

conclusion:

a new movement for civic renewal

Revolutionary times call for revolutionary thinking. For the past generation, the ways that Americans live, work, and play have been dramatically transformed. Increasingly, we live alone, work late, and entertain ourselves by staring at television or computer screens. We spend less time in groups – with family, friends, neighbors or fellow club members. We are less trusting, less civic-minded, and less participatory in the affairs of public life. We don't like what we've become, and now, growing numbers of us are ready and eager to embark on a national journey of civic renewal. It is time for individual and institutional innovation.

America did not reach this state of civic crisis overnight, nor will we rebuild a civic community in a day, a week, or a year. But great strides always begin with small steps. One by one, we need to emerge from our cocoons of individualism and indifference. Just as the Salvation Army was founded to “save one soul at a time,” we call on every American to make just one change in his or her life that will contribute to the commonwealth. These individual actions will quickly multiply into a great spiritual and moral force for rebuilding social capital in America.

The causes of America's civic decline are many, and we therefore have advocated a multi-pronged approach to reversing that decline. We have focused on five categories of institutions to generate broad social and political change.

Employers should allow their space to be used for forums, association meetings and civic skill building; allow expanded leave for civic and family purposes; provide employees greater flexibility in work hours; and focus corporate philanthropy and community relations on building social capital, especially across socioeconomic groups.

Arts Organizations should strengthen their role as civic spaces, emphasizing community-based productions and citizen dialogue about important issues; collaborate across artistic disciplines and ethnic traditions; take center stage in community planning and social problem solving; and offer their unique services to other community organizations working to build social capital.

Government and Elected Officials must help revive and support intermediary institutions linking citizens to the state; reform the campaign finance system so that participation matters more than money; provide incentives for citizens to discuss how to make public agencies work better; develop “smart growth” strategies to revive community life; foster innovative programs to reward civic participation and make it habit-forming; finance local efforts to use technology for networking and community building; and review legislative and administrative decisions (past and future) to understand more fully their role in building or depleting our nation's stock of social capital.

Faith-Based Organizations should step up their efforts to collaborate with one another, and with non-religious institutions (including government), on pressing social problems; provide leadership in bridging cultural and ideological divides; and use their moral authority to promote civic values and civic participation among congregants.

Youth Organizations, Schools, and Families should redouble their support for expanding community service, leadership opportunities, and extracurricular activities for young people; reducing class sizes to maximize youth participation; teaching civics in a way that engages real-world issues; re-engaging high-school dropouts; rewarding mentors and young people who take part in community life; and providing social-capital-rich alternatives to television, computers, and video games.

Every American, and every American institution, has a unique role to play. The task of regenerating social capital will succeed only if each one of us, as private citizens and as leaders of institutions, leverages our particular talents and positions toward civic ends. Of course, there are millions of ways that individuals can make their own lives and communities richer in social capital. We can have friends over more often, hold more block parties, start a reading group, even create a civic organization. Without individual dedication, social capital (especially the informal sort) will continue to dissipate.

We wish to focus briefly on a group that has not been specifically addressed in the previous chapters: the baby boomers. While data show that the boomers are less civically engaged than are their parents in “the Long Civic Generation,” we don't assume that the boomers will always lag behind. As the boomers begin to reach retirement, some hopeful signs are emerging. First, they are more likely than previous generations to profess a desire to work and be useful. Second, our societal notions of how to age gracefully have shifted away from mere activity and toward usefulness and value. Third, non-profit groups are beginning to devise ways to make volunteer work appealing to retiring boomers. These pitches may have to appeal to boomer self-interest – for example, drawing on the powerful ties between social capital and health by noting that civic engagement is the “health club of the new millennium.” Professionals have begun to turn their skills toward community service – some doctors are putting off retirement to provide cut-rate services to disadvantaged people, for example, and some lawyers forced into early retirement are seeking ways to be productive in the civic sphere.¹

