

Citizens League

v^oice

Quality conversation. Healthy debate.

Premiere
Issue

Fall 2017



Whose Streets?
The Case For and Against
Disruptive Protest

For Argument's Sake

To find ways forward we must make space for quality conversation and healthy debate

Even though I've spent over 25 years in public policy, I'm still amazed that policymakers routinely fail to involve citizen stakeholders in the decision-making process. When making decisions about financing for a program like Metro Mobility, for instance, there's often a failure to involve the very people who rely on the service (see "How to Mobilize," page 20). Or when involved in discussions about how to address the increased number of workers who aren't saving enough for their senior years, we don't go to the source—the workers and seniors themselves—and ask about their financial choices and needs.

Maybe we professionals have an "expert bias." Maybe we're worried that inviting in new people could challenge our authority or position. Maybe we're just afraid to be wrong. Whatever the reason, the approach isn't working.

We chose to call the Citizens League's new magazine *Voice* because, in surveying our achievements over the years, it's clear that there's one strategy that's most responsible for our success: We routinely assemble people with a diversity of experiences and circumstances to discuss issues that matter most to Minnesota's



Instead of working together to find the best solutions to our common concerns, we're busy using our voices to shame or outshout our opponents."

future. This process—where people are genuinely heard and feel valued—helps define problems more accurately and, more often than not, results in unexpected, innovative solutions.

As I routinely tell students when I talk about public policy, this approach should be the norm, not the exception. This is especially true given the deeply polarized state of our society. And no, I'm not romanticizing the past.

According to the Pew Research Center, not only is polarization at a multigenerational peak; it extends beyond politics to impact how we socialize and even shop. One-third of Democrats and one-half of Republicans would be "upset" if their child married someone from the other party. Social media and networks like Fox and MSNBC too often encourage us to listen only to people we agree with, and more and more we're segregating ourselves into physical communities where we tend (or pretend) to agree with each other. Instead of working together to find the best solutions to our common concerns, we're busy using our voices to shame or outshout our opponents.

Too many ideological policy groups, single-issue advocates, and political parties rely on this tactic. It can be great theater, but this approach to solving public problems is counterproductive. It's a debate gone bad. An entire generation has grown up thinking that these verbal wrestling matches are normal. That to not consider another person's ideas, or to apply political litmus tests across the ideological spectrum, is how politics works.

When editor David Schimke and I began talking about *Citizens League Voice*, we discussed this unfortunate trend and decided to offer a different model: "A



PHOTO: MICHAEL DVORAK

Good Debate" (page 6)—or debate gone well, if you will. This involves bringing people together to share their differing opinions and best ideas, of course. But we've also been careful to establish a set of ground rules and a process that encourages rigor, not rancor. If the goal is to get something done, then an informed, rational debate is an essential building block.

We believe that when citizens and policymakers apply these standards, they can transcend the usual talking points and inevitable roadblocks. Instead of surrounding ourselves with like-minded folks and engaging in exclusionary sanctimony or hollow outrage, we can negotiate a set of evidentiary standards and behavioral values that will help more of us traffic in novel ideas and productive arguments with an open mind. And then, having built trust by truly listening to one another and considering multiple points of view, we can get closer to agreeing on a way forward.

Minnesota, like the rest of the country, is at a crossroads. We have to decide whether we'll continue on our current path, where debate remains shallow and polarizing, or risk engaging in discussions and debates that are difficult but constructed to find a common good.

I know which side we're on. I hope this magazine encourages you to join us as we endeavor to move forward. ✨

SEAN KERSHAW has been executive director of the Citizens League since 2003. skershaw@citizensleague.org

A GOOD DEBATE

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OUR MISSION

Citizens League Voice will stimulate quality conversation and meaningful debate by engaging Minnesotans of all backgrounds and ideologies with non-sensational journalism and fact-driven essays designed to explore the most effective policy solutions for today and tomorrow.

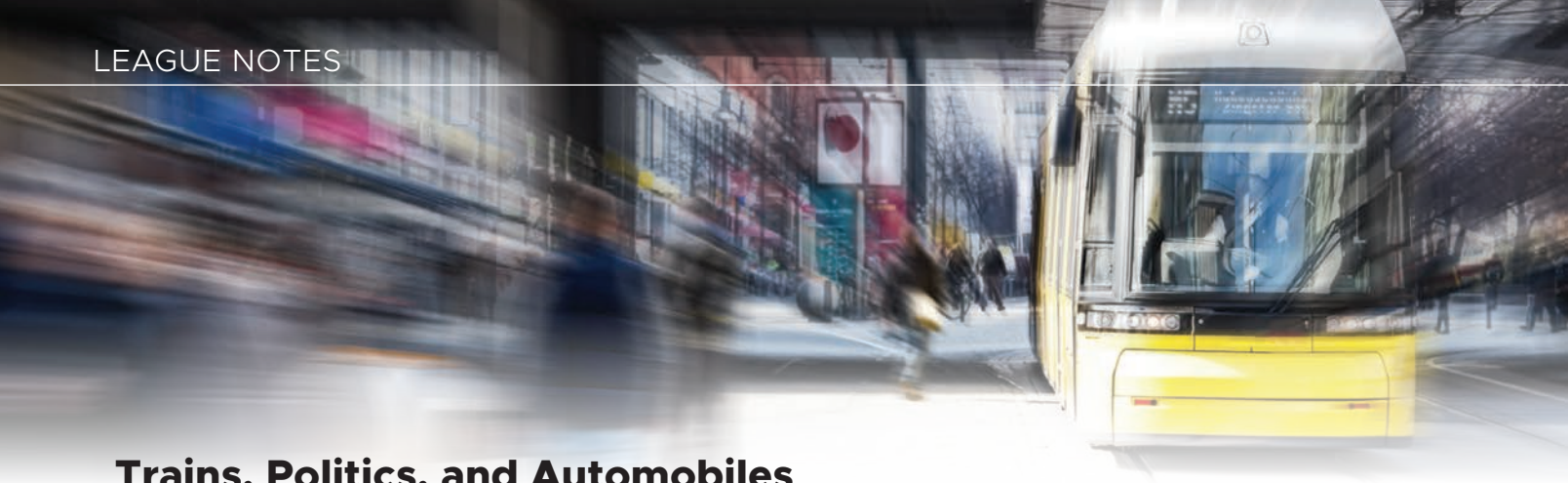
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Trains, Politics, and Automobiles

“**S**tate lawmakers could save themselves time and trouble with the counsel of 21 Minnesotans brought together by the Citizens League to make sense of the state’s vexing disagreement over sustainable transit funding,” exclaimed the *Pioneer Press*’s editorial board in the midst of the Minnesota legislature’s 2017 session.

The St. Paul daily wasn’t the only media outlet to applaud the bipartisan spirit of the task force, which met for six months and produced the comprehensive 150-page report “Getting from Here to There: Funding Transit in the Region.” The effort was recognized in newspapers across the state and magazines such as *Finance & Commerce*. The *Star Tribune*’s Lori

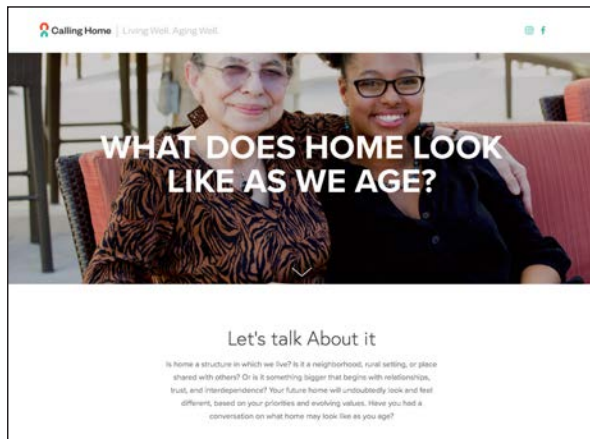
Sturdevant was particularly taken with the study’s pragmatic financing options, which included “a taxing policy that owns up to the reality that not every part of the metro area is well-served by transit.”

Ultimately, the League’s core recommendations were not included in the final compromise bill, which boosted funding for road and bridge projects and added \$70 million as a one-time allotment to the general fund’s \$89 million mass transit spending. A Metro Mobility Enhancement task force was also created to address the human-services program’s rapidly rising costs. Given the gridlock around transportation over the past several sessions, the incremental movement was encouraging. Members of the committee remain

concerned that a fairly temporary, partial fix leaves the region wanting for a more comprehensive policy, however.

“Long term, we’re still going to need a funding source,” says Peter Bell, who cochaired the task force. “And you can’t have one entity eat all the cost. You have to spread it out. There’s no painless solution, and you have to spread the pain.”

Bell believes transit issues will be in a holding pattern until after the 2018 election, when inevitable changes in both houses and a new governor could well create an atmosphere for deeper, more strategic discussions. At that point, he anticipates, the Citizens League’s data-driven recommendations will once again be used as a blueprint.



which we live? Is it a neighborhood, a rural setting, a place shared with others? Or is it something bigger that begins with relationships, trust, and interdependence?

Calling Home is a Citizens League–led project to prompt intergenerational dialogue on these sorts of questions, which involves considering variables such as self-care, health care, mobility, and retirement planning. In September, with the help of 11 partner organizations, the initiative rolled out its website, Calling Home (www.callinghomemn.org), which features a senior-friendly interface and state-of-the-art design to engage users of all ages.

“Because this project is addressing aging from a multigenerational perspective, we wanted to create a site that feels friendly and accessible—and also clean and contemporary,” says site architect Bryn Bundlie. “Aesthetically this means easy-to-read large type,

A Website for the Ages

What does home mean to you? When we’re starting our careers and families, it’s a question we often answer unconsciously as we make in-the-moment life decisions. On the other side of middle age, though, the concept becomes more complex and tends to require more deliberate planning. Is home a structure in

negative space to rest the eye, and full-screen imagery to help break up content. The site is also one continuous scroll, which will help users digest the information instead of getting distracted or lost clicking on menu options.”

Short, lively videos (produced by Twin Cities PBS), discussion guides, and resource sections on topics including Health & Vitality and the Art of Caregiving are designed to immediately engage visitors as participants. There are no product endorsements or false promises, just important facts and moving testimony from a diversity of voices. “While doing research for this project, I came across a lot of sites that housed useful information on the process of aging. But it was oftentimes buried,” says Bundlie. “Our intent was to build a pragmatic, stripped-down experience focusing on essential information and the positive aspects of the aging process.”

