

BAD ASS GRANDMAS DEMOCRACY ★ for our grandchildren ★



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Optimism in Challenging Times

By *Lyn Dockter - Pinnick*

Greetings on a cold winter's day, in deep and dark December. There's no sugar coating it; dealing with the results of November 5 was a bit like a death, with all the aftermath of denial, anger, acceptance, sadness, and back around again. Many fellow activists as well as myself have found ourselves depressed and have chosen to be protective of self and sanity through limiting our online engagement. We want to think that the human spirit evolves like technology, but alas, it does not. In fact, throughout human history, people have grappled with the same issues that we are facing today. Other grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and daughters walked equally hard times before us. They kept walking, and **together**, we can, too. Wherever you are today, whatever you are doing, you are not alone. We are with you. We are your community, and we are here.

In challenging times, many of us turn to poetry. I am sharing two poems here, both of which fill me with hope. They also remind me, as a white woman, of the challenges our sisters of color face every day and have throughout America's history. However stark the reality of this day is and of these times, these poems remind me to have hope. May they bring you the same comfort that they brought me. Peace be with you all as we enter the new year.

won't you celebrate with me

won't you celebrate with me
 what i have shaped into
 a kind of life? i had no model.
 born in Babylon

both nonwhite and woman
 what did i see to be except myself?
 i made it up
 here on this bridge between
 starshine and clay,
 my one hand holding tight
 my other hand; come celebrate
 with me that everyday
 something has tried to kill me
 and has failed.

—*Lucille Clifton*

From her 1993 collection, **Book of Light**



Photo by Afro American Newspapers/Gado/Getty Image

Kindness

Before you know what kindness really is
 you must lose things,
 feel the future dissolve in a moment
 like salt in a weakened broth.
 What you held in your hand,
 what you counted and carefully saved,
 all this must go so you know
 how desolate the landscape can be
 between the regions of kindness.
 How you ride and ride

thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers eating maize and chicken
will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness,
you must travel where the Indian in a white
poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing
inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest
thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense
anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to mail letters
and purchase bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

—Naomi Shihab Nye



Photo credit: Michael Nye

Naomi Shihab Nye gives voice to her experience as an Arab-American through poems about heritage and peace that overflow with a humanitarian spirit.

PUBLISH THE ERA – DAY OF ACTION – DECEMBER 10, 2024 – by Denise Dykeman



Suffragette Alice Paul and attorney Crystal Eastman drafted the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) which was intended to prohibit sex discrimination in all forms. "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." On December 10, 1923, the ERA was introduced to the United States Congress. Senator Charles Curtis (R-

KS) and Representative Daniel R. Anthony (R-KS), Susan B. Anthony's nephew, introduced the ERA in their respective legislative chambers. Since that time, many more women and men and non-binary folks from all walks of life have joined the fight for equal rights.

The story of the ERA is a long one and far from over. It was approved by the Senate in 1972, but wasn't ratified by the required 38 states until 2020. Nevada became the first state to pass the ERA in 45 years in 2017, followed by Illinois in 2018 and Virginia in 2020. The 2020 Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel released a memo weeks before Virginia ratified the amendment, stating that the ERA resolution expired after its 1982 deadline and that any state ratification that happened after 1982 was null. However, in August of 2024, the American Bar Association weighed in on that legal analysis. The new ABA resolution supports two important legal principles: (1) a deadline for ratification of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution is not consistent with Article V of the Constitution, and (2) under Article V states are not permitted to rescind prior ratifications. The resolution urges support of ERA implementation by the legal community and all federal, state, local, territorial, and tribal governments.

On December 10, 2024, on the 101st anniversary, the ERA activists of today, including me, marched from the White House to the National Archives to demand that the Archivist publish the ERA as the 28th amendment.

