

RONALD REAGAN CENTER ON CIVILITY AND DEMOCRACY



WINTER 2025 NEWSLETTER



► **A MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR FREDERICK J. RYAN, JR.**

Advancing Civil Discourse

The Reagan Center on Civility and Democracy is working to heal the many divisions that have undermined personal relationships, work connections, and community cohesion across our country.

As this civility crisis is many years in the making, we are committed to a sustained, long-term approach to help address it. We believe teaching students the principles of civil discourse is essential to preparing the next generation to be part of this effort, and our nation's educators are increasingly seeking tools to equip them.

To assist American teachers, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Institute has developed the [Civil Discourse Project](#), nonpartisan classroom materials that prepare students to engage in more civil and respectful conversations with their peers, teachers and friends and to collaborate across ideological divides. Already adopted by the Department of Defense Education Activity to serve the thousands of children of active duty military and Department of Defense civilian families worldwide, this project's materials are now available to classrooms across the country free of charge.

You too can share information about the Civil Discourse Project with your local school, school district, or educational organization. [A Sample Lesson Can Be Found Here ►](#)

We are also working to extend this material beyond the classroom to businesses, places of worship, civic organizations, and other community groups and national associations. As the first of these extensions, we have developed a simple primer to help guide you, loved ones, and colleagues as you engage in civil discourse. [View and Share the Civility Compass ►](#)

Alexandra Hudson, author of the bestselling book [*The Soul of Civility: Timeless Principles to Heal Society and Ourselves*](#) and founder of the [*Civic Renaissance*](#) newsletter community, is our guest contributor for this quarter’s newsletter. She offers her thoughts on why civility and education are inextricably linked - and why both are indispensable to the health of our democracy.



► GUEST CONTRIBUTOR ALEXANDRA HUDSON

Paideia, Humanitas, Civility and Education

We live in uncivil times. Yet if we look back to the history of civility and education, we find valuable guidance for the challenges of our day.

Civility is the art of human flourishing. It is not merely a set of manners, but a disposition of the heart—one that recognizes the inherent dignity and moral equality of all people. Civility is the baseline of respect owed to others by virtue of our shared humanity. This respect is grounded in Imago Dei, the Judeo-Christian belief that human beings are created in the image of God.

The word “civility” is derived from the Latin *civitas*, which also gives us city, civilization, and citizen. This etymology tells a story: Civility is the set of behaviors, customs, and values that define a responsible citizen within the “city.”

In his 1828 dictionary, Noah Webster defined education as the process of raising a child by developing their morals and manners. Education is the very means by which we cultivate civility—the deep-seated love and respect we owe to our fellow human beings. It shapes individuals who not only think of others alongside themselves but who are equipped to participate in the life of a republic.

KEEP READING



► RECENT EVENTS

“All of my life, I’ve had a certain idea of America: that it was good, that it deserves our protective loyalty, that it must be continued generation after generation...”

- Peggy Noonan

The Center on Civility and Democracy promotes civil discourse by bringing together and engaging notable cultural and political leaders in thoughtful conversation.

A Common Ground Forum: Rivalry and Sportsmanship in America's Game: The Center launched its signature Common Ground Forum by hosting distinguished former players from the Army-Navy Game for a discussion of sportsmanship and civility. In partnership with the [Rose Bowl Institute](#) (RBI) and moderated by CBS Sports' Brad Nessler, the public dialogue was followed by a private roundtable in which sports leaders explored how athletic competition can foster civility across the country.

[Watch the Common Ground Forum ►](#)

[Read Our Joint Op-Ed in the Los Angeles Times ►](#)

[Read Coverage in USA Today ►](#)

The Common Ground Forum is made possible by the generous support of Founding Underwriter Marcia Carlucci, with additional support from Gloria Dittus.

A Certain Idea of America with Peggy Noonan: Former speechwriter to President Reagan and Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Peggy Noonan joined the Center to discuss her latest book, [A Certain Idea of America: Selected Writings](#). The wide-ranging conversation celebrated what America has been, is, and can be through the eyes of someone who knew President Reagan well.

