



Volume 1, Issue 2 — February 2026

Democracy Chronicles

One of the events I am most excited about for 2026 is the first-ever Democracy Summit, which The Madison-Lincoln Initiative will host this July. This year's Summit will take place virtually as we celebrate our nation's 250th birthday. We anticipate that future Summits will include both in-person and virtual options. The exact date for this year has not yet been announced as we finalize our keynote speaker and break-out sessions, so please watch for further updates as these details are settled.

A key purpose of the Summit is to provide educators with an opportunity to share best practices in democratic engagement with fellow educators. But the Summit is not intended solely for educators—it is open to all democracy-lovers as we explore ideas and strategies to strengthen our democratic republic while resisting the power-grabs of would-be dictators.

In addition to the Democracy Summit, please keep an eye out for our new podcast series, *The Democracy Guardians*, which will launch soon. The first interviewee is none other than Scott Corbett, the editor

of this newsletter. In his recent interview, Scott shares his personal and professional story and discusses why he became involved with The Madison-Lincoln Initiative and why protecting our democracy is so important to him.

If you are alarmed, incensed, or disgusted by the anti-democratic agenda of the Trump Administration and are seeking an outlet for your anger, please consider donating to The Madison-Lincoln Initiative or volunteering to help us achieve our mission. And what is that mission? To massively increase our children's civic education so they can better protect this constitutional republic from future tyrannies. We must all do what we can to fight against the current regime while also bolstering the future of our democracy for our kids and grandkids.

Thank you for reading this newsletter. Please share it with your friends and family and help us spread the fire of democracy.

Luis P. Sanchez, JD, LLM President The Madison-Lincoln Initiative



In The News

New Federal Grant to Expand Civic Learning Across California

The California History–Social Science Project (CHSSP) has received a prestigious U.S. Department of Education grant to launch *Foundations of Freedom*, a three-year initiative designed to strengthen civic

Civic Learning Gains Momentum Nationwide

Despite a turbulent year, the CivxNow Coalition made significant strides in strengthening K–12 civic education at both the federal and state levels. Congress preserved funding for American History and Civics programs,

education for TK–12 teachers across California. Timed to coincide with the nation’s 250th anniversary in 2026, the program will support intensive, year-long teacher seminars focused on founding documents, constitutional principles, and inquiry-based civic instruction, with special attention to rural and historically under-resourced communities. The initiative will culminate in a national conference highlighting teacher-led innovations and research on civic learning.

👉 **Learn more and application details (opening late 2025):** <https://chssp.ucdavis.edu/news/chssp-us-department-education...>

while new federal investments tied to the nation’s upcoming 250th anniversary expanded support for civic learning nationwide. At the state level, dozens of new policies advanced or passed, including expanded course requirements, diploma seals, and targeted appropriations—benefiting an estimated 700,000 additional students each year. Powered by a 400-member coalition, CivxNow also elevated educator and student voices through Hill Days, state convenings, and national forums, ensuring civic learning remains central to America’s democratic future. <https://civxnow.org/crucial-march-toward-stronger-civic-educ...>

Feature Story

Federal Civic Learning Tour Brings Hands-On Civics to Classrooms

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In December **U.S. Secretary of Education *Linda McMahon* spotlighted civic learning with the *History Rocks!* initiative, visiting Maple Elementary in Cambridge, Maryland to kick off a nationwide tour designed to bring interactive history and civics education directly into classrooms. The *History Rocks!* tour — part of the *America 250 Civics Education Coalition* — uses hands-on activities and student engagement to deepen understanding of America’s founding principles and the responsibilities of citizenship, with stops planned across all 50 states as part of the lead-up to the nation’s 250th anniversary.



**Students receiving recognition
for their participation in Civics
Learning**



[U.S. Secretary of Education
visits Maple Elementary on
“History Rocks” tour](#)

Art as a Defender of Democracy

Across the world, artists are stepping into a vital civic role: defending democracy and human rights through creative expression. In moments of political strain, cultural fragmentation, or rising authoritarian pressure, art becomes more than aesthetic—it becomes a form of public courage. Whether through poetry, design, or visual storytelling, artists help societies imagine alternatives, resist dehumanization, and rebuild the empathy that democratic life depends on.

This idea emerges powerfully across several contemporary reflections:

- **Global Artistic Resistance** The Nanovic Institute highlights artists who confront repression and human-rights abuses directly, using their work to expose injustice and strengthen democratic culture. <https://nanovic.nd.edu/features/fighting-for-democracy-and-h...>
- **Joy Harjo on Cultural Stress** Former U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo argues that in times of cultural anxiety, art helps communities process fear, restore connection, and imagine more humane futures—an essential democratic function. <https://kettering.org/we-are-under-cultural-stress-art-can-h...>

- **Creativity as Civic Action** A Civic Nation/Forbes piece frames democracy itself as a creative project—one that relies on imagination, participation, and the ability to see beyond the present. Artists and designers help citizens engage, question, and re-envision shared civic life.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/civictionation/2025/10/16/art-and-...>

- **Art in Times of Crisis** Contemporary artists responding to war, displacement, and global upheaval show how art becomes both witness and warning—documenting trauma while urging moral and civic responsibility.

