

Lift Every Voice

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

Book 5: Democratic Knowledge:

We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

Article I.

Section 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

Section 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at least one Representative, and until such Enumeration shall be made, the State of New Hampshire shall be entitled to choose three, Massachusetts eight, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New York six, New Jersey four, Pennsylvania eight, Delaware one, Maryland one, Virginia ten, North Carolina five, South Carolina six, and Georgia three.

When vacancies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies. The House of Representatives shall choose their Speaker and other Officers, and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.

Overview



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Please cite *Lift Every Voice* as the source.

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First edition March 2023.

Published in the United States of America.

To Voice Institute



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We look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms. The first is freedom of speech....The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way.... The third is freedom from want....The fourth is freedom from fear . . . anywhere in the world.

— **Former President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the Midst of WWII**

Lift Every Voice

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



1. Founding Documents



2. Legislative Branch



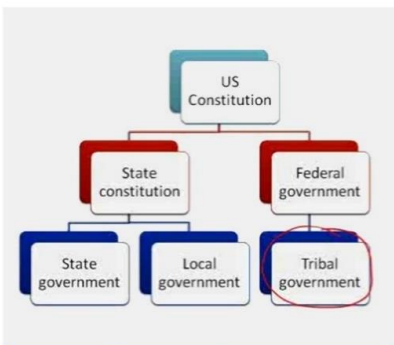
7. Rights and Responsibilities



Book 5:
Democratic Knowledge



3. Executive Branch



6. State & Local Government



5. Major Amendments, Laws, and Court Cases



4. Judicial Branch



Voices Institute



We look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want . . . everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear . . . anywhere in the world.

—Former President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the Midst of WWII

"Franklin Delano Roosevelt (January 30, 1882 – April 12, 1945), often referred to by his initials FDR, was an American politician who served as the 32nd president of the United States from 1933 until his death in 1945. A member of the Democratic Party, he won a record four presidential elections and became a central figure in world events during the first half of the 20th century. Roosevelt directed the federal government during most of the Great Depression, implementing his New Deal domestic agenda in response to the worst economic crisis in U.S. history. As a dominant leader of his party, he built the New Deal Coalition, which defined modern liberalism in the United States throughout the middle third of the 20th century. His third and fourth terms were dominated by World War II, which ended shortly after he died in office."

—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.

Book 5: Democratic Knowledge Overview



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.

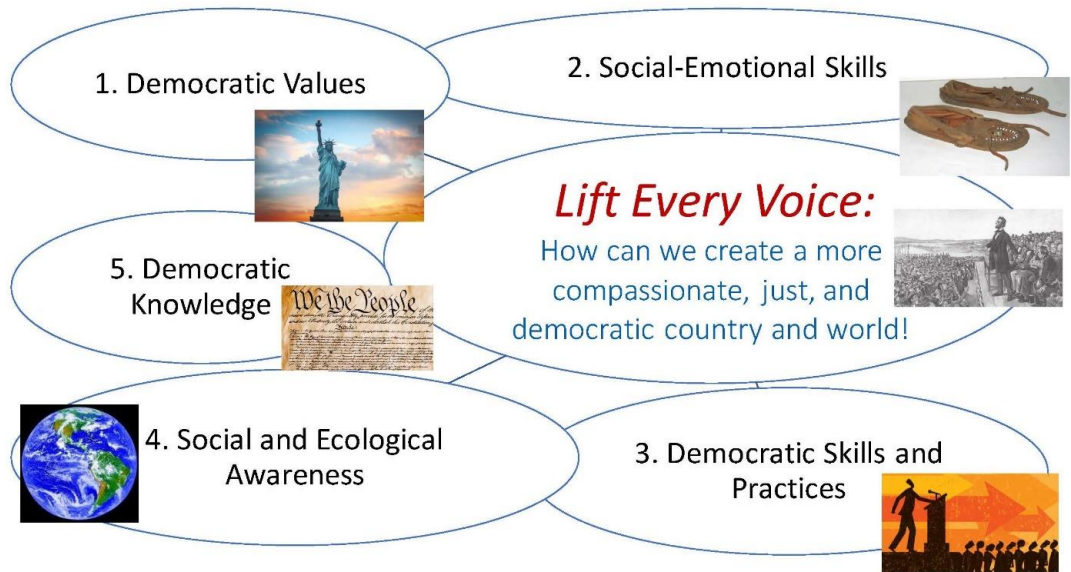
Book 3: Democratic Skills and Practices includes the skills we need to participate in the civic life of our communities and our society such as learning to advocate, discuss, and debate ways to solve major social and ecological problems.