Leading the December 10th march was Kati Hornung! Kati is a fourth generation Republican originally from North Dakota! She was so happy I was there! Read more about their work here: <https://voteequality.us/>

Denise also had a Washington Post story linked about Kati, but, it required a paid subscription, so looking for something else, located an op ed that Kati wrote for USA Today. You can read it here: [Biden, enshrine ERA in Constitution. Close the equality gap | Opinion](#)

The story of Denise's ability to participate in the march on December 10 to the Archives is a testimony to the power of community. Kati was on our November 20th BadAss Grandmas meeting and I put out two actions, following that meeting to our 300+ followers; one of which was about the ERA. Denise immediately emailed me asking some questions and she indicated that she was going to be in DC and would join the march. Thank you, Kati; thank you, Denise! LET'S GET THE ERA PUBLISHED. Let's send emails, texts and cards every for the rest of President Biden's administration or until it is published. You can send

a message or email at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/> or send a postcard or letter asking him to **PUBLISH EQUALITY IN OUR CONSTITUTION** -

President Joe Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500



Make your voice heard.



The President Must Immediately Publish the Equal Rights Amendment

From the League's website: In the United States, women are still not guaranteed equal rights. We have seen the devastating consequences of this reality. Yet, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which will update the US Constitution to protect the equality of rights under the law regardless of sex, can be added to the Constitution with one action. With just weeks left in office, we are urging President Biden to act to ensure that the ERA is published.

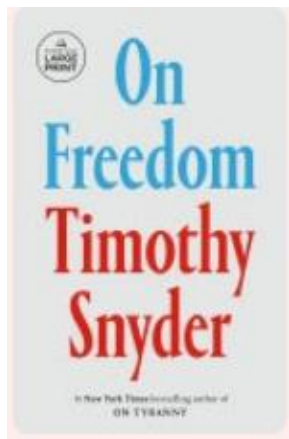
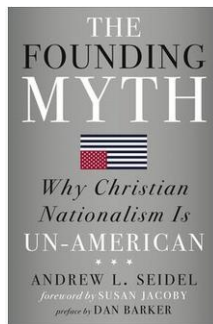
The ERA will protect against the rollback of rights, provide a vital tool for the judicial branch to decide sex discrimination cases, and pave the way for further legislative progress toward sex and gender equality. The 2024 election results were not friendly to women's equality, and our future status in the country is at stake. It's imperative that President Biden take urgent action to ensure the process of publishing the Amendment is completed since it has been fully ratified since 2020.

Urge President Biden to instruct the US Archivist to certify and publish the ERA in the Constitution! Equality cannot wait. <https://www.lwv.org/take-action/president-must-immediately-publish-equal-rights-amendment>.

NEWS OF THE VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB

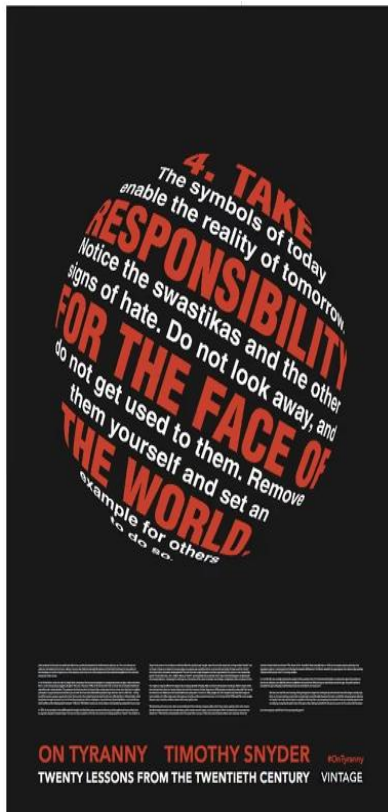
Our virtual book club will **not** meet in December, due to the proximity of our meeting day to the holidays, so our next meeting will be **Thursday, January 30, at 6:30 pm Central**, where we will finish discussing The Founding Myth.

Our next book will be On Freedom by Timothy Snyder, a compelling follow up to his book, On Tyranny.



JOIN US FOR A THOUGHT PROVOKING DISCUSSION

On Tyranny and On Freedom are ideal books to read right now, for our challenging times. Questions re book club? lynpinnick@gmail.com



Submitted by Barb Lang

Letters from an American

December 7, 2024

On Thursday, December 5, in Chicago, Illinois, former president Barack Obama gave the third in an annual series of lectures he has delivered since 2022 at his foundation's Democracy Forum, which gathers experts, leaders, and young people to explore ways to safeguard democracy through community action.

