

# INSIGHTS REPORT 2020

NATION  
SWELL

BUILD  
IT BACK  
BETTER

DATA FOR GOOD

# CULTURE OF CONNECTION, BRIDGING AND BELONGING

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND FUTURE OF WORK

CLIMATE JUSTICE

EDUCATION



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# WELCOME



# FRIENDS

Welcome to ‘Build It Back Better’, a NationSwell initiative designed to surface and advance solutions to some of the world’s biggest challenges, to help build a more equitable, inclusive and resilient world for all. This report synthesizes the key insights and impact arising from the Culture of Connection, Bridging & Belonging within ‘Build It Back Better’, and we hope you will use it to inform your strategy, collaborations and solution-building going forward.

At NationSwell, our mission is to strengthen society and the planet by helping purpose-driven leaders and organizations take their impact to the next level. We do that by creating the conditions for impact to thrive:

- Creating forums where change-makers can access cross-sector expertise and inspiration to shape strategy and build confidence in solutions;
- Making connections that catalyze meaningful partnerships to accelerate and scale their work;
- Engaging stakeholders through experiences and content designed to drive awareness and action; and
- Providing proximity to resources that empowers innovators to find mission-aligned funders and investors for impact solutions.

‘Build It Back Better’ represents the culmination of many months of work from across our mission-driven team of strategists, creators, producers and community-builders, and would not have been possible without the inspiring partnership of Einhorn Collaborative and the AARP Foundation.

Einhorn Collaborative is a nonprofit foundation dedicated to addressing America’s growing crisis of connection by advancing the science and practice of empathy, mutual understanding and relationship building so we can rediscover our common humanity and solve our nation’s greatest challenges together. The AARP Foundation focuses on increasing economic opportunity and social connectedness that can prevent and reduce senior poverty.

Thank you to Jennifer, Jon and the Einhorn Collaborative team; to Marc, Eliza, Jessica, Kamili and the AARP Foundation and AARP teams; and to all who participated with ideas and energy to make this track possible.

With gratitude,



Greg Behrman  
NationSwell Founder & CEO

# WHAT IS 'BUILD IT BACK BETTER'?





# WHAT IS 'BUILD IT BACK BETTER'?

As the human and economic impact of COVID-19, racial injustice and economic turbulence continue to be felt across the country, strong and informed leadership, and solution-building across sector boundaries, has never been more essential.

We created 'Build It Back Better' to give leaders and organizations — across business, philanthropy, investing, nonprofits, public office and entrepreneurship — the expert, action-focused forums they need to workshop solutions, share resources, spark new connections, raise their profile and form cross-sector coalitions for meaningful change.

In 2020, we facilitated six tracks for inspiration and collaboration around some of the world's most pressing challenges: Climate Justice, Culture of Connection, Bridging & Belonging, Data for Good, Economic Opportunity, Education, and the Future of Work.

Within each track, we worked with our partners to co-design, plan, curate, facilitate and produce a series of expert working sessions and high profile live events. Plus, we created bespoke thought leadership and social content to amplify the solutions and leaders involved, and have synthesized Insights Reports — including this one — for each track that capture the insights and imperatives to drive action.

In 2021, we will launch our next round of expert tracks focused on fostering cross sector 'collaboratives' around solutions to issues including sustainability, health equity, justice reform and more.






**“Partnering with NationSwell on ‘Build It Back Better’ was a real highlight of our work in 2020. Across the all-Council events, working groups and articles, the track we shaped together was a great opportunity to amplify the ideas of visionary leaders in our network who are giving voice to the “Relational Era”. The NationSwell team was a terrific partner from design to execution. They helped us engage a diverse cross-section of the NationSwell community. And it was encouraging to hear how much the content resonated.”**

– Jon Gruber, Strategy Lead, Einhorn Collaborative

# **CULTURE OF CONNECTION, BRIDGING AND BELONGING: THE CONTEXT**







# PEOPLE CONTINUE TO SHOW THAT THEY WILL GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER, IN WAYS BIG AND SMALL.

We are living through a time of sometimes shocking divisiveness: Political extremes, inflammatory rhetoric, social media echo chambers, flagrant abuses of trust by authorities, climate change and climate denial, violent clashes on the streets, even insurrection.

And yet, when faced with overlapping crises and some of the most overwhelming challenges to life as we know it, people continue to show that they will go to great lengths to support each other, in ways big and small. Checking on an elderly neighbor in the building during lockdown. Creating newsletters to fight for accountability in care homes. Placing community fridges on curbsides to keep communities from going hungry. Creating virtual supper clubs to support the grieving. Marching together in solidarity for racial justice. Collaborating across time zones and legal boundaries to innovate a life changing vaccine.

But there have also been many missteps due to the deep set divisions within our current society, and there is still much work to be done. John A. Powell, civil liberties expert and leader of the Othering & Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley, said: “Trust is the residue of experience. We’re struggling as a people because we have walls of distrust and animosity. We used to be able to pull together in a time of crisis as a social body. One unit that would behave as a one nation in times of crisis. We failed to do that this year, because we failed to form a social body.”