However, as important as individual action is, whether by boomers or others, we have chosen to focus on networks and institutions – private, public, and non-profit – because we believe that wholesale social change is not possible unless individuals work together in structured and ongoing ways – precisely what networks and institutions offer. Each type of major institution has a unique role to play. Corporations and other employers can foster social capital inside their walls – where most Americans spend their days – and institute policies that make it easier for employees to get away from work to participate in their communities. Religious leaders have the advantage of a spiritual doctrine and moral authority, which can be used to repair broken community bonds. Schools and youth organizations have the unique opportunity to influence a whole new generation of Americans before it is too late – an especially important task given that generational succession is the major cause of the current state of affairs. Arts organizations have the unique advantage of providing creative, fun and powerfully moving ways to rebuild social capital. And, of course, government, with its vast spending and decision-making authority, and elected officials, with their powerful bully pulpits, can influence society on a scale that is hard for private organizations and individuals to match.

Some burgeoning movements for social, economic and political reform promise also to strengthen our bonds of trust and spur greater civic participation. The push at the state and national level to reform the campaign-finance system, for example, is guided in part by a desire to give average citizens a reason to think their participation will make a difference. The growing backlash against big chain stores and suburban sprawl is rooted in a belief that mom-and-pop shops and vibrant town centers are civic resources.¹¹ The movement for charter schools is partly about enhancing parents' engagement in their children's education. Recent demonstrations by men, whether the Million Man March or rallies of the Promise Keepers, hint at deeper national concerns about dwindling social capital within the family.

We have called for a new period of civic renaissance, harking back to a century ago when a broad array of civic-minded reformers, coming from diverse backgrounds and political ideologies, created a new set of institutions to replace those that industrialization and urbanization had rendered ineffectual or even obsolete. Today's movement for civic renewal might involve both the creation of new institutions – such as the community-service corps that began to spring up in the 1980s – and the reinvigoration of existing organizations. Mindful of our increasingly fast-paced, mobile, and technology-driven lives, today's civic reformers must focus also on building *informal networks* of people to bridge the divides of race, class, and geography. Artists might be linked to urban schools, for example, to produce plays about community life. Suburban entrepreneurs might be linked to displaced blue-collar workers to help them navigate the unsettling seas of the new economy. Congregations might join in partnerships with social-service agencies to help families in crisis. Families might emerge from their cocoons to join with environmental engineers in cleaning up neglected areas.

While there are many important similarities between today and the Progressive Era of a century ago, there are important differences, as well. For one, many more American women are, by choice or necessity, in the full-time paid work force and thus without the time that their foremothers had to devote to community work. The data suggest that this transformation has had a smaller influence than many people imagine on the quantity of women's civic work.¹² But it is nonetheless important to recognize that the civic demands on women must be tailored to meet their new, busier schedules. Likewise, in keeping with changing gender roles in the labor market and the family, the Saguaro participants call upon men to commit themselves to what 100 years ago was largely "women's work" – the various social and civic reform activities labeled "municipal house-keeping." As women share the productive work once dominated by male wage-earners, men must share the civic work once dominated by female volunteers.

Another major change of the last 100 years is the ascendance of multiculturalism as a core democratic value. While America has always been a nation of immigrants, and hence has always been multicultural, the multiculturalism model of the Progressive Era was white, middle-class Protestant reformers' helping newcomers assimilate to white, middle-class Protestant values. Today, white, middle-class Protestants do not monopolize the positions of power, and the nation's value system places greater emphasis on preserving and managing underlying cultural differences. To be successful, today's efforts to build social capital must complement, rather than challenge, the prevailing standards. That is, "bonding" social capital is unlikely to find fertile ground if it appears self-consciously exclusive, and "bridging" social capital is unlikely to flourish if it appears to privilege one set of cultural norms over another.

The last major change – perhaps the most profound of all – is the revolution in technology. One hundred years ago, Americans traveled mostly by horse-drawn carriage, were just beginning to communicate by telephone, learned about public affairs from local newspapers and local notables, and entertained themselves on front stoops, at church halls, and in opera houses. Today, we travel by automobile and airplane, communicate through e-mail and in electronic "chat rooms," learn about public affairs from television ads and direct mail alerts, and entertain ourselves by watching "reality TV" and playing hand-held video games. Technology makes our world faster and smaller, but also makes our connections to one another more sporadic, tenuous, and remote.