Taken together, these lectures are a historical and philosophical exploration of the weaknesses of twenty-first century democracy as well as a road map of directions, some new and some old, for democracy's defense. In 2022, Obama explored ways to counteract the flood of disinformation swamping a shared reality for decision making; in 2023 he discussed ways to address the extraordinary concentration of wealth that has undermined support for democracy globally.

On Thursday, Obama explored the concept of "pluralism," a word he defined as meaning simply that "in a democracy, we all have to find a way to live alongside individuals and groups who are different than us."

But rather than advocating what he called "holding hands and singing 'Kumbaya'" as we all tolerate each other, Obama described modern pluralism as active work to form coalitions over shared issues. His argument echoed the concepts James Madison, a key framer of the Constitution, explained in Federalist #10 when he was trying to convince inhabitants of a big, diverse country that they should endorse the newly written document.

In 1787, many inhabitants of the fledgling nation objected to the idea of the strong national government proposed under the new constitution. They worried that such a government could fall under the control of a majority that would exercise its power to crush the rights of the minority. Madison agreed that such a calamity was likely in a small country, but argued that the very size and diversity of the people in the proposed United States would guard against such tyranny as people formed coalitions over one issue or another, then dissolved them and formed others. Such constantly shifting coalitions would serve the good of all Americans without forging a permanent powerful majority.

Obama called the Constitution "a rulebook for practicing pluralism." The Bill of Rights gives us a series of rights that allow us to try to convince others to form coalitions to elect representatives who will "negotiate and compromise and hopefully advance our interests."

Majority rule determines who wins, but the separation of powers and an independent judiciary are supposed to guarantee that the winners “don’t overreach to try to permanently entrench themselves or violate minority rights,” he said. The losers accept the outcome so long as they know they’ll have a chance to win the next time. Obama noted that this system worked smoothly after World War II, largely because a booming economy meant rising standards of living that eased friction between different groups: management and labor, industry and agriculture. At the same time, the Cold War helped Americans come together against an external threat, and a limited range of popular culture reinforced a shared perspective on the world—everyone watched the sitcom *Gilligan’s Island*.

Most of all, though, Obama noted, American pluralism worked well because it largely excluded women and racial, gender, and religious minorities. He pointed out that as late as 2005, when he went to the Senate, he was the only African American there and only the third since Reconstruction. There were two Latinos and fourteen women.

In the 1960s, he noted drily, “things got more complicated.” “Historically marginalized groups—Blacks, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans; women and gays and lesbians; and disabled Americans—demanded a seat at the table. Not only did they insist on a fair share of government-directed resources, but they brought with them new issues, born of their unique experiences that could not just be resolved by just giving them a bigger slice of the pie. So racial minorities insisted that the government intervene more deeply in the private sector and civil society to root out long-standing, systemic discrimination.”

Women wanted control over their own bodies, and gays and lesbians demanded equality before the law, challenging religious and social norms. “Politics,” Obama said, “wasn’t just a fight about tax rates or roads anymore. It was about more fundamental issues that went to the core of our being and how we expected society to structure itself. Issues of identity and status and gender. Issues of family, values, and faith.... [A] lot of people... began to feel that their way of life, the American way of life, was under attack” just as increasing economic inequality made them think that other people were benefiting at their expense.

Increasingly, that economic inequality cloistered people in their own bubbles as unions, churches, and civic institutions decayed. “With the Cold War over, with generations scarred by Vietnam and Iraq and a media landscape that would shatter into a million disparate voices,” he said, Americans lost the sense of “a common national story or a common national purpose.” Media companies have played to extremes, and “[e]very election becomes an act of mortal combat.”

With that sense, there is “an increasing willingness on the part of politicians and their followers to violate democratic norms, to do anything they can to get their way, to use the power of the state to target critics and journalists and political rivals, and to even resort to violence in order to gain and hold on to power.”

