



Volume 1, Issue 3 — March 2026

Democracy Chronicles

From our President

I am thrilled to announce that Congressman Ro Khanna has agreed to speak at our first-ever Democracy Summit on Monday, July 13, 2026. The Summit will be held via Zoom and will begin at 2 PM Pacific Time. Representative Khanna will speak at 2:30 PM. For those few readers who are not already familiar with Representative Khanna, he is a Democrat representing California's 17th congressional district, which includes the Silicon Valley. He has been prominent in the national news for working in collaboration with Congressman Thomas Massie, a Republican from Kentucky, to hold President Trump accountable for his authoritarian and unconstitutional agenda. Representative Khanna is frequently cited as a promising new voice in the Democratic Party, and

a possible future candidate for the Presidency. He will speak about the importance of civic education and democratic engagement to strengthen our floundering republic.

The Summit was designed as a forum for educators to share strategies with each other on how to foster civic engagement in their classrooms and at their schools and colleges, but there will also be workshops for civic leaders and community members who wish to help strengthen our nation's democracy. The Summit will adjourn at 6 PM.

As you know, the Madison-Lincoln Initiative is a non-profit, non-partisan 501C3 organization dedicated to advocating for the dramatic overhaul of civic education and fostering democratic engagement in our nation's schools and colleges. At its philosophical core is a belief that civic education should be a lifelong activity, and that there are five key pillars that a robust civic education should include. They are: civil discourse, constitutional literacy, critical reasoning, media literacy, and ethical rectitude [or **Integrity of character** -..

There is no charge to attend the Summit, but due to technological limitations, attendance will be limited. To reserve a spot, please contact me at: ipsanchezlaw@gmail.com



What's Happening

Media Literacy for Democracy
Education advocates in New

Gen Z Civic Action Campaigns

York are emphasizing media literacy as a core democratic skill. With the rise of digital information, students are learning to evaluate sources, think critically, and participate responsibly online. This initiative highlights the growing link between media skills and civic engagement.

Source: [NY State United Teachers, February 2026](#)

A major nonprofit coalition is launching a campaign to engage Gen Z in civic participation, offering grassroots projects, leadership stipends, and digital tools to help young people identify issues, work with local officials, and take civic action. Early reports suggest strong interest among high schools nationwide.

Source: [AP News, February 2026](#)

iCivics Expands Classroom Simulations

iCivics has announced the expansion of its digital classroom simulations focused on constitutional decision-making and local governance. The new modules emphasize deliberation, compromise, and institutional roles — reinforcing not just civic knowledge, but also civic habits.

Source: iCivics national update, February 2026.

Civic Learning Spotlights at Constitution Center

The National Constitution Center recently hosted a national convening of educators examining how to teach constitutional principles in polarized times. Panels focused on civil discourse, Supreme Court literacy, and helping students understand the role of the Supreme Court of the United States within the constitutional system.

Source: National Constitution Center program release, February 2026.

Feature Story:

Civics Education Takes Center Stage in 2026

From classrooms to communities, a renewed national focus is helping prepare the next generation to participate in democracy.



Across the United States, civic learning is experiencing a moment of unprecedented national attention. Educators, policymakers, and community organizations are responding to concerns about civic knowledge, democratic participation, and the preparation of students to engage as active citizens.

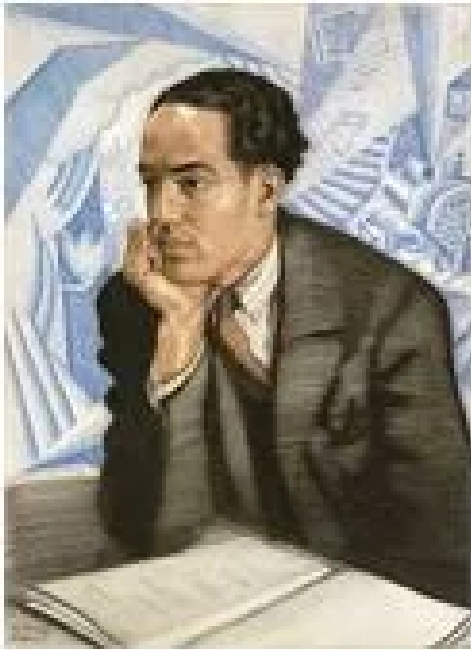
Key Developments Highlighting the Momentum:

- **America 250 Civics Education Coalition** – Over 40 partner organizations, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, are rolling out state tours, lectures, teacher summits, and student competitions to deepen civic understanding and strengthen knowledge of founding principles.[1]
- **Youth Engagement** – The “My America” campaign has already distributed more than 25,000 classroom kits nationwide, giving students hands-on opportunities to explore history, civic identity, and democratic responsibility through creative projects.[2]
- **Higher Education Initiatives** – James Madison University recently launched its **VA250 commemoration**, featuring a public panel on *The American Revolution* that links historical study to contemporary civic engagement.[3]

- **Media and Civic Literacy** – The Federal Communications Commission is encouraging broadcasters to air more civic-focused content, including public service announcements and historical specials, as part of the Semiquincentennial celebrations.[4]

These initiatives reflect a growing national commitment to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and motivation necessary to participate meaningfully in democratic life.

Verse as Vigilance: Cultural Foundations of Constitutional Democracy



Poets whose work aligns with civic education

These poets appear in national civic-engagement and social-justice poetry collections, which emphasize identity, rights, protest, and democratic participation.

Langston Hughes

A central figure in American civic imagination, Hughes wrote about democracy, equality, and the unfinished work of citizenship. His poems appear in collections of protest and empowerment that highlight poetry's role in raising consciousness and challenging injustice.

["Let America Be America Again"](#) by Langston Hughes — a critique and re-imagining of American democracy.



