

Visioning a Future for the Common Good

Even when the media is flooded with negativity and bad news, we must persevere with hope because we need it now, more than ever.

Hope and Vision are Necessary to Create Change

When Sisters conducted their “Lemonade Ministry” at the Democratic and Republican conventions, the question that was the most difficult for people to answer was “What gives you hope for our nation?” Instead of being able to imagine a positive future, people could only think of their fears and the worst-case-scenarios they heard on the news and from candidates. They had very little, if any, positive vision of the future as they headed to the polls for the 2016 election.

We cannot be Spirit-filled voters on Election Day if we are entirely motivated by worry or fear. We must also have a positive vision for a more just and compassionate future. In his [exhortation on holiness](#), Pope Francis says, “Complacency is seductive; it tells us that there is no point in trying to change things, that there is nothing we can do, because this is the way things have always been... Let us rethink our usual way of doing things; let us open our eyes and ears, and above all our hearts, so as not to be complacent about things as they are.”

May Pope Francis’s instruction open our minds to think of new ways of being in community with one another in our nation, and the federal policies that would support this vision. Your vision could focus on one issue area, or across many. Whatever it is, do not be held back by the limitations of our current reality. Then, let us share our vision with one another and use it as motivation to mobilize, organize, and vote on Election Day for the candidates who will bring our country closer to that vision.

Building a New Vision for Our Democracy: The Importance of Voting Rights

By U.S. Senator Tom Udall

This season, before an incredibly important election, we must reflect on the state of our democracy. Democracy represents more than a system of government. It is the sacred affirmation that each voice matters equally in one nation — and that a representative government must be of, by, and for the people.

But today, the American people are losing faith in our democracy. They see the evidence with their own eyes as the wealthy purchase influence in political campaigns and drown out the voices of the people. Voting rights are under assault, foreign adversaries interfere in our elections, and so-called public servants use their offices to help themselves and their friends — instead of the people they are supposed to work for.

Our voices do count. Our voices count when we vote in each election, especially this year. And they count when we organize, march, and speak out about injustice.

But there is no doubt that our democracy is in a crisis. Since coming to Congress in 1999, I’ve seen firsthand the corrosive influence that big money is having on our political system. The influx of

unlimited contributions and secret donations into campaigns has fueled the hyper-partisanship we see across the nation, including in Congress.

Special interests try to dominate the political agenda, to the detriment of the common good. This has obscured the fundamental values that should define our work. Values like social justice. Feeding the hungry. Helping the poor. Making peace. And caring for our earth.

The money in our politics fuels a disconnect between what people in our democracy want and what Congress is giving them. The people want action on climate change. The people want universal, affordable health care. Economic justice and food security for families. Commonsense gun safety laws. And they demand that we welcome the stranger and treat immigrants as human beings.

These are priorities for the vast majority of Americans. And there is a direct link between Congress's inaction on these issues and barriers to the ballot box and our broken campaign finance system.

We live in a representative democracy. But Congress is not representing the people. The 1% are heard, while the other 99% are not.

In Congress, we are fighting for reforms to make our democracy work: increasing access to the ballot box, putting an end to the influence of secret money in elections, and raising the ethical bar in government.

The For the People Act (H.R.1) makes it easier to register to vote and to cast a ballot. In a society where special interests artificially widen and sustain our divisions, it has never been more important to ensure that each and every voice is heard. H.R.1 also returns our campaign finance system to the hands of the people, shining a light on secret campaign contributions and empowering small donors.

We need to put an end to the idea that money equals speech and reign in an out-of-control campaign finance system. And the only way to do that is to exercise our most fundamental and sacred democratic right — the right to vote.

Our democracy cannot be fully realized unless we, the people, vote. We deserve a representative democracy, with elected leaders who understand our concerns and are committed to fight for all voices to be heard. For our common values. And for the future of our democracy in this election and all the elections to come.

Senator Tom Udall represents New Mexico, and is a champion of restoring voting rights to marginalized groups for a more equal and just democracy.

We Pray

Close your eyes.
Place your hand over your heart.
Take a moment to feel your heartbeat.

Feel its strength...
Feel its complexity...

Your heart connects you to your ancestors. The same people who labored for their vision of a just world.

Sit this way for a few minutes.

When you're done, keep your hand over your heart and recite this prayer:

During these difficult times,
 We recall the labor of our ancestors
 We pray for strength of heart.
 We pray for our labor for justice.
 So many of us have embarked on the journey
 Of working for a just world for all.

When we began this work,
 We were overfilled with the imagination
 Of what that just world would look like,
 But through obstacles, policies, elections, deportations, and deaths;
 Our vision of a just world became blurry
 And has seemed almost impossible.

It's not.

We must push on.
 We must remind ourselves what that just world looks like.
 We must share our vision of that just world with
 our colleagues, friends, community,
 and most importantly with the next generation.
 We must remember that vision when we feel it is impossible
 We pray for strength of heart.
 We pray for our labor for justice.
 We pray to never forget what that just world looks like.

Written by José Arnulfo Cabrera

José Arnulfo Cabrera is the director of education and advocacy for migration for the Ignatian Solidarity Network.

Take Action

Every night during Nuns on the Bus trips, there is a town hall meeting where local residents share their hopes for their communities with Sisters and their neighbors. It's critical to think about and share our vision for positive change, so that we can begin planning how to make them a reality.

Join NETWORK for a **Digital Town Hall** to gather with other members of our Spirit-filled network and share your vision for the future of our country!

Thursday, March 26, 2020 from 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM EDT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4824737692720245261>

If you can't join the Digital Town Hall, we still want to hear about your vision. Comment on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/NETWORKLobby) or tweet at us (@NETWORKLobby).