For all that he was speaking in 2024, Obama could have been describing the realization of the fears of those opposed to the Constitution in 1787. But he did not agree that those anti-Federalists had won the debate. Instead, he adapted Madison’s theory of pluralism to the modern era. Obama stood firm on the idea that the way to reclaim democracy is to build coalitions around taking action on issues that matter to the American people without regard to personal identities or political affiliations. Pluralism, Obama said, “is about recognizing that in a democracy, power comes from forging alliances, and building coalitions, and making room in those coalitions not only for the woke but also for the waking.”

And that, in many ways, identified the elephant—or rather the donkey—in the room. In the 2024 election, the Democratic Party under Vice President Kamala Harris and Minnesota governor Tim Walz very deliberately moved away from so-called identity politics: the idea that a person builds their political orientation around their pre-existing social identity. During the campaign, Harris rarely referred to the fact that if elected, she would be the first woman, as well as the first woman of color, to hold the presidency: when attendees at the Democratic National Convention wore white in honor of the suffragists, Harris wore black. Instead, Harris and Walz embraced investing in the middle class and supporting small businesses. But that shift to the center did not translate into a presidential victory in 2024, and those on the political left, as well as progressive Democrats, are not convinced it was a good move.

Since the rise of Donald Trump, the MAGA party has been the one championing identity politics, rejecting American pluralism in favor of centering whiteness, a certain kind of individualist masculinity, Christianity, and misogyny. Making common cause with Republicans, even non-MAGA Republicans, in the face of such politics seems to the left and progressive Democrats self-defeating.

Obama disagrees. “[I]t’s understandable that people who have been oppressed or marginalized want to tell their stories and give voice fully to their experiences—to not have to hold back and censor themselves, especially because so many of them have been silenced in the past,” he said, “But too often, focusing on our differences leads to this notion of fixed victims and fixed villains.”

He stood firm against compromising core principles but said: “In order to build lasting majorities that support justice—not just for feeling good, not just for getting along, to deliver the goods—we have to be open to framing our issues, our causes, what we believe in in terms of ‘we’ and not just ‘us’ and ‘them.’”

And he emphasized that such cooperation works best when it’s about action, rather than just words, because action requires that people invest themselves in a common project. “It won’t eradicate people’s prejudices, but it will remind people that they don’t have to agree on everything to at least agree on some things. And that there are some things we cannot do alone.” “It’s about agency and relationships.”

Then Obama addressed the political crisis of this moment, the one the anti-Federalists feared: “What happens when the other side has repeatedly and abundantly made clear they’re not interested in playing by the rules?” When that happens, he said, “pluralism does not call for us” to accept it. “[W]e have to stand firm and speak out and organize and mobilize as forcefully as we can.” Even then, though, “it’s important to look for allies in unlikely places,” he said, noting that “people on the other side...may share our beliefs in sticking to the rules, observing norms,” and that supporting them might help them “to exert influence on people they’ve got relationships with within the other party.”

The power of pluralism, he said, is that it can make people recognize their common experiences and common values. That, he said, is how we break the cycle of cynicism in our politics.

Obama’s argument has already drawn criticism. At MSNBC, Ben Burgis condemned Obama’s “centrist liberalism” as inadequate to address the real problems of inequality and warned that his political approach is outdated.

But it is striking how much Obama’s embrace of pluralism echoes that of James Madison, who had in his lifetime witnessed a group of wildly diverse colonists talk, write letters, argue, and organize to forge themselves into a movement that could throw off the age-old system of monarchy in favor of creating something altogether new.



Some BadAss HISTORY – by Jane Williams

I’d like to share with you how I, with the help of the original BG4D, ended up spending the last four years growing the nonpartisan pro-democracy movement. Our youngest son, Alex, sent me a link to the 12 minute video featuring Jennifer Lawrence – *Unbreaking America/Solving the Corruption Crisis*. It really resonated with me and I decided that it was a cause I was interested in pursuing. The very next day I met Ellen Chaffee and she made sure I continued to be involved!

Now that the original BadAss Grandmas for Democracy had successfully added the 14th amendment to the North Dakota Constitution establishing the Ethics Commission,

they went on road trips in ND LOOKING FOR WAYS TO EXPAND THE MOVEMENT. Ellen Chaffee arranged for them to meet with me and I agreed to work on it by creating a branch of the BG4D in Fargo.

