

Our Shared Democracy

A starting point for community members to invite dinner dialogues centered on exploring connections between inner values, outer work, and practicing democracy.

Welcome

Conversation guidelines:

Be curious and open to learning.

Please respect confidentiality and suspend judgment: keep names in and take learning out.

Be authentic and welcome that from others (use “I” statements).

Take space, make space.

Dine

Describe yourself, today, in three words.

What inner or core values ground your work and service in your community?

Discuss

“For me, the question of democracy also opens up the question of what does it mean to be truly human. And it seems to me that we need to recognize that to develop the best humanity, the best spirit, the best community, there needs to be discipline, practices of exploring. How do you do that? How do we work together? How do we talk together in ways that will open up our best capacities and our best gifts?”

— Vincent Harding (1931-2014), civil rights activist, author, and scholar

How have your values helped to guide how you practice democracy in your community?

What does a healthy democracy look like in your community?

What helps and prevents your vision of democracy from appearing in your community?

How can community leaders best engage divergent voices, as productively as possible, so these voices contribute to a healthy democracy? What is your wish list for your community?

Reflect

How could more spaces like tonight’s dinner exist to bring community members together and model healthy democracy?

About Tonight's Conversation

At a moment when the divisions within many communities across the country are more visible and palpable than in recent years, we encourage diverse groups of nonprofit, foundation, and community leaders to come together and **to participate in a reflective community-based conversations about the role every leader and organization can play in contributing to a vibrant, healthy, and inclusive democracy.**

Such conversations can provide a supportive and hospitable space that community leaders do not typically have—**to reflect on the connection between their individual leadership and the values and ideals that inform their participation and/or their organizations' roles in their local communities.**

Discussions are part of a learning-focused program initiated by Independent Sector and the Fetzer Institute, in collaboration with the Council of Michigan Foundations, to **better understand how to engage local nonprofit, foundation, business, faith, and intergenerational leaders as partners contributing to a healthy democracy and thriving civil society.**

Our Shared Democracy Partners:

Fetzer Institute (Kalamazoo, Michigan): working to help building the spiritual foundation for a loving world.

Independent Sector (Washington, DC): a national membership organization that brings together nonprofits, foundations, and corporations to advance the common good.

Council of Michigan Foundations (Offices in Detroit, Grand Haven, and Grand Rapids, Michigan): a thriving community committed to increasing the impact of Michigan philanthropy.

