artisans.** Courtesy Artvee

ABOVE **"Rainy Day in Camp" by Winslow Homer, 1871. Six years after the end of the Civil War, Homer created this painting from studies he had made during the siege of Yorktown in the spring of 1862 when he visited the front as an artist-correspondent.**

Image and caption courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

guaranteed by our Constitution. Only 59% of Americans report taking a high school civics class.

The effects of this lack of education are clear. Bipartisanship, pride in country, and confidence in the future are all at an all-time low. Political animosity and violence are the highest they have been in decades. The effects of this are clear. Instances of political violence and assassination are increasing. Only 67% of the country feel proud that they are American. Most dangerously, more and more citizens are unengaged and ambivalent to the state of the nation and feel unable to be part of the change they want to see. While it's not a cure-all to this issue, civics education can help stop this malaise that underlies so many of these problems—all while giving people the skills to effectively advocate for better policies and a stronger and more united America.

Civics education is not just beneficial, it is foundational.

President John F. Kennedy once said, "Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future." Civics education is not just beneficial, it is foundational. Without it, our democratic system of governance and

Constitutional values become dangerously unstable, and we lose sight of how well those have guided us.

But civics is not just for law or politics. Look at the virtues that we have strived for as we built the nation: honesty, community, inclusion, compromise, selflessness, courage, and valor. These aren't unique to governance, but values we should adhere to in our everyday lives—and they are all present in our founding documents.

In the first amendment's guarantee of freedom of religion and our guarantees to voting rights, there is inclusion and the creation of a nationwide civil community. In its preamble that begins with "We the people," there is uncontestably optimistic belief in the honesty and goodness of the American people. Civics education, crucial for learning these values, makes us better people and better neighbors.

In "We the people," there is an uncontestably optimistic belief in the honesty and goodness of the American people.

Organizations like the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation recognize this, which is why they have prioritized civics education for America's students and for business leaders. Those same values critical to civics education are not just transferable but necessary to the business world and a key to success for education regardless of whatever field that may be.

I know personally how crucial civics education is—how it instills a love of country, a dedication to selfless service, and ecognition of the importance of helping your fellow man. In a time when civics education is waning and becoming deprioritized, reinvigorating civics education for adults and school children will help heal our country and secure the future.

PATRICK J. MURPHY is a former prosecutor, vetrepreneur, former US Representative, and the 32nd Army Under Secretary.


CHARLES C. CURRAN, N.A.

RACHEL LU

PARENTING FOR CIVICS

Every year around Memorial Day, a video clip flashes up on my social media "memories" feed, which inevitably inspires a pang. Two small boys are sitting on the back steps of a white stucco house, clad in camo shorts and flag-festooned t-shirts. In the background, a man asks whether everyone is ready and from behind the camera, my own voice mingles with the boys' as we count down from ten and yell "BLAST OFF!" Pandemonium ensues in the form of colorful explosions, smoke, noise, screaming, cheers, and peals of laughter.

There is so much joy in those fifteen seconds. The nostalgia is almost unbearable. I watch that Memorial Day festivity and think, "Men died for this. At Normandy and Iwo Jima, in the camps at Valley Forge, they died so there could be days like this." That's maudlin perhaps, or cliché, but isn't it true? Reflecting on all this, my mind is usually drawn into further reflections on patriotism, piety, and parenthood. Young parents make so many blunders, but that day I did it right. I brought my family together in happy celebration of something important.

LEFT *After the Storm* by Charles Courtney Curran, ca. 1916–1919.

Image courtesy Artvee

Patriotism isn't always as simple as lighting a firecracker. How do we teach our kids to love America when we ourselves often have profoundly mixed feelings about it?

