

PENNY U – POST-ELECTION: WHAT'S NEXT?

What should a concerned, engaged citizen do?

SUMMARY: table conversations at Penny U Town Hall Seattle, November 15, 2016

AREAS OF FOCUS / SPHERES OF ACTION

Hold the media accountable / understand the news we consume

- Use different sources of news, “choose your news”
- Get outside own technological bubble; read *The Big Sort*, learn how much we’re “sorted”
- Figure out how to fight inaccurate/false information, fight fake news
- Identify biases in news sources
- Learn how money and advertising control the news
- Support nonprofit journalism, support free media, subscribe to a paper
- Don’t let media “normalize” Trump, it’s unacceptable
- Learn what’s going on internationally
- Be aware of how social media filters the news
- Get after media to broadcast positive messages & education
- How can we change the national conversation?

Protect individual and civil rights/fight racism, sexism, LGBTQ bashing, and more

- Help people feel safe
- Stand up for/with people of color, LGBTQ
- How do we address prejudice & hatred? How do we respond to bullies?
- Protest against policies that promote hate & violate rights
- Fight white supremacy
- Address anti-choice movement
- Daily acts of kindness to people who look different from you.
- How do we have meaningful conversation about race with all sides heard & respected?
- Can we use our privilege to give others a place at the table?
- Share truths & articles on racism
- Intentionally engage diverse people
- Provide sponsorship & funding to immigrants
- Fight misogyny, classism
- Create a venue for people’s anger
- Speak up whenever there’s a hate crime
- Speak up if someone is being harassed

Build understanding & develop conversation with the “other side”

- Build relationships with people, not just around politics
- Bridge gap between eastern and western Washington, reach out, ask their views
- Speak about our values, find empathy
- Read books written for “the other side.” Connect with family/fiscal conservatives. How?
- How can we engage people who voted for Trump? Read *The Art of the Deal*
- Don’t demonize Trump supporters, target his team/administration.
- Make ourselves open to the “other side,” allow ourselves to be uncomfortable
- Can we have non-emotional conversations, with people holding opposite opinions?
- Listen deeply, not to advance own agenda but to understand
- What are culturally relevant ways to approach them?

- Hold as many of these conversations face-to-face as possible
- Understand the role of economics, and the needs of the economically disenfranchised; since the 1980
- Listen to other viewpoints, have conversations with people you wouldn't usually speak to
- Onus is on us to start the conversation. Listen to labor
- Learn source of the fear that defined this election, learn about their pain, anger, mistrust
- Ask "why?" We need to have these discussions.
- Understand the "enemy" – the fear, disenfranchisement, longing for the way things were.
- Understand the root causes of fear. Share *your* fear for what may happen.
- Volunteering time can often further understanding better than direct, abrupt conversation
- Connect across all lines, identify common ground, get out of our bubble. How?
- Work against class divisions
- Get a pen pal in a red state, tell your story

Review, revise, change the U.S. voting & election process

- Work to change the electoral college system. It is a big part of the problem.
- Change the electoral college process at a state level
- Why don't more people vote? Work to get more people to vote next time. Recruit youth
- Fight gerrymandering. The 2018 election is crucial for redistricting.
- The National Popular Vote needs to pass
- Increase understanding of our political & electoral process—example, ex-cons can vote
- Hold forums for candidates to express views
- Advocate for rank voting
- Fight Citizens United
- Ask, are we still a democracy? Audit our system.
- Set term limits
- Fight for voters' rights

Bolster the Democratic Party and communicate with current legislative bodies

- Support & communicate with our own officials, representatives
- Become active in the local Democratic Party to refocus on labor rights, access to education, economic opportunity, tax fairness; attend district meetings
- Reshape the Democratic Party, co-opt the party's need to rebrand itself
- Crowdfund the research that politicians need.
- We need a dynamic "change" candidate
- Advocate for legislation to reduce economic inequality & to improve access to education
- Write your member of congress, personally
- Talk to state legislators, call and write. Do we want them to stalemate on specific issues?
- Run for office
- Support Democrats' efforts to raise minimum wage
- Work on the NEXT election in two years.
- We need to transform Congress

Organize to change public policy from outside the current party structure

- Traditional political action alone is not sufficient.
- Two-party system is tribal. It doesn't facilitate coalition-building
- The two-party system silences anyone not part of the system
- Why do we have essentially only two parties? Consider third parties.

