

Lift Every Voice

How can we lift our voices to advocate for a more compassionate, just, and democratic country and world?

Book 3: Democratic Skills and Practices:



Overview



Voices Institute

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To Voice Institute



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...a call to action for those who want to fight it (racism) and build a world where black lives do, in fact, matter.

—Alicia Garcia,
Co-founder of
Black Lives Matter

Lift Every Voice

How can we lift our voices to advocate for a more compassionate, just, and democratic country and world?

1. Democratic Voice

2. Community Organizing

Book 3:
Democratic Skills
and Practices

Register
to
VOTE

3. Register and Vote

CITIZENSHIP
AND
CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

6. Civil Disobedience

5. Use the Courts

4. Lobby Elected Officials



Voices Institute



Black Lives Matter was created as a response to state violence and anti-black racism and a call to action for those who want to fight it and build a world where black lives do, in fact, matter.

—Alicia Garcia, Co-founder of Black Lives Matter

“Alicia Garza (born January 4, 1981) is an American civil rights activist and writer known for co-founding the international Black Lives Matter movement. She has organized around the issues of health, student services and rights, rights for domestic workers, ending police brutality, anti-racism, and violence against transgender and gender non-conforming people of color. Her editorial writing has been published by The Guardian, The Nation, Rolling Stone, and Truthout. She currently directs Special Projects at the National Domestic Workers Alliance and is the Principal at the Black Futures Lab.”

—Wikipedia

Book 3: Democratic Skills and Practices Overview

Introduction to *Lift Every Voice*



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We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the **better angels of our nature.**

—*Abraham Lincoln's First Inaugural Address*



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I've long talked about the battle for the soul of America. We must restore the soul of America. Our nation is shaped by the constant battle between our better angels and our darkest impulses. It is time for our better angels to prevail.

—*Election Eve Speech by President-Elect Joe Biden (Nov. 7, 2020)*

The United States today is very divided and polarized. *Lift Every Voice* seeks to help overcome this division by providing a resource center of democratic competencies (democratic values, skills, and knowledge) that can help heal and unite our country, that can help restore the soul of our country, and that can help guide our country in the future.

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The better angels of our nature are the democratic values that we can embrace, and which can unite and guide us as a country!

Overview of Five Democratic Competencies

Lift Every Voice promotes and teaches five Democratic Competencies. These competencies include the values, skills, and knowledge we need to create a more democratic society and country. Each of the five books in Lift Every Voice presents one of these competencies.

Book 1: Democratic Values includes the democratic values that can guide the growth of democracy in our country. We argue that two of the most important values are love and freedom.

Book 2: Social and Emotional Skills includes the skills that can help bring more love and freedom into our society such as social perspective taking and social problem solving.

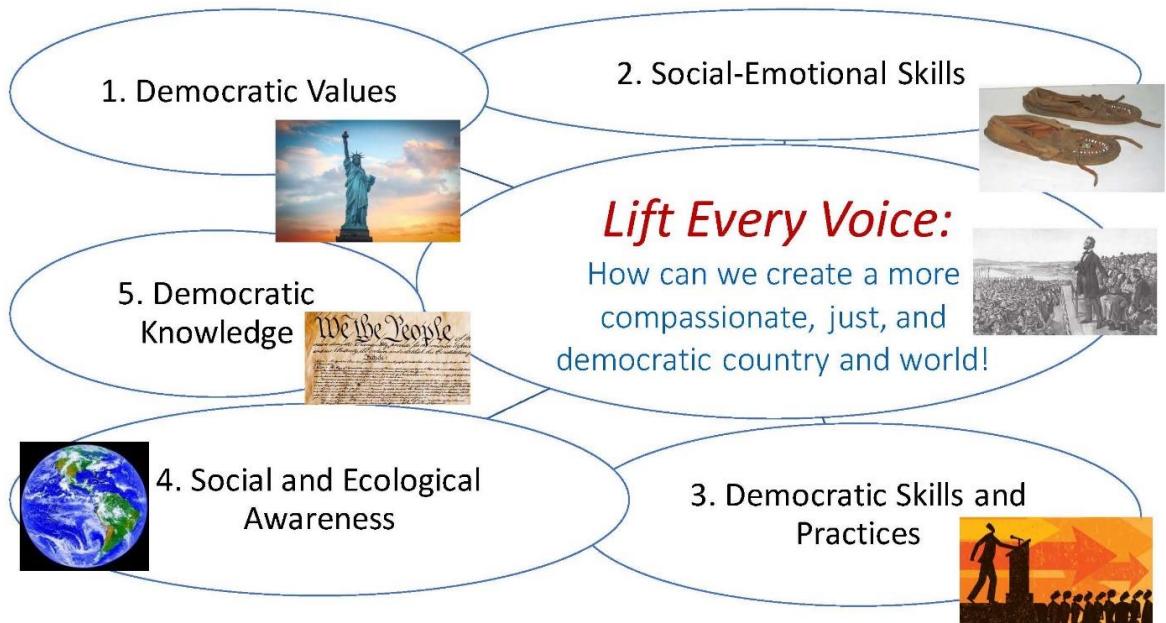
Book 3: Democratic Skills and Practices includes the skills we need to participate in the civic life of our communities and our society such as learning to advocate, discuss, and debate ways to solve major social and ecological problems.

