

CONNECTIONS

www.kettering.org

2007

A Year's Review
from the Perspective
of Citizens

WHAT IF?

IMAGINE THIS

COULD IT BE THAT?

MAYBE THE QUESTION WE SHOULD BE ASKING IS...

Introducing the
READERS' FORUM
See page 33

What You Need to Know about *Connections*

With this issue of *Connections*, the Kettering Foundation introduces three significant initiatives for the newsletter.

The first is a decision to change *Connections* from a biannual publication to an annual. This new schedule corresponds with Kettering's review cycle, which goes like this: each year, Kettering focuses its research through a particular point of view, or, as we say at the foundation, lens. The foundation's research has three fundamental foci: citizens, communities, and democratic institutions. This reflects Kettering's hypothesis that democracy requires the following:

- citizens who can make sound decisions about their future;
- communities of citizens acting together to address common problems;
- institutions that are legitimate in the eyes of citizens and that support a democratic society.

By publishing *Connections* once a year, it will serve as a record of the foundation's research focus over the previous 12 months. Therefore, as you'll find throughout the following pages, this issue of *Connections* reflects the foundation's research over the last year—through the lens of citizens.

The second initiative is the addition of a new section, the "Readers' Forum." As its name implies, the new section



features reactions and comments by *Connections* readers, who were invited to review drafts of many of the articles that appear in this newsletter. With the help of our colleagues Connie Crockett and Alice Diebel, we interviewed 13 people from around the country about how their experiences relate to these articles. This feedback is organized into three articles related to the

foundation's hypothesis about democracy, as noted above. The "Forum" is described in more detail on page 33.

To make the new section a true "Readers' Forum," the foundation has devised a new way for readers to react to—and even to read—*Connections*. This is the third initiative: the creation of a new discussion area on the foundation's Web site, www.kettering.org. On the Web site you'll find a new section devoted to this issue of *Connections* and comment areas where readers can participate in a forum around the ideas expressed in the articles published in this issue.

The addition of both the print and online "Readers' Forum" is an attempt to help readers better connect to *Connections*—and the Kettering Foundation. But remember: the online forum will only be as good as you our readers make it.

—Deborah Witte and Bob Mihalek

CONNECTIONS

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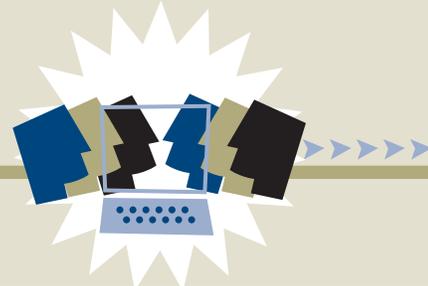
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Books Worth Reading

The Next Form of Democracy is an extremely helpful contribution to this public work.

—Harry C. Boyte

Harry Boyte is codirector of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at the University of Minnesota. His next book, copublished by the Minnesota Historical Society and the Kettering Foundation, is *The Citizen Solution*. He can be reached at boyte001@umn.edu.

Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi

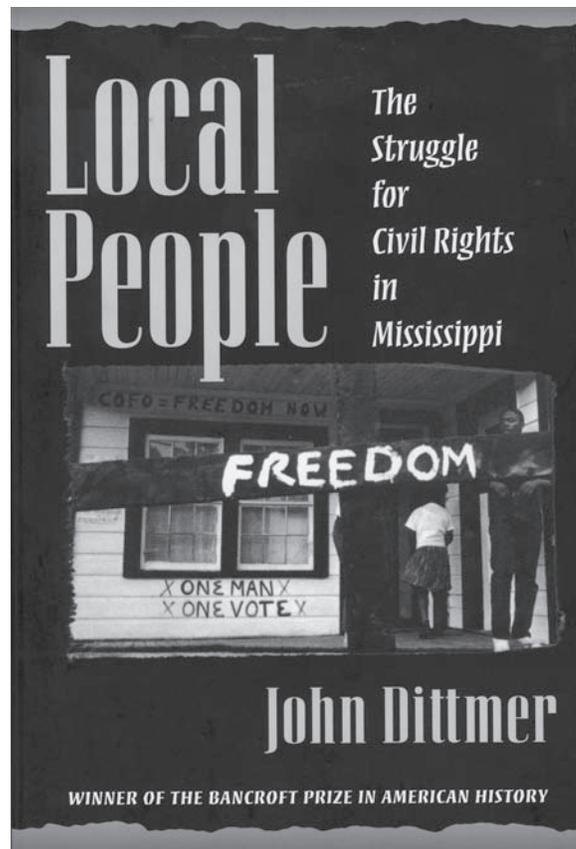
By John Dittmer
Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995

Local People is a historical narrative inspired by the banding together of citizen leaders to overcome the injustices of the Jim Crow South. John Dittmer presents the peoples' fight for civil rights and the Mississippi suffrage movement with true conviction.