Whether technology, with its myriad manifestations, will end up being a boon to social capital or a drain is open to question. There are clearly warning signs. Recent research suggests that, for all the informational needs that it serves, the Internet may draw people away from face-to-face interaction and contribute to social isolation. In addition, the sheer pace at which many of us live our lives seems to militate against the relaxed, guilt-free "schmoozing time" on which the nation's stock of social capital depends – the stereotypical chat over the backyard fence on a warm summer's eve.¹³ However, by cutting costs of travel and communication, technology allows us to create and maintain relationships with people who might not otherwise be a part of our lives. It is now less expensive to call or visit distant friends and family members, and e-mail enables people nationwide and globally to develop "virtual communities" united by shared interests. Whatever hodgepodge of effects technology is having on social capital, technological innovation will be a growing part of Americans' lives and communities. And, so, any effort to

boost our stock of social capital will have to harness the immense power of technology – television, computers, satellites, and so forth. We must redouble our efforts to find creative ways to capitalize on technology's potential to bring more of us together while curbing its potential to strand us in the anonymous ether of cyberspace.

Because of changes in values, demographics, and lifestyles, the job of 21st-century Americans is not precisely the same as the job that faced our predecessors at the turn of the last century. But there are broad similarities. Like them, we must rebuild community amid rapid social change and profound cultural differences among peoples. Like them, we must find ways to instill greater trust in our civic capacities, in one another other, and in our governing institutions. Like theirs, our task is likely to require thousands of local experiments led by visionary reformers, working through both voluntary action and paid positions. And, like theirs, our task is likely to require a wholesale shift in orientation on the part of everyday folks, where millions of Americans engage less in passive entertainment and reconnect more with those around them.

Perhaps the greatest lesson of the first Progressive Era is that small changes in habits and attitudes, and seemingly simple innovations, can have a profound and long-lasting effect on large, complicated societies. Few people could have foreseen the revolutionary impact of Progressive inventions such as direct electoral primaries, kindergartens, playgrounds, and ethnic fraternal organizations. The lightning speed with which information and innovation spread in today's media-and-computer age only promises to magnify the effects of otherwise isolated efforts. The challenge to all of us is to leverage new technologies for civic ends.

The Saguaro Seminar invites everyone to join the movement for civic revitalization. For our part, the Saguaro group is moving forward on a number of fronts:

- *Social Capital on the Web.* We believe that the Internet is a wonderful forum for sharing ideas about how individuals and institutions have successfully built social capital in their local areas. We have created a Web site (www.BetterTogether.org) where citizens can read about innovative ideas, communicate with others about successful examples of social capital building, and post their own ideas of what has worked.
- *Taking Stock of America's Social Capital.* In partnership with community foundations, the Seminar is undertaking the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey to quantify levels of social capital in three-dozen localities and states, which together comprise nearly one-quarter of the U.S. population. The foundations will use the data to gauge changes in social capital over time, to assess the civic strengths and weaknesses in their particular community, and to inform new projects for building or spotlighting social capital. The survey instrument will be publicly available for communities wishing to measure their own supplies of social capital. [see: <http://www.cfsv.org/communitysurvey>]

We urge the leaders of American institutions to take full advantage of these new social capital resources. And we urge all Americans to take bold new steps into the civic life of their communities. We can only imagine where this exciting movement for civic renewal will lead.

i See Marc Freedman, *Prime Time: How Baby Boomers Will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999). And see the Civic Ventures web site (<http://www.civicventures.org>).

ii We thank David Brewster for this observation. See David Brewster, "Finding Contemporary Ways to Foster a Civil Society," *Seattle Times*, 7 July 2000 (at www.seattletimes.com).

iii See Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

iv Alan Ehrenhalt, "The Empty Square," *Preservation*, March-April 2000, pp.42-51.

changing

the wind – saguaro seminar values

We began the Saguaro Seminar project in 1996 believing that social capital – social networks and the bonds of trust and reciprocity that facilitate collective action – is a resource available for both positive and negative ends. Much as financial capital could be used by an individual to start an environmental clean-up firm (a social good) or to stockpile nerve gas (a social bad), social capital could be used by neighborhoods to build a playground or by groups like the Ku Klux Klan to terrorize minority groups. Despite its potential for abuse, we believe that social capital is used primarily for positive ends. There are far more Girl Scout troops in America than there are militia groups.