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 5: Democratic Knowledge Overview



Overview of Democratic Knowledge

The Democratic Knowledge component of Lift Every Voice consists of six subcomponents which seek to provide you with an overall understanding of the organization and principles which guide our democratic government.

1. The Founding Documents: Support and Improve Our Constitution. We begin with reading and analyzing the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights and then review the democratic principles that guided the development of these documents.

2. The Legislative Branch: Transform Our Voices and Our Proposals Into Laws. We then focus on the three branches of our federal government beginning with the legislative branch which consists of the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. The Congress which refers to both houses of the legislative branch is primarily responsible for passing the laws and the budgets for our government and country.

3. The Executive Branch: Make Our Voices Heard by Our President. The President and the executive branch are responsible for enacting these laws and managing the disbursement of funds appropriated by the Congress.

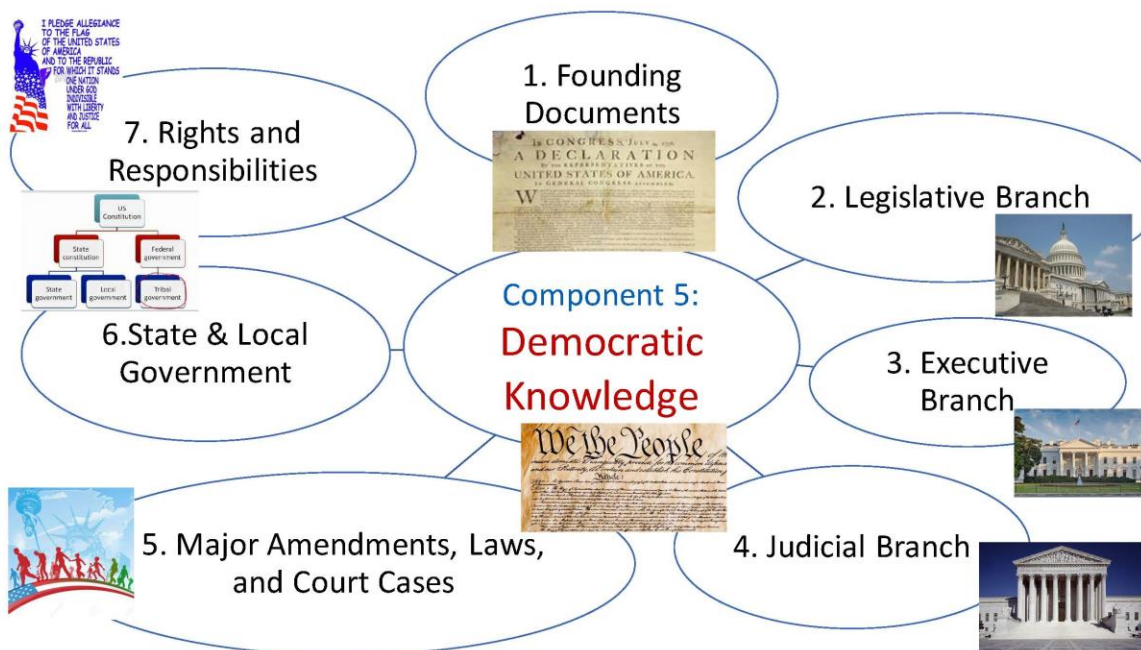
4. The Judicial Branch: Pursue Truth and Justice Through the Courts. At the national level the Supreme Court has the responsibility to resolve conflicts between the legislative and executive branches and to rule on broader legal issues which affect the whole country and to assure that the resolution of these issues is consistent with our constitution.