With this context, the goal of the Culture of Connection, Bridging & Belonging track was to identify and explore the big ideas and the most meaningful ways in which we as individuals and as institutions can build the skills and do the work we need to heal after this period of crisis: To reject the narratives and solutions that are self serving and embrace those that are other-serving, and to build back stronger with ideals and actions that leave trust as their legacy.

# EVENTS

NationSwell produced and hosted  
seven events in the Culture of Connection,  
Bridging & Belonging track

# THE RELATIONAL ERA: A CULTURE OF CONNECTION, BRIDGING & BELONGING

Sept. 15, 2020  
Opening public event



## Speakers

**john a. powell**

Director, Other & Belonging Institute  
at Berkeley

**JACQUELINE NOVOGRATZ**

Founder & CEO of Acumen

## Moderator

**DAVID BROOKS**

The New York Times

## Event Description

To kick off the Culture of Connection, Bridging & Belonging track, we hosted a conversation on how we can commit to building a culture of connection, bridging and belonging in our relationships, in our organizations, our communities and across our country.

Human connection is foundational to our individual and collective wellbeing. And yet, today, despite these common needs and desires, we live in a culture that all too often reinforces just the opposite. As we face a confluence of historic crises as a nation, it's no surprise that the prevailing narratives might seem bleak. However, they are not complete. Unfolding all around us every day are stories of living and solving problems together that are made better by our differences, not in spite of them.

# BRIDGING DIFFERENCES TO BUILD MORE SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONS

Oct. 5, 2020  
Working Group session

Featuring solutions from

## JASON MARSH

Executive Director of The Greater  
Good Science Center

### Participants

#### AMY NELSON

CEO, Venture for America

#### ARTI VARANASI

President & CEO, Advancing Synergy LLC

#### GEORGE TSIATIS

CEO, The Resolution Project

#### JASON MARSH

Executive Director, The Greater Good Science Center

#### JON GRUBER

Strategy Lead, Einhorn Collaborative

### Event Description

How can we leverage the science of bridge-building to spark collaboration and creativity in our companies and organizations? We hosted a working group on how we might spread practical skills that support more connected, collaborative and successful organizations. Research suggests that diverse teams and organizations are more innovative, and solve problems more creatively, than more homogenous ones. But in order to foster effective collaboration in any organization, we need to be able to help people bridge their differences and work toward common goals. This working group explored science-based practices that help people overcome divides and work together effectively at a time when so many forces are pulling us apart.

#### JEFF SENNE

Responsible Business Leader, PwC

#### MARY BETH BRUGGEMAN

President, The Mission Continues

#### MATT MCFARLANE

Founder, GROUT

#### PAUL HARRISON

CEO, Valued Acts

#### SOMMER CHATWIN

Chief of Staff, Bridgewater Associates

# BUILDING EMPATHY AND CONNECTION THROUGH STORYTELLING

Oct. 12, 2020  
Working Group session

Featuring solutions from

## DAVID BORNSTEIN

Co-Founder & CEO, Solutions  
Journalism Network

### Participants

#### A.J. JACOBS

Editor-At-Large, Esquire; Author; NPR Contributor

#### AURORA ARCHER

Founder & CEO, Bellatrix Group

#### BABITA PATEL

Founder & Executive Director, KIOO Project

#### CHRISTY VINES

President, Ideos

#### DAVID BORNSTEIN

Co-Founder & CEO, Solutions Journalism Network

#### ELISSA YANCEY

Co-Founder, A Picture's Worth

#### ELIZABETH CAMPOS

Strategic Communications, Viva Social Impact Partners

#### GREG WALTERS

Journalist

#### HOLLY CARTER

Founder & Executive Director, BYkids

### Event Description

We assembled journalists and storytellers to investigate frameworks that can help us see each other with empathy. The group's aspirations and assets were front and center, which yielded nuanced, solutions-focused stories. We explored solutions journalism, listening and interviewing techniques, and asset-based story framing. These practices are crucial to the public seeing opponents in more human terms and understanding issues holistically.

#### JON GRUBER

Strategy Lead, Einhorn Collaborative

#### KABIR SEHGAL

Senior Vice President, Caliber Home Loans; NYT bestselling author; Multi-Grammy winner

#### KELLY SORG

Podcast host

#### KEN HARBAUGH

Crooked Media

#### LEE-SEAN HUANG

Founder & Creative Director, Foossa

#### MIA HAUGEN

Media Executive & Impact Investor

#### ROBIN WHITE OWEN

Co-Founder & Principal, MediaCombo Inc.

#### ROMESH RATNESAR

Deputy Editor, Bloomberg Businessweek; Fellow, New America Foundation

#### RYAN JACOBS

Senior Speechwriter, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

# THE POWER OF INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION

Oct. 19, 2020  
Working Group session

Featuring solutions from  
**MARC FREEDMAN**  
CEO, Encore.org

## Event Description

In partnership with the Einhorn Collaborative and AARP Foundation, we explored the innovative ways in which the public and private sectors are addressing shared issues by forging bonds across generations.