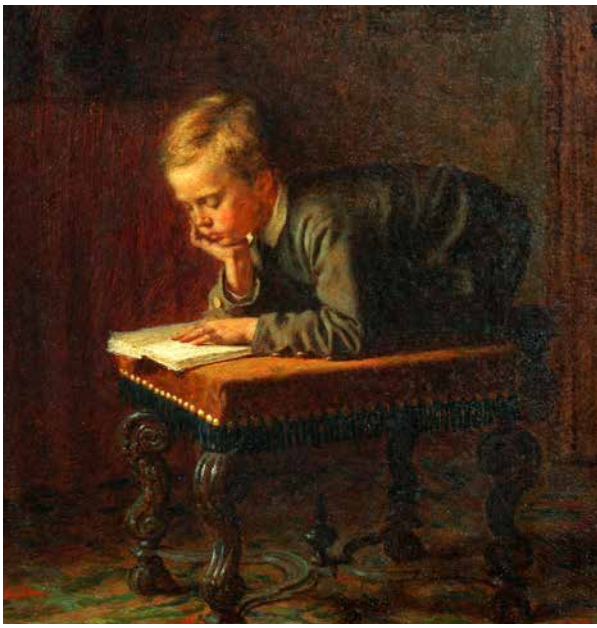
Time passes. Those boys (my eldest two sons) are now teenagers, less easily thrilled. Just in general, we don't get to spend our lives resting in the simplicity of those effervescent moments. Some wars are morally murkier than World War II. Some firework shows get spoiled by rain. As kids get older, a new set of concerns come into view: could they *be* those men at Normandy, if circumstances required it? How many young people have that kind of mettle today? It has always been obvious to me that parents have an indispensable role to play in forming conscientious citizens, and since patriotism among young Americans has apparently reached historic lows, it would seem their parents are shirking a bit. That's distressing, and yet I understand it. Patriotism isn't always as simple as lighting a firecracker. How do we teach our kids to love America when we ourselves often have profoundly mixed feelings about it?

Far more often than I'd like, I find myself talking to my kids about the importance of standing *outside* the mainstream culture, rejecting things other Americans consider normal, maintaining beliefs and traditions in a society that is sometimes hostile to them. It takes work to harmonize that lesson with a real love of country. I have little doubt that other parents struggle in similar ways (even if their concerns are a bit different) and this surely impacts the younger generation's feelings about America. Thus, civic education tends to begin in the mirror. Before we can instill civic pride in our kids, we have to ask ourselves: Why do *I* love America? Which pieces of her history and culture do I *want* my kids to embrace?

The only way to improve a flawed thing is to love it, to desire its real good and try to help realize that.

There is no real script here, but I have a few suggestions. First, engage in some shameless cherry-picking. What are *your* favorite American novels, films, songs, sports, historical figures, or pastimes? Share them with your kids. It works well because you can endorse your favorite things with full-throated, unfeigned enthusiasm. Must every civics lesson take the form of a Hard Conversation? Even with older kids, it's healthy sometimes to catch the sunshine.

