

Caring Citizens Are the Solution!



*“We hold these truths to be self-evident,
that all men are created equal,
that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,
that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,— That
to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men,
deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,
That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends,
it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it,
and to institute new Government,
laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form,
as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”
— Second Sentence of the U.S. Declaration of Independence*

*“The history of the present King of Great Britain
is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations,
all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States.
To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.
He has refused his Assent to Laws,
the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.”
— Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Sentences of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, listing
the first of many grievances*

*“And for the support of this Declaration,
with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence,
we mutually pledge to each other*

our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”
— *Last Sentence of the U.S. Declaration of Independence*

*“We the people” and our representatives -
not kings, presidents, preachers, CEOs, or generals -
are charged with the protection and empowerment
of our own and one another's life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
We will govern with care and responsibility and care for ourselves,
care for our family, care for our work, care for our communities,
care for our states, care for our nation, and care for our world.
This is the moral mission
of America's government of the people, by the people, for the people.
— Vision Statement of the Empathy Surplus Project*

Introduction

If you're reading this, you are already committed to expanding the common good, what elected representatives of the 13 American colonies referred to as the “public good.” In this sense, you and I are already common good partners. Our common challenge in a world suffering with a chronic empathy deficit is to grow our base so we may collectively challenge modern day monarchies and the corporations they charter to daily undermine our democracies and republics. More than likely, you get up everyday like I do thinking about how to build an empathy surplus in your sphere of influence. You and I are not alone.

In the text that follows, I want to share with you how a book by a cognitive scientist, read in 2004, set me on a course to cofound the Empathy Surplus Project, a non-profit organization committed to building demand at the local level for effective government driven by empathy and responsibility for self and others. The Empathy Surplus Project, and its affiliate organization, the First Caring Citizens' Congress of Wilmington, Ohio, are modeled after Rotary International's Rotary Clubs and are tied to the United Nations through the United Nations Global Compact, a platform for inspiring ethical and sustainable business practice. By writing about the major milestones on my journey to positively impact the common good, I hope to generate

opportunities to form partnerships with others that will strengthen the capacity of caring citizens everywhere to drive social change from the communities in which they live and work.

George Lakoff's Call to Build a Caring Common Sense

Those closest to me say Dr. George Lakoff's best selling book, [Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate](#), changed my life. In 2004, I joined a group of friends to study the book at a local pub, one chapter per week. At the end of ten weeks I was convinced there was hope for the future — common sense regarding the need for an empathy surplus could be built.



Author with Dr. George Lakoff
Berkeley, CA (2014)

In his book, Lakoff cites Lewis Powell who was appointed in 1970 to the Supreme Court by Richard Nixon. Two months prior to this appointment Powell wrote a memo to the business community which became known as the Powell Memo. At the time, the best and brightest young people coming out of college were focused on the common good. "Conservative," in the political sense, was a dirty word. Powell challenged the business community to cooperate with one another so that young people would choose business over the common good. Paraphrasing the Powell memo, Lakoff wrote,

"What we have to do is to set up institutes inside the universities and outside the universities. We have to do research, we have to write books, we have to endow professorships to teach people the right way to think."

Through the Powell Memo, Powell laid out a roadmap for conservatives to build an empathy inhibiting common sense. Many heeded Powell Memo's call and since the 1970's billions of

dollars per year have been poured into dozens of Conservative think tanks. One industry that heeded Powell's call worth mentioning is the intentional and cultural production of ignorance. As Michael Hiltzik, in a LA Times article on the subject, wrote 03/09/2014:

"It's a rich field, especially today when whole industries devote themselves to sowing public misinformation and doubt about their products and activities."

In response to decades of Conservative strategies to promote their values, many Progressives are committed to reversing the empathy deficit and building a caring common sense. Lakoff continues to support this effort by writing books and articles to caring citizens across the United States and Canada. Although our collective capacity to re-shape common sense is growing, it needs to become stronger. In 2004, Lakoff called all common good advocates to join the movement to build a caring common sense by joining his Rockridge Institute, which I did. Through the Rockridge Institute, I met Joe Brewer, a colleague of Lakoff, who now serves as the Empathy Surplus Project organizational consultant.

Brewer advocates for the power of human cooperation. When groups compete, the group that cooperates most effectively wins. Louis Powell called on Conservatives to cooperate around conservatism: a strategy they have implemented extremely well. Progressives are learning a lesson from Conservatives regarding the importance of cooperation. Lakoff and Brewer are calling on us to cooperate around care and responsibility for self and others, a practice that lies at the heart of Progressivism.