For the first time in U.S. history, more people are over 60 than under 18. But our multi-generational society is structured to keep old and young people apart. This causes us to miss opportunities. Fortunately, a new wave of innovators and leaders across sectors – e.g., education, housing, social action – are discovering ways to bridge this divide and leveraging the unique assets of older and younger people.

## Participants

### ALAN VAN CAPELLE

CEO, Educational Alliance

### AURORA ARCHER

Founder & CEO, Bellatrix Group

### AYLENE MCCALLUM

Senior Director, Civic Leadership Programs,  
Downtown Denver Partnership

### DAVID SHAPIRO

CEO, MENTOR

### ELIZA HEPPNER

Director, Programs Director, AARP Foundation

### ERIN ALBERS

Vice President of Social Purpose, Home  
Instead Senior Care

### GERSON MARTINEZ

Executive Director, Talbot Mentors

### JON GRUBER

Strategy Lead, Einhorn Collaborative

### KAMILI WILSON

VP, Enterprise Initiatives, AARP

### LORNA SMITH

CEO, Horizons National

### MADELINE KERNER

CEO, Matriculate

### MARC FREEDMAN

CEO, Encore.org

### MARC MCDONALD

VP, President's Office-Integration, AARP  
Foundation

### MAUREEN MCCOMSEY

Founder, Momentum for Good

### MICHAEL OWEN

Principal and Executive Producer,  
MediaCombo Productions

### MIKE O'BRIEN

Incoming CEO, America's Promise Alliance;  
Founder and Former CEO, iMentor

### RAJIV MEHTA

CEO, Atlas of Caregiving Pilot

### ROXETTE BURGOS

Youth Advocate

### SEAN TAYLOR

Deputy Executive Director

### VANESSA BISHOP

Entrepreneur, Entrepreneurship for All  
(EforAll)

# REPAIRING OUR SOCIAL FABRIC: SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE AT FOREFRONT OF THIS WORK

Nov. 2, 2020  
Working Group session

Featuring solutions from

## EBOO PATEL

Founder & President, Interfaith Youth Core

## CAROLINE MEHL

Director, OpenMind

### Participants

#### A.J. JACOBS

Editor-At-Large, Esquire; Author; NPR Contributor

#### AMAR PETERMAN

Fellow, Ideos

#### AMINATA DIALLO

Social Media and Community Manager for Daniel Lubetzky, KIND

#### CAROLINE MEHL

Director, OpenMind

#### DANA MORTENSON

Co-Founder + CEO, World Savvy

#### DUE QUACH

CEO & Founder, Calm Clarity

#### EBOO PATEL

Founder & President, Interfaith Youth Core

### Event Description

Gen Z is known for its commitment to social justice. In 2020, we saw America's most diverse generation mobilize to address COVID-19 and organize against systemic racism. Against a backdrop of campus closures and strict public health regulations that limited in-person opportunities, this working group explored how we could support Gen Z's social commitment online and invest in young peoples' role as change agents, problems-solvers, and bridgers in a time of heightened disruption. We focused on how to foster their passion for social justice and develop their collaborative problem solving and perspective-taking skill sets to support greater social cohesion.

#### GRACE RODRIGUEZ

Co-Founder & CXO, Impact Hub Houston

#### HOLLY CARTER

Founder & Executive Director, BYkids

#### HUGO LENTZE

Director of Strategic Partnership, Travis Manion Foundation

#### ISABEL CORONADO

Policy Entrepreneur

#### JON GRUBER

Strategy Lead, Einhorn Collaborative

#### LYLEAH HERNANDEZ

Youth Leader, Interfaith Youth Core

#### KYESHIA LIKELY

Program Coordinator, Choose 180

#### LORI DUNSTAN

VP, Global Corporate Giving Executive Director, Chubb Charitable Foundation

#### PARKER NILES

Youth Leader, Interfaith Youth Core

#### RACHEL HUTCHISSON

Vice President, Corporate Citizenship & Philanthropy, Blackbaud

#### SANDY BOYD

CEO, Seek Common Ground

#### SARAH JUDD WELCH

Co-Founder & CEO, Sharehold

#### SUE SCHWARTZMAN

Principal, Schwartzman Advising

#### TONY BANOUT

SVP, Interfaith Youth Core



# THE LONG ROAD AHEAD OF HEALING THE HEART OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Nov. 18, 2020

Closing public event



## Speakers

### PARKER J. PALMER

Author & Founder of Senior  
Partner Emeritus

### STEVEN OLIKARA

CEO & Founder, Millennial  
Action Project

## Moderator

### KRISTA TIPPETT

Host & CEO, On Being Project

## Event Description

On the heels of a highly divisive and polarizing election, the work of mending our frayed bonds and bridging our fraught divides will be all the more pressing – and perhaps more possible. Yet it will require greater courage, curiosity, and empathy in how we see and relate to one another across our differences. At a moment when the pervasive cultural frame is “us versus them”, how can we commit to the inner and outer work of creating a larger sense of “we”, we created space for a reflective and future-focused conversation about the long road ahead of healing the heart of American democracy.