State of the State: Two Perspectives

As memories of the 2017 session of the Minnesota State Legislature fade and policymakers prepare for 2018, we searched out some politically diverse post- and pre-game analysis. Many thanks to Kim Crockett, vice president at the Center for the American Experiment, and Patricia Nauman, executive director of Metro Cities, for sharing their takes on the state of the state.

What was the most encouraging outcome of the 2017 session?

Kim Crockett: “We’ve been working on some big things for years, including a transportation bill and a tax bill, that finally moved forward. There’s something to be said for that, especially when the average person is wondering: ‘Can’t you guys get something done?’”

Patricia Nauman: “Metro Cities worked successfully with legislators this year to restore some of the funding for economic development programs that had previously been cut. These funds serve an important role in creating jobs and enhancing economic development work by communities and businesses in Minnesota.”

What was the most disappointing outcome?

KC: “Minnesota used to lead the nation in taking care of the poor while offering lots of good market-based options for healthcare. Now we are spending hundreds of millions on a

failed healthcare exchange and necessary bailouts. That is a massive failure of public policy. It’s also a massive ethical failure that Medicaid and other welfare programs are growing so fast for able-bodied people that you’ve got elderly and disabled people having to compete for what, until now, have been generous benefits.”

PN: “Every session brings its opportunities and challenges. This year there was a pretty distinctive trend with the introduction of bills that would have had the effect of minimizing local decision-making authority in areas where local authority is very established. We were responding very regularly to those bills. We know that local control is not a black-and-white issue, but it’s important that city officials have the authority to do what’s best for their communities.”

What’s the most crucial issue facing legislators in 2018?

KC: “The issue you haven’t heard much about: reforming public pensions so we can keep the promise of retirement security for our teachers, cops, and other public employees. If there is any kind of correction in the market, you’re going to see the pension funds in an absolute panic.”

PN: “The monthly state revenue collections that are coming in have been trending downward. If that trend continues, it could present budget challenges for the state next year.”

Equity in Edina

A year ago, the City of Edina became part of the national dialogue on race and policing when a video emerged showing a 34-year-old black pedestrian being stopped for walking in the street. When the man attempted to explain to the officer that he’d simply been trying to avoid road construction, he was cited for disturbing the peace. At an emotional community meeting, Mayor James Hovland and members of the city council publicly apologized for how the incident had been handled. The Minnesota NAACP called the gesture a “step in the right direction.”

At the time, according to Edina city manager Scott Neal, the first-ring suburb—where 88 percent of the population is white and 3 percent is black—had been in the midst of deliberations about how to address local race and equity issues. And the aforementioned episode only “accelerated the discussion,” he says.

One of the initiatives Neal and his colleagues had already been tracking involved 12 Minnesota jurisdictions, including St. Louis Park and Hopkins, that were working with the Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a national nonprofit that uses data to define specific areas where increased cultural awareness and policy changes are needed. Convinced of GARE’s efficacy, Edina joined a second Minnesota cohort in 2017, with an option to continue the partnership in 2018. Concurrently, Edina created its own Race and Equity Task Force, which is just beginning its work.

“These two efforts are quite thoroughly linked. Our goal is to identify race-based disparities in our city services, institutions, and facilities and propose remedies to those disparities,” Neal says. “We can’t guarantee equal outcomes, but we can guarantee equal access.” For instance, he explains, it’s important that regardless of a person’s address and income level, their neighborhood has the same amount and quality of lighting as everyone else in the city.

In May, Edina hired the Citizens League to facilitate the local task force. This involves coordinating with two subcontractors: JOI Unlimited, a crisis, conflict, and change management firm that specializes in facilitating sensitive conversations; and Turnlane, which helps map and implement agreed-upon goals.

“The Citizens League brings gravitas,” Neal says. “The organization has respect across the Twin Cities and is capable of being a strong mediating voice in subject matter that’s certainly going to include some conflict.”



PHOTO: MN DEPT. OF ADMIN.; CATHY KLIMA PHOTOGRAPHER

INFORMED. ENGAGED. EMPOWERED.

Wilder Foundation's Community Equity Pipeline helps young leaders of color navigate the state capitol

BY ADAM WAHLBERG

Walking the grounds and wandering the halls of the Minnesota State Capitol, one can't help but be awed. Its white marble exterior, influenced by the neoclassicist Beaux Arts movement in France, is capped by a three-layer dome inspired by St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. A gilded copper sculpture of a four-horse chariot looms high above the southern entrances, and six classical figures representing six virtues sit just below it. Inside, visitors can view 38 governors' portraits and the paintings *Father Hennepin at the Falls of St. Anthony* and *Attack on New Ulm*.

While taking in the results of the building's \$272 million renovation, it's also hard not to notice the Eurocentric nature of the place, which mirrors the demographic makeup of its elected members. Seventy-nine percent of Minnesota's inhabitants identify as Caucasian, as do a whopping 92 percent of its state representatives. In 2017, in fact, there were just 16 nonwhite legislators, and that's the highest number in the body's 149-year history.

It's no wonder people of color often feel unwelcome—and, as a result, too often feel ill equipped to participate in their democracy.

With the goal of chipping away at the institution's exclusionary veneer, the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation rolled out the Community Equity Pipeline (CEP) in the fall of 2015. A 10-month training program intended for young leaders of color, it's designed to provide instruction regarding legislative sausage making, as well as give participants the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with lobbyists and lawmakers. (The Citizens League's Capitol Pathways Program also offers experiential internships at the legislature. It focuses on college-age students with leadership potential.)

Those selected for the program are neither political neophytes nor newcomers to the business of advocacy. Typically between the ages of 18 and 30, they are often executive directors or officers from various Minnesota nonprofits. It's just that, for the most part, they don't have a lot of experience with the capitol's nooks and crannies.

"What we want to do is help leaders avoid the first couple years of mistakes that people make when they're advocating," says James Chang, the legislative programs lead at Wilder Foundation. "We want to fast-track them to be effective."

Formal instruction includes direction on how to read bills,

analyze budget proposals, and navigate the often byzantine day-to-day. Each apprentice is also matched with a lobbyist and a legislator and then encouraged to spend a significant chunk of time observing the gears of government turn.

For many participants, like Chuayi Thao, director of Achievement Plus, an education nonprofit, the program is akin to a mind-altering field trip. Even though the Hmong American woman grew up in the Twin Cities and graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2001, she hadn't spent much time at the capitol and, as a result, found its physical plant disorienting. Even having a chance to practice seemingly mundane tasks during the 2017 session, like navigating the area's various parking ramps or finding a committee hearing, was edifying. "I was talking to family members, and many told me they had never been to the capitol, even though we've lived here a long time," she explains. "It's historically not been an inviting place to people of color."

State representative Rena Moran can relate. When she was elected in 2010 as part of the first class of black legislators from St. Paul, she felt out of place. "The people I saw didn't look like the community that I represent," she says. "And this is a problem because legislators make decisions based on those who come [and testify] before them."

Moran agreed to mentor the young people who took part in the program this past year and, when they came to her with questions, tried to provide personal insights on the vagaries of the political ecosystem. "The goal is to help people feel comfortable in a space that can feel uncomfortable," she says.

Once everyone is up to speed on the process and comfortable with the campus, CEP participants begin to play a role in the way laws are debated and shaped. That's where Wilder's volunteer lobbyists, like Paul Spies, come into play.

Spies, director of the School of Urban Education at Metropolitan State University, also serves on the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color, which he helped form in November 2015. He understands how frosty the capitol can be to someone who isn't a professional lobbyist, no matter his or her demographic makeup. "It's a closed culture," he says. "That's just the reality." Still, Spies believes there are ways to invite oneself into the process and gain some self-confidence.



ILLUSTRATION: RICHARD BERGE; PHOTOS: STEPHANIE GLAROS



Before the session began, he shared the teacher coalition's legislative agenda—which emphasized funding for such things as paraprofessional-to-teacher programs, loan forgiveness, and hiring bonuses—with the CEP participants. Spies then explained the various ways a person or organization can create and leverage opportunities to help achieve goals, including attending hearings, working media contacts, holding events, and taking meetings with allies in the house and senate.

One of the coalition's champions, and a CEP co-mentor with Spies, is Rep. Fue Lee, who agreed to talk to Wilder's program participants about the power of forming alliances, particularly when they need someone to sponsor a bill. "It's about getting in the door and connecting with lawmakers," says Lee, a Hmong American man from Minneapolis. "It's tough. It takes a while."

Many of the teacher coalition's provisions passed into law, giving those they interacted with in CEP a sense for the look and feel of success. "Funding for more teachers of color, that's an issue with a lot of support among Democrats," Lee says. "But with Republicans in the majority, we thought it could be more effective for Democrats to stay in the back seat and have a Republican take the lead."



I was talking to family members, and many told me they had never been to the capitol, even though we've lived here a long time. It's historically not been an inviting place to people of color."

ABOVE: The 2016–2017 cohort of the Community Equity Pipeline (left to right): Cynthia Zapata, Sheku Samba, Amanda Koonjibeharry, Awale Osman, Mónica María Hurtado, Kye Allums, May Esperanza Lososo, Bao Lee, Brett Grant.

BELOW: Co-leaders James Chang and Chalonne Wilson.

For Thao, the experience was *prima facie* evidence that politics is like forming any other kind of social network. You need to reach out, make connections from connections, allow people of differing experiences and opinions to find expression, and learn to lean on one another when challenges arise. "We had so many meaningful conversations during the program, with legislative figures and within the cohort," she says. "Going forward these will be relationships that I can rely on to keep my energy up when advocating, just knowing others care about your issue. The key will be to keep coming back."

The leaders at Wilder are encouraged by the success stories that have already emerged from their pipeline. This past year in particular, Moran sensed that the group had bonded and found a sense of strength. "I think they learned that they have a lot of power in their own experiences and voices, maybe more so than they realized," she says.

Another class began orientation on September 5, 2017, and Wilder believes that as one cohort follows another, long-term relationships will be forged, commitments will be deepened, and a lasting influence on Minnesota's state capitol will result.