Our conversations over two years made evident that the specific social capital building strategies endorsed by group members invariably were shaped by our individual and collective values. We thus thought it helpful to be explicit about the values that unite our effort. While we hope that others share these values, we list them not to be prescriptive or proselytizing.

We've taken our title "Changing the Wind" from one of our participants, who noted that politics too often is organized around replacing one wet-fingered politician (testing the winds of public opinion) with another. We need to think about *changing* the civic wind, not merely figuring out (in the manner of the stereotypical politician) which way the wind is blowing. Our hope is that this report, in conjunction with the efforts of millions of concerned Americans, can help to turn the vicious cycle of social-capital depletion into a virtuous circle of growth and renewal.

An Instrumental View of Social Capital

We care about increasing social capital at least in part because it is a vital resource for achieving societal goals. Scores of academic studies confirm that trust and civic engagement lubricate society's institutions. In so doing, social capital helps to ensure quality education, a more engaged citizenry and more accountable public decision makers, longer and healthier lives, reduced crime and violence, economic development and growth, increased tolerance and understanding among diverse groups of people, and even greater citizen compliance with laws. More social capital means broader generalized reciprocity, greater honesty toward others, and a more expansive sense of the "self." Social capital also helps to combat materialism and self-centeredness, two values that seem increasingly prevalent in our economically robust times.

While we support social capital building strategies that don't necessarily solve pressing societal problems directly, we prefer strategies that simultaneously address pressing social problems *and* build social capital, such as crime watch groups, revolving credit associations, and parent-teacher associations. Our group is confident that the former (groups like choral societies) enlarge the stock of social capital and are likely to have indirect, long-term effects on ameliorating pressing social issues. We must be cautious that strategies to increase the latter (e.g., parent-teacher associations) often seem like "civic castor oil"—bolstering America's civic health but appealing only to a narrow slice of Americans, the civic do-gooders. Faced with a choice between social capital building strategies that might attract hundreds of thousands of people, even without directly addressing America's pressing problems, and civic do-gooding ideas that attract relatively few, we favor the former. Of course, groups oriented toward solving civic problems with broadly appealing methods are our ideal choice, since they provide a "double bang for the buck."

Our desire to reinvigorate American civic life is not an exercise in nostalgia. We do not seek to recreate the 1950s, even in an airbrushed version without sexism and oppression of racial or cultural minorities. We seek participation, not conformity. We hope to reinvigorate our long tradition of strong communities within the realities, both positive and negative, of the recent technological, social, and economic changes in American society.

Values to foster. Our key goal is to foster greater reciprocity in our dealings with one another. Greater reciprocity will build and strengthen earned trust, rather than forging a Potemkin Village of untrustworthy citizens. Within this goal of greater collective effort and reciprocity, however, we respect individuality, and the freedom not to join (with no moral stigma for non-joiners). We hope to forge more social capital without undermining our ability to be distinct individuals.

Types of social capital we support or oppose. Social trust and connectedness in America are far more common among Americans of similar a race, ethnicity, class, age, or religion than among people who are different from one another. We believe that society benefits immeasurably by creating opportunities for "bridging social capital," bringing citizens together *across* these differences. This bridging social capital helps to forge common ground and promote citizen responsibility and engagement. Nevertheless, we believe that it is human nature to seek out people like oneself; the maxim "birds of a feather flock together" embodies deeper undercurrents of human behavior. Therefore "non-bridging" (or "bonding") forms of trust will always be more prevalent than "bridging" bonds. In most cases, social-capital connections will involve people with some similarities and some differences (such as the varied ethnicities of alumna from a women's college, or the varied socioeconomic backgrounds of members of a Catholic fraternal group). Such mixed forms of bridging and bonding social capital may represent the most practical way of meeting our twin goals of greatly increasing community connectedness while multiplying our interactions with people unlike ourselves.