Joe Brewer, Empathy Surplus Project organizational consultant

Brains and Frames

A cognitive scientist and linguist from the University of California, Berkeley, Lakoff spells out how those of us who want to expand the common good can become more effective in framing our case. We need to cooperate. Following is what Lakoff says we need to cooperate around:

You think with your brain. Every thought you have is physical — an activation of neural circuits. At least hundreds of thousands of such circuits are fixed in your brain — learned all through life. Most of your thought — an estimated 98% — is unconscious, effortless, uncontrolled, and automatic. Many of these neural circuits have the form of “frames,” which structure our understanding of everyday life. A hospital frame, for example, contains elements for doctors, patients, nurses, operating rooms, emergency rooms, and so on, as well as the kinds of things that typically happen in hospitals. Everything else is outside the frame — igloos, elephants, baseball games, and so forth.

Frames are structured in a hierarchy. To understand a kitchen, you have to understand food preparation and eating. In politics, the highest frames are moral frames. The reason is that all politics is moral: political leaders propose policies because they are right — not because they are wrong or don’t matter. All policies, therefore, have a moral basis.

American politics is based on two different, and opposed, moralities — conservative and progressive. Every basic political concept — freedom, equality, fairness, prosperity — is contested. That is, there are two different versions of each concept, determined by conservative versus progressive moral systems. Freedom for progressives may mean slavery for conservatives, and vice versa.

Every word is defined with respect to one or more frames. When you hear the word, the frame is activated in your brain. And the more often the frame is activated, the stronger it gets. When it gets strong enough, the frame will define your “common sense.”

Common sense is simply the collection of fixed frames that you use to understand what you experience and what you hear. You automatically, effortlessly, and unconsciously reason with those frames that have become your common sense. The brain just works this way. Conservative and progressive common sense frames are very different and often lead to opposite conclusions.

As a result, words used in politics are not neutral. They evoke frames that define your brand of political common sense. For example, consider “tax relief.” The Relief Frame contains an affliction, an afflicted party harmed by the affliction, a reliever who can take the affliction away, and an intervener who may try to stop the reliever. The word “relief” activates this frame, and when “tax” is added, we get the metaphor that taxation is an affliction, with the inference that eliminating taxes brings relief from harm and continuing or imposing taxes continues or imposes a harmful affliction. Since relief is always positive and afflictions are always negative, there is no way to see taxes in a positive light in this frame. In short, “tax relief” is conservative language that evokes the conservative moral system. And every time you hear it or use it, it strengthens the circuitry for that moral system in your brain.

Promoting the “Caring Citizens” Frame

In Ronald Reagan’s first inaugural speech, January 20, 1981, he declared “government is the problem.” It was an indirect attack on President Abraham Lincoln’s resolve that “government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth.” Reagan effectively began the reframing of public government away from something that caring citizens do to something that corporations should do for us. Privateers really want more corporate government. Our use of the phrase “caring citizens are the solution,” is a direct

response that effective public government is the mutual responsibility of every caring citizen regardless of party affiliation.

Regardless of your political party affiliation, when you hear the words “caring” your pre-frontal cortex, where empathy is physically located, is activated. When you connect the word “caring” with “citizen,” you immediately connect the pre-frontal cortex with public government, i.e. public government is for citizens and we want public government connected to the work of caring citizens. We would especially like the frame “caring citizens” to replace the frame “tax payers” in everyone’s brain. We want “caring citizenship” to become the new common sense to replace “tax payers,” which activates the amygdala, where fear and “fight or flight” physically resides. Tax payers fight over money. Caring citizens take care of each other.

The frame, caring citizens, fits well with the work of Rabbi Michael Lerner of Tikkun Magazine and the Network of Spiritual Progressives. Lerner and his spiritual progressives want to build a “caring society.” The frame, caring citizens, fits well with the work of Riane Eisler, founder of the Caring Economy Campaign. It takes caring citizens to build a caring society generated by a caring economy that’s filled with ethical business. I will come back to how we apply the concept of caring citizenship later.

Let’s continue looking at the logic of embracing the latest insights of the brain when it comes to building trust for effective governance. Lakoff continues about brains and frames:

Logic and facts are of no help where such frames are involved. The frames are defining what you can understand. If the facts don’t fit the frames, they will be ignored. If you use conservative language, it will strengthen conservative frames. And if you argue against conservative frames, you are nonetheless activating those frames and helping conservatives.

