



The Future of Democracy & the Democracy 2.0 Declaration

DEMOCRACY = *demos* (people) + *kratos* (rule) = PEOPLE RULE

REFERENCE: Wiktionary.org

One of the most classic examples of nearly-direct democracy in American history and culture is the town meeting. Indeed, many small towns in Maine and throughout New England still conduct annual town meetings which set the course for the town's next year.

But, people are too busy to debate issue after issue in meeting hall after meeting hall hour after hour day after day. Enter the internet! Just get online and search on "democracy wiki", "e-democracy", "deliberative democracy", etc. and you will quickly find a dazzling array of new projects which hold great promise for the future of democracy. These online tools for democracy offer fast, convenient, and long-lasting options for citizen participation in shaping our common future.

"The Future of Democracy: Developing the Next Generation of American Citizens" (by Peter Levine, Tufts University Press/University Press of New England, 2007), could be the single most important book for the future of our planet. Here's the logic:

- 1) it is a terribly inconvenient truth that Earth is, indeed, in the balance
- 2) it is an obscene and abominable truth that Al Gore is correct that, "this problem will not be solved by those on the inside of the system ... if that could have been done it would have been done by now ... the problems we face with our environment cannot and will not be solved unless and until we fix the fundamental flaws in our political system so that citizens can participate and have their demands reflected in our laws and policies."
- 3) you cannot teach an old dog new tricks (ATTENTION party "leaders": lead, follow, or get the hell out of the way, already!!!)
- 4) new ideas and new energy comes, primarily, from new people ... young people
- 5) we need a guidebook to navigate our way to the future and our young people must not only be the stars by which we steer, but, also the Navigators, Captains, and Admirals themselves so that we begin to nurture and cultivate a vibrant culture of the people, by the people, and for the people ... ALL the people! young & old, black & white, man & women ... ALL the people!

As the publisher describes it, "A nonpartisan clarion call for civic renewal to restore American democracy. We need young people to be civically engaged in order to define and address public problems. Their participation is important for democracy, for institutions such as schools, and for young people themselves, who are more likely to succeed in life if they are engaged in their communities. In *The Future of Democracy*, Peter Levine, scholar and practitioner, sounds the alarm: in recent years, young Americans have become dangerously less engaged. They are tolerant, patriotic, and idealistic, and some have invented such novel and impressive forms of civic engagement, as blogs, "boycott" movements, and transnational youth networks. But most lack the skills and opportunities they need to participate in politics or address public problems. Levine's timely manifesto clearly explains the causes, symptoms, and repercussions of this damaging trend, and, most importantly, the means whereby America can confront and reverse it. Levine demonstrates how to change young people's

civic attitudes, skills, and knowledge and, equally importantly, to reform our institutions so that civic engagement is rewarding and effective. We must both prepare citizens for politics and improve politics for citizens." [italics added]

In October 2007, a new network called mobilize.org, released the, "DEMOCRACY 2.0 DECLARATION". Peter Levine posted this to their blog,

"...apparently, they finished the drafting well after midnight (in the great tradition of the Port Huron Statement) and carried it down to Washington's Tidal Pool to read it to Thomas Jefferson. Some say he shed a tear.

[You may have heard of TJ. He was on the development team of Democracy 1.0. They used a lot of open source components from projects in Greece and England (believe it or not), but they really took the concept to scale for the US market. Their product was kind of buggy. Some users were dissatisfied and there was a big issue around 1860 that almost killed the business. Still, thanks to user input, it turned into a robust platform. The 2.0 upgrade is eagerly anticipated.] [square brackets are from original quote ... italics added]

Here is an excerpt from the, "DEMOCRACY 2.0 DECLARATION":

Democracy is an unfinished project. It's time we upgrade.

We, the Millennial Generation, are uniquely positioned to call attention to today's issues and shape the future based on the great legacy we have inherited. Our founding fathers intended for every generation to build, indeed to innovate, on the American experience. We realize that as young people we are expected to be the leaders of tomorrow, but we understand that as citizens we are called to be the leaders of today.

... We are uniquely positioned to foster community engagement through social networks of all kinds. It is our responsibility to use information and technology to upgrade democracy, transform communication and advance political engagement and civic participation.

We are social networkers, we are multi-taskers, we are communicators and we are opinionated. The informality of our generation breaks down traditional barriers and opens doors for inclusiveness and equality. Most importantly, we are leaders in a society that yearns for leadership.

It's our democracy, it's time to act. [FULL TEXT available at www.mobilize.org]

Let's get to work!

FMI/thoughts/ideas: www.can-so.org/chartingdemocracy



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