# THE POWER OF RITUAL

Nov. 23, 2020

Final Working Group session

Featuring solutions from

## LENNON FLOWERS

Co-Founder & Executive  
Director, The Dinner Party

## ERIC LIU

CEO, Citizen University;  
Executive Director, Aspen  
Institute Citizenship and  
American Identity Program

### Participants

#### ALEJANDRO GIBES DE GAC

Founder + CEO, The Springboard Collaborative

#### EMMA WEISMAN

Associate Director of Operations,  
Burning Man Project

#### ERIC LIU

CEO, Citizen University; Executive  
Director, Aspen Institute Citizenship and  
American Identity Program

#### GEORGE TSIATIS

CEO, The Resolution Project

#### HEDI TRAUPE

Senior Manager, Social Impact Sector,  
Amazon Web Services Global Public Sector

#### HOLLY CARTER

Founder & Executive Director, BYkids

#### HUGO LENTZE

Director of Strategic Partnership, Travis  
Manion Foundation

### Event Description

We hosted a working group on the wisdom and the “how-to” of bringing ritual into different facets of our lives – a timely conversation as we enter the holiday season amidst the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and a highly polarizing period in our national politics. We explored practical, innovative ways in which we can bring collective ritual into our lives – in our families, organizations, and communities to strengthen bonds, find meaning, and cultivate shared purpose.

#### JASON HARRIS

Director of Diversity & Inclusion, Friends  
Seminary // Educator, Facilitator, Strategist,  
and Restorative Justice Practitioner

#### JASON WISDOM

Co-Founder, The Design Gym

#### JOHN HECKLINGER

CEO, Global Fund for Children

#### JON GRUBER

Strategy Lead, Einhorn Collaborative

#### JUANA JEAN HORSTMAN

Founder and Chief Executive, Emeritus,  
Interise; Founder, Step Back Solutions

#### JUSTIN COHEN

Chief Strategy Officer, Cambiar Education

#### LATOYA GAYLE

Co-Founder & Executive Director, Boston  
School Finder

#### LEE-SEAN HUANG

Founder & Creative Director, Foossa

#### LENNON FLOWERS

Co-Founder & Executive Director,  
The Dinner Party

#### RENEE WOLF KOUBIADIS

Executive Director, Anti-Poverty Network  
of New Jersey

#### SANDY BOYD

CEO, Seek Common Ground

#### SURABHI LAL

Chief Impact Officer, Luminary

#### VANESSA LUNA

Co-Founder and Chief Program Officer,  
ImmSchools

# INSIGHTS & RESOURCES

‘Aha moments’ that can shape your thinking, and powerful evergreen ideas to take forward into how you approach your work



1

## FREEDOM SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS AN UNLIMITED RIGHT

“We are still having a conversation in America that is based on a rather naive definition [of freedom] that is self-serving and not other-serving.”

— Jacqueline Novogratz

“If it’s just about you, you have unlimited freedom. If you understand that what you do affects others, you don’t have unlimited freedom.”

— john a. powell

2

## BELONGING IS TOXIC IF IT IS BASED ON OTHERING

“Toxic belonging is when my belonging is based on your not belonging, my belonging is based on othering you. This is the great challenge for America. We have this amazing vision of creating a society where all people are created equal in the midst of genocide and enslavement of people”

— john a. powell

3

## “TRUST IS THE RESIDUE OF EXPERIENCE”

— john a. powell

Trust is built on reliable, virtuous behavior. We’re struggling as a people because we have walls of distrust built on years of experience of harm: “When you leave people naked and alone distrusting, they do what they’re evolutionarily told to do: You revert to tribe, you develop a scarcity mindset, you get hostility and you get othering.

— David Brooks

4

## EMPATHY IS NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE WITH DISAGREEMENT

“Having empathy or compassion doesn’t mean you agree with them, it means you acknowledge their humanity and suffering. To recognize them as a human being.”

— john a. powell

5

## IF WE FOCUS ON CONNECTION AS A MEANS TO THRIVING, WE CREATE A BETTER SOCIETY

We have consistently built a society contrary to the need for connectedness — siloing older adults from younger generations, creating media echo chambers and gentrifying neighborhoods to the exclusion of others. Yet, connection is essential to human thriving, and a key to happiness later in life.

6

## “SOCIETY GROWS GREAT WHEN OLDER PEOPLE PLANT TREES UNDER WHOSE SHADE THEY SHALL NEVER SIT”

— Marc Freedman

Society, and us as individuals, grow better and happier when we center not just ourselves and our generation, but those of generations to come. Older individuals who support younger generations are 3x as likely to be happy. (Source: [Harvard Study of Adult Development](#))

7

## WE NEED INSTITUTIONS, NOT JUST INDIVIDUALS, TO FOSTER BELONGING

“We create a belonging through the institutions, the cultures, the stories we tell, and about having experiences with each other.”  
— john a. powell

“With Black Livers Matter, we have a moment of moral reckoning, but now we have the work of building institutions that make manifest the values of belonging and community. That is where the hard work starts and it is the work of our lifetime.”  
— Jacqueline Novogratz

8

## “WE CAN THINK OF VULNERABILITY AS AN ASSET TO ONESELF”

— Parker Palmer

Empathy means showing up with some essence of self, but also a desire to learn about the other. You can bring out empathy in others when you make yourself vulnerable.

