



Mediators Foundation

PROJECT OVERVIEW

May 2017 Update

Bridge Alliance

Project Co-Directors: David Nevins and Debilyn Molineaux

The *Bridge Alliance* is a network of more than seventy organizations including Village Square, Centrist Project, Coffee Party, NCDD, AllSides, Future 500 and Living Room Conversations. Its purpose is to unite and serve organizations and citizens, making all of us more effective in our respective endeavors as well as in our shared goals for increased civility and collaboration between people, organizations, and government. By building awareness around this emerging movement we aim to elevate the national conversation as well as the actions of our elected leaders. Most recently under the leadership of David Nevins, Bridge Alliance has funded ten collective impact projects involving three or more members of the Alliance. *BA* is a project originally conceived and implemented under the auspices of Mediators Foundation. Mediators Foundations Board Member John Steiner continues to serve on the BA board). (See www.bridgalliance.us)

Citizen Summit 2018

Project Director John Steiner

We are continuing to explore the possibility of a Citizen Summit — a third convention — in the fall of 2018. The narratives of the two party conventions could be stated as “elect me and my party and we’ll “fix it” and that of the Citizen Summit, “it will take citizens and leaders from all sides to ‘fix it’”. Both John Steiner and Mark Gerzon have returned to Kansas City to deepen conversations with potential allies we met there in 2015 and 2016. We are also now in conversation with city leaders in Dallas and Denver.

Citizen Summit 2018 would shine a light on the important structural changes that

are underway and necessary to level the playing field from open primaries and ranked choice voting to ending gerrymandering, the corruption of so much money in our politics and the emerging power of Independents. It would also honor a number of transpartisan leaders at state and national levels, who put country before party and ideology. Faith, millennial, women, and business leaders across the divides would be featured. Regardless of the outcome of this venture, our organizing and outreach strengthens the field and lays the groundwork for a potential, national transpartisan, citizens' movement.

In preparation for the Citizen Summit and the emerging citizen movement, Project Director John Steiner has:

- engaged with Eric Liu's Citizen University and the Civic Collaboratory and with leaders in the democracy reform field
- participated in World Civility Day, held recently in Hammond Indiana that may lead to a new national Civility Alliance and Civility Cities under the leadership of Carolyn Lukensmeyer (National Institute for Civil Discourse) with the support of Lew Bayer (National Civility Council).
- met with key philanthropy leaders at the annual Council on Foundation, held in Dallas this year, to build interest in the healing role of philanthropy in the transpartisan field
- supported the work of Bill Shireman of Future 500 and Trammell Crow, founder of the largest Earth Day event in the world, in Dallas, which is catalyzing transpartisan collaboration around oceans, forests, and climate;
- and is continuing to explore with other major national institutions a potential convening for the transpartisan field.

Colorado Cross-Boundary Initiatives Project(CCBI)

Project Director: Mark Gerzon

Mediators Foundation is involved in numerous state-based activities to develop Colorado as a model of a more collaborative, problem-solving civic culture. These activities include:

- Supporting the offices of Rep. Ken Buck (District #2) and Rep. Jared Polis (District #4) to develop cross-district dialogue and collaboration.

- Working with the Colorado Office of Dispute Resolution and other statewide mediation organizations to explore educational, civic and other strategies for promoting a more collaborative civic culture
- Presenting at the Colorado Counties Inc. Summer Conference to the county commissioners to promote statewide inclusion and respect for differences
- Working in Eagle County with Vail Symposium to bring together citizens to explore common ground
- Participating in The Centrist Party's initiative to showcase Colorado as a state where Independents can find a voice and be elected to public office

The CCBI Project will continue to explore these and other opportunities to enhance the capacity of our state to demonstrate to the country that citizens at the local level can work together in ways that can reconnect rather than divide Americans.

Common Ground Initiative (CGI)

Project Director: Sarah Hedden

The *Common Ground Initiative* aims to restore the vital dynamism of our democracy by rebalancing the narratives of freedom and equality. We believe the most compelling framework for this restoration is the literal common ground we all share as Americans—our national and local parks, forests, refuges, battlefields, rivers, wetlands and monuments—the physical manifestations of both freedom and equality. America was founded on the existence of common ground, yet this remarkable inheritance faces the same existential threats as our core democratic values. The two are inextricably linked—the warp and weft of a belief system that posits that we, the people, are better together.