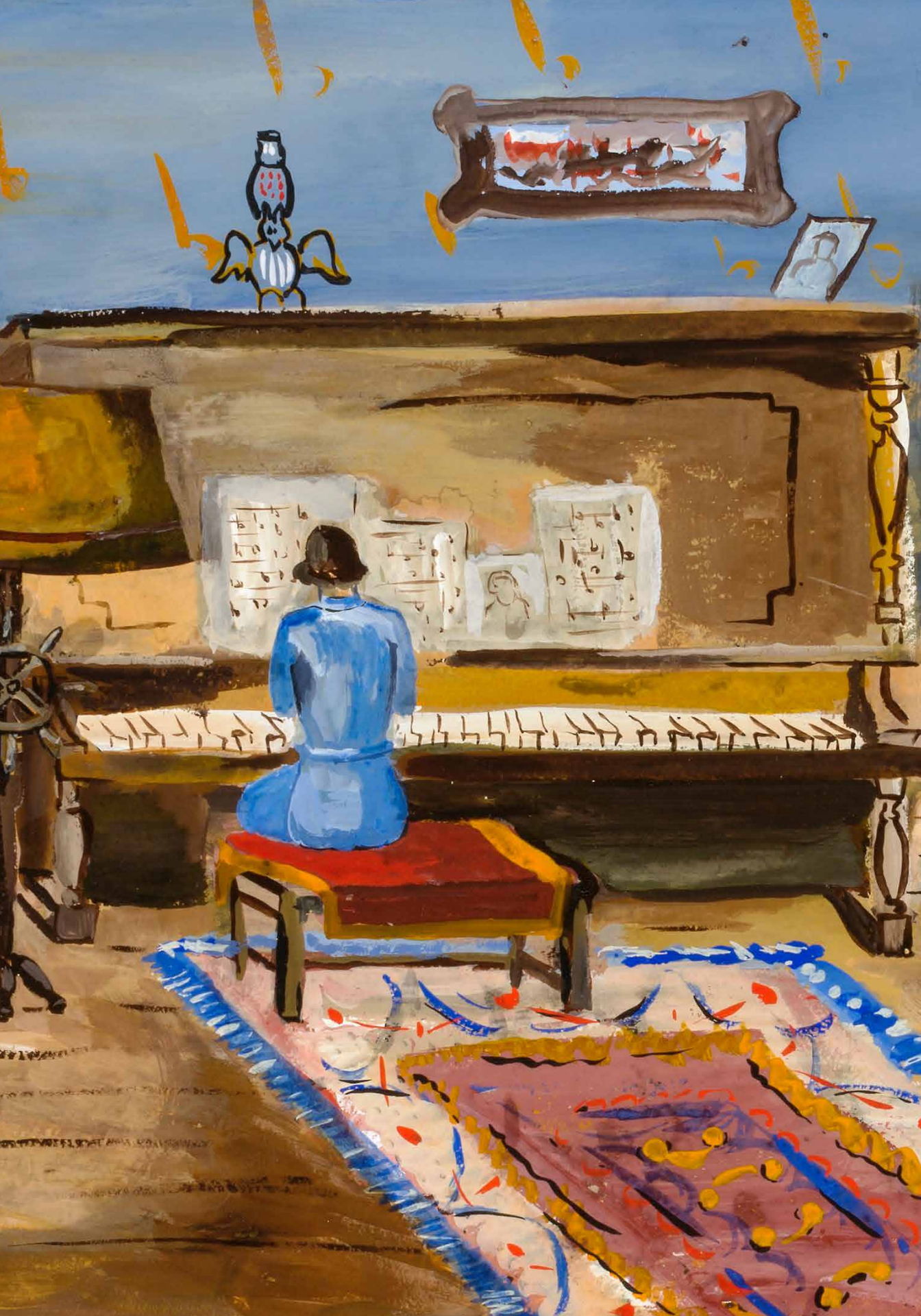
When hard conversations do happen, try to keep perspective. No human society is perfect. But even through the darkest chapters of a nation's history, we can always recall G.K. Chesterton's "Pimlico Principle": the only way to improve a flawed thing is to love it, to desire its real good and try to help realize that. One of the best ways of doing *that*, in my experience, is by weaving America's story together with the story of your own family history. It's okay if that history has some dark chapters of its own. The point is that we all want the best for our family, regardless of their imperfections, and we should want that for our country too. If parents don't teach that lesson, it's unlikely anyone will. It's hard to replace a parent's role in bridging the gap between family and nation.



ABOVE ***Reading Boy***
by Eastman Johnson, 1863
Image courtesy Artvee

Teaching civics to our kids can be complicated, but it can also be wonderful, and there's a final point worth considering. It's worth taking a little trouble to raise children who know how to honor things bigger than themselves. As we struggle to hold onto the ties that bind, civic virtue may prove a necessary support to all the others. My boys are no longer tiny, but someday I would like to relive that Memorial Day scene, perhaps as a grandparent or great-grandparent. We live and die to make those moments possible. God bless America.

RACHEL LU is an associate editor at ***Law & Liberty***, and a contributor at ***America*** magazine and ***National Review.***



JACOB LUTE

THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN CIVIC LIFE

STRENGTHENING OUR SHARED AMERICAN IDENTITY CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS A SONG

Most of us would readily admit that music plays a significant role in our personal lives; after all, we spend countless hours listening to music in our cars or through our earbuds. But how often do we consider the role it plays in our social and community lives?

Perhaps singing "Take Me Out To The Ball Game" would be a the most broadly applicable example. When we hear this song, we are transported to the seventh-inning stretch of a baseball game where thousands of fans stand and sing together, engaging in a baseball tradition passed down since 1934. Weekly participation in congregational worship may desensitize Christians to the strangeness of masses of people acting in one accord and singing together in our modern world, but we must acknowledge that it is

LEFT *Quiet Hour* by Cecil Clark Davis, 1940. A female artist born in Chicago, she painted this for the Works Progress Administration, created during the Great Depression-era to provide relief for out-of-work American artists and artisans. Courtesy Artvee

increasingly strange given the individualizing impulse of our age of AirPods and personally curated soundscapes. We each have unique musical tastes and listening practices that shape our personal identity. However, our shared experience with "Take Me Out To The Ball Game" suggests that music also shapes our communal identity.