9

## PEOPLE OFTEN MISTAKE DIVERSITY FOR INCLUSION

E.g. the military is diverse, but then expects everyone to conform to a certain type to fit in. Building an inclusive culture is harder than diversity alone. We need to get better at being aware of other people's lived experience — not just yours — as we build cultural norms and processes.

10

## LISTENING IS AN ACT OF LOVE

Even for those with diametrically opposed views, you can break down barriers by showing respect for their perspective by listening, and showing proof of listening (e.g. playing back what you heard until they see that you have really heard them).

11

## MENTORSHIP MUST BE SYMBIOTIC

Our understanding of mentorship is changing: To be most effective, a mentorship should not be a one-way, didactic relationship, but an empowering, symbiotic exchange of learning across generations / from peer to peer ... bringing people together to learn from each other.

12

## “WE NEED RITUALS THAT TURN THE MUNDANE INTO MEANING.”

— Lennon Flowers

What separates ritual from routine is symbolism and essence. So much can spring from investing in rituals: togetherness, civic action, celebration of achievement, joy.

# RESOURCES

Websites, books, news articles and organizations that offer vital context, detail and solutions on this issue

## ORGANIZATIONS & INITIATIVES

- Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC)
- We Got The Vote: A Project of FRRC Education Fund
- Encore.org
- Talbot Mentors
- Champions of Aging
- Experience Corps from AARP
- Media Reparations
- Open Mind
- Global Oneness Project
- Artichoke

## TOOLS



Ideos’ empathy mapping network



Interfaith Youth Core’s “We Are Each Other’s” Campaign

Care Package for Uncertain Times

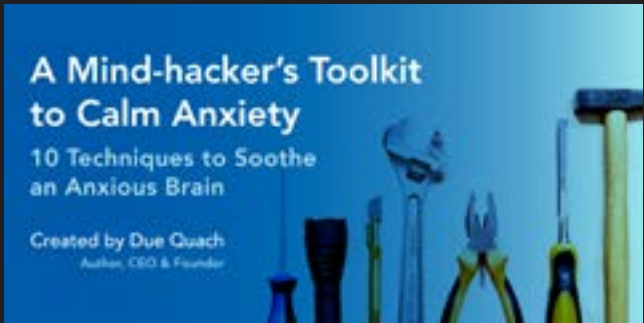


Better Conversations: A Starter Guide

Seek Common Ground’s COVID Recovery Action Accelerator



Calm Clarity’s Mind-hacker’s Toolkit to Calm Anxiety



The Ideological Turing Test



# RESOURCES

Websites, books, news articles and organizations that offer vital context, detail and solutions on this issue

## BOOKS & MEDIA

Various written publications — by john a. powell



Manifesto for a Moral Revolution — by Jacqueline Novogratz

What It Takes to Make Change (Ted Talk) — by Jacqueline Novogratz

On Being podcast



Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit — by Parker J. Palmer

How to be indistractable — by Nir Eyal



Chris Voss's MasterClass and book Never Split the Difference

Heineken "Worlds Apart" Ad on bridging differences

Fandango at the wall

Films by ByKids

The Year of Living Biblically — by A.J. Jacobs

Greater Good Science Center x NationSwell 'Bridging Differences' series



Bending the Arc

NYT article: The Overton Window is Shifting

Harvard University's report: For Groups in Conflict, Genes Matter

A Story of Interfaith Leadership & Racial Justice

How to Practice Politics with Music in Mind with Phillip Bimstein

Anchored in the Current: Discovering Howard Thurman as Educator, Activist, Guide, and Prophet, — by Gregory C. Ellison

Dr. Martin Luther King's final speech "I've Been to the Mountaintop"



Elizabeth Alexander's poem Ars Poetica #100: I Believe

Building a Culture of Connection — by Jonathan Gruber

# INSPIRING LEADERS



**GLORIA WATKINS**  
**AKA BELL HOOKS**

Author & Feminist



**MAGGIE KUHN**

Founder of the Gray Panthers



**GWENDOLYN BROOKS**

Poet

“We are each other’s harvest: we are each other’s business: we are each other’s magnitude & bond.”



**REINHOLD NIEBUHR**

Theologian

“Love is the motivation, and justice is the work.”



**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

Minister & Civil Rights activist



**BRYAN STEVENSON**

Lawyer & Founder of the Equal Justice Initiative

# SOLUTIONS

# 6

A photograph of a young man with dark hair and a beard, smiling as he shows something on a smartphone to an older woman. The woman is looking at the phone with a focused expression. They are both indoors, with a window in the background.

# SOLUTIONS THAT WORK

**Relevant, cutting-edge solutions — both global and local — to explore and consider supporting**

## PAID SERVICE YEARS TO FUEL CONNECTION

Such as Champions of Aging, offering real support and incentives for young people to spend the time to build empathy with older generations and exchange skills and learning across generational boundaries.