Book 4: Social and Ecological Awareness helps us to explore the social, economic, and political features of our country so that we can more effectively advocate ways to improve it.

And in **Book 5: Democratic Knowledge**, we explore in depth the major features of our democratic government: U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, Constitutional Principles, the Amendments, the Branches of Government, major court cases, and the responsibility of state and local governments.

With these Democratic Competencies, we will be able to use them to advocate ways to solve major social and ecological problems in our country, such as how to prevent gun violence, how to stop the pandemic, how to stop police violence, and how to stop global warming.

Book 3: Democratic Skills and Practices Overview



Overview of Book 3: Democratic Skills and Practices

The third Democratic Competency focuses on Democratic Skills and Practices.

What are the skills and practices we need to master in order to make our voices heard in our democratic society?

In this competency, we highlight seven related democratic skills and practices.

Democratic Voice: Lift Your Voice Against Social Injustices, Lift Your Voice for a More Compassionate, Just, and Free Society. Most fundamentally, democracy, as rule of the people, means that the people must be heard--they must be able to lift their voices, to describe injustices, and to advocate for a more compassionate, just, and free society. This means we need to learn to tell our stories, express our opinions, and deliver speeches. It also means listening, discussing, debating, and ultimately compromising. Authoritarian governments can issue decrees without listening to us. Democracy requires that we engage in discussions with the hope of finding common ground based on respect for everyone.

Community Organizing, Demonstrating, and Marching: Coming Together To Make Our Voices Heard. As individuals all of our voices need to be heard and respected, but most often bringing about fundamental improvement in our society requires people to come together, in significant numbers, to gain the attention of the larger society and our political leaders.

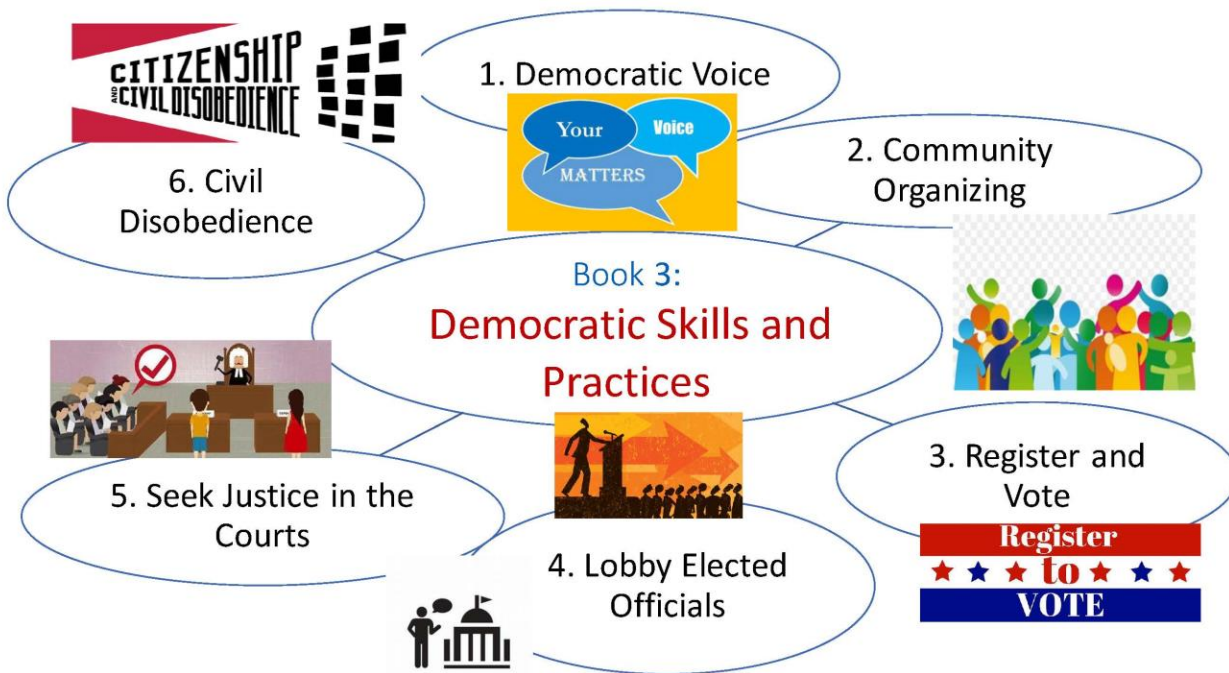
Book 3: Democratic Skills and Practices Overview

