

Civity

Bridging Divides to Strengthen Communities

The word "Civity" – from the Latin word for the civic body constituting a city – highlights the importance of relationships and networks. A community with Civity is a community in which relationships cross divides and people are empowered to work together. The quality of Civity makes communities stronger and more able to tackle the complex challenges that affect us all.

Creating Stronger Communities: Our Goal

Around the country, isolation and fear of “the other” prevent individuals within communities from working together to address critical issues. Civity helps community leaders strategically transform their networks to harness social, political, and organizational diversity – not to ignore differences, but to work across differences. When we bridge divides, we are better able to address the collective problems that confront us.

Civity Co-Founders: Malka Kopell and Palma Strand

Malka, based in the San Francisco Bay Area, brings to this work over 30 years of experience with cross-sector and civic collaboration to address public challenges. She has started a successful organization herself and assisted at the birth of many others. She has a vibrant network of friends and colleagues who work at the intersection of civic engagement, community-building, and philanthropy. Malka has just completed a paper for the Aspen Institute describing the need for a “21st century civic infrastructure”, what it looks like, and how to build it. For her, “Civity gives a name to something I’ve been thinking about for a long, long time. I look back on my work in communities and I see divides *and* what can happen when people like and trust each other across those divides. Civity is the missing piece needed to achieve real impact. The good news is that putting the Civity piece in is something everyone can contribute to. And building Civity benefits Civity-builders personally as well as communities as a whole.”

Palma entered the field as an active citizen and public-school parent – participating in community decision-making, standing as a candidate for School Board, engaging in civic organizing, and contributing to cultural competence training for a school system. She integrates those experiences into her work as a professor at Creighton Law School and the Werner Institute at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. She was the first to name Civity, which she infuses into her work. She teaches and writes on the civic underpinnings of law, Civity’s role in creating resilient regions, and the connection between building Civity and surmounting racism. For Palma, “Civity gives a name to the quality that makes communities work. I’ve seen people with different backgrounds and different perspectives reaching out and connecting. Through telling their own and listening to others’ stories, they discover shared concerns. When that happens, the magic of diverse contributions marshaled toward common goals sparks real progress.”

Our Guiding Principles

We build Civity into institutions and communities by naming, eliciting, and supporting relationships of mutual respect, empathy, and trust across social dividing lines.

Principle #1: Relationships are Foundational

We encourage, create space for, and teach relationship-building. Moving along a continuum of respect, empathy, and trust, relationships – especially those “bridging” relationships that connect through difference – are foundational to making change.

Principle #2: Individuals Can Make a Difference

We work with individuals to forge and improve relationships. By being strategic and intentional about their civic networks, individuals can strengthen their own community.

Principle #3: Networks Enable Ripple Effects

Our goal is stronger civic networks with aware, intentional individuals engaging in more – and more productive – bridging relationships. By utilizing the fact that people are already self-organized into networks, our relationship-building approach can leverage greater impact.

“Civity Communities”: The Work

Starting in January of 2016, we will support leaders in communities across the country to build Civity. Working with community-based partners in the nonprofit, public, and private sectors to develop a Civity-building approach specifically tailored to each community, we will:

- ✓ **Strengthen Place-Based Networks:** Support community leaders’ ability to *organize in place* for systemic change by diversifying existing local networks.
- ✓ **Be “Intrapreneurial:”** Validate and reinforce the ways in which community leaders already engage in Civity and support their increased effectiveness.
- ✓ **Harness Diversity:** Elevate the inherent value of being connected to individuals with diverse perspectives and the power of *connecting through difference* without needing to resolve it.
- ✓ **Disseminate User-Friendly Tools:** Train, support, and reinforce leaders’ work with focused, simple, and portable approaches and models.

Though Civity can be built at many levels, we will focus on communities that are both small enough to leverage existing networks and big enough to offer a range of opportunities for crossing divides.

Our Commitment to Learning

Although the basis of our theory of change – strengthening civic networks to improve community resilience – is grounded in already-existing research, there is much to learn about how to operationalize that work in communities. We are committed to bringing rigor and data-driven analysis to our process so that we can both improve our own Civity-building work and contribute to the field at large.

For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.civity.org>

We acknowledge and thank the people who are helping us “name Civity,” many of whom are building Civity themselves in their own institutions and communities ...