"The capitol is a small, tight-knit community, and a lot of the same folks are there year after year. We want our people to have that same kind of continuity," Wilder's Chang says. "I've been delighted by how quickly these cohort members came along and how much more they want to learn. We're already looking forward to next year." 🌟

ADAM WAHLBERG is a Minneapolis-based writer who served as a page in 1992 for state senator Joe Bertram Sr. and was a capitol intern in 1993 for KARE-TV, where he helped cover the Phoneygate scandal.



Whose Streets?

A new generation of protesters is becoming increasingly vigilant and disruptive. Lawmakers, citing public safety, are writing legislation to deter their behavior.

BY DAVID SCHIMKE



For many Twin Citians, the week of July 4, 2016, remains seminal. The holiday took place on a Monday. On Tuesday, news broke from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, that two white police officers had held down a 37-year-old black man named Alton Sterling and shot him at least six times, killing him. (The officers, who had tased Sterling, said he was going for a gun in his front pocket. Neither of them was charged in the incident.)

The next day in Falcon Heights, Minnesota, Latino St. Anthony police officer Jeronimo Yanez shot a 32-year-old black man named Philando Castile five times, killing him. (Yanez would later testify that he believed that Castile, who had warned the officer that he was in possession of a licensed firearm, was a mortal threat. After that testimony, Yanez, who had been charged with manslaughter and reckless discharge of a firearm, was acquitted.)

That Thursday, in Dallas, Texas, a crowd gathered to protest both of the shootings. At the end of the demonstration a 37-year-old lone gunman killed five police officers and wounded nine of their colleagues. Other officers at the scene who tried to negotiate with the man, an Afghanisthan veteran, said he was upset about blue-on-black violence and wanted to kill white people and police officers. The authorities killed him with a remote-control bomb.

The deadly aggression in Dallas would play a role in the overall reaction to a protest that took place two days later in St. Paul. On the evening of July 9 and into the early morning hours of July 10, between 200 and 300 people—including some who had demonstrated at the governor's residence earlier in

the day—marched onto Interstate 94 from Lexington Avenue to protest Castile's death, halting traffic to and from downtown St. Paul for five hours.

Many protesters sat and stood on the highway, while others gathered on a pedestrian overpass. St. Paul police, who were dressed in riot gear, reported being hit with bottles, rocks, and fireworks. Twenty-one officers were injured, one seriously, when he was hit by a piece of rebar police say was thrown from the overpass. Before it was over, authorities had used tear gas to disperse the crowd, and 102 people had been arrested. Members of Black Lives Matter who had participated in the action condemned the violence but defended their right to occupy the highway.

It was not the first time Minnesota residents had blocked traffic or disrupted commerce in response to a fatal officer-involved shooting. In early November 2015, two white Minneapolis police officers were involved in the fatal shooting of a 24-year-old black man named Jamar Clark. Witnesses said he was handcuffed at the time. The NAACP and Black Lives Matter called for immediate demonstrations, and a tent city was erected outside of the Fourth Precinct police station in North Minneapolis. Hundreds of people demanding that officials release a video of the incident then clogged a section of I-94 in North Minneapolis. On December 23, 2015, protesters met at the Mall of America and moved to the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, closing security lines for nearly an hour and jamming up traffic coming in and out of the main terminal.

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The Star Tribune's editorial board approved of the bill. The interim director of the ACLU of Minnesota called it 'chilling.'
”

Because the sit-ins and sit-downs related to the tragedy in Falcon Heights took place during such a tumultuous week in the summer of 2016, however, they received more national attention than the demonstrations in 2015. In part, this was because commentators opined that in the wake of the Dallas killings, the officers in St. Paul—who were trying to keep order on the highway while people were throwing objects at them—must have felt like they were in a shooting gallery.

The events in 2016 also sparked a more intense, consequential local conversation around the nature of civil disobedience and public safety that continues to this day. Those who participate in and support disruptive protests argue that civil disobedience is the natural consequence of rage, and a necessary, historically proven tactic in the pursuit of justice. Citizens who are concerned about public safety counter that blocking traffic and disrupting commerce crosses a line, because it infringes on the rights of others.

Early in the 2017 session at the Minnesota legislature, Republican-controlled public safety committees in the House and Senate voted to increase penalties for disruptive protesters. Various iterations of a bill were proposed, including one that would hold demonstrators convicted of unlawful assembly or public nuisance financially responsible for any cost related to policing. Ultimately, though, it was a bill introduced by Representative Nick Zerwas that made its way through to Governor Mark Dayton's desk.

The *Star Tribune's* editorial board approved of the measure. It increases penalties for blocking freeways or airport roadways, and for blocking mass transit, from a misdemeanor to a gross misdemeanor, which can result in higher fines and up to a year in prison. Teresa Nelson, interim director of the ACLU of Minnesota, called the regulation's language “chilling” and wrote on the organization's website that by “ratcheting up penalties for peaceful civil disobedience, we are sending a message that dissent and demands for justice will simply not be tolerated anymore.”

Ultimately, the governor did not sign the legislation. It will be reintroduced in 2018, though, and advocates will have more recent incidents to reference—the most

notable of which harkens back to July 2015. On the night of Officer Yanez's acquittal, June 16, 2017, some 1,500 protesters marched onto I-94 near Dale Street and closed the highway for three hours. No officers were injured. Eighteen people were arrested.

Over the past year, 18 states have considered legislation designed to curb lawlessness in a period of increased activism marked by large demonstrations, street protests, and other spontaneous, digitally driven actions meant to disrupt the flow of traffic or commerce or both. Bills have already been passed in North Dakota and South Dakota, driven in large part by grassroots opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline and focused on policing behavior on public lands. Oklahoma created a statute to increase punishment for those convicted of obstructing critical infrastructure. Tennessee decided to impose fines on anyone who obstructs an emergency vehicle's access to a street or highway.

In 11 other states, including Minnesota, one proposal or another failed in session. Iowa considered five-year prison sentences for highway obstruction. In Missouri the sentence would've been seven years, and there was also talk of illegalizing wearing masks in certain situations. Arkansas considered banning mass picketing.

A "hit and kill" bill in North Carolina has been proposed to provide immunity to anyone who hits a protester who is blocking traffic, unless the protester is participating in a permitted event. Conversation around the initiative, which has been proposed in other states, ceased after a man drove a vehicle into a crowd of anti-racist protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer and injuring at least 19 others. In Virginia, the senate voted down a proposal that would've defined the disablement of critical infrastructure as a domestic terror threat.

In a majority of cases, Republicans have sponsored and championed these law-and-order efforts. This has made some Democrats, as well as Independents and Libertarians occupying different parts of the ideological spectrum, wonder whether there's a coordinated campaign going on to quiet people upset over the election of President Donald Trump. One talking point that's used by ACLU representatives

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*Sizable
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”



in a number of states is that the timing is more than coincidental, given that more people are standing up to be heard on subjects including blue-on-black violence and immigration.

Proponents of stricter regulations point out that some of the most tumultuous protests—including the one in St. Paul 14 months ago—happened under President Obama's watch; most also insist that they support free speech and assembly, as long as it doesn't constitute a clear and present danger.

Both sides ardently believe that the U.S. Constitution justifies their position. Activists say increasing penalties is an effort to discourage free speech and freedom of assembly, which are broadly protected by the First Amendment. Proponents of increased punishment for protesters note that the amendment allows for people to "peaceably" assemble, and that no right is absolute. They also suggest that current laws are insufficient, since they clearly aren't deterring disruptive behavior.

The dialogue over what it means to increase penalties, particularly for blocking a highway, is complicated by history, especially because a majority of the most newsworthy protests prior to President Trump's election centered on police shootings in black communities.

As the *Christian Science Monitor* posited in 2016, just a few days after the Castile shooting protests in St. Paul, "[Protesters] were occupying a highway that, a half-century ago, was constructed at the expense of St. Paul's historically black community. Interstate 94, like urban highways throughout the country, was built by erasing what had been black homes, dispersing their residents, severing their neighborhoods and separating them from whites who would pass through at high speed.

"That history lends highways a dual significance as activists in many cities rally against unequal treatment of blacks: As scenes of protest, they are part of the oppression—if also

the most disruptive places to call attention to it.”

Representatives from Black Lives Matter also say that highway blockage is part of a proud civil rights tradition, and often reference the Freedom Rides, Rosa Parks and the seminal Selma march led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1965, which occupied the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

One response to the Selma comparison is that the march was using the bridge as a thoroughfare, not trying to block its use to wreak economic havoc. Another common refrain is that the civil rights movement of the '60s was aimed at changing specific laws and was more agenda driven.

What's more, despite the symbolic importance of major roadways, there's simply an overall sense among people who support harsher penalties for disruptive protest that modern highways, particularly in growing metropolitan areas, are too busy, too important, and too dangerous to block.

Roads like I-94 are oftentimes a city's main artery, and when you block that artery the potential consequences are too dire. Conversely, protesters believe the best way to raise the population's attention around issues of injustice, especially in underrepresented communities, is to make life along that artery noticeably uncomfortable.

Before the presidential election

In 2016, the Pew Research Center revealed that “For the first time in surveys dating to 1992, majorities in both parties express not just unfavorable but *very* [emphasis theirs] unfavorable views of the other party. And today, sizable shares of both Democrats and Republicans say the other party stirs feelings of not just frustration, but fear and anger.”

Most revealing: “Among those highly engaged in politics—those who vote regularly and either volunteer or donate to campaigns—fully 70 percent of Democrats and

62 percent of Republicans say they are afraid of the other party.”

Given the increasingly polarized state of the nation, part of what fuels passions on both sides of the debate around legislating the use of highways and roads is inherent distrust of the other's motives. And it doesn't help that at both extremes people have created conspiracy theories around unsubstantiated claims involving government-sponsored racial cleansing on the right and violent, anarchic revolution on the left.

The rhetoric between police and protesters has also become increasingly heated. On September 17, in St. Louis, Missouri, peaceful demonstrations and vandalism followed the acquittal of white former St. Louis police officer Jason Stockley, who had been charged for fatally shooting 24-year-old black man Anthony Lamar Smith in 2011. At one point, officers policing the increasingly chaotic scene were heard chanting “Whose streets? Our streets,” a rallying cry that for decades has been used by activists, including those affiliated with Black Lives Matter.