A great many people are conservative on some issues and progressive on others. That means that they have both conservative and progressive moral systems in

*their brains, applying to different issues. How is this possible? Because of a phenomenon called mutual inhibition. Two neural circuits that are contradictory inhibit each other; that is, when one is turned on, the other is turned off. This applies to “moderates,” “independents,” and “swing voters.” How should you communicate with such voters? Should you use your language or your opponent’s language? The answer is obvious. **Use your language because it will strengthen your moral system in their brains.** If you use your opponent’s language, you will strengthen your opponent’s moral system in their brains. Conservative candidates are trained not to use the language of the left. But progressives often make the mistake of “moving to the right” as if that will get moderates, independents, and swing voters to support them and their policies. This is self-destructive. It is shooting yourself in the foot. And at the same time you are failing to do your part in the democratic process by failing to offer people alternative, progressive ideas to consider. These considerations lead to certain guidelines:*

- Don’t repeat conservative language or ideas, even when arguing against them.*
- If you think you have a language problem, you really have an idea problem.*
- All politics is moral, and morality trumps policy. Talk about the moral bases of your policy positions openly and regularly.*
- Facts have no meaning outside of frames, metaphors, and moral narratives.*
- Always discuss facts within moral frames, because people do not reason outside of those moral frames.*
- Conservatives have defined the central political frames; progressives must redefine them.*
- “Moderates,” “independents,” and “swing voters” will use conservative moral frames on some issues and progressive moral frames on others. Reinforce the*

morality they share with you by using YOUR moral language, not the language of conservatives.

- The great ideas — freedom, fairness, democracy, prosperity — each come in two versions, progressive and conservative. So when you talk about those ideas, make sure you are talking about YOUR version.*
- Repetition strengthens frames. Repeat your own moral frames over and over, every hour of every day of every year.*

In 2004, I made promoting the common good my moral mission for the rest of my life. As I worked to inwardly digest the concepts I learned from Lakoff and Brewer, it occurred to me that it would be nice to have a group of local people committed to embracing these insights into how the brain functions and using them to build a government that is driven by empathy and compassion. With this thought in mind, I set out to gather a group of like-minded people.



Early Attempts at Organization

The time was during the 2006 Ohio primary season, and I decided to become a candidate for precinct representative to my county's political party. I envisioned a group of neighbors gathered together on a regular basis to identify concerns we wanted our party to address; then as their representative I would attempt to introduce actionable ideas to the party to address my precinct's concern.

During my campaign, as I talked to registered party members in my precinct, I discovered (1) most party members who thought of themselves as loyal party members did not know how the party was governed at the local level, (2) those who were familiar with the process had no trust in the process of their party, (3) most were excited to talk to me, and (4) most everyone I talked to believed healthcare is a human right and that smart economic growth focused on human dignity would expand our personal freedom. I began gathering weekly calling the gathering the Union North Precinct meeting.

An Early Recruiting Focus: Healthcare Human Rights

From the time of the 2006 primary and the fall of 2009, I served on a state wide *Healthcare for All* council with Dr. Don Rucknagel, who co-directs the Adult Sickle Cell Center, University of Cincinnati Medical Center. Dr. Rucknagel and I spoke frequently each month about how to advance healthcare human rights. My contributions were based on a case study that Joe Brewer and George Lakoff had written entitled "How is Public Policy Understood?" Brewer and Lakoff wrote:

"There are two aspects of every policy: a cognitive policy and a material policy. Material policies consist of the nuts and bolts, what is to be done in the world to fulfill policy goals. Cognitive policy is about the values and ideas that both motivate the policy goals and that have to be uppermost in the minds of the public and the media in order

for the policy to seem so much a matter of common sense that it will be readily accepted. At the Rockridge Institute we have identified a guiding principle behind any robust public policy, what we call the Cognitive Criterion for Public Support: an effective policy must be popular if it is to stand the test of time and it must be popular for the right reasons, namely because it promotes the right long-term values in the minds of citizens. This criterion is cognitive in nature. That is, it is a criterion based on how the policy affects the minds — and hence, the brains — of the public.

Based on these findings, I started engaging the Healthcare for All Act of Ohio initiative group in an ongoing effort to add the cognitive component of lifetime, comprehensive healthcare for all based on empathy and responsibility for self and others to their focus on getting a specific bill passed in the Ohio State House and Senate. I was able to convince the group to invite Joe Brewer to Columbus one April to be the keynote speaker at the *Healthcare for All* annual conference. He was well received by many.

According to Lakoff, Brewer, as well as, autism expert Simon Baron Cohen, empathy, which resides in the pre-frontal cortex of everyone's brain, can be strengthened by repetitious reframing of the public's conversations around the core values of empathy, responsibility for self and others. Strength to act on these values is another core progressive value and is also strengthened through repetition.



How does one activate the pre-frontal cortexes of a significant number of people if one doesn't own a media company? Encourage lots of people to engage one another around those core human values. Here's a 2008 photo of me and Dr. Don Rucknagel with Bishop Thomas

Breidenthal at a pre-convention gathering of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio where we were promoting healthcare human rights.

Here's another photo of the Empathy Surplus Project founders taken in Cincinnati in 2013 with Healthcare Human Rights advocates. From L-R: Dr. Don Rucknagel, Healthcare for



All Ohioans Act advocate; Chuck Watts, co-founder and president; human rights attorney, Mary Gerisch, from the Vermont Workers Center; Gary Evans, co-founder and treasurer; and Anita Dobrzelecki, co-founder and secretary. Our partnership with Vermont began at this meeting.

