



**“Are We Enough?”**  
**Sermon by Eric Liu • Civic Saturday**  
**El Centro De La Raza • Seattle, WA • June 2, 2018**

I’m so gratified to be here with you this morning at El Centro de la Raza, and especially to be here at Plaza Roberto Maestas.

Roberto has been gone eight years now but he remains so vivid to me in his gestures, the texture of his voice, his knowing and mischievous laugh. I feel like I could call him for coffee later today and we would sit out on Beacon Avenue and he’d riff on all that’s happening in our city. For those of you who never met him or have no idea who he was or why this place is named for him, let me tell you about Roberto Maestas.

Roberto was one of the best civic improvisers I ever knew. Born into poverty in Depression-era New Mexico and raised by his grandparents, he ran away at 14 and became a migrant farmworker in eastern Washington. Eventually he hustled his way west to Seattle and got himself through high school while working odd industrial jobs on late shifts. He eventually earned a degree in Spanish at the University of Washington, and became a teacher at Seattle’s Franklin High School.

It was there, during the 1960s, that his evolution into a firebrand revolutionary began. He became a vocal leader in the emerging Chicano movement. He joined black student activist Larry Gossett, Native American leader Bernie Whitebear, and Asian American leader Bob Santos to create multiracial coalitions for justice in education, policing, immigration, and other issues. Together they became masters of organizing and direct action. These so-called “Four Amigos” were bonded by personal chemistry. But they also recognized that in predominantly white Seattle they were stronger together.

This was particularly the case for Seattle’s small, dispersed Latino community. Maestas sought a way to galvanize Latinos into a visible sense of shared fate. So in October 1972, he and over seventy other activists entered and took over the abandoned Beacon Hill School, which had been shuttered because of declining enrollments. The aging building lacked heat, electricity, running water, or supplies. But it now had occupants (or at least occupiers). The activists proclaimed it “El Centro De La Raza” – which they translated, strategically, as the Center for People of *All* Races, not *the* race.

They secured a commitment from the school superintendent that they would not be forcibly evicted, and from there they began to negotiate. As the talks got underway, the activists organized educational and artistic projects in the building, from English lessons to mural-making, to show what El Centro could be. They also organized rallies at the City Council and in the streets. Along the way, Maestas and a young fellow occupier named Estela Ortega were married, in the unheated school gymnasium. Three months later, the district agreed to lease the property to the activists for \$1 a year.

From that point on, El Centro became a civic hub and a political force. Combining the spirit of the urban crusader Jane Addams and the revolutionary Cuban poet Jose Martí, with a dose of the Black Panther Party, El Centro created a space for low-income immigrant families that was equal parts settlement house, people's school, child care center, free breakfast program, and activist proving ground.

Maestas led with zest and swagger. He was unafraid to confront community leaders he felt weren't moving quickly enough to include poor and brown people. He marched and protested, often with the other Four Amigos. But he mastered the inside game as well. Fiesty public challenges would be followed by subtle private negotiations. He cultivated working relationships with business and philanthropic insiders. His office became a necessary stop for aspiring political candidates.

By the time of its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in 2007, El Centro de la Raza was serving many thousands of people annually through over 45 different programs. It had a strong presence as an advocate for immigrants and poor communities of color. It had become a key conduit of the local power structure. Governors, mayors, councilmembers all paid homage at the anniversary, as the restless Maestas worked the room all night.

Roberto died in 2010 of lung cancer. Estela Ortega, who had been running things day-to-day, took over formally as El Centro's executive director. She would never say it, but Estela has become a full-fledged member of the city power structure. She is wired into City Hall. She doesn't have to raise her voice to get things done in this town.

Estela decided after taking over to launch a legacy project: a festive plaza, adjacent to the old schoolhouse she and Roberto had once occupied, with street-level retail, a community center, light rail, affordable housing for hundreds of low-income residents. The project opened last year. It's called Plaza Roberto Maestas, and here we are.