## TAILORED OPPORTUNITIES THAT HARNESS THE UNIQUE VALUE OF OLDER GENERATIONS

That allow people more control over their own data e.g. an Institution Learning Data Lake developed to allow a school to control access of student data on the students' behalf — so students, not the tool providers, own the data.

## INTERGENERATIONAL PROBLEM SOLVING & PLAY

Finding a common issue (for example: bus schedules) that allows for generations to come together to work towards a solution, instead of expecting the older generation to fit in with the younger generations' needs (or vice versa). For example, a local community center using table tennis to bring generations together in Leeds, UK.

## INTENTIONALLY BUILDING THE SKILLS OF COLLABORATION AND EMPATHY

“Empathy is a practice and a muscle that we keep exercising to maintain” —Steven Olikara, Millennial Action Project

For example, the work of OpenMind building the skills for constructive dialogue, and the work of the Greater Good Science Center in making scientific methods of bridging differences more accessible and usable by “bridgers” across society.

# NATIONSWELL SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

## CITIZEN UNIVERSITY

Citizen University envisions a great civic revival across our nation. They spread the belief that a strong democracy depends on strong citizens — that we all have the power to make change in civic life and the responsibility to try. They design gatherings, rituals, and workshops that focus on civic power and civic character as the building blocks of powerful citizenship. They then train and activate civic catalysts nationwide to bring the beliefs and practices of powerful, responsible citizenship to their communities.

**“What we’ve got to be able to do is figure out how to have better arguments. And what that means is arguments that are more grounded in history, more literate in power, more honest and intelligent emotionally.”**

— Eric Liu, CEO & Co-Founder, Citizen University



To find out more visit [citizenuniversity.us](https://citizenuniversity.us)

# NATIONSWELL SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

## ENCORE.ORG

For the first time in U.S. history, people over 60 outnumber people under 18, raising fears of widening generational divides. Encore.org sees another path — a more-old-than-young society that works for all generations. By accelerating intergenerational solutions to pressing social problems from literacy to loneliness, Encore.org bridges divides and collaborates across generations to create a better future together.

**“Social innovation is what we need to change the culture. Rather than trying so hard to be young, we need to be there for people who actually are. We can solve problems and bridge divides by bringing generations together.”**

— Marc Friedman, CEO & Founder, Encore.org

**encore.org**

To find out more visit [Encore.org](https://encore.org)



# NATIONSWELL SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

## GREATER GOOD SCIENCE CENTER

Greater Good Science Center (GGSC) finds science-based techniques and tools to help people bridge across differences and turns that scientific research into stories, tips, and tools for a happier life and a more compassionate society. Through articles, videos, quizzes, and podcasts, they bridge the gap between scientific journals and people's daily lives, particularly for parents, educators, business leaders and health care professionals.

**“There’s tremendous knowledge at UC Berkeley that can support people’s everyday lives, and we want to get that knowledge out into the community in the most accessible way.”**

— Jason Marsh, Executive Director, Greater Good Science Center



To find out more visit [greatergood.berkeley.edu](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu)



# NATIONSWELL SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

## OPENMIND

OpenMind is an interactive, psychology-based platform designed to foster intellectual humility, empathy, and mutual understanding across a variety of differences. OpenMind equips people with skills and a shared language to overcome their differences and work together to solve their collective problems. OpenMind provides a set of tools that universities, organizations, and corporations can use to depolarize their communities.

**“What differentiates Gen Z is their commitment to justice. But how they consume diverse perspectives is informed by social media which creates binary thinking of us vs. them. So much of what they want to accomplish requires coalitions and not leaving out people who are not on the same page as them.”**

— Caroline Mehl, Co-Founder & Executive Director, OpenMind



To find out more visit [openmindplatform.org](https://openmindplatform.org)

# NATIONSWELL SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

## SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM NETWORK

Solutions Journalism Network aims to shift the landscape of journalism from a focus on conflict and strife to one that centers solutions and looks at stories through the lense of aspiration and human capacity. They train and connect journalists to cover what's missing in today's news: how people are responding to problems, and bringing solutions journalism to every newsroom worldwide.

**“What we have been doing is training journalists that there is a way to cover solutions that isn’t just about advocacy and fluffy but is rigorous. The question we’ve been grappling with is how do you get to people’s heart beat? We have to build trust, give them proof that you’ve listened to them before we come back to the next comment.”**

— David Bornstein, CEO & Co-Founder, Solutions Journalism Network

**SOLUTIONS**  
JOURNALISM  
NETWORK

To find out more visit [solutionsjournalism.org](https://solutionsjournalism.org)

# NATIONSWELL SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHT

## THE DINNER PARTY

The Dinner Party is a platform for grieving 20- and 30-somethings to find peer community and build lasting relationships. They screen, train and support a growing network of peer hosts, and connect them to 12-15 people nearby to host virtual “dinner parties”, who share a similar age and loss experience. Their mission is to transform life after loss from an isolating experience into one marked by community support, candid conversation, and forward movement using the age old practice of breaking bread.

“It took us a few years to realize that our work was less about grief than it is about combating the isolation and disconnection that so often follows a loss.”