Ethical Business as a Recruiting Focus Emerges After the Great Inside Job of 2008 and DHL Devastates Our Community

Even though we may want to embrace the latest insights of the brain and reframe our American governing narrative away from self-interest and competition to community-interest and cooperation, distractions abound. In 2008, the great heist of the American economy by bank privateers took place.



National economic and empathy traumas were compounded in my local community when the largest employer, DHL, the German package delivery corporation, announced they were closing their Wilmington hub. This departure occurred just two years after DHL had bought local airfreight company, Airborne Express, and served as the impetus for our local US Representative Mike Turner to open hearings on possible fraudulent collusion between DHL and UPS. DHL laid off 10,000 DHL employees, produced a multiplier effect in Southern Ohio that

resulted in the loss of 40,000 jobs and caused Ohio's unemployment fund to run out. Within a year, the unemployment rate in Wilmington, Ohio, and surrounding area, went from 3 to 20 percent. Seemingly overnight hundreds of fairly new homes stood empty with waste high grass as a yard. DHL became a local acronym for **Destroys Homes and Lives**.

When people are fearful about their livelihood, which reduces their freedom and happiness, they hoard their cash. Since the Great Economic Heist, we continue to have record amounts of cash in the U.S. economic system. When your economic world has been turned upside down and you can't predict the future how does one regain confidence and trust in an American system of governance and the economy? I became convinced that one must be brave and attempt to move out of our comfort zones and find ways of cooperating with our neighbors of good will. Our weekly precinct meetings had anywhere between 6-8 people and we studied the Rockridge Institute book entitled Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision.

Lakoff defines the kind of trust that's based on the core American values of empathy and responsibility as based on open and honest communication. Think of it as a "brand" one is building. Integrity is important and Lakoff devotes a section to integrity in the chapter on "Fundamental Values." Lakoff writes,

"The basic logic of integrity is twofold. First, it means saying what you believe and then acting on it consistently. Second, it means the consistent application of a principle:

- Progressive integrity is the consistent application of nurturance.*
- Conservative integrity is consistent application of strictness.*

It may seem simple, but these statements lead to an interesting difference in the understanding of integrity.

With discipline (core conservative value), constancy is critical. Discipline must be applied the same way every time, regardless of circumstance. The person being disciplined needs to understand that there is a direct and immediate consequence for all actions and that the consequence is the same. The focus is on the constancy of the process, the identicalness of action.

To consistently apply empathy, however, the needs of the person receiving nurturance must be addressed, not the process itself. So to remain empathetic, the same degree of care must be applied. Sometimes this care requires different actions or different approaches, depending on the circumstance.

What if there was not just one organization but thousands dedicated to providing safe spaces where caring citizens could become effective by learning how to build integrity based on empathy? What if we could reverse our national empathy deficit and build a caring society with a caring economy filled with ethical businesses? What would that look like? With that basic idea, my friend, Gary Evans, and I decided to start a non-profit organization called the Empathy Surplus Project.



Joe Brewer and the Emerging Empathy Surplus Project

Joe Brewer founded Cognitive Science Works, Seattle, Washington, following the closing of Rockridge Institute in 2008. All of the Rockridge Institute's online documents are archived at CPW. After I attended one of Joe's



**COGNITIVE
POLICY
WORKS**

workshops on how to bring about large-scale behavioral change the Empathy Surplus Project

and the Cognitive Policy Works established a consulting relationship. In 2009, I also began commissioning white papers from Cognitive Policy Works on our evolving ideas.

During this same period of time, George Lakoff had been invited to a conference call of more than 3,000 “single-payer” advocates; a dialogue that was tied to the national healthcare debate. During that conference call, Lakoff told us, that using the term “single-payer” was counter productive, because it did not activate the “empathy” frame that Barack Obama had used to get elected. He reminded us that empathy has a particular and physical location in all human brains and needs to be activated. The “single-payer” frame does not activate the empathic brain. To activate the pre-frontal cortex of all Americans, he encouraged us to talk about an American Healthcare Plan that focused on the patient-doctor care relationship. He reminded us we needed to foster debate that employs our language. Our opponents need to be saying phrases such as “I don’t want a patient-doctor care plan,” “I don’t want an American Healthcare Plan” or like “I don’t want a healthcare plan based on empathy.” The takeaway from that conference call was that even if people disagreed with you, you were making progress in strengthening their pre-frontal cortex where empathy is located when they disagree using YOUR empathy language. Healthcare human rights advocates in Vermont got the message. Focusing on the “human rights” frame, Vermont became the first state to define healthcare as a public good.