Dittmer's book features civil rights leaders who lacked national media attention or who have been broadly categorized in other history books. By focusing exclusively on the Mississippi story, localized leadership and the strength of grassroots efforts is unveiled. Civil rights were won in individual states, particularly in the South, where Jim Crow laws and terrorist actions by supremacist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, kept all citizens from enjoying equal rights. Dittmer recounts the horrific lynching of Emmett Till and others who were falsely accused of sexually assaulting white women or committing other similarly heinous crimes. Each story serves as a reminder of the inhumane treatment blacks in the Deep South faced on the grounds of racial superiority from whites. Countless examples of false imprisonment and deplorable treatment of nonviolent demonstrators bear witness to the endurance required of citizens whose actions and voices whites attempted to keep quiet.

Early in the book, desegregation of schools is discussed in response to the *Brown* decision. School desegregation, like voting rights, was a hot topic issue for Mississippians. Fostering a collective voice for African Americans on the subject of school equality was one of many challenges these citizen groups faced. For example, the African American clergy favored the continuance of all-black schools, which they saw as a way to preserve their heritage and teach black citizenship. Citizens first came to realize that maintaining the status quo of segregation of schools and other public places would only prolong the treatment of blacks as second-class citizens. The clergy were one of the last to rally in support of desegregation. Dittmer tells another story of how religious leaders in Mississippi failed to mobilize until a peaceful group of civil rights marchers were falsely arrested and held without charges in a prison-camp arrangement.

In *Local People*, there are previously untold stories about the disillusionment of the citizen activists who stifled progress at various points of the civil rights movement in Mississippi. Community leaders like Dave Dennis and Bob Moses of the Council of Federated Organizations for example, grew discontented and depressed in the mid-1950s after years of civil, lawful demonstrations were retaliated against by violence and murder. Citizen organizing groups were failing to achieve any advancement in voting and civil rights for African Americans. Citizen groups became disenchanted due to internal fighting and external pressures. Racial tensions between civil rights workers derailed the work of the Mississippi rights movement. Racial tensions within the Student



Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), along with general feelings of defeat, led to a decrease in college student volunteers traveling to Mississippi during the summer to advocate civil rights. In tandem with the racial tensions, sexual discrimination caused factions within the SNCC project. Racial and sexual discrimination within civil rights advocacy groups is commonly excluded from history books, perhaps for fear it would make the citizen leadership look weak. On the contrary, Dittmer reveals the perseverance required to achieve equality of rights. Coalition-building groups like the SNCC and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People face the same barriers as all communities in terms of finding common ground. John Dittmer's work serves as an unpleasant reminder of the cruelty that governments and citizens can bring upon other citizens and the injustices of the American tradition. *Local People* is a well-told historic recollection of the rollercoaster battles citizen advocacy groups faced in securing

justice and equality in Mississippi, going as far back as the mid-1940s. Perseverance and grace are required of all grassroots organizers who desire to achieve collective action to break down the state of discrimination, violence, and hatred and to restore human decency.

— Caitlin Bortolotto

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Profit with Honor: The New Stage of Market Capitalism