We started with an afternoon tea party in our living room in **May of 2019** with about 19 women in attendance – most of them my friends. The featured speakers were two of the original BG4D – Ellen Chaffee and Dina Butcher. I believe they wore their BG4D sweatshirts and their pearls. After one more tea party, we started meeting in person in January 2020. We were primarily novices regarding anything political so we decided before volunteering; we first needed to educate ourselves.

Our first meeting was the day after a snowstorm in January. We met in downtown Fargo where the streets hadn’t really been plowed and we didn’t know where to park. The next two meetings were in a wonderful, donated space with parking and it was good to meet each other in person before and after the meeting

By our fourth meeting, Covid hit and we all began learning about the intricacies of Zooming. *Fortunately, that allowed us to include grandmas and grandpas and others who shared our mission from outside of Fargo*, and, most importantly, the ability to wear anything we wanted to our meetings. Over the last 3-1/2 years we have held monthly zoom meetings featuring amazing speakers from all over the country who not only educated us, but challenged us to become involved in the non-partisan pro-democracy movement that is sweeping the country.

Our democracy is being threatened and we all need to do our part to make sure that we leave to future generations the kind of democracy where every voice is heard, where our elected officials are reflecting the voices of their constituents, and where the impact of the economic elite and narrow interest groups are minimized and we get back to honesty and integrity.

We had speakers from Alaska to Hawaii and from California to NY. *But we were also blessed with many talented BG4D who shared their expertise.* For example,

Our fellow BG4D who participated in the 1970s ERA battle inspired us with stories of their civic engagement. Hearing our own talented members helps bond us together.

--Sarah Vogel on her book, The Farmers Lawyer, and what’s next for her. Ellen Chaffee put on at least two programs!

--A panel of Cara Mund, Katrina Christensen, and Arlette Preston shared their stories of running for office in 2020

and what they learned with the assistance of moderator extraordinaire Amy Jacobson. *Hopefully programs like these will encourage more women to run for office – any office.*

--I'm going to tell you about one featuring the original BG4d plus Carol Sawicki. The title was Having Fun and Jumpstarting Democracy in ND (or Baby steps to a Better Democracy in ND as Long as we are Having Fun). They invited us to play a leadership role in setting the stage for a better democracy in our state.

The following was written by (Senator) Mary Schneider after the meeting, "...I ALSO want to say that one of the most important things you can do is something you are doing tonight so beautifully. You know, looking back on tonight, I have had so much fun, and you have: INSPIRED US, MOTIVATED US, MADE US ALL THINK, ENCOURAGED US TO ACT, and MADE US LAUGH. I think getting together as women, and as groups of people who encourage and desire and work for change, is one of the most important things that you can do. I am so proud of all of you, for the work you do, and for the impact you have. So thank you very much."

I have copies of all of our meetings and I'd be happy to email one to anyone interested, and as per the attached.



FEATURING 30
BG4D MEETINGS.doc

These meetings sound serious, but they are also fascinating and important to hear – so many talented people working with us towards our goal of a democracy that we want to leave for the next generations. My life has changed since becoming the ringleader of the BG4D four years ago.

- I feel empowered
- I am now familiar with so many important topics related to the pro-democracy non-partisan movement
- I am able to talk about these subjects
- I have met so many fascinating people
- And I feel that since I have retired, I am making a difference and helping to create a democracy that I want for my granddaughters

It's been an honor to work with the BG4D. Whatever I have done, I could not have done so without the help of my wonderful mentors: Ellen, Dina, Sarah and Kathy who helped me decide on the programs, and who even persuaded the speakers to join us on occasion. And thank you as well to the countless others who stepped up to be a program, to moderate the programs, to tape the

programs. It takes a village to do what we have done the last four years. I will always remember these years as very hectic and very rewarding and an opportunity to meet wonderful friends and mentors.