[Watch the Conversation ►](#)

From Campaign to Governance with the National Lieutenant Governors Association: Center Director Fred Ryan joined NLGA's New Elect & Member Meeting for remarks on how lieutenant governors can encourage civility on the local level and rebuild trust in American institutions. The Center is working with lieutenant governors across the country to make the Civil Discourse Project available to their states.

More Perfect Summit at Mount Vernon: The Center on Civility and Democracy joined

[More Perfect](#) and George Washington's Mount Vernon in a convening of over 300 national leaders to discuss bold initiatives to advance civility to strengthen democracy. Director Fred Ryan led a conversation with Rosie Rios, Chair of [America250](#), on ways organizations and individuals can help celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

[Get Involved ►](#)



► UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

A Common Ground Forum With Governors Cox and Lujan Grisham

On May 19, Utah Governor Spencer Cox (R) and New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham (D) will join the Center on Civility and Democracy at the Reagan Presidential Library in California for our second Common Ground Forum. Join us in-person as they discuss bipartisanship, mutual respect, and working together for the greater good.

[Register Today ►](#)

Ronald Reagan Oratory Competition

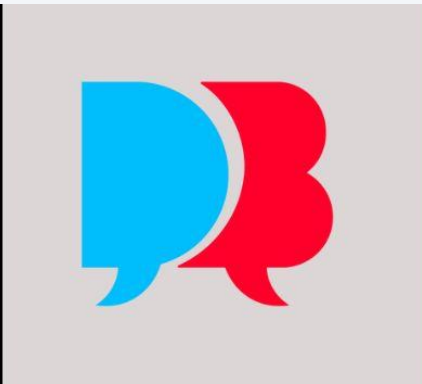
On February 15, the Civil Discourse Project oratory finals will be held at the Ronald Reagan Institute in Washington, D.C. 10 students - 5 from middle school and 5 from high school - will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., where high schoolers will compete for a \$1,000 grand prize.

[Learn About the Civil Discourse Project ►](#)

Rose Table Dialogue on Sports and Civility

On March 6, the Center on Civility and Democracy will join our partners at the [Rose Bowl Institute](#) in hosting a [Rose Table Dialogue](#) at the Rose Bowl. Prominent sports industry professionals, civic leaders, and business executives will explore the relationship between sportsmanship, civility, and good citizenship in confidential discussion.

[Stay Engaged ►](#)



► FEATURED ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations Fostering Civil Discourse

Below are nonpartisan organizations showing us how to engage in civil discourse and providing opportunities to practice it:

BridgeUSA: BridgeUSA is a student movement that creates spaces for constructive discussion across differences on college campuses and in high schools.

[Visit Website ►](#)

Disagree Better: The Disagree Better initiative showcases healthy conflict by highlighting constructive groups around the country, providing resources for everyday Americans, and featuring governors in public events and public service announcements.

[Visit Website ►](#)

One Small Step: One Small Step brings people with different views together to record a conversation — not to debate politics — but simply to get to know each other as people.

[Visit Website ►](#)

If you would like to highlight efforts to address the issues raised in this newsletter, civility, or democracy more broadly, please share them with us.

EMAIL US



► TOP READING PICKS

“We must interact and practice civil conversations. What’s often lacking are the right skills.”

- Lindsey Galvao and Benjamin Klutsey

Here are thoughtful reads providing insights and practical advice for fostering civil discourse, from classrooms to everyday conversations:

Why and How to Engage Classrooms in Civil Discourse: In this *Seattle Times* opinion piece, Mercatus Center’s Benjamin Klutsey and social studies curriculum specialist Lindsey Galvao describe how polarization has seeped into the classroom and provide simple tips for fostering civil discourse.

[Read Article ►](#)

More Colleges Try Teaching Civil Discourse: Reporting in *EdSurge* describes how colleges are increasingly teaching civil discourse skills to help students navigate divisions on and off campus.

[Read Article ►](#)

How to Have Difficult Conversations When You Don’t Like Conflict: This evergreen piece in *Harvard Business Review* provides tips for being proactive, productive, and civil during hard conversations.

[Read Article ►](#)

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Promoting constructive solutions to restore
and renew American democracy.

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