Music is a powerful tool within human societies by which the intellectual, emotional, and moral lives of community members are positively impacted and shaped. A strong relationship exists between the musical activity and traditions of a community and the success of that community in maintaining its values and culture across successive generations. Music acts as a cultural leaven that works into the minds and hearts of participants, forming a sensitivity to the people and perspectives affiliated with a given community.

Music is a powerful tool within human societies by which the intellectual, emotional, and moral lives of community members are positively impacted and shaped.

On a national level, "The Star-Spangled Banner" provides a lingering example of this concept of cultural leaven as it relates to our sense of citizenship and patriotism within the United States. Patriotic songs have historically played a prominent role in the music curriculum of our public education system and have been used to instill a sense of citizenship and patriotism in students from a young age.

During school, The Pledge of Allegiance was led each morning through the loudspeaker before classes began, and the national anthem was performed before school sporting events. A district-wide Veterans Day assembly highlighted this embedded patriotic disposition each year through musical performances of "My Country 'Tis Of Thee," "God Bless The USA," and "Armed Forces Salute" to honor veterans in various branches of the US Military. Perhaps your childhood experiences were like my own.

Sadly, this patriotic musical practice is quickly fading in popularity. One NPR journalist identified this trend in a 2016 article entitled, "As patriotic songs lose familiarity in public schools, do they still hold value?" She interviewed fourth-grade students and discovered that, while they know "Take Me Out To The Ball

Game" and "The Star-Spangled Banner," they knew none of the other patriotic songs I have mentioned. I wonder whether the increasingly polarized national and political landscape is partly a consequence of failing to transmit a particular musical-cultural understanding about civics and shared American ideals.

While few of us still start each morning with the patriotic rituals of our school years, "The Star-Spangled Banner" remains a vestige of that early musical practice that continues to inform our sense of place and belonging as citizens and residents of the United States. Standing, removing our caps, placing our hand over our hearts, and quietly singing along in response to the music is not a spontaneous or organic behavior. Rather, it is a communal behavior taught and expected of members of the civic community. Whether we sing or assume the expected posture, we all participate in the performance through this ritual action, moving beyond the role of passive listeners and, thereby, appropriating the performance and its patriotic sentiment as our own.

The effect of music expands beyond our personal lives into the realm of communal and civic life. I submit that music must continue to play such a public role, especially amid the societal fragmentation characteristic of our technological age. While we often approach music through the personalized lens of music preference, we must acknowledge the formative effect of music within the broader communities we inhabit.

This knowledge should lead us to engage in and embrace the longstanding tradition of inherited music practices that transcend personal taste. To minimize our inherited musical traditions in deference to individualized musical taste diminishes the very bonds that hold our communities together. As we lean into our musical and cultural inheritances and zealously share them with the next generation, we foster lively and sustainable communities that communicate and actuate shared cultural values.

JACOB LUTE is an Associate Pastor of Music and Discipleship and adjunct professor in Pleasant View, Tennessee.

JENNIFER FREY

LIBERAL EDUCATION AS CIVIC EDUCATION

It is an essential part of a civic education that students understand the intellectual and cultural traditions that have profoundly shaped their own society.

At the heart of the Western intellectual tradition is the claim that the liberal arts aim to make a man free through careful and sustained inquiry into what is true, good, and beautiful. While liberal arts are pursued for "its own sake," or solely for the perfection of the person who engages them, the servile arts, by contrast, are studied for the execution of some specific line of work or trade. While this tradition developed into a taxonomy of the seven liberal arts, in the contemporary academy, this vision of liberal education is often associated with the study of the masterworks of Western tradition—sometimes called "Great Books." We study this tradition to find our own answers to the question at the heart of our collective political life: what is it to be a good human being

LEFT ***Rip Van Winkle*** **by Albertis del Orient Browere, 1933, inspired by Washington Irving's popular story in which an old man slumbered through the entire period of the American Revolution and the change in the country's government.** Image and caption courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

and citizen? Entering "the great conversation" of the West with this existential-political question in mind is clearly at the heart of a civic education as well, since it at least partially prepares those who undertake it to participate fully in the project of collective self-government.

It is an essential part of a civic education that students understand the intellectual and cultural traditions that have profoundly shaped their own society. American students have a clear and compelling reason to study the Western intellectual tradition—they live in the West and therefore have been shaped by and participate in Western culture and Western institutions. It is no accident that we read Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Jefferson, and Marx in a Great Books curriculum—these fathers of our political order are an important part of a civic education. They help us think about our current politics in light of the principles and historical movements that helped to define and refine it over the centuries.

