

Letting Foundation

CONNECTIONS

Winter 2006



CONNECTIONS

C O N T E N T S

Community Politics:

A Lens for Seeing the Whole Story of Kettering Research

The interconnected challenges encountered.

David Mathews page 3

Engaging Citizens: Challenge One

Some research suggests that many of today's citizens are not engaged in the collective work of community problem solving.

Disconnecting and Reconnecting with Community

Richard C. Harwood page 6

Reexamining "Chronic Disengagement" through Another Lens

John Cavanaugh page 8

Involving Ordinary Citizens in Public Work:

The Cincinnati Experience

Valerie Lemmie page 9

A Deeper Look at Citizen Engagement and Democracy

Anne Thomason reviews First Democracy by Paul Woodruff page 11

Regaining Our Sense of Community: Challenge Two

Other studies propose that the sense of community and the common good are being supplanted by self-interest, thus communities become dysfunctional and common problems go unsolved.

Engaging Untapped Community Resources

Carolyn Farrow-Garland page 12

Coming Together to Address Wicked Social Problems

Sue E. Williams and Renée A. Daugherty page 15

Community Politics, Leadership, and International Research Connections

Maxine S. Thomas page 17

Reclaiming Our Institutions: Challenge Three

Further research contends that many of our institutions are distressed because citizens indicate they have lost considerable confidence in them.

Professionals, Institutions, and Community Challenges

Randall Nielsen page 19

Public Work and Education

Paloma Dallas explores Kettering Foundation's recent publication:

Reclaiming Public Education by Reclaiming Our Democracy page 21

Philanthropy and Public Life: A Question of Civil Investing

Scott London page 22

Institutional Administrators and Deliberative Democracy:

The Tittabawassee Case

Alice Diebel page 24

A New Book Worth Reading

Peter Levine reviews Politics Is About Relationship

by Harold H. Saunders page 26

Community POLITICS, Leadership, and International Research Connections

By Maxine S. Thomas

Kettering Foundation research focuses on finding ways to help democracies make the fundamental changes needed in today's rapidly evolving political and economic climate. In every community, one fundamental question is whether citizens can build the capacity to solve their own problems through engagement with institutions and professionals. This is true whether the community is in Grand Rapids, Michigan, or Buenos Aires, Argentina. With democratic reform dominating much of the last century, Kettering has been able to learn from the experiences of a broad network of practitioners both here and abroad. We also consider the impact of these efforts on emerging democracies through common research with practitioners from many of the countries challenged by these changes.

Realizing that deliberative democratic practices have the potential to help democracy work as it should, Kettering has developed two workshops at which participants from more than 50 countries have come together to focus on ways that democracies make the fundamental changes needed in today's rapidly evolving political and economic climate. Deliberative Democracy Workshops (DDW) I and II introduce international

participants to the concept of deliberative democracy and provide a space for them to explore the organization of citizens' political efforts in their home communities.

Participants in the workshops come from organizations that have a particular interest in democracy. These organizations engage in common research with the foundation so we can both better understand the processes that might

improve democracies. Participants have also recently engaged in an international effort that we hope will create an international network to encourage deliberation on important international issues.

But it is in communities where this work is most apparent. Emmanuel Akwetey of the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) in Accra, Ghana, felt that his country needed to engage its citizens in decision making so they could create and support the kinds of communities they wanted. This work began after he participated in DDW and explored how to make it a reality in his community. Subsequent participants from Ghana came to DDW and several members served as International Civil Society Fellows at the Kettering Foundation. In this way, IDEG built critical skills in its staff leadership to engage the many communities in Ghana.

Similarly in Russia, a nonprofit director, Igor Nagdasev, and a political science professor, Denis Makarov, have partnered to encourage these ideas in Russian communities. Both Nagdasev and Makarov attended and now teach DDW. They both served as International Civil Society Fellows, and they now work together in building democratic communities in Russia.

Roberto Saba is from Argentina. He, too, has been a part of the Deliberative Democracy Workshops and an



Mahambrey Photography

Deliberative Democracy Workshop participants from all over the world explore and share ideas that they take home to their communities.