Maya Angelou

Her work is widely used in classrooms to explore identity, resilience, and social responsibility—core civic-education themes. Angelou's poems often appear in social-justice teaching lists designed to spark critical thinking and civic dialogue.





["Still I Rise"](#) by Maya Angelou — used to teach resilience, agency, and civic voice.

 Amanda Gorman

As the first National Youth Poet Laureate, Gorman explicitly frames poetry as civic action. Her inaugural poem ["The Hill We Climb"](#) is used nationally to teach democratic ideals, civic voice, and collective responsibility.

 Martín Espada

Often called the "Latino poet of the civic conscience," Espada writes about rights, justice, and public participation. His work appears in protest and empowerment collections that emphasize civic agency, including the poem **"How We**

Could Have Lived or Died This Way." [How We Could Have Lived or Died This Way](#)

 **Claudia Rankine**

Her hybrid poetic works interrogate citizenship, race, and public life, making them central to contemporary civic-education discussions. [Read her poems.](#)



Snow, Smoke, and Shots: The Night That Sparked a Revolution

Nations, like individuals, often act with limited foresight. Policies meant to restore order can inflame resistance. Measures designed for stability can provoke instability. When governments and citizens respond to

fear, economic strain, or political pressure, their choices ripple outward in ways no one fully anticipates.

In 1770, British officials stationed troops in Boston to maintain order and assert imperial authority. Few could have predicted that a tense street confrontation would ignite outrage across the colonies, reshape public opinion, and accelerate a movement toward revolution. Yet history often turns not only on grand designs, but on the unforeseen consequences of ordinary decisions made under pressure.

The story that follows is one such moment — where an attempt to control unrest instead helped ignite it.

The **Boston Massacre** occurred on **March 5, 1770**, when British soldiers fired into a crowd of colonists, killing five civilians. Tensions had been simmering for years: Boston was under military occupation, colonists resented taxation without representation, and everyday encounters between citizens and soldiers were charged with fear, anger, and mistrust. What began as a confrontation spiraled into violence—an example of how fragile public order can be when legitimacy is questioned and power feels imposed rather than accountable.

Its importance to our struggle for democracy lies not just in the bloodshed, but in what followed. Colonial leaders insisted on **rule of law**, giving the British soldiers a fair trial (defended—most notably—by John Adams). This moment underscored a foundational democratic principle: **justice must apply even to those we oppose**, and civic virtue requires restraint as well as resistance.

The Boston Massacre belongs in our civic education curriculum because it teaches that democracy is born not only from protest, but from ethical choices under pressure: how citizens respond to authority, how governments use force, and how societies balance outrage with justice. Understanding this episode helps students see democracy as a lived practice, shaped by decisions, responsibilities, and the constant work of self-government.

Sharpen Your Civic Toolkit

2026 Maryland Civic Education & Engagement Leadership Summit

A one-day, hands-on gathering on March 21, 2026, bringing Maryland educators, students, and civic partners for interactive workshops, student showcases, and strategies that link civic learning with democratic practice.

Source: Maryland Civic Education Coalition. *2026 Civic Education & Engagement Leadership Summit*. Community College of Baltimore County, Dundalk Campus, March 21, 2026.

Civic Learning Institute (CLI)

Ongoing online professional-learning courses and workshops from the Democratic Knowledge Project at Harvard Graduate School of Education, offering four-week interactive programs such as *Teaching Effective Discussions* and *Deepening Civic Learning Through Community Connections* for civics, history, and government educators. **Source:** Democratic Knowledge Project, Harvard Graduate School of Education. *Civic Learning Institute*. Accessed 2026

ASU Center for American Civics Educator Workshops

A statewide series of free, expert-led professional-development workshops for social-studies teachers across Arizona, featuring content sessions with ASU faculty, inquiry-based pedagogy, and classroom-ready materials.

Workshops run in Phoenix, Tucson, Flagstaff, Show Low, and Lake Havasu from 2026–2028.

Source: Arizona State University, Center for American Civics. *Educator Workshops and Professional Development Programs*. 2026–2028

Civics Quiz — Test Your Knowledge!

1. Which statement best defines integrity in public office?

- A) Following public opinion at all times
- B) Acting honestly and consistently with ethical principles
- C) Winning elections
- D) Protecting your political party

2. Why is integrity essential for democratic government?

- A) It makes leaders more popular
- B) It ensures faster decision-making
- C) It builds public trust and legitimacy
- D) It guarantees policy success

3. Which of the following is an example of integrity in action?

- A) Ignoring a conflict of interest
- B) Hiding mistakes to avoid criticism
- C) Disclosing financial interests transparently
- D) Prioritizing reelection over public duty

4. What happens when integrity in public office declines?

- A) Citizens become more engaged
- B) Trust in institutions erodes
- C) Laws become unnecessary
- D) Government becomes more efficient

5. Integrity in public office primarily protects:

- A) Individual politicians
- B) Political parties
- C) The rule of law and the public good
- D) Media coverage

Memorial Events & Calendar

March

- **Women's History Month** – All month (March). A time to highlight women's contributions to civic life and public leadership.
- **Irish American Heritage Month** – Can be tied to discussions on immigration, cultural contributions, and participation in civic life.

April

- **Arab American Heritage Month and other heritage observances**
– All April. Can be tied to civic inclusion themes.
- **Patriots' Day – Third Monday in April (April 20, 2026).**
Commemorates the first battles of the American Revolution and civic resistance.

Answer Key

1. B
2. C
3. C
4. B
5. C



Volunteer with
MLI, Join the
Council of Civic
Champions, or
nominate a
teacher



Support our work

Your support
strengthens civics
education across
California. Every
contribution

makes a
difference.

Madison-Lincoln Initiative

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