<https://www.khederpaintings.com/post/contemporary-art-in-tim...>

Together, these perspectives reveal a simple truth: **art doesn't just reflect democracy—it actively protects it.** Through imagination, critique, and human connection, artists help keep the democratic spirit alive when it is most at risk.



Erosion – G. E. Vogt



**Dread Scott
A Man Was
Lynched by Police
Yesterday**



Deborah Roberts
[The duty of
disobedience, 2020](#)

**“Democracy Isn’t Guaranteed:
The Past Shows Us Why”**



“Teenagers Who Dared the Deadly Path to Democracy”

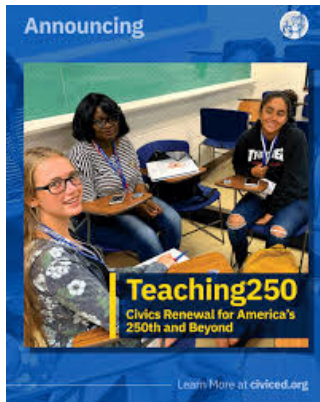
February 1, 1960

On that day, four Black college students sat down at a **whites-only lunch counter** at a Woolworth’s store in **Greensboro, North Carolina**, and politely asked to be served. They were refused. They stayed seated. They returned the next day. Within weeks, the **Greensboro sit-ins** spread to dozens of cities across the South and became a defining moment of the modern **Civil Rights Movement**.

This event illustrates America’s ongoing struggle to realize a democratic republic because it shows democracy not as something finished in 1776, but as something **claimed and expanded by citizens**. The students used nonviolent, lawful protest to demand equal participation in public life—insisting that the promises of the Constitution apply to them as well. Their actions led directly to desegregation, the formation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and momentum toward the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts.

The Greensboro sit-ins belong squarely in civic education because they teach that democracy depends on **civic courage, collective action, and peaceful dissent**. They show students that ordinary people—especially young people—can move the nation closer to its ideals,

not by rejecting democracy, but by demanding that it live up to its own principles.



Teaching250: Civics Renewal for America's 250th

A new national initiative supporting teachers in creating inquiry-based civics lessons for the 250th anniversary of the U.S.

- Focus: curriculum design, primary sources, constitutional democracy
- Format: collaborative lesson-building with expert support



iCivics Winter Professional Learning Opportunities

iCivics has expanded its winter PD offerings with new online courses and virtual workshops.

- Inquiry-based courses
- Coaching and collaborative cohorts
- Flexible scheduling



NCSS Spring 2026 Professional Learning Series

The National Council for the Social Studies has opened new spring programming, including February events.

- Includes scholar-led webinars
- New session example: **“What Kept Them Up At Night?”** (Feb 12, 2026)

Civics Quiz — Test Your Knowledge!

1. **Which Supreme Court decision declared that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional?**

- A. Plessy v. Ferguson
- B. Brown v. Board of Education
- C. Roe v. Wade
- D. Gideon v. Wainwright

2. **What was the main goal of the Selma to Montgomery marches in 1965?**

- A. Ending school segregation
- B. Securing federal protection for Black voting rights
- C. Desegregating interstate travel
- D. Protesting the Vietnam War

3. **Which organization led many of the legal challenges against segregation?**

- A. Red Cross
- B. NAACP
- C. AFL-CIO
- D. UNICEF

4. **What major change did the Voting Rights Act of 1965 bring about?**

- A. Abolished the Electoral College
- B. Banned literacy tests and enabled federal oversight of elections
- C. Lowered the voting age to 18
- D. Ended segregation on trains

5. **Which act banned discriminatory voting practices such as literacy tests?**

- A. Civil Rights Act of 1964
- B. Fair Housing Act
- C. Voting Rights Act of 1965
- D. Equal Pay Act

Memorial Events & Calendar

February 15 — Susan B. Anthony Day Commemorates the birthday of the suffrage leader who helped secure women's right to vote.

February 19 — Day of Remembrance (Japanese American Incarceration) Marks the signing of Executive Order 9066 and honors those unjustly imprisoned during WWII.

National Civics Bee

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute is hosting the California and D.C. statewide civics competitions.

Students in 6th, 7th, or 8th grade who reside in California or any participating state are invited to submit four paragraphs using guided prompts in the [Essay Guide](#) on how they can make a difference in their community.

To qualify, essays must be submitted no later than **Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Hawaii Standard Time**. For the latest updates on the application portal, entry deadlines, and helpful resources, be sure to visit the [website](#).



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Champions
Nominate a
teacher or



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California. Every
contribution
makes a
difference.

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working to
advance Civics
Education

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Answer Key: 1) B 2) B 3) B 4) B 5) C

Get your creative juices flowing. Write engaging and informative content that will help your readers understand your message.

Madison-Lincoln Initiative

790 Jewel Court, Camarillo
United States of America



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