In sum, we support all social capital strategies, as long as groups that are privileged or advantaged do not demonize those who don't or can't belong. We seek strategies that will raise the aggregate level of trustworthiness and trust in society.¹ We also believe that many efforts that begin as non-bridging social capital (for example ethnic associations) will lead to bridging social capital (for example, searching for allies in issue-based coalitions).

Tolerance and deliberation. Many people would rather change others than tolerate their errors, but we believe we should tolerate if we can't persuade. Bridging social capital will only have value if we learn from our differences, even where such learning doesn't produce agreement. We want to expand social capital not only because it has practical uses, such as improving public health and making streets safer, but also because it creates the deliberative space that promotes greater understanding. This greater understanding, ultimately, will enable Americans to reach agreement on policies that will improve our nation for all citizens.

¹ Thus, a strategy to boost the Mafia or Crips and Bloods would fail this test, but one to assist Hadassah or an all African-American church might pass.

who we are

Participants in the Saguaro Seminar

Dedicated to the life of Lisa Yvette Sullivan (1961-2001)



The Saguaro Seminar dedicates this edition of Better Together to the life of Lisa Yvette Sullivan, our colleague and our friend. Lisa was a thinker, a writer, a lover of sports and music, and her life's work was devoted to young people. She was particularly concerned with the lack of resources available for cultivating the talents of disadvantaged children, and in 1998, she founded LISTEN, Inc., a national nonprofit social change organization dedicated to developing the next generation of political and civic leaders among poor urban youth.* She was determined that youth have an opportunity to be heard, to think, to change, to become. She encouraged and challenged those who knew her to greater thoughts and action. As we go forward, we carry her memory in our hearts and in our minds and we hope to make her vision of the world a reality. <http://www.lisn.org>



Team Saguaro

Xavier de Souza Briggs is a Professor at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government whose research focuses on urban policy, community building, and strategic management. He has done community planning in the South Bronx and acted as the Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Rev. Bliss Browne is founder and president of Imagine Chicago, an organization which catalyzes intergenerational urban connections and harnesses civic imagination as a resource for innovative community building. She is an ordained Episcopal priest, a director of seven not-for-profit boards, and a former Division Head of the First National Bank of Chicago.

Pastor Kirbyjon Caldwell is senior pastor at the Windsor Village-St. John's United Methodist Churches. His 120 ministries and 9 nine-profit organizations provide a community center, food pantry, drug abuse treatment program, juvenile delinquency program and 24-hour crisis nursery center. He is the founder of Corinthian Point, a 34-acre master-planned community, and he has developed the Power Center, which provides community housing, corporate offices, and job training services.

John Dilulio Jr. is Frederic Fox Leadership Professor of Politics, Religion and Civil Society at the University of Pennsylvania. There he directs the Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society and the Robert A. Fox Leadership Program. He is also a Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute and the Brookings Institution.

E.J. Dionne is a *Washington Post* columnist and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, where he is investigating government's impact on social capital and the role of religious institutions in public life. He wrote *Why Americans Hate Politics* and *They Only Look Dead: Why Progressives Will Dominate The Next Political Era*.

Carolyn Doggett is executive director of the California Teachers Association. She spearheaded CTA's opposition to anti-affirmative-action proposals and the voucher initiative, and has organized representation elections, charter amendment campaigns, and school board and legislative campaigns.

Lewis Feldstein is co-chair of the Saguaro Seminar and president of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the principal source of venture capital for New Hampshire's nonprofit community. Feldstein worked with the civil rights movements in Mississippi, and served for seven years in senior staff positions in the administration of New York City Mayor John V. Lindsay.

Christopher Gates is co-chair of the Saguaro Seminar and president of the National Civic League, which is committed to consensus-based decision making, citizen participation, and diversity. He is also the director of the Alliance for National Renewal and founding chairman of the Colorado Institute for Leadership Training.

Stephen Goldsmith is the Professor for the Practice of Public Management and Faculty Director of the Innovations in American Government Awards Program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Prior to this he was Mayor of Indianapolis. He is the author of *The Twenty-First Century City: Resurrecting Urban America* and the chairman of Netgov.com.