— Lennon Flowers, Executive Director, The Dinner Party



To find out more visit [thedinnerparty.org](http://thedinnerparty.org)



# SOLUTIONS WE NEED

**Solutions that our group of experts identified that address an urgent, unmet need**

## INFRASTRUCTURE TO FILL CONNECTION GAPS

“What every child needs is one adult who is irrationally crazy about them.”

— Marc Freedman

70,000 students are waiting for matches with Big Brothers and Big Sisters; 6 in 10 older adults reported experiencing social isolation and many didn’t know where to find help (AARP Foundation). But often gaps in digital access/skills and lack of proximity can be barriers to bridging these divides. How can we create the infrastructure and leverage technology to make sure these connection gaps are filled?

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## STORYTELLING THAT DEFINES PEOPLE BY THEIR CAPACITY, NOT THEIR CHALLENGES

“Often the solutions story presents beneficiaries as victims, and the problem solvers are the foundation or nice program officers, and you inevitably create a narrative and models of hierarchy even when you are trying to smash the hierarchy.” — David Bornstein, CEO & Co-Founder, Solutions Journalism Network

Judgements and biases are kept alive by storytelling; even journalism aiming to spotlight solutions to social issues can contribute to traditional “victim saviour” tropes. Instead, we need narratives that champion impacted communities’ capacity and aspirations.



## SOLUTIONS WE NEED

### INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE YEARS

Initiatives like Peace Corps and Service Year that are available for young people show the transformative effect of service years in building empathy and sense of connectedness to a larger, more diverse community. Is it time for a 21st century service initiative focused on intergenerational people serving side by side?

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### AGGREGATED MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AND BEST PRACTICES

Many businesses offer mentorship programs and some nonprofits offer specific opportunities, but perhaps we can scale the ability to mentor others effectively by synthesizing cutting-edge thinking on mentorship best practice and offering one centralized hub for mentoring opportunities?

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### CREATION OF SPACES THAT WELCOME DISSENTING POINTS OF VIEW

In an age defined by online echo chambers, what would it look like to create spaces that intentionally bring together people with differing perspectives to listen to each other, share their stories of difference, and find shared humanity? “Creating space to welcome views that differ from you can encourage people to express their own difference”

— Lyleah Hernandez

# RELEVANT CONTENT





# THE RELATIONAL ERA: WHAT WE NEED TO BUILD A CULTURE OF CONNECTION, BRIDGING AND BELONGING

For #BuildItBackBetter, NationSwell asked some of our nation's most celebrated purpose-driven leaders how they'd build a society that is more equitable and resilient than the one we had before COVID-19. We have compiled and lightly edited their answers.

No matter who we are, how we live, or what we believe, we all share a deep, instinctual need and capacity for human connection and belonging. It's at the core of our shared humanity — and baked into our DNA.

As human beings, we yearn to be in relationships: to feel seen, valued and understood; to inhabit places where we live together, work together and look out for each other; to be part of a community of shared values and aspirations that is bigger than ourselves.

And yet, we are living in a culture that all too often reinforces just the opposite. A culture that stokes distrust and amplifies divisions. That fuels hyper-individualism and alienates us from ourselves and each other. A culture that creates a distorted sense of belonging for some of us by telling others they don't belong.

As we navigate the “twin pandemics” of COVID-19 and racial injustice, we face a fundamental challenge that lies at the heart of all others: a crisis of human connection.

All around us, we see more and more Americans living in isolation, loneliness, anxiety and fear. And all too often, our culture reinforces a zero-sum game that seeks to benefit by pulling us further apart — with an “us vs. them” mentality that's eroding our faith in each other, our institutions and the future we seek for our children.

The sheer speed and scale of these challenges can seem overwhelming, but beneath them lies a simple and inescapable truth: we cannot solve our nation's most complex and urgent challenges unless we see, hear and understand each other first.

September 10, 2020  
by Jenn Hoos Rothberg

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If we want to 'Build It Back Better', we must draw upon one of the greatest and oldest technologies we have as a species: human connection. Our ability to connect, empathize, build relationships, and collaborate may be our greatest gift. When we start to see ourselves in others and recognize that our own humanity is a reflection of our shared humanity, we begin to shift from a culture of turning on one another to turning toward one another.

Einhorn Collaborative works with community leaders, researchers, and cultural influencers to help each and every one of us build stronger relationships, embrace our differences, and rediscover our shared values and humanity—with the belief that by doing so, we can find common ground and solve our most urgent challenges together.

Through this 'Build It Back Better' series, *The Relational Era: A Culture of Connection, Bridging, and Belonging*, we'll lift up the voices of individuals and communities who are writing a new story of America. We'll hear bold and practical ideas for what's needed to build a more inclusive and connected culture from a wide range of vantage points and disciplines, and a through a mix of large public events, intimate working groups, and action-oriented articles.

We'll share powerful stories, compelling science and cross-disciplinary research that shows us new ways of living, working and thriving together – by embracing radical

bridge-building in our politics, by inspiring interfaith cooperation in our communities, by using ritual in the service of social healing, by fostering intergenerational relationships and igniting a new generation of bridgers, by nurturing emotional intelligence and cultivating moral leadership, by promoting civic love and elevating bright spots of civic renewal. And so much more...