Now, why did I tell you so much about this place and this person? Because I believe that memory matters, and that it's important to honor our elders and those who build our institutions. And because at *every* Civic Saturday, whether here in Seattle or in Nashville or Des Moines, Iowa or in Atlanta three weeks from now, our approach is to name the layers of history beneath our feet and to remind ourselves that there is never in America a truly blank canvas, never a second act that was not corrupted by the first.

But another reason why I tell you about Roberto and Estela is that they embody the spirit of perpetual revolution, which is of course the essence of the American idea. Coming out of the liberation movements of the 1960s, they were at the practical, useful cutting edge of the counterculture.

And I submit to you that we gathered here today are the new counterculture. In a culture of celebrity worship and consumerism, we stand for service and citizenship. In an age of hyperindividualism, we practice collective action and common cause. In a time of fundamentalism and showy righteousness, we stand for discernment and humility. In the smog of hypocrisy and situational ethics, we still live and breathe the universal timeless values and ideals of the Tao, of the Golden Rule, of the Declaration.

That is radical. We who choose to show up on a Saturday morning for fellowship and friend-making and skill-honing and power-building, we are at the cutting edge of the counterculture now. If we do our jobs right, we will spark a great civic awakening all across this country. A renewal of people power and a replenishment of civic character. If we don't, we may realize to see that the decades we have been alive will turn out to have been the blip, the exception, and that American political life is returning to the nasty, brutish, corrupt condition of the 1820s or the 1850s or the 1880s.

So today, in the countercultural spirit of Roberto – a spirit of play, of war, of art, and of love – I want to ask a simple question.

Are we enough?

Are we who gather here and others like us who show up for Civic Saturdays, are we enough to undo the toxic effects of concentrating wealth and the culture of hoarding? Are we enough to fight the imperialism of the market and the addiction of narcissism? Are we enough to make our country live up to its promise as a city upon a hill? And what about *this* city, built upon seven hills?

Let me tell you first why I worry whether we are enough, then let me tell you why I still have hope.

### **Why I Worry**

When the great civil rights organizer Ella Baker said, "Strong people don't need strong leaders," she was referring obliquely to MLK, with whom she often disagreed over how hierarchical or decentralized the movement ought to be. She is not famous today but she was right. The corollary, of course, is that weak people do need strong leaders.

One measure of whether we the people are strong or weak is how susceptible we are to viruses. How robust is the civic immune system, and how resistant to infection? The

infection is called racism or white nationalism or misogyny or nativist scapegoating populism. But the precursor virus now deeply rooted in the body politic is absolutism. Absolutism kills. And our viral load of absolutism is high and getting higher.

On Monday Jeff Sessions, the attorney general of the United States, detailed a “zero tolerance” policy for people attempting illegally to cross the border into the U.S. Every such migrant, he said, would now be subject to immediate prosecution.

That got me angry, because many of these migrants are seeking asylum, which is not a crime; because migrant parents who are being detained as criminals are thus being separated from their children; and because it was the cold-blooded goal of this administration to use well-publicized separations to deter future migration.

But then I got to thinking about all the ways “zero tolerance” appears in American life, in law and norms, and I realized that it’s not just in this president’s immigration policies. It’s everywhere. It started with zero-tolerance policies in schools in the mid-1990s. Bring a gun to school, or drugs, and you’d be suspended. Boom. Bring a gun-shaped key chain to school, or ibuprofen for cramps, and you might be suspended too. Wait, what?

This absolutist logic was a response to the anxieties of the day about crime and delinquency. About law and order – and race. It found its way into three-strikes-you’re-out criminal laws and sentencing guidelines that made imprisonment without parole automatic. And even though many people now admit that these policies have resulted in a school-to-prison pipeline that has fed a new Jim Crow system of mass incarceration of brown and black men, Americans have not fallen out of love with zero tolerance.

To the contrary. Our society has doubled down on it – and often in the name of social justice. Colleges, corporations, government agencies, and media outlets have adopted zero-tolerance policies against sexual harassment and assault, racism, bullying, hate speech. The omnipresence of iPhones and the contagious righteousness of social media mean that every single day brings forth a new moral outrage, a new occasion for us to declare “There should be zero tolerance for this!”