Ezekiel Edwards, director of the ACLU Criminal Law Reform Project denounced the appropriation: “Make no mistake, the police were sending a clear and chilling message to communities of color in St. Louis.” St. Louis police commissioner Lawrence O'Toole didn't comment on the reported incident, except to say that his officers did “outstanding work” and “owned the night.”

It was not the first time groups with conflicting agendas have used the phrase. (Self-identified white nationalists, captured on film by filmmakers from Vice, used it repeatedly in Charlottesville.) It likely won't be the last. And as people continue to discuss the scope and effectiveness of protests in communities and on campuses around the country, Minnesota lawmakers will once again formally address the question.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

The impetus behind the creation of **A Good Debate** was a recognition that meaningful conversation and respectful, evidence-based discourse is lacking in popular media and the public sphere. Our desire in each issue of *Citizen's League Voice* is to model thoughtful dialogue that encourages disagreement while discouraging rancor.

Every quarter, those who turn to the cover package will be presented with **Just the Facts**. The goal of this piece is to provide objective context for a specific question or area of disagreement. **Opening Arguments** is designed to explore subjects from a variety of angles, because debate topics are too often presented in the media as a for/against or yes/no proposition. Practical realities are typically more complex, and there can be multiple sides and constituencies. In this issue, for instance, we highlight three different perspectives on one aspect of public protest. To construct the section, contributors worked closely with *Voice* editors to hone their positions and were encouraged to rely on logic and best evidence. Personal attacks, red herrings, and assumptions, particularly those that involve cultural or ideological stereotypes, were discouraged.

A **Cross-Exam** of each contributor rounds out the section. Conducted by the editors, this is an effort to further explore the nuance of each argument and challenge each author's reasoning. It's also designed to provide a model for thoughtful questioning.

Why Disruptive Protest?

In 2014, the nonhierarchical movement Black Lives Matter (BLM) emerged to demonstrate against the fatal police shootings of black men in Ferguson, Missouri, and across the country. More recently, the deaths of Minnesotans Jamar Clark and Philando Castile at the hands of police made national headlines, because of the nature of both incidents and because local protesters chose to register their discontent by blocking traffic on major highways. This tactic, which for the purposes of this discussion we've labeled *disruptive protest*, led a group of state lawmakers to propose legislation in 2017 that would have increased penalties for obstructing traffic access to an airport, a highway, or public transit. The resulting bill did not become law, but it will be reintroduced in 2018.

The Participants

Opening Arguments begins with an essay from **Representative Nick Zerwas**, who introduced the legislation. His concerns about deterrence, public safety, and further political polarization capture the typical case against disruptive protest.

Local author and radical animal rights activist **Sarahjane Blum** writes in favor of disruption. Her position is informed by direct experience with illegal tactics, both as a participant and as an invested observer.

Given that discussion of this subject is intertwined with the issue of policing in communities of color, **Neeraj Mehta**, director of community programs at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, shares his perspective as a supporter of BLM and as a member of that community, which he says often views the act of protest through a different historic and cultural lens.

The Dangers of Disruption

Why I want to increase penalties for protesters who block traffic

BY REP. NICK ZERWAS

Our country relies on the American people to be able to create and have constructive dialogue. Citizens can get involved in their community through communicating with their elected officials, running for elected office, serving on local governing boards, and protesting the status quo. Minnesotans, like all Americans, have the right to express their opinions freely, with emotion. Recently, however, demonstrations and protests have been moving onto freeways and obstructing other public spaces. This all-too-frequent tactic is designed to attract attention to an increasing number of issues, in part because current penalties don't seem to be a sufficient deterrent.

THE CONCLUSION:

When protest threatens public safety, it is ineffective and unjustified.

THE ARGUMENTS:

- Minnesotans have the right to assemble.
- Protesters who obstruct traffic threaten public safety.
- Current penalties are too lenient to deter disruptive protest.
- Free speech doesn't include actions that put others at risk.
- Disruptive protest is polarizing.

During the 2017 legislative session, I introduced legislation that would alter the criminal penalty for blocking public right-of-ways. The bill would not change what actions are already legal under Minnesota law, but it would increase the criminal penalty from a misdemeanor to a gross misdemeanor for those who intentionally obstruct traffic access to a highway, airport, or transit system. If passed, the legislation would dictate that a person who is convicted of illegally blocking a public right-of-way could face

not more than one year in jail and/or a fine of not more than \$3,000.

Increasing fines or penalties is an instrument commonly used by lawmakers and advocates to discourage certain activity, such as speeding in a construction zone or parking in a handicap space; a similar philosophy seems appropriate in this case. There have been multiple instances in which public right-of-ways have been blocked off illegally in the last two years, such as when protesters took over a section of I-35W near the University of Minnesota for 90 minutes during morning rush hour in July 2016 (*Star Tribune*, July 13, 2016), or when, last November, an illegal protest that blocked traffic for an hour on both sides of I-94 was incited because some folks were disappointed with the results of the 2016 election (WCCO-TV, November 10, 2016). Disabling a highway, a public transit system, or an airport and endangering those around you is not protected expression under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution or current Minnesota Statutes.

Critics, including the ACLU, have asserted that my proposal is somehow unconstitutional, but they haven't been specific about how or why. Since the ratification of the Bill of Rights, the interpretation of the First Amendment has been challenged in the U.S. Supreme Court numerous times. As a result of rulings in a number of landmark cases regarding what expression is protected and what expression is not, the amendment has become more narrowly defined; the court has decided on multiple occasions that the right to free speech does not cover actions that put others' safety and rights at risk. For example: in *Brandenburg v. Ohio* (1969), the sitting justices concluded that speech can be limited if it's "directed at inciting or producing imminent lawless action . . . likely to incite or produce such action." I want to clarify that I am not a legal or a constitutional expert. The precedent set by the ruling of this case, however, would no doubt be cited if the constitutionality of existing laws were challenged. What's more, my bill only creates stiffer criminal



penalties for acts already deemed illegal in Minnesota. No form of protest that is currently allowed under existing law would be made illegal by its passage.

Disruptive protests create unnecessary chaos, which can very easily and rapidly devolve into riots that threaten the safety of not only the general public and law enforcement, but the protesters as well. In July 2016, a protest that shut down I-94 from late on a Saturday night until 4:30 a.m. the following day was marked by smoke bombs, fireworks, jagged rocks, and broken bottles. Twenty-one police officers were injured in the melee, including a University of Minnesota police officer who suffered a spinal-compression injury after a chunk of concrete was dropped on his head (*Pioneer Press*, July 12, 2016). Breaking the law and resorting to this sort of violence is not an effective way to petition your government, and inflicting harm on law enforcement is not an effective way to persuade the public to sympathize with your cause.

My experience as an elected representative is that these illegal, disruptive protests create resentment as well as build an even greater divide among people on all sides of an issue. By constantly working to “shut it down” (with the “it” ranging from malls on busy shopping days to press conferences by the DFL mayor of Minneapolis), the protest groups have

become an opposition party. However, the “opposition” seems to be to everything and has alienated large swaths of Minnesotans. Tactically, this approach is counterproductive and causes the average Minnesotan to view protesters’ behavior as arrogant, reckless, and at times dangerous.

Many of those who are not in favor of my legislation argue that, if enacted, it would “chill” free speech. I vehemently disagree. Increased criminal penalties for blocking a freeway, closing an airport, or blocking transit should have no impact on legal protests. I have no issue with people protesting and petitioning their government. There have been multiple protests outside of the state capitol that have been legal displays of petition and are protected under the First Amendment. During the Women’s March over 100,000 people gathered in St. Paul to protest, and nobody broke the law. This was the largest protest in recent history and nobody was arrested; the people were respectful, their voices were heard, and their causes were given significant media coverage the following days.

I was prompted to draft my legislation, which will continue to move forward in the next legislative session, after numerous constituents reached out to me expressing their frustrations with disruptive protest. One constituent told me how she had waited for six weeks to have

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Disruptive protests create unnecessary chaos, which can very easily and rapidly devolve into riots that threaten the safety of not only the general public and law enforcement, but the protesters as well.
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a doctor’s appointment with a specialist at the Mayo Clinic, only to miss that appointment when protesters blocked the freeway for several hours. It took another six weeks to reschedule. Another constituent missed an irreplaceable event. In the midst of an airport shutdown, she was unable to get on a flight to say goodbye to her mother. In a time when she was trying to focus on her family, she was confronted with protesters with mixed messages preventing her from getting to her ailing parent. Even after rescheduling her flight, she did not make it in time to say her final goodbye.

I agree with the Constitution that Americans have the right to assemble and speak freely against their government, and I agree with the courts setting limits on the time, place, and manner of expression of those rights. In all facets of our lives, our freedoms are limited. There are speed limits, liquor laws, tobacco laws, gun laws, age restrictions, and so on. Americans are a free people and we have free will, but every action has a consequence. In order to keep civility in our society, limits must exist. The legislation I propose is not meant to impede protesters’ constitutional rights; it is meant to preserve the public’s right to safety and reliable transportation.



NICK ZERWAS is a state representative from Elk River. He is in his third term and serves on the Public Safety and Security Policy and Finance

Committee, the Health and Human Services Finance Committee, and the Higher Education and Career Readiness Policy and Finance Committee. Nick is married to Bette, and their son Jackson is a year and a half old.

Injustice Demands Disruption

Legislation to address activities that are already illegal chills dissent

BY SARAHJANE BLUM

In late May, some 100 people, led by members of the Dakota community, convened in protest of artist Sam Durant's sculpture *Scaffold*, which was being installed in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, a partnership between the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. The large, jungle-gym-like installation riffed on the gallows used to hang 38 Dakota men in Mankato in 1862—the largest mass execution in American history.

Protesters covered swaths of fencing surrounding the sculpture garden with signs featuring nooses and phrases such as “Execution Is Not Art.” The messages, which went viral on social media and fed the flood of mainstream media coverage, focused on the cultural appropriation and insensitivity of recasting a cultural tragedy as a playground attraction. At one point, a protester trespassed onto the construction site and hung a banner from the sculpture itself, reading simply “Take This Down.” The message was clear: business-as-usual would not be permitted until people's concerns had been addressed.