We believe that addressing America's crisis of connection and building a true culture of connection, bridging and belonging is not only critically urgent, but possible — and already underway in communities across our country.

We believe the prevailing narratives of distrust and division are not only flawed, but reversible.

And we believe that when we sit down to listen, learn, and share different perspectives, we unlock entirely new ways of seeing ourselves, each other, and the needs and values we share.

Through this series, we invite you to join us on a journey of envisioning what it will take to build a culture of connection, bridging, and belonging — and to commit to doing this vital work alongside us.

Jenn Hoos Rothberg is Executive Director of Einhorn Collaborative.



## OTHER RELEVANT CONTENT

### TO BUILD IT BACK BETTER, FIND THE JAZZ IN DEMOCRACY

by Steven Olikara

### TO BUILD IT BACK BETTER, EMBRACE INTERFAITH DIVERSITY

by Eboo Patel

### TO BUILD IT BACK BETTER, INVEST IN BELONGING

by Caroline Mehl

### TO BUILD IT BACK BETTER, RETHINK HUMAN NATURE

by Jason Marsh

### TO BUILD IT BACK BETTER, DESIGN FOR INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE

by Marc Freedman

### TO BUILD IT BACK BETTER, LEARN TO TALK ACROSS THE POLITICAL DIVIDE

by Rick Weissbourd

### TO BUILD IT BACK BETTER, WE MUST CHANGE THE WAY WE LISTEN

by Niobe Way & Crystal Clarke

### TO BUILD IT BACK BETTER, GIVE OURSELVES PERMISSION TO FEEL

by Marc Brackett

# CALLS TO ACTION

Imperatives for leaders and  
organizations alike that surfaced from  
our experts across the track.



**1**

## BE BRAVE ENOUGH TO BE A “BRIDGE TO WALK ON”

Bell Hooks said that “bridges are made to be walked on” — i.e. “If you are the link between two communities, you are likely misunderstood by both. It’s not an easy place to be, but it is radically necessary. If you’re just switching back and forth between society, community and ideas without any deeper translation it might be great for personal survival, but it’s not building anything larger.”

— john a. powell

**2**

## EMPOWER PEOPLE WITH CONNECTIONS AND CAPACITY, NOT JUST MONEY

“The opposite of poverty isn’t wealth, it’s dignity... It’s not just about helping someone, but building the muscles to take advantage of the access to opportunities presented to them. There is a real need to take our privilege and social capital and extend it to those who have every desire to be a part of something bigger and give them the tools to do things on their own.”

— Jacqueline Novogratz

**3**

## TRUST YOUNG PEOPLE

Rather than trying to “parent” young people, give them the resources to lead by themselves and to teach those in their network. Give yourself the confidence and permission to defer to young people. Give them equity and power in decision-making spaces.

**4**

## STRIVE TO REMOVE BIAS IN YOUR STORYTELLING

“We found that when we asked people why there is so much skepticism around journalism, part of it is because our own biases (especially if you’re a journalist) show up. And if we don’t have a way to check our own bias people are savvy enough to know that there is an agenda that’s behind it. Getting rid of bias is the beginning of how to move forward.”

— Aurora Archer, Bellatrix Group

# 5

## EMBRACE VULNERABILITY WITHIN YOUR BUSINESS

A culture that is open to difference and failure allows for innovative approaches to problem solving. Thus, vulnerability, and the willingness to ask for help, should be woven into the social contract for a team. If businesses don't create a sense of safety for divergent points of view and missteps along the journey, people won't be willing to bring new perspectives and approaches to the table and progress and innovation will falter.

# 6

## HAVE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS, EVEN AT WORK

“Surgery can be a metaphor for healing conversations: A surgeon wields a knife to heal, not to harm.”  
— Parker Palmer

Facing up to tough subjects together is essential to healing. Start in your own spheres of influence, your workplaces (even if it's a virtual workplace). The workplace can often be the most politically diverse community people are part of: We can model the conversations we want to see in public discourse.



# EMERGING IMPACT

At NationSwell, our goal is to create the conditions for impact to thrive — and specifically, this track was designed to surface solutions, diversify experts' perspectives and catalyze new collaborations to accelerate impact around building a Culture of Connection, Bridging & Belonging. We are excited to share several ways in which that impact is starting to emerge.

1

“Krista, Parker and Steven were so wise in 'The Long Road Ahead...'. It was a great reminder that the work of nation building happens on an individual level, and their words about listening to each other and connecting were powerful and true.” — Stephanie Cornell, Managing Director, Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation

2

“The beauty of the track has been that it has been challenging and deeply relevant. Most content is to be absorbed, reflected on, and passively processed for months and years ahead to be synthesized into one's work and worldview. This track has delivered content that stopped me in my tracks and forced me to confront things about myself, the environment we create in our organization, and the space that our work creates for deeper connection and impact at fundamental levels. I'm grateful for the leadership of the organizers (Einhorn Collaborative and NationSwell) and for their commitment to delivering powerful and provocative sessions!” — George Tsiatis, CEO & Co-Founder of the Resolution Project.

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For more information,  
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