To achieve this aim, CGI will catalyze a new narrative in culture that features common ground as central to our American identity and as an embodiment of our collective hope for a free and equal future. This is a multi-year, multi-faceted endeavor to change the cultural conversation in American.

Common Ground Philanthropy Project (CGPP)

Project Co-Directors: Mark Gerzon and John Steiner

Wherever there is conflict, philanthropy faces a choice. Financial resources can be invested in one "side" or the other, or it can be invested in discovering the common

ground between them. While both choices are legitimate and honorable, their impact is profoundly different. *Boundary-based* philanthropy strengthens the parts; *cross-boundary* philanthropy can potentially strengthen the whole.

CGPP is dedicated to building bridges across all conflicting groups. We believe this is a high-priority for philanthropy today because our society is increasingly fragmented, polarized, segmented, and "sorted" by economic, political, religious and ideological differences. In order to meet this high-priority goal, we are identifying and convening a cross-section of politically diverse funders (both institutional and individual) to explore how philanthropy can play a more effective bridge-building, problem-solving role in American civic life.

In partnership with Stephen Heintz of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Chris Gates, senior adviser to the Council on Foundations, and others colleagues from across the political spectrum, the CGP Project is co-designing a meeting later this year to bring together key individuals from across the political spectrum to chart the next steps.

Living Room Conversations (LRC)

Project Director: Joan Blades

Living Room Conversations is an open-source project exploring the power of revitalized civil discourse in America. As envisioned by its co-founder Joan Blades, it is designed to enable people who have fundamental differences of opinion and backgrounds to work together with respect, and perhaps joy, to realize the vibrant future we all desire. (See www.LivingRoomConversations.org)

The LRC platform enables people to come together through social networks to engage in self-guided conversations about specific topics. Typically, conversations have co-hosts who hold differing views, perhaps from different ethnic groups, socioeconomic backgrounds or political parties. Each co-host invites two friends and the group follows an easy-to-use format and set of questions to get acquainted with each other and with each other's viewpoints on a chosen topic. These conversations foster new relationships and often reveal common ground. Police community relations, clean energy, homelessness, the future of our nuclear weapons, immigration, money in politics- these are some of many topics which LRC hopes to address. The time has come to create a culture of respect and appreciation for differences so that we can solve challenges in our communities.

¡Vamos Adelante!

Project Director: Josué Romualdo

The purpose of *¡Vamos Adelante!* is to provide support for the undocumented citizens of Boulder County, Colorado.

In order to determine what the undocumented immigrant community needs most urgently, we are conducting research through interviews with a wide range of stakeholders in the community, including immigration attorneys, teachers who have worked with immigrant families, immigrant rights advocates, and undocumented citizens themselves. Based on our interviews to date, we have begun to determine the primary fears and concerns of this marginalized and vulnerable community:

- Increased threat of deportation raids, both at work and at home
- Anxiety about interacting with law enforcement officials
- Intimidation about speaking out against injustices or hate crimes
- Targeting of DACA students for immediate deportation
- Risks due to lack of health insurance coverage, driving without a license, etc.
- Being triggered by erratic and threatening government policies
- Rising concern for the safety of children of undocumented parents

In our estimation, the undocumented immigrant population of Boulder County is in urgent need of the following support: (1) proper legal education and advice on immigrant rights; (2) protection for undocumented children, as well as children of undocumented parents; and (3) access to psychological and emotional support for any and all undocumented immigrants and their families dealing with concerns for their safety.

While the policies of the Trump administration have provoked fear in the undocumented community in Boulder County and elsewhere, those same policies have also inspired increased support for immigration rights around the country. As one volunteer from the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition (CIRC) said, “Since President Trump was elected into office, we’ve seen a rise of community members, from different backgrounds -- especially white folks -- step up and pledge to help and support the immigrant community.”

Currently, we are exploring strategies for building a roster of professionals who can provide the necessary support to this community.

Wisdom Beyond Borders

Project Director: Margo King

Wisdom Beyond Borders is a fund, administered by Mediators Foundation, to support the work of individual wisdom teachers and leaders through honoraria — a kind of private MacArthur Award.

Because these recipients are people whose work is well recognized and understood nationally and/or globally, funds can be expedited quickly.