

REPORT

The State of Our Democracy: An Interactive Art Exhibit

By Elaine Kessler

The 2022 Flinn-Brown Convention was held Friday, November 4, 2022 at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix. Gathered in the Dorrance Center were 124 Flinn-Brown Fellows attending from across the state for presentations and conversations about “The State of Our Democracy.”

Objectives:

An interactive art exhibit was designed to cultivate conversation, collaboration, data, and engagement. As participants experienced the flow of the exhibit - making their way to each work of art and to each design thinking-based exercise - they were to consider the theme: The State of Our Democracy, from the vantage points of their social identities, current and possible paradigms for reality, institutional policies, and networks for change.

Participants were to share their thoughts, reactions, and insights to the exhibit with their collaborators. They were to record their responses at each station. All of the insights have been gathered and compiled here.

Participants were reminded that there were no right or wrong answers. Participants were asked to consider who they are today and how they can help us realize the democracy we want for the future.

Results:

Given the breadth and scope of responses to these questions, the responses are visually represented in this document as word clouds emphasizing any words that were oft repeated. Responses were organized into documents pertaining to each question; each of which was then processed by word cloud software highlighting repeated words or phrases.

Each question garnered 50+ responses.

The *questions* presented themes related to revolutionary love, democratic hope, and *citizen-ing*. The *responses* represent a variety of perspectives delineating motifs centered on collaboration, civic participation, hope in our youth/future, mentorship, health, and inclusivity.

Station Six, Part A:

Valarie Kaur says "...revolutionary love is a force for social justice." She says that "Loving our opponents requires us to love ourselves."

Participants were asked to answer the question: IN THE CONTEXT OF BEING A DEDICATED CITIZEN, How can you love yourself better?

Notable Trends: Self care. Health first. Boundaries. Forgive. Prioritize.



Station Six, Part B:

Valarie Kaur says that “Stories help us see no strangers.” She asks: “Who have we not yet tried to love?”

Participants were asked to answer the question: IN THE CONTEXT OF IDENTITY POLITICS, WHO HAVE YOU NOT YET TRIED TO LOVE?

Notable Trends: The closed minded. MAGA.



What now?

A potential follow up endeavor would be to invite curious fellows to reconvene based on individual station questions, or on the exhibit as a whole, to discuss the responses in further detail.

An outcome of this specific gathering might be to create an action plan to engage and elevate the Flinn-Brown network in areas that they say are important to them: inclusion, mentoring, celebrating civic participation, sharing knowledge, and advocacy efforts.

This report may be shared with participants.

Thank you

Thank you for the opportunity to design, produce, and deliver an interactive art exhibit for the 2022 Flinn-Brown Convention. We hope you found the exhibit energizing and the responses insightful.

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