Forty-eight hours after the protests began, Walker executive director Olga Viso announced that the piece would be disassembled. Dakota artist Graci Horne declared the capitulation “a small victory,” adding that the Native American community and its supporters had been prepared to engage in a “marathon” of opposition.

THE CONCLUSION:

Meaningful dissent is under threat at the Minnesota legislature.

THE ARGUMENTS:

- Collective action drives change.
- Minnesotans are averse to confrontational tactics.
- Protest without disruption is pageantry.
- Risks of disruption are overblown.
- Current penalties are already severe.

“*It would be better, the argument seems to be, to apply for a permit, behave in an orderly fashion, and go home after you have had your symbolic say. But that isn't protest; it's pageantry.*”

The incident is easy to read as another example of how progressivism is fueling energetic social movements in the Twin Cities. Consider the crowd of nearly 100,000 that came out in St. Paul to show solidarity with the Washington, DC, Women's March the day after Donald Trump's inauguration, or the thousands of people who flooded the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport on January 29th in opposition to a Muslim travel ban. We are living in a moment marked by Minnesotans who are using collective action to drive both conversation and change.

As of this writing, though, the ability to demonstrate effectively is under threat from an anti-protest bill that was introduced during the 2017 session and is likely to be heard again in 2018. This proposed legislation would increase the penalties for acts of civil disobedience that result in the blockage of traffic access to highways, airports, or transit systems. The effort is a direct response to well-publicized tactics used by supporters of Black Lives Matter and other Minnesotans outraged by the police killings of Jamar Clark and Philando Castile—and the lack of punishment for the officers involved. The ACLU has denounced the bill, saying it would have a “chilling effect on the exercise of constitutionally protected speech.” And whether it

passes or not, the effort and limited debate around it have revealed a seeming aversion to confrontational tactics within the state, and confusion over how they contribute to meaningful dissent.

Yes, stopping traffic is disruptive. Those orchestrating these actions are often cast in the media as violent and are confronted with armed officers carrying shields and ready with tear gas. The images that circulate of these standoffs animate this simplistic narrative and make it easy for those who are uncomfortable with confrontation to write off unsanctioned protests as “out of control” or unnecessarily polarizing. It would be better, the argument seems to be, to apply for a permit, behave in an orderly fashion, and go home after you have had your symbolic say. But that isn't protest; it's pageantry. Requiring a permit to oppose police who kill people of color only reinforces the state's power to decide whose lives are worth advocating for.

People of good conscience have a duty to side with those who bring attention to injustice, and to stand against those who fight to maintain the status quo and quell dissent by insisting that all rallies be sanctioned and all event-oriented protests be relegated to “free speech zones” marked by fences, barricades, and armed enforcers. Otherwise we will



only see an increase in anti-protest legislation and crackdowns on free speech.

The effects of such crackdowns can be seen in the case of Louis Hunter, who attended the shutdown of I-94 on July 9, 2016, following Philando Castile's death in Falcon Heights at the hands of a St. Anthony police officer. Accused of throwing debris at officers during the demonstration, he was the only individual to face felony charges in the wake of the march, and he wasn't picked up until the following day. Hunter is a cousin of Castile's. The arrest and prosecution sent a message to the families of victims of state violence that it is dangerous to speak up in the wake of police killings, no matter how unjust they were. As a petition that was circulated by Hunter's supporters

read, "These charges are a clear attempt to silence and punish dissent—it's the embodiment of the state violence that killed Philando in the first place."

Only the most sketchy and inconsistent evidence linked Hunter to the property damage that occurred on the freeway and, on August 2, after significant pressure was applied by the community via coordinated call-in days, demonstrations, and petitions, the Carver County Attorney's Office announced that it was dropping all charges. Upon Hunter's arrest, however, the police had impounded the vehicle he used to make a living, and his loss of steady income led to the eviction of his family (which includes four daughters). In the past year he has struggled to find steady housing and employment. So while Hunter's charges were dismissed, his story is just more proof that the state already has plenty of power to punish protesters.

Though few Minnesotans were stuck in traffic due to the outcry over the *Scaffold* sculpture, the protests were tremendously disruptive to the Walker Art Center. For the donor- and patron-centered institution, the potential to lose the support of its membership or suffer a downturn in visitors because of the reputational hit and appearance of chaos on its grounds proved enough to

force change. At some point, the protesters might've chosen to block traffic, but it wasn't necessary. So the difference between the *Scaffold* protests and the I-94 protests is not one of legitimate-versus-illegitimate or effective-versus-ineffective tactics. The discrepancies simply remind us that power asserts itself in all sorts of ways, and when people choose to stand up to it, they put themselves at the mercy of forces they don't have much control over. The lesson to be taken from hearing people say that being stuck in traffic is a more significant problem than police violence is that we need more disruptive protest, not less.



SARAHJANE BLUM has been active in grassroots environmental, social justice, and animal-rights campaigns for nearly three decades. She was the lead plaintiff in *Blum v. Holder*, a lawsuit that challenged the constitutionality of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, a law that has served as a blueprint for many current anti-protest bills. She serves as chair of Property of the People, a nonprofit dedicated to ensuring government transparency and accountability.

To Afflict the Comfortable

For many people of color, protest isn't a strategy to be analyzed—it's a matter of life and death

BY NEERAJ MEHTA

Any debate or conversation about injustice, problem solving, or social change should begin by acknowledging that we often have different experiences, different narratives, and different beliefs. And so, the ways in which we express our approval or dissatisfaction can and should vary radically.

For instance, the places that many communities of color call home and the places that many whites call home are just a few miles away, but they're often worlds apart. These worlds have been forged over a long history, marked by racist public policy, poisonous attitudes, morally bankrupt economic policies, and geography. In his 2016 book *Democracy in Black*, Eddie Glaude Jr., chair of the Department for African American Studies at Princeton University, calls this inequity the value gap. Others simply define it as white supremacy.

THE CONCLUSION:

The public policies of yesterday still shape the racial landscape of today.

THE ARGUMENTS:

- Racism is deeply entrenched.
- Blocking traffic is a public crying out.
- Disruptive protest exposes society's inequities.
- Transformational change is inherently uncomfortable.
- Legislating *how* protests are conducted is really a response to *what* they're about.

It is tempting for some to think that 150 years after the Civil War, 50 years after the civil rights movement, and 9 years after the election of our first black president, we have effectively addressed structural discrimination, life is fair, and anybody who works hard can make it in this land of equal opportunity. A consequence of this way of thinking

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Disruption makes those in power defensive. Not because of how they're being made aware, but because of what they're being made aware of. Privilege. Injustice. White supremacy.”

is the tendency to absolve organizations and institutions that hinder mobility and perpetuate bigotry.

Too often the spaces where race, place, and injustice intersect most intensely are the same spaces privileged people rarely see. Hidden by race. Hidden by place. Hidden by privilege. Protest seeks to disrupt this comfort by criticizing the dominant culture. For communities of color, blocking traffic or temporarily impeding commerce or claiming a piece of land is also a public crying out, a life-and-death rejection of a society stubbornly organized around a certainty that black lives are inherently less valuable than others. It's an attempt to bring society's harshest realities out from the shadows.

Consider the issue of housing. Today, shelter is treated as a commodity. To mediate the economic imbalance of this reality, well-meaning policymakers might push for an inclusionary zoning policy, which would require developers to mix in a few more affordable units per project. We'll call this static enhancement. A different approach would be to create a universal housing voucher program that would transform housing from a mere commodity to a human right, ensuring that no one, particularly people living in poverty, would have to pay more than 30 percent of their income for shelter.

This would require upending traditional markets and reconsidering profit margins and opinions about who is or isn't deserving of our support. That's transformational justice. The former is geared toward incremental change. The latter requires challenging the dynamics that perpetuate racism in the first place. And that requires making noise, getting in the way, and making people uncomfortable.

Inevitably, this sort of disruption makes those in power defensive. Not because of *how* they're being made aware—although that's a common, cynical refrain—but because of *what* they're being made aware of. Privilege. Injustice. White supremacy.

Now, depending on your experience, your world, I can understand how someone lobbying against inconvenient and intellectually challenging activism might seem reasonable. After all, if your relationship with the police has always been positive and helpful, then the idea of defunding police departments sounds threatening, even silly. I can even see how the idea of raising the minimum wage might not make sense to people who can afford a mortgage and still have money left for additional necessities and comforts.

It's all a matter of perspective, after all.

A 2011 study done by researchers at Tufts University's School of Arts and Sciences

and Harvard Business School showed that while whites' and blacks' estimates of overall racial bias in the 1950s were similar, whites who were polled some 60 years later believed that racism against whites had increased significantly as racism against blacks had decreased. According to the authors of the study: "These data are the first to demonstrate that not only do whites think more progress has been made toward equality than do blacks, but whites also now believe that this progress is linked to a new inequality—at their expense. Whites see racial equality as a zero sum game, in which gains for one group mean losses for the other." A 2014 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center after the killings of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, showed that in both cases a plurality of whites believed that race received more attention than it deserved.

Communities of color are not surprised by this data. We are not surprised when President Trump tries to create an equivalency between white supremacists and counterprotesters. We are not surprised when police treat a group of white supremacists marching in Charlottesville differently than they would a group of people of color. (Take a moment here, please, to imagine what would have happened if a group of black folks, some with guns, had pulled up on campus with torches lit.)

In one world there is a narrative that everything is OK, while for others it is clear that it is not. Oblivious to how the world really works, believing that racism is a historical artifact, too many white folks fail to appreciate or believe the overwhelming evidence that centuries of institutional and structural racism still shape our world in the 21st century. Working for change based on the transformation of white people's minds or



hearts has become untenable. Instead, we must confront the disturbing truth that the public policies of yesterday still shape the racial landscape of today.

Today's protesters are endeavoring to replace the top-down politics of oppression and exploitation with the bottom-up politics of compassion and justice. And while that's messy, it's about more than public spectacle. It's about refusing to be placated by short-term promises and instead taking a longer, more transformative view. It's about forcing politicians and public officials to more carefully articulate, and defend, their values to people from all walks of life. It's about making it unacceptable for the death of a black or brown citizen at the hands of the police to pass without comment and consequence.