Lakoff also encouraged us to talk about our experience in framing our conversations this way. He said it was important because of the mirror neurons in our brains. He said, great athletes, in addition to actually training their muscles to perform a certain action do something called visioning right before they compete. They will meditate and envision the motions they need to go through to win their event. When they do this exercise, the same neurons that are activated in their brains when they are physically going through the motion, are the same neurons firing when they are simply thinking about the same thing. This is why story-telling is so

important. Mirror neurons is what the brain uses to learn from others. All training cannot be done without mirror neurons. If your mirror neurons are damaged, you can't learn.

If you don't own a media company, I'm paraphrasing Lakoff, what do you do to build a more caring society? You become the change, as Ghandi might say. You talk about the activities that have to happen for a caring society to emerge. You show people, through your behavior and language, how much you care. You become the story you want to tell the world.

Consequently, people in my precinct group and I began going door-to-door in our precinct that Summer engaging neighbors around an American Healthcare Plan, the healthcare plan based on empathy and care. That same year I commissioned two more white papers from Joe Brewer on healthcare:

- [Healthcare for All Ohioans](#)
- [Ohioans for an American Healthcare Plan](#)

The response our canvassers got at the door step with their message of care for one another was impressive. It didn't matter what political party affiliation neighbors had, their number one concern was lack of trust in government itself. "No one is talking to anyone across the aisle," was a common refrain, referencing Congress. In conjunction with this concern was appreciation by those we engaged that they had been engaged. They would say, "We need more people like you in office," or "Good luck," or "Thanks for stopping by."

After that conference call, the white papers, and the canvassing, I got back with Joe Brewer to share our experience and ask him to write one more paper to help us focus our efforts on [Building Trust for Effective Governance: A Strategy Brief for Reframing Local Organizations](#).

Find that paper in its entirety in Appendix A. It became the foundation of our current organization.

The Empathy Surplus Project: A Federation of Caring Citizens' Congresses

To build trust in the minds of men and women for effective governance there must be a grassroots empathy-building movement. That movement must be dedicated to building strength for individual caring citizens to govern cooperatively around empathy and responsibility. The early American vision of “We the People” was and is a movement to build America. Legitimacy is determined no longer by party label, but by how well one promotes the dignity of all people and the respect of the consequent human rights of the individual.



This country fought a civil war to double down on the simple idea that “all men (and now all people) are created equal.” President Lincoln wrote:

“Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.”

Caring citizens should not be under the illusion that the forces of inequality, unethical corporate privateers and their accomplices inside government at all levels were defeated (1) on September 3, 1783, when Benjamin Franklin signed the Treaty of Paris in Paris, whereby Great Britain and the entire world recognized the United States of America as an independent country, or (2) on April 9, 1865, when General Lee surrendered at Appomattox, Virginia, and the Confederate States of America ceased to consider itself a separate country. Progress toward a more effective government that resists anti-empathy sentiments is a common sense that has been changing ever so slowly since 1776.

We want physical common sense to change faster. Lakoff says, “Metaphors are constitutive,” meaning they define our actions. The Empathy Surplus Project makes the case that the metaphors of empathy and responsibility for self and others are not only traditional American values, but neural pathways worth exercising and by which nations can be governed. We who govern with care and responsibility will not simply endure. We will thrive and grow. The ESP offers a safe grassroots training infrastructure from which men and women can grow in strength to govern their lives and their spheres of influence around empathy and responsibility.

The Caring Citizen Vision

We the people” and our representatives — not kings, presidents, preachers, CEOs, or generals - are charged with the protection and empowerment of our own and one another's life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We will govern with care and responsibility and care for ourselves, care for our family, care for our work, care for our communities, care for our states, care for our nation, and care for our world. This is the moral mission of America's government of the people, by the people, for the people.

Our organization is modeled after Rotary International, the first business service club in America, organized in 1905 around human rights. Rotary members are clubs — 30,000 of them worldwide. Each club has an average membership of 33, so there are more than one million Rotarians. Similar to Rotary, Caring Citizens’ Congresses are neighborhood think-and-do tanks with an average attendance of 6-12 caring citizens. We chartered the First Caring Citizens’ Congress of Wilmington, Ohio, December 2, 2014. Our purposes are:

1. To promote the compassionate discourse among citizens of the United States who believe empathy and responsibility for self and others belong in public government;
2. To research, develop and promote the distribution of information about the benefits of compassionate public government;

3. To encourage the development of caring public policy directions that promote a measurable empathy surplus and encourage the citizens of the United States to protect and empower each other; and
4. To engage in any lawful act or activity and to do all things necessary, convenient, or expedient to further the general purpose of the corporation either alone or in association with other corporations, firms, associations or individuals.