OLORI Grace Faduyile

*Okitipupa Local Government,
Ondo State Nigeria*



Mahambrey Photography

Every summer, the Kettering Foundation holds an international event. These are the Deliberative Democracy and the Public Policy workshops. More than 200 people from all over the world are invited to attend. The participants come from diverse professional and academic backgrounds, as well as diverse nationalities. But this year, there was someone unique among the

participants. A Queen! Olori Grace Faduyile, wife to Abodi, the paramount ruler of Ikale Land, Ondo State in Nigeria.

Faduyile is a busy woman. As the *Olori* (King's wife) her responsibilities include receiving and welcoming an endless stream of visitors to the palace daily and her traditional role of raising children. But, Faduyile is also a school principal.

Why would the wife of an African king leave the life of royalty to attend the deliberative workshops? She has already experienced the impact of the deliberative method in her work. "When we use deliberative democracy, we are all working together to reach the same goal," she says. Faduyile participated in the first Deliberative Democracy Workshop in Nigeria, which drafted an issue book on truancy, a major problem for the schools in her area. She then went on to apply deliberative skills to address this problem in her school. "It is a good system and I feel I need to extend it to cover the whole community." Besides truancy, she believes the method can be used to resolve other problems, such as early marriage and HIV/AIDS.

In Nigeria, the queens do not just sit in the lavish comfort of their palaces. They are always out in their communities working, to improve sanitation facilities in the villages, to build markets, and to attend to other important projects.

Faduyile is well respected among the women in her village. She is the overall Olori, therefore the senior most, among the queens. This, she believes, plays to her advantage, as she seeks to gather support from others in her country to use the deliberative method as a means of addressing important problems.

—Martin Ocholi

International Civil Society Fellow. As he has watched his government teeter on the verge of economic collapse, he has tried to figure out how these ideas might bring stability and participation to his communities.

In 2005, Kettering had its first royalty attend DDW. Olori Grace Faduyile came to learn something that could help her community become more democratic. Faduyile straddles two worlds, the vibrant continually more westernized communities in Nigeria and the tribal order that is the history of Nigeria. She is the wife of a king, a mother, a woman, and a leader in her community. She is also an important part of the governance of her community. She comes to this work with multiple interests in how her community can work better and how women can play an important role in the leadership of their communities. This is why many other participants come, but it is the royal context that makes Faduyile different. (See sidebar story.)

As David Mathews has said, "The Kettering Foundation doesn't do research on or in other countries . . . we have joint-learning agreements with organizations in the U.S. and around the world to learn what citizens themselves are learning about self-government as they struggle with its problems." Deliberative Democracy Workshops provide space for these citizens to engage in this common work. In fact when these 50 to 60 people join us at DDW, we find that what's so important is not that they are internationals (from many different countries) but that they are all concerned about building democracy through communities, through leadership programs, through preparation of materials, through engagement with government officials; work that covers the broad spectrum of Kettering's own research ideas.

Maxine S. Thomas is secretary and general counsel of the Kettering Foundation. She can be reached by e-mail at thomas@kettering.org.

The Kettering Foundation, chartered in 1927, is a research foundation—not a grant-giving 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. Six major Kettering programs are designed to shed light on what is required to strengthen public life.

Kettering is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) research corporation supported by a \$250 million endowment. For more information about KF research and publications, see the Kettering Foundation’s Web site at www.kettering.org.

Connections is published by the Kettering Foundation, 200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2799. The articles in *Connections* reflect the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the foundation, its trustees, or its officers.

Editors

David S. Frech
John Dedrick

**Graphic Design
and Production**

Long’s Graphic Design, Inc.

Copy Editor

Lisa Boone-Berry

Illustrations

Long’s Graphic Design, Inc.

*Kettering
Foundation*

© Copyright 2006 by the Kettering Foundation

200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2799 (937) 434-7300

444 North Capitol Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001 (202) 393-4478

6 East 39th Street, New York, New York 10016 (212) 686-7016

Kettering Foundation
200 Commons Road
Dayton, OH 45459-2799

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Dayton, OH
Permit No. 638