"At every moment in history, oppression has been met with resistance," author, academic, and activist Marc Lamont Hill wrote in his 2016 book

Nobody: Casualties of America's War on the Vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and Beyond. "In every instance in which a state has consigned the vulnerable to the status of nobody, the people have asserted that they are, in fact, somebody. In doing so, they offer hope that another world is indeed possible, that empires eventually fall, and that freedom is closer than we think."



NEERAJ MEHTA is the director of community programs at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota and adjunct faculty member at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. He lives in North Minneapolis with his wife, Erin, and two boys, Ezra and Koen.

Back & Forth

QUESTIONS FOR REP. NICK ZERWAS

Do you believe we would be having the same conversation in this country about blue-on-black violence if protesters in various communities wouldn't have stopped traffic and committed other acts of civil disobedience?

NZ: Yes. And I think in some ways these conversations are happening in spite of the protests and the tactics of Black Lives Matter. Here in Minneapolis, I think the stories of injustice or perceived injustice are what drive the narrative, not the criminal behavior of a few people blocking a highway. Criminal justice reform does not need to be a partisan issue. In fact, for years it hasn't been a

partisan issue. Across the country, we've had multiple examples of conservative Republican governors that have looked at reforming the criminal justice systems in their own states. The types of tactics these protesters are using are only serving to drive a wedge between people from different political persuasions who could be collaborating on larger criminal justice issues.

What is the difference between Black Lives Matter's tactics of civil disobedience and those used by leaders of the civil rights movement?

NZ: Today, from what I can see, there is not a defined set of objectives. When some localized chapters of some of these groups have released concerns or a list of issues or demands, oftentimes it's stuff that isn't really doable or realistic: the idea of disbanding a major metropolitan police department, for instance. When folks refused to leave a lunch counter because someone was refusing to serve them, I can see the connection there. When people say enough is enough and we're not going to be forced to give up our seats or move to the back of the bus, so we're going to boycott your

bus system, I see the connection there. But when you decide you're mad about an incident involving the police and then, on the biggest profit-margin day of the year for a retailer, you try and obstruct customers from entering the largest mall in the country, I don't see that connection. When protest groups claim victory or say they've reached their objective by simply shutting a freeway down, shutting a fair down, shutting a mall down, shutting a liberal mayor's press conference down, I don't agree it has a similar impact. I just don't see it. What's the point?

Given today's media environment, can a protest void of disruption or some other headline-making element get people's attention, especially if the people protesting are from a community that's been historically underrepresented?

NZ: Quite honestly, the basis of the question makes me nervous. Because I feel like we're going down this road, intentional or unintentional, which requires escalation for escalation's sake. I go back to the Women's March from last winter, when you had 100,000 individuals show up at the state capitol, and many more at places all around the country. They did so in a deliberate, measured way that abided by laws and statutes. And they didn't block the train. They used the train to get

people there to join their action. They didn't block the freeways. The freeways were used to get women and other participants in from the suburbs to join the action. The participants had national media attention and statewide media coverage for days and days and days, with a huge impact. I really challenge the narrative or the idea that the only way to get attention is to violate the law. I think that is a disservice to the individuals that they are professing to represent.

The construction of I-94 devastated the mostly African American Rondo neighborhood in the '60s. Is there a way for Black Lives Matter to use the historic symbolism of the highway without blocking traffic or violating the law?

NZ: That historical connection is not lost on me. But, if you're trying to bring your child who is in respiratory distress to St. Paul Children's Hospital and the freeway is blocked, mom and dad aren't taking a moment to ponder the tragic history of the Rondo neighborhood. That just isn't happening—and I'm willing to guess that 85 to 95 percent of the people stopped in that traffic aren't making that connection either.

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I feel like we're going down this road, intentional or unintentional, which requires escalation for escalation's sake.
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QUESTIONS FOR SARAHJANE BLUM

Do you object to the fact that blocking access to highways and transit is illegal, or to the proposed increase in penalties, or both?

SB: I object to laws that make the intention of an action more illegal than it would otherwise be. There are already laws on the books that say that there are penalties for blocking traffic. There are already laws on the books that govern where people can stand and sit and how they comport themselves in public. There is a real danger to the entire notion of America

as a place where dissent is considered part of the process of building a more perfect union when we start passing laws that make things more illegal because you're doing them out of conscience. To me, all of these laws have to do with reinforcing the status quo and saying that an unpopular idea itself deserves legislating against. That's incredibly dangerous.

Those in support of disruptive protest often say the risks are exaggerated. What about the risk of new legislation chilling free speech? If you just take away this one tactic of blocking streets and highways, will it really put us on a slippery slope?

SB: Where the slippery slope comes in is not because it's taking away the right to block a roadway. We don't actually have that right. The problem comes in saying it is more illegal to block a freeway because you were doing it as an act of expression. There doesn't even need to be a slippery slope. In and of itself, that is a very clear signaling from the government that speaking your mind is something the state is allowed to punish you for. And punish you for at levels that do not align with how we treat other people who are exhibiting the same behaviors.

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The problem comes in saying it is more illegal to block a freeway because you were doing it as an act of expression.
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In July 2016 it was reported that 21 officers from various agencies were hurt when protesters blocked I-94. One officer was hit by a piece of concrete thrown from an overpass. Is this sort of risk acceptable?

SB: I'd like to reframe that question. Because there's nothing inherent to the tactic of shutting down a bridge that would create conflict with police or that would cause injury to police. If in fact it is true that we are seeing greater instances of physical altercation that could cause harm to police, the better question to ask is: What are the root causes of this? Is it the increased militarization of the police force? Is it that protests that have to do with standing up to systemic police brutality create a scenario

wherein the police come in primed for a fight? Is it that there's just been increasing escalation over the years with no change, and people are increasingly angry? I don't know what proximately causes a protest to turn into the volleying of sticks and stones back and forth from police and protesters. What I do know is that, by and large, when the police and the public come into contact, the police are better equipped, better weaponized, and typically inflict far more damage than they receive.

Since they are required to show up, what should the role of peace officers be when a public road is blocked?

SB: I'm not an expert in best practices for policing. I do know that there are tactics and strategies for de-escalating situations that some cities and states try to enact. There are also some changes happening that increase tensions: There've been increased budget allowances for things like sound cannons, which are essentially weapons to be used against protesters. I definitely think, at the very least, not walking into the scene gunning for a fight, brandishing the overwhelming force that everybody already

knows the police have, would be a better tactic. I would also say that we're in a moment where the energy and the momentum is towards individuals taking to the public sphere to make their concerns heard, because it's getting increasingly hard to address hard questions that are important to everybody any other way. I would say the role of police chiefs and police forces is to investigate best practices for interacting with the public, for de-escalation.

Back & Forth

QUESTIONS FOR NEERAJ MEHTA

You refer to bottom-up policies of compassion and justice. What does that look like in practice?

NM: There's so much of how we typically go about doing work on these issues that comes from the top down, from a hierarchy of who has the "right" information or skills or knowledge to address a particular challenge. And we marginalize the knowledge, experience, and wisdom of the people and communities who are

living with the problem. I think that policing is a great example of where we need to do a better job of listening to people who are directly affected. We also need to work harder to turn some of the control and decision-making over to the broader community. That's a little bit of the bottom up.

You go so far as to say that changing white people's hearts and minds has become untenable. If that's true, and if white people are not integral to the movement for black lives, can one truly expect systems to change?

NM: I do think white allies and white people have a role to play, and maybe an integral role. But what I'm ultimately arguing has more to do with who holds the power. And I'd rather spend my energy shifting that power balance than trying to make white people more loving and kind and empathetic.

“What are we asking for?” We’re asking not to be perceived as a danger simply because of the color of our skin.

Can transformational change take place without first accomplishing a set of incremental policy changes, what you might call static enhancement?

NM: I think we have to get out of binaries. It's not change the hearts and minds of white people or build the power of black and brown people. It's both. It's not just go upstream and get to the root cause or deal with the thing right in front our face. It's both. And we have

to figure out how we're doing both. Now, part of the point I'm making is that we've over-emphasized one over the other. And so, I might be arguing for a shift in the balance of how we approach these things. But I'm not saying it's one or the other.

What about polarization, though: Don't disruptive actions make people more apt to stereotype a group or dismiss them altogether? Doesn't it make it harder to come together on substantive change?

NM: I hear this criticism, and it assumes a particular goal: that I'm protesting so that the people who disagree with me will be more willing to get in a room with me to think about what to do. That's not necessarily the end game. I mean, it might be for some people. But part of what I note in my essay is that protest is our public lament. It's about filing a public complaint. If you agree or disagree, I don't care sometimes. Now, saying that, if you look at

the movement for black lives, people are doing work that goes beyond the actual protests, like releasing a platform last summer. There is also healing work that the movement does. There is a lot of trauma from being oppressed for centuries. If I see a protest as an isolated thing and assume nothing else is involved, then I'm not doing the work of really digging into the broader movement.

A frequent criticism of organizations such as Black Lives Matter is that their street protests, unlike the most seminal marches of the civil rights movement, aren't tied to an actionable set of grievances.

NM: It might be clear to someone today that segregation was wrong and demanded civil disobedience. But it was not clear back then. If the same person who is troubled by Black Lives Matter's tactics today were transported back in time, he or she would be saying, 'Wait a minute, our society is separate but equal. Separate but equal. That's what Jim Crow is about. I don't see what you're fighting for here. Why do you want to sit at our counters? You've got counters.

Why do you want to drink at our drinking fountains? You've got drinking fountains.' You can't evaluate what's going on today by looking backwards.

'What are we asking for?' We're asking not to be shot by police. We're asking not to be perceived as a danger simply because of the color of our skin. If you say you don't know what we're asking for, you're not paying attention. ✨

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HOW TO MOBILIZE

Patty Thorsen's transit work is highly personal—and effective

BY JACQUELINE WHITE

Though her high-rise residence at City Walk Condominiums in downtown St. Paul puts her less than a mile from the Minnesota State Capitol building, Patty Thorsen has to draw on her professional research skills and life experience to plan out a midmorning trip.

Light rail is an option. There's a stop just a block from her building's front door, and now that Thorsen has "Trixie," a lighter-weight, state-of-the-art electric wheelchair with mid-wheel drive, it's easier to maneuver to and from the station. It's not that simple, however. There are a number of fluid factors that determine whether she will have time to take the train or will need to make an appointment to get picked up by a Metro Mobility bus.