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Henry Izumizaki is the founder of a new grassroots leadership network in California. He is the former chief strategist for the Urban Strategies Council and past director of the *San Francisco Bay Area Eureka Communities*, a nonprofit leadership development program. He currently serves as the CFO for the California Consumer Protection Foundation and is chair of the board for MÖCHA, the Museum for Children's Art.

Vanessa Kirsch is president and founder of New Profit Inc., an innovative venture capital fund for the non-profit sector focused on growing social entrepreneurial organizations to scale. Prior to launching NPI, Vanessa founded and led two non-profit organizations, Public Allies (a national service program) and the Women's Information Network.

Carol Lamm is a consultant in Community Organization Development in Kentucky and Central Appalachia. She is the former program development director for the Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED), which assists communities through business financing, entrepreneurship training, and the facilitation of sustainable development. She is also the former director of the Brushy Fork Institute, a leadership development program at Berea College.

Liz Lerman founded the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange in 1976. LLDE travels to communities and spends months listening to residents' stories, turning their salient themes into dances that are performed for the community by both community and troupe members.

Glenn Loury is a professor and director of the Institute on Race and Social Division at Boston University. His research interests include welfare economics, game theory, industrial organization, natural resource economics, and income distribution. He authored *One by One From the Inside Out: Essays and Reviews on Race and Responsibility in America*.

John P. Mascotte is president and CEO of Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Kansas City. He is a former chairman and CEO of the Continental Insurance Company and a former chairman of the board of Local Initiatives Support Corporation, a major national funding agency for community development.

Martha Minow is a professor at Harvard Law School, where she teaches courses on school reform, family law, and law and social change. Her books include *Making All the Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion, and American Law; Not Only For Myself: Identity, Politics, and Law*; and *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History After Genocide and Mass Violence*.

Mark Moore is the Guggenheim Professor of Criminal Justice at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. He is director of the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations. His research focuses on public sector leadership, particularly in criminal justice, in governmental organizations, and in the community, non-profit, and voluntary sectors.

Barack Obama is an Illinois State Senator and a civil rights attorney at Miner, Barnhill and Galland, specializing in employment discrimination, fair housing and voting rights litigation. He is a senior lecturer at the University of Chicago, serves on the boards of numerous community organizations, and was a director of Project Vote!, which registered more than 100,000 new voters.

Peter Pierce III is president of the First Bethany Bancorp, a small, family-owned, community-focused bank, and co-founder of Oklahoma MetaFund Community Development Corporation. He has held municipal elective office, organized transitional housing for homeless families, and been involved in numerous non-profit and faith-based organizations.

Robert D. Putnam directs the Saguaro Seminar and is a political science professor at Harvard University and a former dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government. He authored *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* and *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*.

Paul Resnick is an associate professor at the University of Michigan School of Information, where he directs the Community Information Corps. He was a pioneer in the field of recommender systems (sometimes called collaborative filtering or social filtering), which guide people to interesting materials based on recommendations from other people.

Juan Sepulveda directs The Common Enterprise in San Antonio, TX, which develops programs to foster community networks. He is a board member of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the National Civic League, and the Center for Policy Alternatives.

Robert F. Sexton is the executive director of Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence in Kentucky, one of the nation's largest grassroots campaigns to involve citizens and parents in education reform. He is the founder and president of the Kentucky Center for Public Issues, and in 1994 won the Charles A. Dana Award for Pioneering Achievement in Education.

George Stephanopoulos is a political analyst for ABC News. He was the communications director and a senior advisor to the Clinton Administration, has led efforts to encourage dialogue among voters, and is interested in television's role in facilitating civic engagement.

Dorothy Stoneman founded YouthBuild USA, a national youth program that fosters community leadership through education and low-income housing development. She has served as a community organizer developing schools, youth programs, housing programs, and community coalitions in Harlem.

Lisa Sullivan founded and was president of LISTEN, Inc., which strengthens the social capital and leadership of urban youth for civic engagement and community problem solving. She was a fellowship development consultant for the Next Generation Leadership Program of the Rockefeller Foundation. She was the former director of the field division at the Children's Defense Fund, where she co-founded and directed the Black Student Leadership Network.