As a mode of justice, zero tolerance has primordial appeal. It simplifies. It sends a clear message about where moral norms stand. It creates solidarity and power among those who assert and enforce those norms. When Roseanne tweets what she tweeted, or when the video emerges of the Starbucks manager calling the cops, or when it comes out that Harvey Weinstein is a power-abusing sexual predator, and then we share our outrage about the incidents on social media, it can feel immensely satisfying to have a hand in administering the real-time punishment of shaming and social banishment.

But if you’ve ever seen an episode of *Black Mirror*, the show on Netflix that depicts an eerie near future in which the state does not need to be authoritarian because the *crowd* is, you will know that that feeling should be a warning.

The absolutism of our political culture today flattens the moral landscape. It smashes proportion and perspective and priority. Al Franken was not Donald Trump. Samantha Bee, who called Ivanka Trump the c-word, is not Roseanne – although MSNBC's Joy Reid, who has peddled 9/11 truther conspiracies about and cheered Iran's proposal to kick the Jews out of Israel, appears to be far more problematic than liberals want to admit. Meanwhile, on the day the Internet went crazy about Roseanne a report was published that over 4,600 American citizens died in Puerto Rico because of Hurricane Maria and the administration's half-hearted response to it. Who noticed?

This unwillingness to make distinctions becomes an *inability* to make distinctions, which then clears the field for moral relativism – indeed, for malevolent moral relativism.

Enter Donald Trump. One of his savant-like gifts is that he intuits that he more than anyone will benefit from the obliteration of moral proportion and perspective. That's why his response to the Roseanne flap was to pardon the bigoted, outrage-spewing felon Dinesh D'Souza. Cue the outrage to blunt the previous outrage! Our troll-in-chief is both the product and the creator of a culture of blind moral fury. And the blindness of it all – the reflexive contagious response of fury – makes authoritarianism ever more likely.

In part that's because in this kind of culture a hard callus forms over the nerve endings of our moral sense. John Kelly, the White House chief of staff, assured the public recently that the migrant children separated from their parents at the border would be just fine, that they'd be "put into foster care or whatever."

No phrase better captures the casual indifference and savage ignorance, the dehumanizing sociopathy that trickles down from John Kelly's boss. To them and their base, the prime threat is migration of nonwhite people from shithole countries into the United States and if deterring that threat means demonizing Central American migrants as criminals and misplacing children who shouldn't be here anyway, well, whatever.

Callousness is not just about cruelty, though. It is about shamelessness. Shame is a necessary part of a moral repertoire, and the absence of shame is sociopathy. But when our discourse – I'm sorry; our media-entertainment mob of instant weaponized judgment – is dominated by shame and attempts to shame, then eventually some proportion of the people will stop responding to shame altogether. They may even adopt an identity that takes pride in the thing meant to be shamed.

The overuse of shame has an effect like the overuse of antibiotics and antibacterial hand sanitizers: eventually, a resistant strain of angry righteous hate emerges, and we become defenseless against far more vicious infections than we see in normal times.

The worst part of a culture of absolutism is that it absolves us of the responsibility to know our own minds – and then it strips us of that responsibility. Zero tolerance for

unaccepted views is the mantra of a people who do not trust themselves to make good judgments. So they automate it. On/off. One/zero. Black/white. Zero tolerance is the perfect mantra for an age when more and more of our social interactions are automated, mediated by algorithm, unthinking and undiscerning.

We don't have to know what we think. We just need to know what we're supposed to think. This isn't just about national politics. Consider the debate about taxes and homelessness in Seattle. If you support the head tax you despise business. If you oppose the head tax you despise the homeless. Whichever tribe you are in, you despise the other. You should be ashamed to admit it when the other has a point. So you won't.