In closing, I'd like to share with you an excerpt from a Mother's Day letter I received from my son, Alex, the same one who got me into this: "I am so proud of you getting engaged in these worthwhile movements like anti-corruption. While most of your generation looks away or hides behind the wall of their gated communities, you are getting into the most important fight of your (and my) life. You could easily move to Ft. Lauderdale, buy a boat, and say, 'this is someone else's fight' but instead you are speaking up for future generations and the under privileged. We need more mothers like you." Alex Williams.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE RED RIVER VALLEY and BEYOND

Whitney Oxendahl, on behalf of the League of Women Voters of North Dakota, conducted a training session to help prepare North Dakotas for the upcoming legislative session. If you missed it, the link is below for this informative session. Thanks for sharing, Whitney!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6fWZvq3_6U



JOB OPENING: Buffalo's Fire is reorganizing the Documenters position and are looking to hire a great local community organizer to fill the job. Here is the job description which was posted on the Bismarck Tribune. <https://jobs.bismarcktribune.com/company/buffalo-fire-373929/job/project-managercommunity-organizing-in-bismarck-nd-3dv32umy6pqbp91u8q1vcdpm592j2/>

If you know anyone in your network, please encourage them to apply. The position will be advertised until Dec. 15.

Spotted Bear Moderates UNESCO Panel on Amplifying Indigenous Voices in Media



From Buffalo's Fire – originally posted November 24, 2024

Jodi Rave Spotted Bear, the Indigenous Media Freedom Alliance Founder, led a discussion with international media leaders on empowering Indigenous communities in media. Rave Spotted Bear, founder and publisher of Buffalo's Fire and the Indigenous Media Freedom Alliance, moderated a panel entitled "Amplifying Indigenous voices through Free, Independent and viable Media." It brought geotherm media leaders to explore strategies for empowering Indigenous communities in media. Spotted Bear led the discussion with panelists from the U.S., Norway, Ecuador, Bangladesh, and Columbia, focusing on themes such as free press, representation and sustainability in Indigenous-led media. Follow Buffalo's Fire to learn more.

THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY POST 2024 ELECTIONS

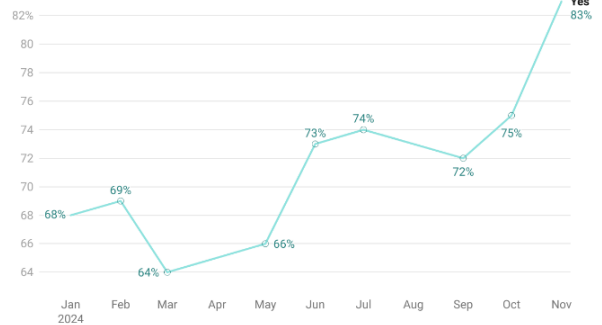
DECEMBER 9, 2024 By: Melanie Phillips and Grayson

Following the 2024 elections, **Citizen Data** explored voter attitudes and perceptions post-election while evaluating the overall state of democracy. The 2024 elections unfolded against a backdrop of deep concern for the state and future of democracy, with voters from across the political spectrum perceiving it to be at risk—albeit for vastly different reasons. Despite the lingering doubts about election results from 2020, this year marked a significant shift. Americans overwhelmingly agreed that the 2024 elections, both nationally and in their local communities, were conducted fairly and accurately. This renewed confidence was accompanied by historic levels of voter turnout, driven by heightened political tensions, aggressive campaigning, and widespread concern about the state of democracy itself.

With so much at stake, Citizen Data set out to understand how voters perceived the election process and state of democracy through pre and post-election surveys. **Read more of what they found at:** <https://citizendata.com/report/the-state-of-democracy-post-2024-elections/>

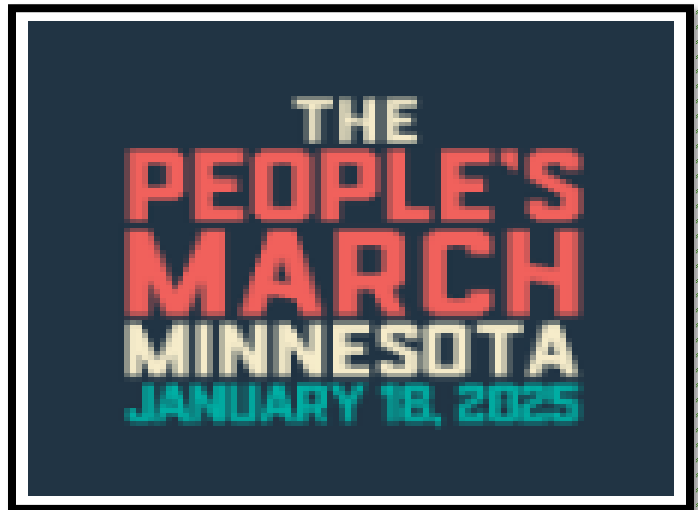
Significant Increase in Election Trust Post 2024 General Election