Caring Citizens' Congresses are communities of practice focused on four activities we call "critical activities." Some Rotary Clubs have their members recite the Four-Way Test at the end of their meeting. The First Caring Citizens' Congress recites our Four Critical Activities:

We will occupy compassion every day by practicing Four Critical Activities:

1. *We will **inwardly digest** and use the values of empathy and responsibility for self and others in daily conversation "in order to form a more perfect Union."*
2. *We will **invest** in our peaceable public assemblies and weekly pledge "our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor" to strengthen compassion occupation and identify caring policy directions.*
3. *We will **implement** our caring policy directions to fulfill our lives, secure our liberties and perfect our pursuit of happiness.*
4. *We will **invite** our neighbors and public officials to join us for the sake of freedom and human dignity now and forever.*

Partnering with Rotarians

As a Rotarian since 1981, I have always admired our historic relationship with the United Nation. The UNESCO Crossing Institute, University of Oregon, documents:

"Rotary International's relationship with the United Nations had already been established when the UN was founded in 1945. At the UN Charter Conference in San

Francisco, nearly fifty Rotarians served as delegates, advisors, and consultants.

“In 1945, Rotary International had clubs in 65 countries and was working to further international understanding, good will, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service. The

purposes of the UN—to maintain an international peace and security; to

develop friendly relations among nations; to help solve international economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems; and to promote human rights—parallel those of Rotary.

“Rotary’s work in promoting peace through education began as early as 1943 with a London conference on international, cultural, and educational exchanges.

Working under the premise that “war begins in the minds of men,” the conference was attended by ministers of education and observers from around the world and was an early inspiration for UNESCO, established in 1946. (UNESCO motto: “Building Peace in the Minds of Men and Women.”)

“Rotary International established consultative status with the UN and UNESCO beginning in 1946-47. In one of the first cooperative activities with UNESCO, the Rotary Foundation awarded a \$5,000 ‘grant-in-aid’ for fellowships to social service and educational leaders in war-devastated countries. The funds were designed to provide training to those who trained others. UNESCO identified prospective recipients.



Rotary International President Ron Burton and the author at the UN on RI UN Day, November 2013.

Empathy Surplus Project wants to be the go-to place for Rotarians who want to govern with care and responsibility in their spheres of influence. Rotarians need to be cautious, in their clubs, when it comes to political activity. Rotary International's Policy on Politics states:

"RI and its member clubs refrain from issuing partisan political statements.

Rotarians are prohibited from adopting statements with a view to exerting any pressure on governments or political authorities. However, it is the duty of Rotarians

- 1. "In their clubs, to keep under review political developments in their own communities and throughout the world insofar as they affect service to their vocations and communities as well as the pursuit of the Rotary objective of world understanding and peace. They are expected to seek reliable information through balanced programs and discussions so that members can reach their own conclusions after a fair, collective examination of the issues.*
- 2. "Outside their clubs, to be active as individuals in as many legally constituted groups and organizations as possible to promote, not only in words but through exemplary dedication, awareness of the dignity of all people and the respect of the consequent human rights of the individual. (89-134, RCP 2.100.)" — from RI Manual of Procedure, page 7*

If you remember the two components of policy making identified by Lakoff and Brewer, the material and cognitive, Rotary International prohibits the material and encourages the cognitive in their clubs. Part of the work of the Empathy Surplus Project is to encourage our Caring Citizens' Congresses in America to honor and



The author with Rotary International President Gary C.K. Huang at the annual RI UN Day, November 2014

celebrate this historic relationship every October and to encourage Rotarians to do the same.

In 2013, I traveled to the United Nations for the first time and participated in my first Rotary International United Nations Day, which is always the first Saturday of November. The main presenter of the morning session was Georg Kell, Executive Director, UN Global Compact. Kell discussed the historic collaboration that Rotary International has with the Global Compact begun in 2009. Kell encouraged Rotarians to join the Global Compact, saying, "Recognizing that such similar missions can lead to fruitful collaboration, Rotary International and the United Nations Global Compact encourage:

1. Education and information sharing between Rotary clubs and districts and Global Compact Local Networks through attendance or invitations to speak at key meetings;
2. As appropriate, individual Rotary members coordinate or facilitate their own businesses to commit to the United Nations Global Compact or invite Global Compact Local Network participants to join a local Rotary club;
3. Local project implementation or collaboration – particularly those addressing the Millennium Development Goals – between Rotary clubs and districts and Global Compact Local Networks; and
4. Joint collaborative efforts promoting the best of corporate social responsibility practices and volunteer leadership and action at the local, district or national level.

**Empathy Surplus Project Joins Global Compact March
2014**

In addition to supporting the ten principles of the UN Global Compact with respect to human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption, we expressed our intent to



Logo used with permission of the United Nations Global Compact.

advance these principles within our spheres of influence, and make a clear statement of this commitment to our stakeholders and the general public.