Without civics education, our democratic system of governance and Constitutional values become dangerously unstable, and we lose sight of how well those have guided us.

A Great Books education has always been a form of civic education because it invites students into the intellectual tradition that has in fact profoundly shaped their lives and habits of thought already—in ways they are not yet fully aware. This study fosters the ability to forge connections between the great thinkers of the past and their present reality, which equips students to deliberate more deeply about the future.

In an ethnically, geographically, and religiously diverse democracy such as ours, citizenship demands that we be able to deliberate across difference of experience, beliefs, and values, and that we be able to find a good in common. A Great Books seminar is an excellent training in learning how to think and speak across such divisions. In intimate, discussion-based seminars, students learn not only to read critically and capaciously, but to think in response to dialectical partners who are pressing them with questions, concerns, and objections. In the Great Books seminar, we engage in a rigorous, ongoing training of rhetoric and dialectic, where we learn to develop clear and rigorous modes of argumentation and persuasion, to see where ideas might take us. We also learn to listen to others, consider opposing

points of view, and practice the art of civil exchange. To do this well, we need to cultivate habits of patience, civility, humility, courage, and even gratitude. The give and take of the seminar is a kind of training in habits of thinking and acting that are necessary for civic friendship and a flourishing democratic polity.

Liberal education does not strive to create experts with a narrow domain of knowledge, but wise and serious people who are ready to flourish in their lives and take up the responsibilities of citizenship. A thriving democracy requires more than expertise. It requires the cultivation of wisdom, which in a political context manifests itself in the ability to judge, in the particular and constantly changing circumstances of life, what laws, orders, policies, or prescriptions will promote and protect the common good. To cultivate such judgment, we must have thought together in a serious and disciplined way about what the common good is. In this process of seeking to know what is good, we are cultivating minds that will help us to lead flourishing lives of purpose and meaning, and to be better participants in our shared political life together.

Civics education makes us better people and better neighbors.

While liberal education is certainly not the whole of civic education, it is an important part of it. To practice liberal learning through the study of Great Books is to become at least partially equipped with those habits of mind and character that allow us to construct a vision of what a good life and society is; this is an education in freedom because that vision will profoundly shape our political choices. It is a kind of education that forms or shapes students so that they have the hearts and minds of engaged citizens, who have thought deeply with others about what it means to be a human being and citizen.

JENNIFER FREY is a philosopher at the University of Tulsa.

RONALD W. DWORKIN

DEMOCRACY IN THE OPERATING ROOM

As an anesthesiologist, I once took care of a man going for a special kind of prostate surgery. It was the only surgery in the textbook that recommended a spinal anesthetic over general anesthesia; in all other surgeries below the waist, neither technique was deemed safer than the other. Yet the man demanded general anesthesia, having heard somewhere that a spinal anesthetic might cause paralysis. When I told him that such events were extremely rare, and likely attributable to how hospitals stored anesthetics long ago—a problem fixed long ago—he nevertheless refused spinal anesthesia. What was I to do?

My predicament was really a microcosm of American governance more generally. Its solution illustrates the benefits of a civics education applied to the doctor-patient relationship.

I could have just told the patient, "I don't care what you want. You're going to get a spinal anesthetic. I know better than you." That would be the authoritarian solution. Many doctors would have responded in this way. But most American

LEFT ***Waiting for the Doctor*** **by Robert Lee MacCameron, 1910. During this period, the American painter focused his painting on '"own and out" persons of the streets of Paris, emphasizing misery and "reduced circumstances." In 1912 he moved back to the U.S. and painted portraits of the American upper class including Presidents McKinley and Taft.** Image and caption courtesy Artvee

patients resist such highhandedness, having been acculturated to the democratic system. It's not just that every American has rights and expects to have a say. The cornerstone of American democracy is that officials govern through the consent of the governed; without that consent, whether it is a politician issuing a decree or a doctor dictating to a patient, governance becomes tyranny, and Americans instinctively resist. Simply ordering my patient to accept a spinal anesthetic would have gotten me nowhere, besides being unethical from the democratic point of view.

Without consent, whether it is a politician issuing a decree or a doctor dictating to a patient, governance becomes tyranny, and Americans instinctively resist.

