

DRAFT RADIO SHOW, SEGMENT OR PODCAST CONCEPT

The Civic Imagination:

Civic Faith, Leadership, Art and Science for Making a Better World

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Note: This could be a separate show or perhaps a regular part of an existing show in the lineup of WAMU, WPFW, or a local college station.

Most of us would like to do our part to make a better world. But it's scary, or we feel we can do nothing, or it's discouraging when our experiences and results don't match up to our expectations. Volunteer rates and giving rates are flat. "Idealism" seems to be a dirty word, or one that only a few feel comfortable recognizing as an important value. Or we'd rather keep hoping beyond hope that somehow technology or the "other political party" will save the day. Ok.

But what if we are headed on a long downhill slide toward major environmental, social, economic and political failure if we don't recognize that there are no panaceas and that we need to do more? What if the events in Ferguson and our divisive political landscape presage worse to come? Muddling along has its limits.

But perhaps we can do better, can appeal to "the better angels of our nature," as Abe Lincoln put it. Perhaps there ARE better ways to organize our lives and communities and economy. We can't prove it scientifically but there's ample circumstantial evidence in both research and all around us if we take the time to look, think and reflect. Whether you want the science to prove it or are willing to have faith in the possibility because to do so gives us a sense of purpose -- and to do otherwise means there's little chance for a better future for our children.

This show will explore this terrain in detail. It will include segments for both the mind and heart, stories (from the past and present) and data. Unlike other shows, our goals are not merely to inform or entertain, but to be part of the network of real people thinking and working on these issues to make a better world. (CPB's American Graduate initiative seems to provide a limited example of how radio can be used to support work on the ground but the Civic Imagination, if successful, would be equal parts radio (with a rich website of course) and meaningful civic engagement on the ground.)

Ideally, this would become a national show combining national segments alongside, say, 30 minutes of local content organized around the proposition that we need to change our civic culture if we are to have a thriving democracy, flourishing communities and a responsible approach to climate change and other issues in coming decades.

Each show would combine:

1 - "Big think" interviews with experts focused especially on the need to move beyond short-term quick fixes.

2 - Inspiring or thought-provoking national and local stories about nonprofit organizations, individuals, or social enterprises.

3 - Tie-ins to action on the ground that could make these shows the basis for discussion and action: "Here's how you can get involved today."

4 - A segment produced by a civic group -- high school (is Youth Voices a good model?), college, or community group or organization. It could be locally based or highlight a model from another community.

Ideally, the connection to activities outside the studio would include:

- Regular updates from projects like the Tutoring and Mentoring Initiative on its progress, challenges, and needs. "Click the button to sign up as a tutor or to help with the next community canvass..." (A "serial" on a couple of individual social entrepreneurs' progress might also be interesting.)
- Opportunities to give or volunteer to specific organizations that may have been featured or mentioned on the show (or not?).
- Opportunities to join "neighborhood/civic leadership circles" - The show could team with local colleges, bookstores, civic clubs, and nonprofits to provide articles, videos, books or other content. (See Civic Leadership Project concept paper and <http://www.civicLeadershipProject.org> for more details.)

Ultimately, the goal is to help create a civic culture by providing a common narrative; a language for thinking about big questions, our roles and responsibilities as individuals; and a "common faith," as John Dewey put it, that can sustain a 21st century democracy.