"Do you feel that you will be able to trust the upcoming 2024 election results?" and "Do you feel that you were able to trust the outcome of the 2024 general election?"



The "Yes" category was created by combining "Yes, definitely" and "Yes, probably."

Source: Citizen Data surveys conducted October and November 2024 with an average N = 1,000 registered voters and an average MOE of +/- 3%. Weighted to be representative of registered voters. - Created with Datawrapper



Minnesota State Capitol
Saturday, January 18, 2025
March ~ Noon
Capitol Program ~ 1:00 PM
Starting location coming soon!

Marches will be held all over the country on January 18, including in Washington, DC. Find out more at <https://www.womensmarch.com/>

**THANK YOU for being a BADASS
Remember to wear those PEARLS!**

Our final thoughts: a thank you to the press

In *20 Lessons for Fighting Tyranny*, Timothy Snyder's first rule is *Do not obey in advance*, and his second rule is *Defend Institutions*. One of those important institutions in our democracy is the free press. During the past month, our region's largest news provider, Forum Communications, made a decision to limit coverage of national stories and to limit opinion on national issues. Many BadAss Grandmas from the Red River Valley, and the Fargo – Moorhead area made their feelings known in Letters to the Editors on this topic. Those letters were published in the Fargo Forum and the Grand Forks Herald.

In the spirit of showing support for such institutions that do so much to protect our democracy, our final page is devoted to thanking journalists.

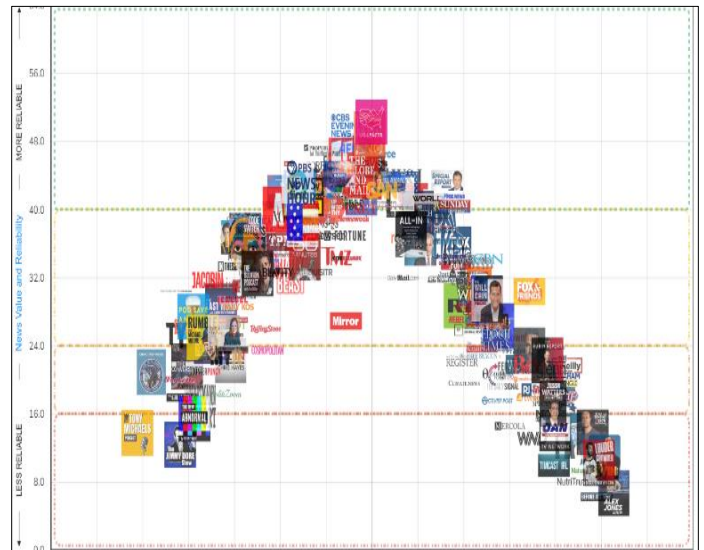
We appreciate the free press and thank you for all you do to protect our democracy.

In these times when many local newspapers have faded away, consider supporting your local newspaper, and independent journalists such as the *North Dakota News Cooperative*, *the North Dakota Monitor*, *Buffalo's Fire*, and *Project Optimist*, all of whom we have heard speak to the BadAss Grandmas. There are so many others, too. Snyder's 10th rule is *Believe in Truth*. Let reputable journalists know that you appreciate their adherence to truth. If you can, take the time to thank them and support them **and** your local public television / radio station.



North Dakota Monitor

In terms of mainstream media, are you interested in knowing how your favorite publications or stations rank as to bias or objective coverage? An option to check out - <https://adfontesmedia.com/interactive-media-bias-chart/>



ad fontes media

Ad Fontes Media, Inc., is a public benefit corporation founded in 2018. The mission of Ad Fontes Media is to rate all the news to positively transform society.