American democracy teaches another relevant point, which is that governance, by and large, is not a task reserved solely for experts. The informed citizen—the citizen-legislator—has as much right to hold office and make decisions affecting the country as someone with specialized education. To analogize to medicine, a few government decisions—for instance, those involving airplane safety—resemble neurosurgery and require expertise. However, the vast majority of decisions are more like blowing one's nose, which needs no special expertise. Whether bad outcomes sometimes arise as a consequence of this approach is irrelevant. Tocqueville made this point when praising American democracy, noting of Americans, "It is incontestable that the people frequently conduct public business very badly . . ." but at least they do the work themselves rather than letting a panel of privileged experts do it for them. This may not lead to a "brilliant society," he writes, but to one that "ensures the greatest enjoyment and avoids the most misery to each of the individuals who compose it."

Did my decision concerning which anesthetic to give my patient require expertise? Most likely. Fortunately, American civics teaches a countervailing idea to account for this possibility. For American democracy, we learn, is not a primitive democracy. It does not operate through plebiscite. It is a democratic republic, where citizens elect officials who exercise their judgment and sometimes vote in ways that the majority disagrees with.

The structure of American government reflects this idea. The House of Representatives, elected every two years, most closely approximates the will of the people;

the Senate, where officials run for re-election every six years, does so less (and even less so historically when senators were elected indirectly through state legislators). Federal judges serve for life and are even more removed from the will of the people. As a variation on this point, many officeholders in America start out as lawyers, who, Tocqueville said, represent a kind of permanent aristocratic class, and serve as a "counterpoise to the democratic element." The people, with their democratic passions, are "checked and stopped by the almost invisible influence of their legal counselors."

Doctors unfamiliar with American civics risk looking upon medicine as a pure democracy.

Doctors unfamiliar with American civics risk looking upon medicine as a pure democracy. Rather than dictate to patients, they are tempted to let patients run the show. Indeed, the patient-centered care movement, which says doctors should always let patients decide, flows out of this purely democratic idea. But when applied to anesthesiology, the movement courts danger. In my case, letting my patient dictate the choice of anesthetic put him at greater risk of complications, whether he understood this or not.

So what did I do? I talked to my patient. I suggested, lectured, persuaded, and cajoled—all the things that American politicians do every day, operating as they do in a society that is part-democracy and part-republic. It is our way. It is why foreigners often complain that we Americans talk too much. In a country that respects both democratic rights and expertise, there is no alternative.

Fortunately, after much talk, I convinced my patient to take a spinal anesthetic. I did not command. I did not decree. Yet neither did I surrender to the mob. I simply governed—in the American tradition.

RONALD W. DWORKIN, M.D., Ph.D
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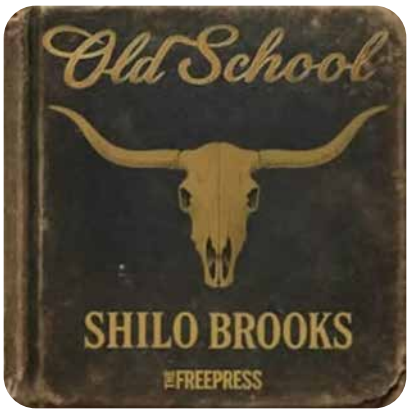
at the Institute for Advanced Studies in
Culture at the University of Virginia.

NEW PODCAST

OLD SCHOOL

with SHILO BROOKS



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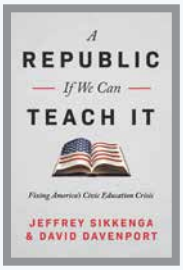


A REPUBLIC, IF WE CAN TEACH IT

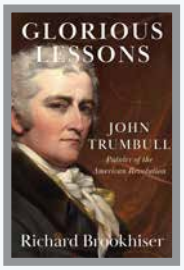
FIXING AMERICA'S CIVIC EDUCATION CRISIS

Jeffrey Sikkenga and David Davenport

THE MYTH OF LEFT AND RIGHT

HOW THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM MISLEADS AND HARMS AMERICA

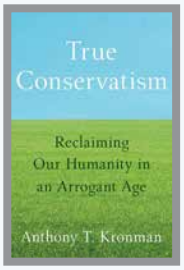
Verlan Lewis and Hyrum Lewis



GLORIOUS LESSONS

JOHN TRUMBULL, PAINTER OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Richard Brookhiser