Our Advisory Council

John Esterle, Co-Executive Director, The Whitman Institute

Kip Harkness, Director, Technology Engagement, PayPal

Liz Joyner, Executive Director & Co-Founder, The Village Square

Beth Kanter, Author, The Networked Nonprofit & Measuring the Networked Nonprofit, Blogger, & Website Host, www.bethkanter.org

Amy Lyman, Co-Founder, Great Place to Work Institute

Martha McCoy, Executive Director, Everyday Democracy, & President, The Paul J. Aicher Foundation

Graham Richard, CEO, Advanced Energy Economy, & former Mayor of Fort Wayne, IN

Colin Rule, Founder and COO, Modria

Janet Shing, Senior Program Officer, Community Foundation for Monterey County

Dave Steer, Director of Advocacy, Mozilla Foundation

Lucy Valentine Wurtz, Development and Marketing Director, Village Enterprise

Others Whose Thoughts (and Example) Have Inspired and Informed our Work

David Jones, Director of Human Resources, and Roberta Katz, Associate Vice President for Strategic Planning, Stanford University

Kathy Reich, Organization Effectiveness and Philanthropy Director, and Carol Larson, President, David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Marie Young, Interim Vice President, Donor Experience and Engagement, and Mauricio Palma, Director, Initiatives, Silicon Valley Community Foundation

The Civity Conversations Pilot Participants

Mike Greenfield, Entrepreneur, and Founder, Circle of Moms

Chris Murphy, Co-Founder, Zoomforth

Lara Ortiz-Luis, Director of Operations, Matter.

Chris Saccheri, Full-Time Dad, former Director of Development, LinkedIn

Varsha Shah, Technology Leadership Program Cohort/Senior Manager, PayPal

Special Thanks to ...

Gina Baleria, Communications

Gigi Barsoum, Evaluation Design

Jill Blair, Strategic Planning

Paul Emmert, Web Design

Nicole Farkouh, Strategic Planning and Implementation

Chris Block, Chief Executive Officer, and Alberto Villaluna, Vice-President, Senior Fellows Network, American Leadership Forum - Silicon Valley

David Smith, Managing Director, The Presidio Institute

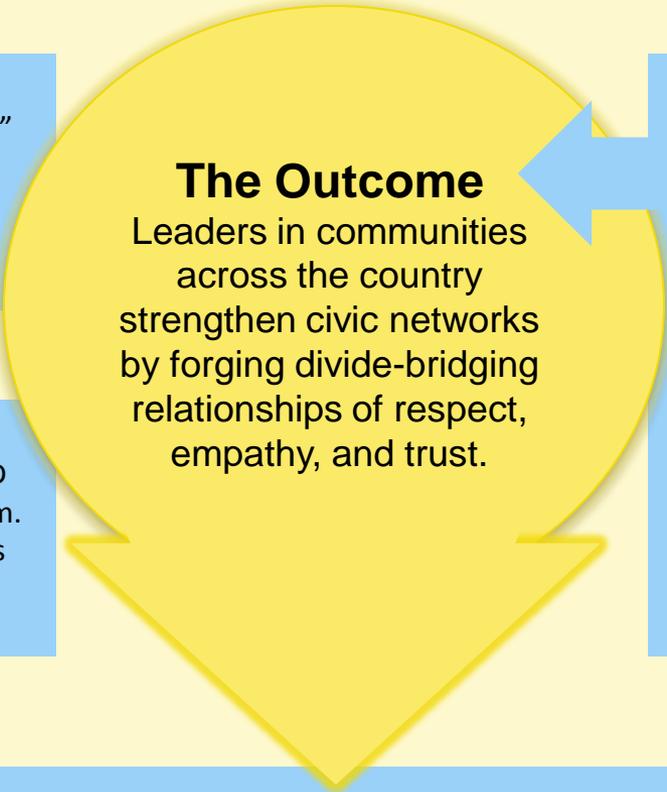
Carolyn Lukensmeyer, Executive Director, and Shane Christensen, Program Director, National Institute for Civil Discourse

CIVITY: Community leaders working together across divides to address social and economic problems.

The Issue
Isolation and fear of “the other” prevent individuals within communities from working together to address critical issues.

Our Focus of Change

- Communities with needs AND the resources to address them.
- Influential community leaders working to address issues grounded in inequities.



Our Strategies

- **Strengthen Place-Based Networks:** Support community leaders’ ability to *organize in place* for systemic change by diversifying existing local networks.
- **Be “Intrapreneurial:”** Validate and reinforce the ways in which community leaders already engage in Civity and support their increased effectiveness.
- **Harness Diversity:** Elevate the inherent value of being connected to individuals with diverse perspectives and the power of *connecting through difference* without needing to resolve it.
- **Disseminate User-Friendly Tools:** Train and support leaders with focused, simple, and portable approaches and models.

Grounding Evidence

With healthy bridging relationships and strong diverse networks, communities are resilient and able to effectively address the problems they face.

- Individuals, when working strategically and leveraging networks, can make a difference.
- Positive civic outcomes are more sustainable when they involve people from diverse experiences and perspectives.
- Because communities are systems, small strategic shifts – “critical yeast” – can lead to widespread change.
- Increased connection, especially bridging connection, yields significant system-level benefits.

(Sources: Robert Putnam, Ashutosh Varshney, John Paul Lederach, Sean Safford, Palma Joy Strand)