We also pledged to participate in and engage with the UN Global Compact and occupy compassion in the following way(s):

- Charter Caring Citizens' Congresses and partner with Rotary International
- Invite local businesses to join our Healthcare Is A Human Right Collaboration by promoting the Caring Citizen Survey: Healthcare & Human Rights
- Invite local business & cities to join the UN Global Compact

Our first biannual submission of a Communication on Engagement (COE) that describes our organization's efforts to support the implementation of the ten principles and to engage with the Global Compact is due next year.

UN Global Compact — Ethical Businesses Aligning Operations Around Human Rights

If you want to partner with the Empathy Surplus Project, there are three ways to do so:

1. Join the First Caring Citizens' Congress of Wilmington, Ohio, if you live in the United States.
2. In or out of the USA you could join a Rotary Club and establish a Rotary UN Relationship Committee (see below) and let us know what you're doing. We'll share your work on our blog.
3. In or out of the USA you could Join the UN Global Compact and partner with the Empathy Surplus Project to find ways to strengthen the 2009 UN Global Compact and Rotary International Collaboration.

The Rotary United Nations Relationship Committee

As a Rotarian, one way to partner with us is by encouraging Rotary Clubs and Districts to create a Rotary United Nations Relationship Committee, whose purpose is:

- **Raise** member awareness of the Rotary International's policy on Politics and Human Rights;
- **Strengthen** the historical founding relationship Rotary has with the United Nations, especially the Economic and Social Council and the Global Compact;
- **Encourage** participation in an annual RI / UN Week celebration in the local community that could also involve travel to the UN itself (October 24 to 1st Saturday in November);
- **Strengthen** the consultative status Rotary has with the United Nations and find ways to develop a similar status with governing bodies in one's sphere of influence;
- **Strengthen** the collaboration Rotary has with the UN Global Compact and foster local collaboration with UNGC participants.
- **Create** an annual Communication of Engagement to the District Governor or his/her committee describing the committee's work.

Please consider this your invitation to partner with us. Thanks for reading. Please share it with your friends.

End Notes

- Page 1 Logos used with permission.
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- Page 3 Photo of George Lakoff and Chuck Watts taken with Watts’s camera and used with permission.
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- Page 4 Photo of Joe Brewer used with permission.
- Page 5 George Lakoff, in Framing: A Brief Introduction, http://empathysurplus.com/frames/?recruiter_id=2, in Framing: A Brief Introduction, The Little Blue Book Blog. <http://www.thelittleblueblog.org/framing-basics/>
- Page 7 Truthout Radio with Michael Lerner: The Caring Society <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/12814-truthout-radio-with-michael-lerner-the-caring-society>
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- Page 9 Photo of Wilmington, Ohio, taken by Chuck Watts
- Page 10 Cognitive Policy Works, About Cognitive Policy. <http://www.cognitivepolicyworks.com/resource-center/cognitive-policy/>
- Page 11 Photo of the author owned and used by the author
- Page 12 Photo of the author owned and used by the author

- Page 13 George Lakoff & Rockridge Institute, “Fundamental Values,” in Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Visions, http://empathysurplus.com/thinking_points/?recruiter_id=2 [Original Source: George Lakoff and Rockridge Institute, Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Visions (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006)]
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- George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1980)
- Page 20 Photo of the author and Rotary International President Ron Burton at the UN at the annual RI UN Day, November 2013.
- Page 21 Photo of the author and Rotary International President Gary C.K. Huang at the UN at the annual RI UN Day, November 2014.
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- Rotary and Global Compact Partnership Announcement, 2009 Rotary United Nations Day. https://www.unglobalcompact.org/NewsAndEvents/news_archives/2009_11_07.html
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First Caring Citizens' Congress of Wilmington, Ohio, Rotary and Human Rights Page promoting Rotary Clubs and Districts creating a Rotary United Nations Relationship Committee, 2015. http://firstcaringcitizenscongress.com/rotary/?recruiter_id=2

Appendix A

Building Trust for Effective Governance: A Strategy Brief for Reframing Local Organizations

Overview

This strategy brief is intended to clarify the role of local organizations in American democracy. Our hope is that the following recommendations and analysis improve the integrity of our democratic institutions by offering clear steps to rebuild trust in our political system.

The emphasis will be placed on cognitive frames that shape how political issues are thought about. It is important to note that frames are the mental structures activated in our brains every time we think about the world. They give form to the concepts and ideas that underly political language, thought, and action. This work was commissioned by Chuck Watts and the Empathy Surplus Project.

Recommendations

The following analysis reveals two distinct understandings of how politics works:

- 1. Insider Games with Power Players*
- 2. Grassroots Movements for Effective Governance*

The current political system is largely comprised of elite institutions that have been corrupted by special interests. The lack of resonance between elected officials and the citizens they are meant to represent has turned many people off to the political

process. All too often, citizens don't feel that their concerns play any serious role in acts of governance.