TRUE CONSERVATISM

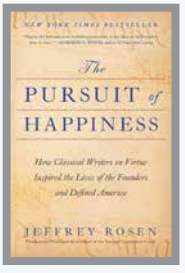
RECLAIMING OUR HUMANITY IN AN ARROGANT AGE

Anthony T. Kronman

WE HAVE NEVER BEEN WOKE

THE CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS OF A NEW ELITE

Musa al-Gharbi

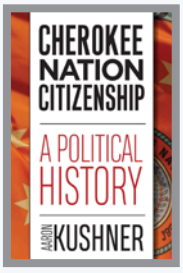


THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

HOW CLASSICAL WRITERS ON VIRTUE INSPIRED THE LIVES OF THE FOUNDERS AND DEFINED AMERICA

Jeffrey Rosen

FROM OUR SCHOLAR NETWORK



CHEROKEE NATION CITIZENSHIP

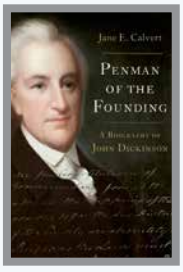
A POLITICAL HISTORY

Aaron Kushner

MAKING THE PRESIDENCY

JOHN ADAMS AND THE PRECEDENTS THAT FORGED THE REPUBLIC

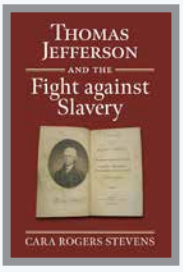
Lindsay M. Chervinsky



PENMAN OF THE FOUNDING

A BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN DICKINSON

Jane E. Calvert



THOMAS JEFFERSON AND THE FIGHT AGAINST SLAVERY

Cara Rogers Stevens

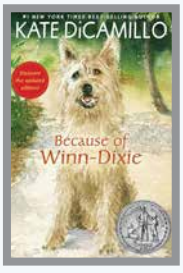
MAGAZINE AUTHOR PICK

ABUNDANCE

Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson

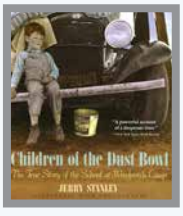
BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

MAGAZINE AUTHOR PICKS



BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE

Kate DiCamillo



CHILDREN OF THE DUST BOWL

THE TRUE STORY OF THE SCHOOL AT WEEDPATCH CAMP

Jerry Stanley

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to this special edition of *Civics Magazine* ahead of the National Summit on Civic Education.

Our deepest gratitude goes to our talented writers, whose creativity and insights shared how civic education enhances the many facets of "our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." We hope these thoughtful essays spark deeper thought about the many ways civic education supports and enriches our society. These themes illuminate much of our work at the Jack Miller Center throughout the year.

We are also grateful to our sponsors and donors, whose generous patronage makes this work possible. A special thanks to the Jack Miller Center's Board of Directors, the National Civics Council, and the Academic Council for their invaluable support and guidance. We are grateful for the commitment of Karen Sheets Design and our editorial team, whose creativity, skill, and hard work have taken this from idea to reality. Thank you all for being part of this project!

LEFT ***Apple Pickers (mural study)*** **by Nicolai Cikovsky, ca. 1934–43.** Courtesy Artvee

JACK MILLER CENTER

For Teaching America's Founding Principles and History

ABOUT THE JACK MILLER CENTER

The Jack Miller Center is a Philadelphia-based educational nonprofit committed to solving the national crisis of uninformed citizenship by teaching America's founding principles and history. Our project began in 2004 when Chicago philanthropist Jack Miller convened 50 top professors of political science and history from across the country to discuss the dire state of higher education and what needed to be done to fix it. Since that meeting, we have grown into a national coalition of scholars, K–12 teachers, philanthropists, and civic leaders who are passionate about advancing civic education in America.

There are three key pillars of our work:

- **Transforming higher education through the American Political Tradition Project**—a strategic venture to build a talent pipeline of scholars and academic entrepreneurs to teach America's founding principles and history.
- **Bolstering K–12 civic education through the Founding Civics Initiative**—a national project to improve teacher education surrounding American primary sources and history.
- **Growing a nationwide coalition of civic education leaders and funders through the National Summit on Civic Education**—an annual two-day conference to identify and advance solutions for effective civic education.

Learn more at jackmillercenter.org.

