



Day One - Why Democracy

“No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time....”

- Winston Churchill

Churchill might have been on to something, but we think democracy still has a lot going for it. By its very nature, it depends on our active participation to make it work. And while our representative democracy is far from perfect, we believe each of us has a responsibility to make it a little more perfect for the next generation. Today let's explore democracy's ideals, how it works in practice, and why choosing democracy is, in some ways, a radical act of empathy—of believing that what's in your neighbor's best interests is also in yours.

Choose One of Today's Challenges

#1: Take a look at the founding days of our democracy.

- [Listen to Scene on Radio's Season 4, Episode 1 “Rich Man's Revolt,”](#) (46 min) which considers the indigenous cultures that preceded our constitution and the truth about our first President.

- [Listen to the first episode of The 1619 Project](#) (42 min) which explores the role Black Americans played in transforming our democracy from an ideal to a reality

#2: Imagine there aren't just two parties, but a range of political identities.

- [Take the Political Typology quiz](#) to see where you fall on the political spectrum.

#3: Consider the role debate plays in our democratic process.

- [ProCon.org](#) gives you a chance to pick a topic and spend some time deepening your understanding of opposition. Can you find common ground?

#4: Are you concerned about protecting our democracy? Maybe we should be. Turns out, less than one third of millennials think it's important to live in a democracy.

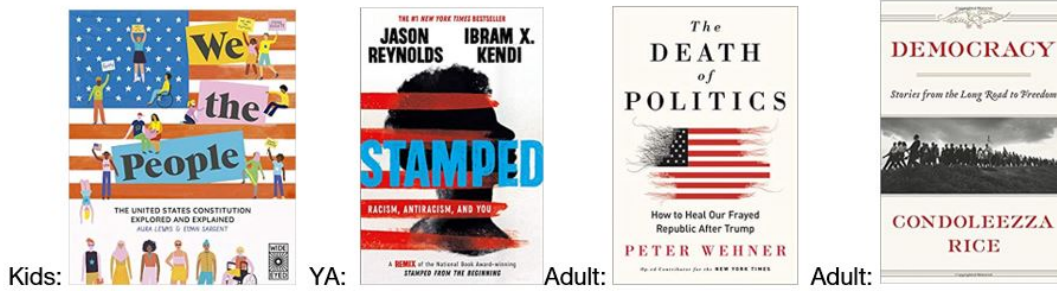
- [Watch How to Save Democracy](#) (16 min) featuring Yascha Mounk
- Read this piece [by Jill Lepore in *The New Yorker*](#) about what can be learned from the democracy's near-death experience in the 1930s.
- Look at [Timothy Snyder's 20 Lessons on Fighting Tyranny](#) and consider which lessons are most important for you to practice in your daily life.

Want to do more?

- [Take a field trip to see *Reflect & Refract Democracy*](#), an art installation by Rose DeSiano at the Cleveland Public Library's Eastman Garden, downtown at 325 East Superior Ave.
- Watch [Democracy Unchained: A Conversation Series](#). This 10-part series brings together national thought leaders in politics, environmental science, religion, and other disciplines to explore how we rebuild democracy and U.S. government to serve ALL Americans.

Recommended Reading

Here are few books you might like. For more, check out our 5 Days for Democracy [collection](#).



Related City Club Forums

Here are a few City Club forums you might like. For more, check out a more [extensive selection from our archives](#).

[Jean Bethke Elshtain](#): author and professor at University of Chicago Divinity School on the decline of civil discourse

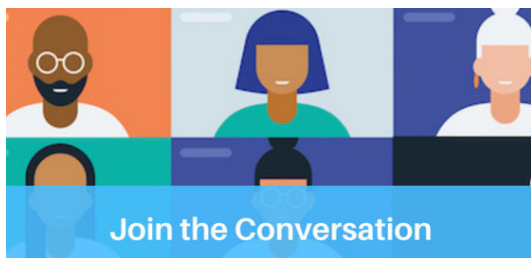
[Yascha Mounk](#): Associate Professor at Johns Hopkins University on dangers that threaten democracy worldwide

[Karen Donfried](#): President of The German Marshall Fund of the United States, on the state of transatlantic relationships

[Mickey Edwards](#): Vice President of The Aspen Institute on the causes of political gridlock

We Want to Hear From You

Share your reflections about today's challenges on social media using **#5days4democracy**. Send ideas about what you would like to challenge people to learn about today's topic to fivedays@cityclub.org. Join the **5 Days for Democracy Common Ground conversation** on Saturday, October 3 to connect with participants and continue the discussion.



Five Days for Democracy is a collaboration between The City Club of Cleveland, [Cleveland Public Library](#), [Cuyahoga County Public Library](#), [East Cleveland Public Library](#), [Euclid Public Library](#), [Heights Libraries](#), [Lakewood Public Library](#), [Rocky River Public Library](#), [Shaker Heights Public Library](#) and [Westlake Porter Public Library](#).

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