Book 5: Democratic Knowledge Overview

5. Major Amendments, Laws, and Court Decisions: Improve Our Constitution, Laws, an Constitution. These founding documents become the foundation for the ongoing growth of our democratic government. This includes first of all the passage of Amendments to the Constitution such as those providing freedom to the slaves and the vote to women. Then there are the laws passed by Congress such as the Civil Rights Act and the Affordable Care Act. Finally, there are the major court decisions, particularly by the Supreme Courts, such as the recent ruling upholding gay marriages.

6. State and Local Governments: Know and Monitor Your Local and State Elected Officials. Next, we will look at how our government is organized at state and local levels as well as at the federal level. The Constitution provides for a federal system of government that grants significant powers to the states and local government which provide most of the services that directly benefit the members (citizen and non-citizen alike) of our society.

7. Our Rights and Responsibilities: Lift Our Voices to Form a More Perfect Union. Finally, in a democracy, in a country founded on the rule of the people, all these founding documents and amendments, laws, and court cases have to put practiced by the citizens of our country. We have both rights, like freedom of speech, and responsibilities, like voting for our elected officials. Ultimately, our most important right is also our most important responsibility, that is to lift our voices to create a more perfect union for citizens and non-citizens alike.



Book 5: Democratic Knowledge Overview

Click on the headings below to read more in-depth about these different components of our democratic government.

1. The Founding Documents: Support Our Declaration of Independence and Constitution



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...We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

—*The United States Declaration of Independence*

2. The Legislative Branch: Transform Our Voices and Proposals Into Laws



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Change Takes Courage!

—*Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez*

3. The Executive Branch: Lift Our Voices to the President



"If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.

”

It's the answer told by lines that stretched around schools and churches in numbers this nation has never seen; by people who waited three hours and four hours, many for the very first time in their lives, because they believed that this time must be different; that their voice could be that difference.

It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled – Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been a collection of Red States and Blue States: we are, and always will be, the United States of America...

—President Elect Barack Obama, Victory Speech, Nov. 4, 2008

Book 5: Democratic Knowledge Overview

4. The Judicial Branch: Pursue Truth and Justice Through the Courts



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I want to state upfront, unequivocally and without doubt: I do not believe that any racial, ethnic or gender group has an advantage in sound judging. I do believe that every person has an equal opportunity to be a good and wise judge, regardless of their background or life experiences.

—*Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor*

5. Major Amendments, Laws, and Court Decisions: Improve Our Constitution and Government



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Gotta have safety at our borders. We're a sovereign nation, gotta protect our borders. Make sure the workplace doesn't become a magnet for folks to be hired without the authorization. And then let's be realistic and sensible about how we approach all those folks who made America their home, established businesses, have children who have gone on to be valedictorians at their high school - and let's do these things in a very sensible way.

—*Xavier Becerra, Attorney General of California, Secretary of Health and Human Services*

Book 5: Democratic Knowledge Overview

6. State and Local Governments: Lift Our Voices to Our Local and State Elected Officials



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But for the first responders and public health experts, it feels very lonely on the frontline fighting this virus right now. Can you imagine if we had a White House that was leveling barriers and getting these vaccines to our nursing homes and to our hospitals, or if we had Congress that gave us the resources we need to build out the administration of these vaccines, or if everyone was simply on the same page and calling on all of us to rise to this challenge, how many businesses would be saved? How many lives would be spared? How many jobs would be maintained?

—Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitman, Press Conference Dec. 29, 2020

7. Our Rights and Responsibilities: Vote To Form a More Perfect Union



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I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.

—Oath of Allegiance of the United States

We need to understand the historical growth of democracy in our country and how to use the tools of our democratic government to improve our communities, our country, and the world.