Register and Vote: Make Your Voice Heard With Your Vote. Ultimately, the most direct and fundamental way we can assure that our voices are heard is through registering to vote and then to vote for the candidates and/or referenda that we support.

Lobby Elected Officials and Government Agencies: Hold Elected Officials Accountable. It is not enough to elect candidates or pass laws, we have to be vigilant and monitor whether these officials and agencies are actually abiding by and implementing these laws.

Use the Judicial System: Fight For Your Rights and Your Causes in the Courts. If our laws are unjust or if they are not fully implemented, we can use the courts at all levels to protect your rights or overcome injustices.

Civil Disobedience: Refuse to Obey Unjust Laws. Finally, if change and reform cannot be achieved in the different branches of government, we have the right and the duty to refuse to obey unjust laws. We can lift our voices, non-violently, in the streets and in the jails.



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Here is a brief summary of the seven social-emotional skills advocated for in *Lift Every Voice*.

1. **Democratic Voice:** Lift Your Voice Against Social Injustice, Lift Your Voice for a More Compassionate, Just, and Free Society



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Each time a man stands up for an ideal...he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope...

—Former Senator Robert F. Kennedy

2. **Community Organizing, Demonstrating, and Marching:** Coming Together To Make Our Voices Heard!



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The Stonewall Riots in New York City (1969) were the birth of the LGBTQ rights movement.

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3. Register and Vote: Make Your Voice Heard With Your Vote



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The issues that we know are mobilizing Latinos are health care, jobs and the economy because of covid, and racial and inequality among Blacks and Latinos, which among young people is the number one thing that is encouraging them to vote.

—*María Teresa Kumar, President, Voto Latino*

4. Lobby Elected Officials and Government Agencies: Hold Elected Officials Accountable



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When you become active in the system and communicate to your representatives, and they don't vote in accordance with your values, your responsibility is to support candidates who will.

—*Joan Blades, Co-Founder Moveon.org*

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5. Use the Judicial System: Fight for Your Rights and Your Causes in the Courts

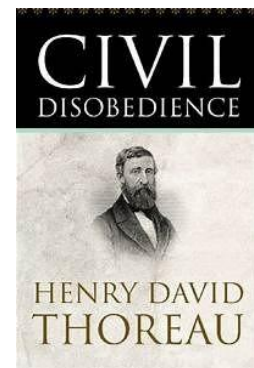
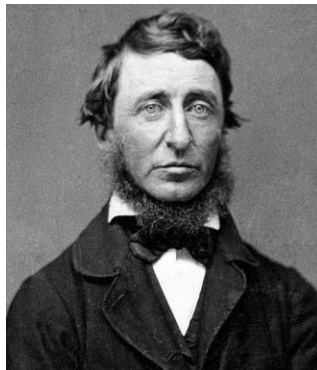


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Where you see wrong or inequality or injustice, speak out, because this is your country. This is your democracy. Make it. Protect it. Pass it on.

—Former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall

6. Civil Disobedience: Refuse to Obey Unjust Laws



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Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also in prison.

—From "Resistance to Civil Government" by Henry David Thoreau

Democratic Skills and Practices Are the Tools We Need to Master In Order to Help Our Democracy Flourish and to "Make Real the Promises of Democracy" As Advocated by Rev. Martin Luther King.



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Now is the time **to make real the promises of democracy**. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children."

—*Rev. Martin Luther King, The March on Washington*