*The **Insider Game** creates a disconnect between citizens and their representatives corroding trust in democratic institutions. This problem of trust lies at the heart of our broken political system. Continued involvement in top-down political structures driven by political insiders does nothing to ameliorate this disconnect, and has considerable potential to make the problem worse.*

*The **Grassroots Movement** perspective allows for accountability and transparency through direct engagement of citizens in political processes. This lays a vital foundation for rebuilding trust after decades of dissonance between the concerns of citizens and the actions of their elected officials.*

We recommend thoughtful consideration of the frames that currently shape local organizations with an emphasis on promoting the Grassroots Movement Frame as part of your efforts to engage local citizens in politics. This includes getting involved in your church, local civic group, and local political party (be it Democrat or Republican) to demonstrate how local organizing contributes to the strengthening of your local civil discourse.

The Insider Game Frame should be confronted directly to reveal how it perpetuates an elite form of rule that contradicts the founding aspirations for democracy in the United States.

Brief Note About Local Organizations

This analysis lays out two different overarching perspectives about how local organizations relate to regional and national entities. Every local organization will have a particular culture, specific people involved, and a nuanced history that makes the application of these frames a delicate matter. We recommend taking care not to apply

too broad a stroke when critiquing the organizations you work with in your own community.

That said, we encourage you to engage in lively and respectful debate with fellow community members about insider politics and grassroots movements to clarify where people stand. Only when the differences are brought to the fore can your organization select the perspective that best suites (a) the values of your community and (b) the objectives you seek to achieve through your organization.

Two Models for “How Politics Works”

Our analysis reveals two competing frames that shape how politics is understood. The first is the Insider Game Frame, which focuses on power players who compete with one another to advance their personal interests. This is contrasted with the Grassroots Movement Frame that focuses on the coordinated efforts of local advocates to influence political outcomes that serve the needs of everyday citizens.

Insider Game Frame

Discussions of politics focus on those who have money and influence. Emphasis is placed on power players who accumulate money and supporters into a resource pool. The only players with an active role are these “insiders” who control the levers of power. Citizens are thought of as “social capital” to be utilized by players.

Citizens are considered inherently weak themselves (because they lack money and access) and, therefore, only have a passive role in the power plays of political elites. This leads to the understanding that central governing bodies use local organizations to advance their agenda because power flows “out and down” from leaders to followers.

Grassroots Movement Frame

Discussions of politics focus on the coordinated efforts of individuals who work locally to promote desired changes. Emphasis is placed on agents of change who get involved in their communities and build movements that transform political culture. These individuals seek out like-minded people and strive for a “game change” that transcends insider politics by spreading a grassroots base into an emerging call for change.

Engaged citizens are thought of as the “locus of action” who challenge political insiders by making them irrelevant to their social change efforts. This leads to the understanding that the elites are “out of touch” and need to become more responsive to the people they claim to represent - or get out of the way. In this view, engaged citizens use local organizations to consolidate their power and advance an agenda.

These competing frames influence how people think about political engagement. Through an Insider’s Game perspective (as in political lobbyists or a top-down state-to-county party structure), engagement might mean getting website visitors to sign online petitions, or donate money, or show up at polls. The “real” action is distant from the here-and-now debate with your neighbors of goodwill.

In the Grassroots Movement perspective, on the other hand, engagement means community organizing and sustained civic engagement. Citizen actions are expressions of political power. No disconnect exists between the citizen and her politics. Transparency and accountability are enforced by the citizens themselves, providing a foundation on which to build the trust that allows a democracy to thrive.

This frame analysis reveals how these competing models for politics operate implicitly in American society. Both models can be made explicit by articulating how they function in the context of local organizations - churches, civic groups, local political

parties, etc. Identification is straightforward once their differences are apparent. Simply ask whether the organization is understood to be a community accountable to its members or a mechanism for some central authority to push its agenda at the local level.

Contested Meanings of Authority

It is helpful to note that authority means different things in top-down and bottom-up situations. The central issue is legitimacy - who is considered to be a legitimate and valid authority figure.

In the context of top-down organizations, a decision-maker is considered legitimate if s/he holds those lower on the hierarchy accountable for their actions. Subordinates must answer to those above them. Legitimacy is determined by one's place in the hierarchy. Anyone outside the hierarchy (e.g. not an "insider player") will not be recognized as a valid authority figure, especially if they challenge decisions that come down from up on high.

Bottom-up organizations treat authority differently. A person is considered to be a legitimate voice if s/he resonates with the concerns and values of the community. Leaders are held accountable to the people they presume to represent. Anyone who acts against the will of the people - as expressed through collective actions within the grassroots movement - is seen as an invalid spokesperson. Legitimacy is determined by one's responsiveness to their community. Anyone outside of the community (e.g. not part of the movement) will not be recognized as an authority figure.