How crowded will the transit line be at her chosen time? At what station will it be easiest to detrain? And what would be the most expedient route from that station to the capitol's handicap-accessible entrance, tucked below the imposing stairs leading up to the grand entrance?

"Accessible," notes Thorsen drily, "is a broad term."

Thorsen was born with cerebral palsy and epilepsy in 1960, and her doctors initially questioned whether the Golden Valley native would be able to talk—an erroneous assessment that has become a running family joke. A St. Catherine's graduate and "lifelong customer of mass transit," Thorsen used Minnesota Valley Transit Authority's reverse-rush-hour service to commute to and from her Eagan workplace until 2009, when osteoarthritis in her left hip and right ankle forced her to leave her job as a library assistant at Thomson Reuters and go on long-term disability.

Though Thorsen is still able to walk short distances with the help of a cane, reduced stamina qualifies her for Metro Mobility, a federally mandated, shared public transportation service "for certified riders who are unable to use regular fixed-route buses due to a disability or health condition," according to the Metropolitan Council's website. Just lately, though, the politics surrounding Metro Mobility—and transit in general—have become increasingly complex and divisive. [See "Trains, Politics, and Automobiles," page 2.]

Minnesota's 65+ population is on pace to grow 8 percent annually—a particularly troubling phenomenon since that's the populace most apt to use Metro Mobility, which is projected to have a \$24 million shortfall in 2017. And that deficit exists in the wake of a heated legislative session in which Metro Mobility barely managed to squeak by without being cut significantly. (At one point a 40 percent, across-the-board cut to the entire transit system was on the table.)

Thorsen played a role in the outcome, both as a member of the Citizens League's 21-member bipartisan Transit Study Task Force, and as a vocal, visible advocate in the media and at rallies, where she passionately made the case that a



PHOTO: MICHAEL DVORAK

functional, multipurpose transit system is essential to the state's economic infrastructure.

While there's plenty of work to be done before Metro Mobility is sustainable (the legislature created a Metro Mobility Enhancement Task Force to make future budget recommendations), Thorsen's journey from transit user to out-front campaigner provides a primer on how an engaged citizen—and Citizens League member—can get active, get heard, and get things done.

Listening

Once on long-term disability, Thorsen began her more flexible "encore career" as a volunteer at the Minnesota Children's Museum, and then joined the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee, for which she now serves as vice chair. That made her a natural choice for the Citizens League's transit task force, charged with making recommendations to the legislature in advance of the 2017 session.

The committee produced the report *Getting from Here to There: Funding Transit in the Region*, in which most participants endorse a two-tier sales tax for transit based on density of use. The report also includes a statement by Thorsen imploring legislators to "Use mass transit for one day to meet your daily needs."

At first, Thorsen was quiet in the task-force meetings, which were cochaired by former Metropolitan Council chair Peter Bell and former Minnesota representative Ann T. Lenczewski. “As a transit advocate, I have to think about why people hold the positions they do,” Thorsen explains. “People think advocating is just about speaking up, but it’s also about listening to the other side.”

In addition to absorbing “the landscape of the issue,” Thorsen was also sensing that her lived experience might be unique in the room. Eventually, she brought that experience out for a ride when a committee member insisted that service cuts were simply a matter of economics. “No, it’s not. This is people’s lives,” she remembers saying.

“When I think there’s injustice or the full picture isn’t being seen, then I’ll speak up.”

Showing Up

“I kept reinforcing how I got to [each task force] meeting: Mass transit allows people to stay involved,” Thorsen says.

In fact, this idea—that half the battle is showing up, and too many people are prevented from doing so—was not only a concept regularly repeated by Thorsen, it was unintentionally reinforced by a scheduling snafu.

To get from downtown St. Paul to the 7:30 a.m. Citizens League meetings, which took place at St. Mary’s Greek Orthodox Church near Uptown Minneapolis, Thorsen scheduled her Metro Mobility rides a few days in advance.

But one day the bus failed to appear at the appointed time. Thorsen later learned that the ride had been mistakenly scheduled for that

evening. Instead of merely using the snafu as a justifiable excuse for being absent, Thorsen treated it as a teaching moment at the next meeting. “It’s good that they see the realities, that I don’t just get in the car and go. There’s another step to it,” she says.

Dollars and Sense

Acknowledging the very real need to balance budgets, Thorsen learned to cast her arguments in financial terms, while simultaneously encouraging committee members to engage in a more holistic brand of cost-benefit analyses.

For instance, she asks people who depend on their cars to conduct a simple exercise: Leave your vehicle at home for one working day and use mass transit to meet all your needs. Then imagine having to do that every day, day after day, no matter the season. And then consider the finite resources required, including time and effort.

In our car-crazed culture, it’s easy to take one’s ability to drive for granted, Thorsen argues. The reality, though, is that most individuals will eventually have to give up that independence and count on locally subsidized services. “Can the state afford to lose the financial contributions that people who rely on transit provide?” she asks rhetorically. “After all, we’re an aging population.”

To Thorsen’s way of thinking, mass transit not only directly benefits those people who can’t afford a car, have a disability, or choose not to drive for various reasons. Having a higher percentage of citizens in a position to do business, make purchases, and participate in the job market makes economic sense for



People think advocating is just about speaking up, but it’s also about listening to the other side.”

everyone. “I’ve known people who have allowed their disabilities to isolate them,” Thorsen explains. “And, unfortunately, that means the valuable abilities and skills they have developed over a lifetime can’t be utilized. We need to ensure that there’s a safety net available so that everyone can stay involved in society.”

Play to Your Strengths

Even when policymakers acknowledge the need for transit (and many do, on both sides of the aisle), the question still remains: Who should pay?

One solution proposed at a task-force meeting was to tap human-services funds instead of paying for transit with general funds. In the moment, Thorsen became irritated, mainly because such a move seemed to bolster the idea that people living with disabilities are charity cases, pitting productive, taxpaying citizens against “those poor people who can’t help themselves and have nothing to offer anyone else.”

“I try to focus on the whole community,” Thorsen says, dismissing an “us versus those guys” attitude as “a bunch of hooley.”

“We never benefit when we divide people in that way.”

Eventually, the woman who made the recommendation apologized, which Thorsen says blew her away and served as a reminder that her first-hand knowledge and passion could be a game changer. “I was not a finance person at all. And sometimes I’d get lost in the weeds in those discussions. But the exchange reminded me that I wasn’t there to be a finance person, I was there to be a face of people using mass transit. And while I may not have changed her overall beliefs, I made her think—and made other people in the room consider things differently, as well.”

“Patty is a strong and persistent leader,” says Transit Study Task Force cochair Lenczewski. “She consistently helped direct the task force’s focus to the needs of every Minnesotan. Her advocacy for those with disabilities ensured the final report included the needs of those for whom transit is a necessary component for everyday life.” ❄️

JACQUELINE WHITE is a Minneapolis writer. When she needs to go downtown, she hops on the No. 4 bus.

A COMING-OF-AGE STORY

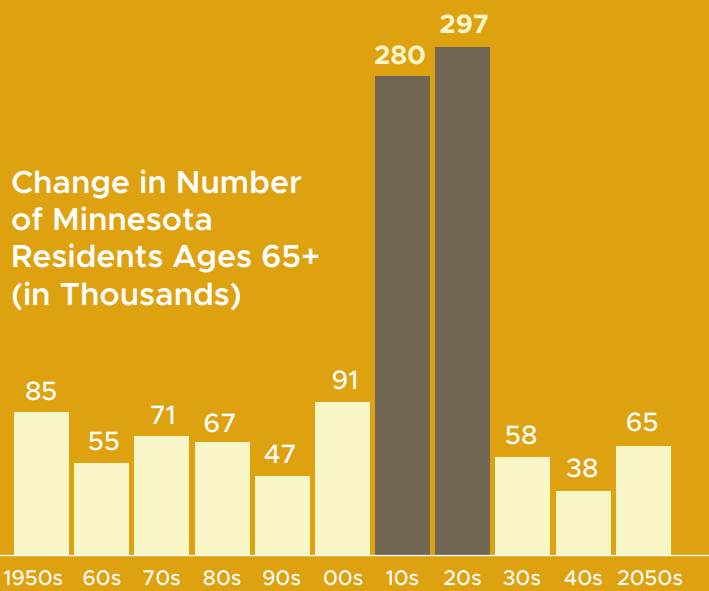
As Minnesota's "older adult" demographic multiplies, innovation is needed to address the opportunities and challenges

Public dialogue around immigration rates, insurance costs, and educational trends too often fails to factor in the aging of America. According to the Population Reference Bureau, a private nonprofit funded in part by the United States Census Bureau, the number of people 65 and older is projected to more than double from 46 million today to over 98 million by 2060, and their share of the total population will rise from 15 percent to 24 percent. In Minnesota, this trend is taking place at the same time that the growth in the labor force—a key ingredient for economic growth—has dropped to almost zero. In part, this is because a disproportionate number of young people in the Midwest are moving to work and go to school elsewhere, and they're not returning in sufficient numbers.

This unprecedented demographic shift will have an impact on all levels of public policy, from Social Security and Medicare to employment retention and scholastic achievement. From a budgetary perspective, priorities will have to be reevaluated and reimagined. And to ensure that robust, bipartisan conversations take place sooner than too late, lawmakers and their constituents will require fresh, fact-driven recommendations.

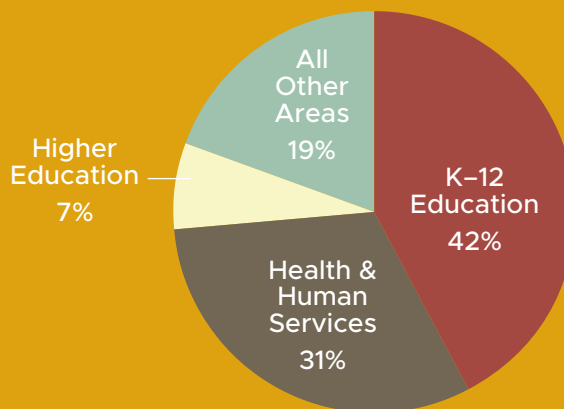
Calling Home, a collaborative initiative of 11 aging-related organizations (see "A Website for the Ages," page 2), is a proactive, intergenerational conversation starter designed to help all Minnesotans think over the challenges and opportunities that accompany later life. The League's focus on workforce-oriented policies is aimed at making sure that as public costs increase, workers across the spectrum will be in a position to realize their full, productive potential. The data at right both inspires and informs this work. 🌸

Statistics provided by Minnesota state demographer Susan Brower.