LEFT *The Boyhood of Lincoln (An Evening in the Log Hut)* by Eastman Johnson, 1868. This was also the title of an 1892 novel by Hezekiah Butterworth that explored the early life of Abraham Lincoln. American paiunter Eastman Johnson was a co-founder of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Born in Maine, he was known as the "American Rembrandt" and along with his paintings of everyday people, he is also known for his portraits of prominent Americans such as Abraham Lincoln, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Image and caption courtesy Artvee

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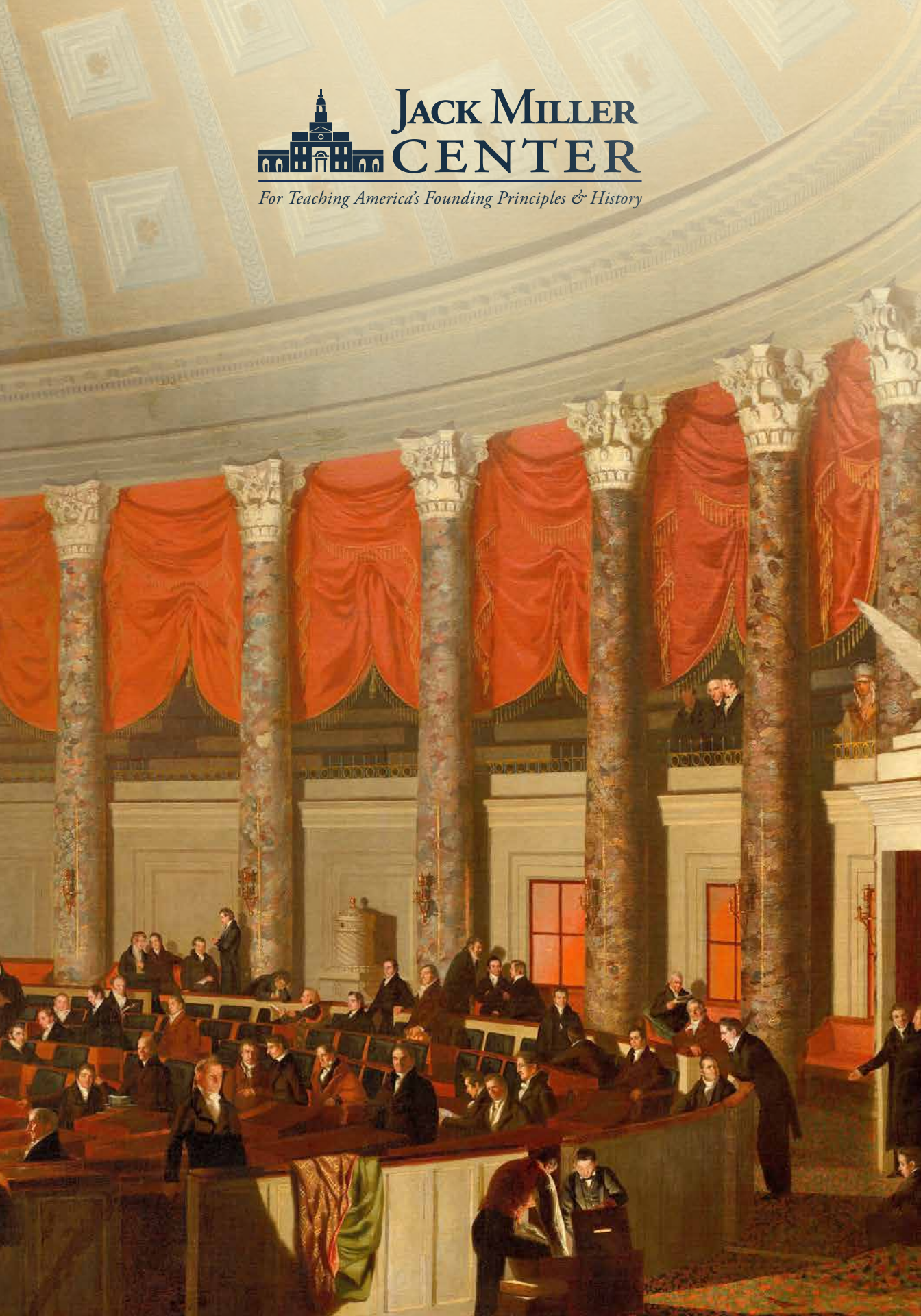

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