James Wallis convenes Call to Renewal, a federation of faith-based organizations working to overcome poverty. He is a board member of the Sojourners Neighborhood Center, which provides supportive programs for youth and parents, and Editor-in-Chief of *Sojourners* magazine, which reports on faith, politics, and culture. He authored *Faith Works: Lessons from the Life of an Activist Preacher* and teaches a course on faith and politics at Harvard.

Vin Weber is a managing partner with the law firm of Clark & Weinstock. He co-directs Empower America, an organization advocating policies that emphasize individual responsibility and accountability in approaching social problems. He co-directs the Domestic Policy Project of the Aspen Institute and served in the House of Representatives.

William Julius Wilson is a professor of social policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, an expert on urban poverty, and a former president of the American Sociological Association. He authored *When Work Disappears*, which addresses the impact of declining social capital on the problems of the American urban underclass.

* To learn more about LISTEN, Inc. go to www.lisn.org. To read a memorial of Lisa Yvette Sullivan and a tribute to her life see <http://www.lisn.org/lis/index.htm>

150 things

you can do to build social capital

Social capital is built through hundreds of little and big actions we take every day. We've gotten you started with a list of nearly 150 ideas, drawn from suggestions made by many people and groups. Try some of these or try your own. We need to grow this list. If you have other ideas, post them at: <http://www.bettertogether.org>.

1. Organize a social gathering to welcome a new neighbor
2. Attend town meetings
3. Register to vote and vote
4. Support local merchants
5. Volunteer your special skills to an organization
6. Donate blood (with a friend!)
7. Start a community garden
8. Mentor someone of a different ethnic or religious group
9. Surprise a new neighbor by making a favorite dinner-and include the recipe
10. Tape record your parents' earliest recollections and share them with your children
11. Plan a vacation with friends or family
12. Avoid gossip
13. Help fix someone's flat tire
14. Organize or participate in a sports league
15. Join a gardening club
16. Attend home parties when invited
17. Become an organ donor or blood marrow donor.
18. Attend your children's athletic contests, plays and recitals
19. Get to know your children's teachers
20. Join the local Elks, Kiwanis, or Knights of Columbus
21. Get involved with Brownies or Cub/Boy/Girl Scouts
22. Start a monthly tea group
23. Speak at or host a monthly brown bag lunch series at your local library
24. Sing in a choir
25. Get to know the clerks and salespeople at your local stores
26. Attend PTA meetings
27. Audition for community theater or volunteer to usher
28. Give your park a weatherproof chess/checkers board
29. Play cards with friends or neighbors
30. Give to your local food bank
31. Walk or bike to support a cause and meet others
32. *Employers:* encourage volunteer/community groups to hold meetings on your site
33. Volunteer in your child's classroom or chaperone a field trip
34. Join or start a babysitting cooperative
35. Attend school plays