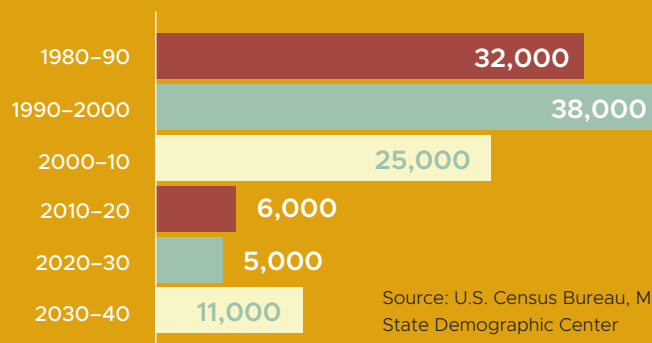
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Minnesota State Demographic Center

General Fund Expenditures, State of Minnesota



Source: Minnesota Management and Budget, February 2013

Projected Growth in Labor Force, Ages 16+



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Minnesota State Demographic Center

PHOTO: MICHAEL DVORAK



Beyond Civility

Healthy disagreement is essential to our democracy,
and it doesn't have to hurt

I've been itching for an argument since I learned to talk.

Just ask my parents. When I was in grade school, I spent countless hours quarreling with my grandfather about whether or not I needed a belt to hold up my Toughskins (I'm lucky I didn't end up in suspenders). In junior high I supported Ronald Reagan's first presidential bid, primarily because I knew it would drive my mother to distraction. Four years later I was handing out leaflets for Jesse Jackson, which prompted my mother's brother to call me Fidel. (At the time, I thought it was a high compliment. In hindsight, I'm certain my uncle didn't mean it that way.)

I joined the debate team, of course, and learned how to think and write and persuade by matching wits with argumentative kids from all over the Midwest. In college, I sat on the editorial board at the *Minnesota Daily* and earned pocket money coaching forensics at Edina High School. For years after that, whether I was sitting in a news huddle or hanging out with friends at a party, nothing gave me more joy than a bout of verbal jousting, especially if I had the chance to defend a position I didn't personally hold. When I was running things at *Utne Reader*, I considered it my primary responsibility to train our young staff to vehemently disagree without making it personal—or taking it personally.

And then something changed, at home and at work. I began to avoid disagreement and explore the concept of civil conversation. This was partly a consequence of growing older and, hopefully, a titch wiser. Arguing just to argue, after all, is not only annoying at holiday gatherings; it can sometimes create needless roadblocks on an otherwise harmonious road. My work also led to a relationship with the Public Conversations Project in Boston, where I partook in workshops aimed at creating mutual understanding.

I realized that my fighting spirit was fading largely because appraising differences in opinion, particularly when it came to public policy, had somehow become unprecedentedly tribal. The best evidence or most workable solutions were no longer valued or trusted. I felt that I was hemmed in by political litmus tests. That what we dared to think (or not think) was being conflated with our values and our value, particularly within our increasingly insulated social circles. It seemed that everyone was indeed, as author Robert Putnam noted in 2000, “bowling alone”—or, at most, only sharing a lane with those who agreed to wear the same team logo.

Still, there was something about the civility movement that left me wanting. The ultimate goal is worthy of pursuit, of course. It is, in fact, essential. In order to hear one another, we must respect one another. That requires relearning how to deeply listen, while

simultaneously abandoning easy stereotypes and self-righteousness. Too often, though, the journey ends there. People participate in dialogue training and public exchanges where the end goal is, in essence, to agree to disagree. Admittedly, this both feels better than and is a vast improvement over what passes for discussion these days. But ultimately this approach fails to get us to truly grapple with our most complex and crucial fiscal, social, and cultural challenges. After we take the vitriol away and retrain ourselves to honor different viewpoints, it's vital that we take the next step and learn how to properly argue with one another again.

The tagline of this magazine is *Quality conversation. Healthy debate*. At the Citizens League these two concepts are not mutually exclusive. They feed off each other. Our membership, the board, our policy committees, and the staff are committed to unearthing the most reliable data and workable ideas, regardless of where they originate or whom they rankle. To get there, we set the table for a collegial give-and-take that rewards creative thinking, encourages tough questions, and, yes, even allows for passionate disagreements. The goal is not to change everyone's mind, but to encourage a consensus or compromise born of rigor.

As this project evolves in print and online, I hope to use this space to talk about what's needed to achieve a balance between conviction and open-mindedness, individually and collectively. I imagine it will be a challenge. I know it will be fun. I hope you decide to participate in the effort. 🌟

“
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DAVID SCHIMKE is the founding editor of *Citizens League Voice*. dschimke@citizensleague.org

2017 CIVIC CELEBRATION

FOR SIXTY-FIVE YEARS, Citizens League staff and board members have dedicated an evening to Minnesotans whose work has inspired, challenged, and transformed the wider community. At the 2017 Civic Celebration, we will honor **DR. JOSIE JOHNSON** and **SUSAN KIMBERLY**, two women who have consistently and courageously stayed true to their respective visions—and have blazed paths that promise to endure for generations.

As is our tradition, the guests of honor, along with the audience, get to sit back, enjoy drinks and appetizers, and hear testimonials from colleagues, friends, and admirers. What follows is a sampling of the sorts of comments guests will hear on October 18 at the Minneapolis Event Center.

Wednesday,
October 18, 2017
5:30–8:00 p.m.

Minneapolis Event Center
212 Second Street SE,
Minneapolis, MN
55414

“Dr. Johnson is a hero to all of us. And I haven’t said this to her, so I’ll say it now: Thank you for making this world a better place. Thank you for making it a place that allowed me to grow and develop. That’s allowed my children and grandchildren and all children to reach their full potential. That is one of the true qualities of people who are willing to give of themselves and serve others.” —Alan Page, associate justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court 1993 to 2015

“Dr. Johnson is the epitome of grace and a quiet force. Despite her iconic status as a civil rights leader, she is always willing to listen and to offer her support—sometimes in the form of advice, other times as a challenge to do better. And she always speaks with clarity and authority.” —Acooa Ellis, director of social justice advocacy, Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis

“No matter your circumstance, when you’re in Dr. Johnson’s presence you feel like you’re in the right place. She welcomes you, she acknowledges you with her beautiful smile, and her spirit is so warm. If you’re starting out your career or have been on your journey for awhile, you must acknowledge that she’s been around the corner 25 times before you wake up. Her wisdom is deep. She’s a changemaker. She’s a gem.” —Shawntera Hardy, commissioner, Minnesota Department of Employment and Academic Development



DR. JOSIE JOHNSON

African American regent at the University of Minnesota, Johnson also served the school as associate vice president for academic affairs. In the mid-’70s, while living in Denver, she became chief of staff for George Brown, the first African American lieutenant governor elected since Reconstruction. She eventually came back to the University of Minnesota and, in 1996, formed Josie Robinson Johnson and Associates, Inc., which assists schools and colleges with diversity issues.

*D*r. Josie Johnson is a storied civil rights activist, educator, and volunteer. In 1964, she led a multiracial delegation of women from Minnesota to witness Mississippi’s seminal civil rights struggle. Three years later, she was named acting director of the Minneapolis Urban League. The first



SUSAN KIMBERLY

transition in the early ’80s, Kimberly was back at city hall, working for DFL mayor George Latimer. Republican mayor Norm Coleman appointed her deputy mayor, and she later worked in his U.S. Senate office. She led St. Paul’s Planning and Economic Development department under Mayor Randy Kelly and served as interim president of the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce.

*S*usan Kimberly’s commitment to public service is legendary. As Bob Sylvester, she served on the St. Paul City Council from 1974 to 1978 and was the head of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority. Sylvester then went on to work as an investment banker with Piper Jaffray. Following gender

“Susan is very bright, very progressive, and very plainspoken. An inquisitive thinker, she quickly comes to the heart of the matter. And, like a good investigative reporter, she asks pointed questions that move the conversation along toward a workable solution.” —David Hozza, St. Paul city council member 1974 to 1980

“Susan is one of the most courageous, visionary, smart policy wonks this city has ever seen. If you think of the jobs and positions she’s had, it’s extraordinary. And I’ll tell you, as good as she is for St. Paul, I’m selfish: I just want her to be on all my future golf scramble teams. She gets to hit from the red tees!” —John Regal, director of risk management and local government affairs, Securian Financial Group

“Susan’s ability to connect fiscal issues with public policy is unparalleled. She has a mastery of the details. She has integrity. She has a quick wit. And she has a first-class mind. Now, I know a lot of people with first-class minds who are jerks and who don’t listen. Susan is *not* one of them.”

—George Latimer, mayor of St. Paul 1976 to 1990

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FALL 2017

OCTOBER

- 17** MIND OPENER (BREAKFAST): Putting Students at the Center in Teacher-Powered Schools
Downtown Woodfire Grill, St. Paul, 7:30 a.m.
- 18** CIVIC CELEBRATION: Honoring Dr. Josie Johnson and Susan Kimberly
Minneapolis Event Center, 5:30 p.m.
- 26** POLICY AND A PINT®: Entrepreneurial Approaches to Increase Wealth for Low-Income Communities
Teatro Zuccone, Duluth, 5:30 p.m.

NOVEMBER

- 20** MIND OPENER (BREAKFAST)
Downtown Woodfire Grill, St. Paul, 7:30 a.m.

DECEMBER

- 4** EDTALKS: Mindfulness and Social Emotional Learning
Icehouse, Minneapolis, 5:30 p.m.
- 19** MIND OPENER (BREAKFAST)
Downtown Woodfire Grill, St. Paul, 7:30 a.m.

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MIND THE GAP

Sponsored by Comcast and RBC—Darla Kashian

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MIND OPENER

Sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

In-depth policy discussions served with breakfast give participants a chance to go to school on a variety of issues, from the electrical grid to opioid use to Minnesota's changing political landscape. Space is limited.

POLICY AND A PINT®

Sponsored by the Bush Foundation and Target

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