Educate ourselves/improve our education system

- Understand U.S. politics first
- Engage young people in high school
- “Democracy is only as good as an educated citizenry”
- Broaden our historical narrative
- Increase education on policy and politics
- Learn how to politely debate around difficult conversations
- Also educate elders and parents
- Make presentations at schools, and provide resources to teachers
- Teach children about tolerance, to be tolerant
- Bring back civics as a required course

Be part of actions around specific issues. Many causes are interconnected.

- Protect the environment, address climate change
- Environmental degradation is an assault on human rights
- Immigration
- Abortion rights

Hold face-to-face conversations within & between specific efforts

- Talk with each other. “If we can’t talk to each other, nothing can get accomplished”
- Stoke the fire with like-minded individuals. Host political meet-ups, Swedish “study circle.” Include young children. Bring dialogue back to America.
- Help “move fear into political courage”
- Get “offline” conversations going, create safe spaces for dissent
- Engage in nuanced conversations
- Have facilitated conversations with people on the other side of the aisle
- Our fundamental values & institutions will decay if we can’t have discourse

Help coordinate many different efforts and a more cohesive movement

- Develop overall coordination of many different efforts
- Expand the choir, bring more people to activism, we need action on multiple fronts
- “Politicize” liberals rather than convert Trump supporters
- Figure out how to have a more cohesive movement
- How do we make this movement “smarter”? and more disciplined
- How do we engage as many people as possible & still maintain cohesion?
- What are the big ideas that could be shared?
- We haven’t developed a message. We need to be consistent. Focus & sharpen?
- Learn basic strategies of movement building
- Name the commonalities; tension among us is not pathological
- Could this be a time of optimism?
- How can a progressive umbrella be inclusive going forward?
- We need goals & vision, we need more critical thinking and respectful deliberation
- Keep attending events like this, keep hosting them, bring young people to them
- Create a digest or resource for “what to do”
- We should learn how the 30-year-long, right-wing, conservative movement got strong; it was a long-term, disciplined, multi-pronged strategy.
- Expect this to be a 15-year fight
- Engage in Transformational Activism”
- Rebuild the public sector / civil society / sense of the common good.

KINDS OF ACTION regardless of the specific focus or sphere of action

Protest – *In one form or another, this was mentioned a lot*

- Demonstrations, boycotts, rallies, songs
- Piggy-back on existing forms of congregation (churches, schools, etc.)
- Peacefully make it known that hate is not acceptable
- Turn a march into a message
- Show up, just show up, bring friends
- Speak up
- Backup protestors in simple ways (I'll bail you out, feed your cat)
- Boycott companies that support Trump (list by Shawn King)
- Movements, like Occupy, need to be more organized
- Pete Seeger

Donate – *Came up over and over as a response*

- “When in doubt, donate”
- Donate to organizations and causes we believe in
- Host events to raise money for groups that are helping people
- Host a “booth fair” for these organizations.

Volunteer – *Volunteering came up repeatedly as a way to respond*

- Find one cause/fight, and put yourself behind it. (*said in various ways*)
- We each need to focus on our cause.

Organize – at neighborhood level, at national level, internationally

- In neighborhoods, for example, meet neighbors, organize block watches, coordinate donations, politicize little libraries

Take personal action – *Many items under specific causes are also personal actions*

- Question your previous assumptions
- Protect your online identity
- Put a family member on your bank account in case you're arrested protesting
- Look at our own “shadow self,” “what is my inner D Trump?”
- Take little actions, something small and doable
- Don't slide back into complacency
- Become activist again
- Fuel yourself with positive, accurate information. Confrontation is not the answer.
- Watch your conversations online; there's no anonymity there
- Vote, participate
- We can't feel it's so bad that we can give up.
- Stay focused, fight personal sense of hopelessness.
- Figure out what will sustain you in your activism