by Daniel Yankelovich

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006

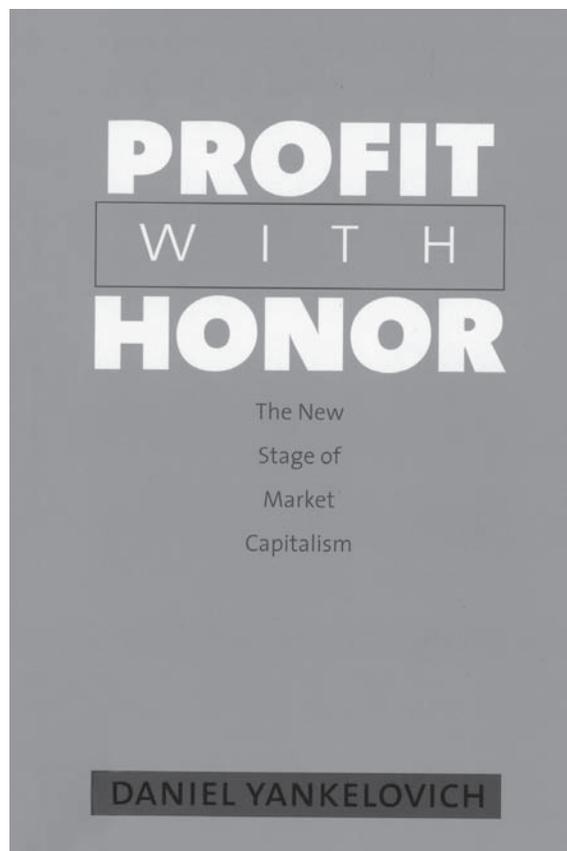
Perhaps even more troubling than recent questionable business practices and corporate scandals, says Dan Yankelovich in *Profit with Honor*, are the ways governments are trying to hold businesses accountable and rectify their wrongdoings. Increased laws and regulations seem to be the primary method, but fall very short of their noble purposes because they do not have a normative climate to support them. Yankelovich advocates for a combination of regulations and norms that mutually support each other in encouraging companies to do the right things, not the wrong ones. He offers a timely plea for the business community to turn the scandals of recent years to good use, both for business itself and for the larger society.

He contends that the main cause of recent scandals is “an extraordinary convergence of three trends, the sort of rare phenomenon that generates what people like to call ‘a perfect storm.’” (3) The three trends are deregulation, linking the richest part of CEO compensation to the vagaries of the stock market, and the steady importation of social norms from the larger culture into corporate life. The combination of these forces, Yankelovich

says, “invents a machine for scandal.” (4)

Coupled with increased corporate scandals and unethical behavior, Yankelovich points to the wider context of the American public. He contends that we have become “absorbed in, and distracted by, a struggle to rediscover our own ethical bearings.” (16) In essence, Americans want firmer ethical ground on which to stand, but are not exactly sure how to obtain it. They know something is terribly wrong, but do not have a clear sense of what it is, much less how to fix it. Most Americans, Yankelovich says, believe businesses should play a pivotal role in restoring ethical behavior. He contends that Americans now expect a higher standard from businesses: Americans want car manufacturers to lessen our nation’s energy dependence, BP and Shell to research alternative fuels, and Citigroup and other financial institutions to address the capital needs of developing nations.

He also posits seven deadly norms that are causing ethical confusion in America, especially in the business community: equating wrongdoing exclusively with illegality; winning at any cost; gaming the system as good sport; viewing “conflict of interest” as insignificant; regarding CEOs as royalty; twisting the concept of shareholder value; and equating free-market economies with deregulation. In isolation, each of these deadly norms is destructive to society, but, as Yankelovich asserts, their combined effect is the most destructive, as they are undermining traditional American adherence to the principle of enlightened self-interest, or more commonly stated, that one can do well by doing good.



Having significant experience in both the social sciences and business, Yankelovich does a great service to frame and analyze the growing problem of corporate wrongdoing that appeals to a broad readership. He goes beyond framing the issue and offers recommendations for businesses to become more ethical. Yankelovich introduces “stewardship ethics” to convey the commitment to care for one’s institution and those it serves in a manner that responds to a higher level of expectations. Furthermore, stewardship ethics is an idea that reconciles long-term profitability with the greater public good, concepts that some may see as mutually exclusive. This vision is surely needed, as sweeping change is already happening in the business world, and people have higher expectations of how businesses should operate.

— Matthew Johnson

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The Kettering Foundation, chartered in 1927, is a research foundation rooted in the American tradition of inventive research. Its founder, Charles F. Kettering, holder of more than 200 patents, is best known for his invention of the automobile self-starter. He was interested, above all, in seeking practical answers to "the problems behind the problems."

The foundation today continues in that tradition. The objective of the research now is to study what helps democracy work as it should. Seven major Kettering programs are designed to shed light on what is required to strengthen public life.

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