36. Answer surveys when asked
37. *Businesses:* invite local government officials to speak at your workplace
38. Attend Memorial Day parades and express appreciation for others
39. Form a local outdoor activity group
40. Participate in political campaigns
41. Attend a local budget committee meeting
42. Form a computer group for local senior citizens
43. Help coach Little League or other youth sports – even if you don't have a kid playing
44. Help run the snack bar at the Little League field
45. Form a tool lending library with neighbors and share ladders, snow blowers, etc.
46. Start a lunch gathering or a discussion group with co-workers
47. Offer to rake a neighbor's yard or shovel his/her walk
48. Start or join a carpool
49. *Employers:* give employees time (e.g., 3 days per year to work on civic projects)
50. Plan a "Walking Tour" of a local historic area
51. Eat breakfast at a local gathering spot on Saturdays
52. Have family dinners and read to your children
53. Run for public office
54. Stop and make sure the person on the side of the highway is OK
55. Host a block party or a holiday open house
56. Start a fix-it group-friends willing to help each other clean, paint, garden, etc.
57. Offer to serve on a town committee
58. Join the volunteer fire department
59. Go to church...or temple...or walk outside with your children-talk to them about why its important
60. If you grow tomatoes, plant extra for an lonely elder neighbor – better yet, ask him/her to teach you and others how to can the extras
61. Ask a single diner to share your table for lunch
62. Stand at a major intersection holding a sign for your favorite candidate
63. Persuade a local restaurant to have a designated "meet people" table
64. Host a potluck supper before your Town Meeting
65. Take dance lessons with a friend
66. Say "thanks" to public servants - police, firefighters, town clerk...
67. Fight to keep essential local services in the downtown area-your post office, police station, school, etc.
68. Join a nonprofit board of directors
69. Gather a group to clean up a local park or cemetery
70. When somebody says "government stinks," suggest they help fix it
71. Turn off the TV and talk with friends or family
72. Hold a neighborhood barbecue
73. Bake cookies for new neighbors or work colleagues
74. Plant tree seedlings along your street with neighbors and rotate care for them
75. Volunteer at the library
76. Form or join a bowling team
77. Return a lost wallet or appointment book
78. Use public transportation and start talking with those you regularly see
79. Ask neighbors for help and reciprocate
80. Go to a local folk or crafts festival
81. Call an old friend
82. Sign up for a class and meet your classmates
83. Accept or extend an invitation
84. Talk to your kids or parents about their day
85. Say hello to strangers
86. Log off and go to the park
87. Ask a new person to join a group for a dinner or an evening
88. Host a pot luck meal or participate in them
89. Volunteer to drive someone
90. Say hello when you spot an acquaintance in a store
91. Host a movie night
92. Exercise together or take walks with friends or family
93. Assist with or create your town or neighborhood's newsletter
94. Organize a neighborhood pick-up - with lawn games afterwards
95. Collect oral histories from older town residents
96. Join a book club discussion or get the group to discuss local issues
97. Volunteer to deliver Meals-on-Wheels in your neighborhood
98. Start a children's story hour at your local library
99. Be real. Be humble. Acknowledge others' self-worth
100. Tell friends and family about social capital and why it matters
101. Greet people
102. Cut back on television
103. Join in to help carry something heavy
104. Plan a reunion of family, friends, or those with whom you had a special connection
105. Take in the programs at your local library
106. Read the local news faithfully
107. Buy a grill and invite others over for a meal
108. Fix it even if you didn't break it
109. Pick it up even if you didn't drop it
110. Attend a public meeting
111. Go with friends or colleagues to a ball game (and root, root, root for the home team!)
112. Help scrape ice off a neighbor's car, put chains on the tires or shovel it out
113. Hire young people for odd jobs
114. Start a tradition
115. Share your snow blower
116. Help jump-start someone's car
117. Join a project that includes people from all walks of life
118. Sit on your stoop
119. Be nice when you drive
120. Make gifts of time
121. Buy a big hot tub
122. Volunteer at your local neighborhood school
123. Offer to help out at your local recycling center
124. Send a "thank you" letter to the Editor about a person or event that helped build community
125. Raise funds for a new town clock or new town library
126. When inspired, write personal notes to friends and neighbors
127. Attend gallery openings
128. Organize a town-wide yard sale
129. Invite friends or colleagues to help with a home renovation or home building project
130. Join or start a local mall-walking group and have coffee together afterwards
131. Build a neighborhood playground
132. Become a story-reader or baby-rocker at a local childcare center or neighborhood pre-school
133. Contra dance or two-step
134. Help kids on your street construct a lemonade stand
135. Open the door for someone who has his or her hands full
136. Say hi to those in elevators
137. Invite friends to go snowshoeing, hiking, or cross-country skiing
138. Offer to watch your neighbor's home or apartment while they are away
139. Organize a fitness/health group with your friends or co-workers
140. Hang out at the town dump and chat with your neighbors as your sort your trash at the Recycling Center
141. Take a pottery class with your children or parent(s)
142. See if your neighbor needs anything when you run to the store
143. Ask to see a friend's family photos
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145.
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147.
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150.

build connections to people. build trust with others. get involved.

Endnote

The Saguaro report is the distillation of a fruitful multi-year conversation around strategies for rebuilding our nation's stock of social capital – the community connections of trust and reciprocity that help make our schools work better, our neighborhoods safer, our residents happier and healthier, our economies more productive, and our public institutions of government more responsive.

This report embodies the spirit of those conversations and reflects our collective learning. While each of us *may* not agree with each specific point, the report captures the sense of the group.

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