But isn't it possible *both* that Amazon and other big employers should be contributing more to address the consequences of unchecked growth *and* that our city government should be more effective at spending public money? Absolutist politics make pawns and symbols of people in a ping-pong game of whataboutism. Trump separates migrant parents and kids. But what about Obama – didn't he separate migrant siblings? Back and forth, on and on, while children remain lost or abandoned or trafficked into hell. Now that Seattle business leaders are pushing a referendum to repeal the head tax, we will argue back and forth, on and on, over whether we want taxes or jobs, while the number of homeless families and homeless deaths keeps rising.

I ask again: Are we enough?

You can see why I worry. I go around the country telling a story that as dysfunctional as DC has become, at least at the local level people are resisting tribalism and the Manichean moral absolutism of national politics; that at the local level there is no time for the Kabuki posturing and virtue signaling of national politics because you either are or are not going to get the problem fixed; and that, in fact, it will be practical problem-solvers from towns across America who will save America.

I confess to you that I tell that story these days with slightly less conviction. Adam Smith wrote about the "moral sentiments" that hold a society together. Tocqueville described the "habits of the heart" that held a young America together. But here's the thing: self-righteousness is as much a moral sentiment as duty and benevolence; dehumanizing rage can be as much a habit of the heart as compassion. Habits are nothing more than what we keep doing and keep indulging.

And we here in Seattle, because we have now become the most unequal city in the United States, surpassing San Francisco recently, we have developed the *bad* habits, the *unhealthy* moral sentiments of an ailing society. Our civic immune system is faltering. When you see the chanting and counter-chanting at neighborhood meetings, or the ironworkers shouting down Kshama Sawant, whose followers are often doing the shouting, you realize we have been infected.

But let me tell you why, despite all this, I still have hope.

## Why I Hope

I still have hope because last month our team went to New Orleans to lead our first CitizenFEST, a festive learning summit on civic power and civic character. We learned with and from so many unsung big citizens from the African American community who have been taking down Confederate monuments, forming story circles to face the everyday traumas of life in the Big Easy, creating mutual-aid networks to lift each other out of poverty, using step dance and chair fitness to boost health and civic health. Most were invited by Denise Graves, a faith leader and organizer who is honored and respected among the poor families of the city and who has seen so much and who, just when it seems she has grown weary, will say something simple and loving in quiet response to someone's pain or another's ignorance that works like acupuncture for everyone. Reverend Denise is the farthest possible opposite of President Donald.

I still have hope because when we were in Des Moines, Iowa to lead a Civic Saturday in May, we met with educators who are organizing and persisting even though they live in a state that forty years ago outlawed teachers' strikes and that forty days ago stripped unions of their leverage in collective bargaining by giving school districts and not arbitrators the final say in contract negotiations. They know the fight now is to convince rural and small-town school boards not to abuse that power – that Iowa must not go the way of Kansas and try to cut its way to quality teachers and schools. They labor under labor laws that remind you what a relative paradise for workers Washington state is. We in Washington have the right to have rights – which is the heart of citizenship.

I still have hope because this Thursday I went to Oakland and in a single afternoon I got together with Wendy MacNaughton, an illustrator-journalist and citizen artist, and we discovered that both of us had recently read *Let Us Praise Famous Men* and we asked what if we collaborated the way Walker Evans and James Agee did for that pioneering, uncategorizable book of text and image about the sharecropping South, and now she is traveling the country for a month to harvest stories; and then with Ann O'Leary, who was Hillary Clinton's top policy aide throughout the campaign and in the wake of that upheaval has re-planted herself in Oakland, refastened herself to civic purpose, and found new ways to be of service; and later with Mia Birdsong, a teacher and activist and urban farmer who keeps three hives of bees in her yard and shares honey with her neighbors on her block which has changed in eight years from 60 percent black to 10 percent but remains a place where her black children feel free and safe to play outside until suppertime, who organizes circles of black women who push each other to work on what they need to work on, who is writing a book about how young people of color are reimagining family; and then, just yesterday, with Jen Pahlka, who founded Code for America and convened a summit with 1,000 citizen technologists who are using their digital savvy to help ordinary citizens build power, fight for justice, and make

government more responsive to people. I told Jen and her Brigades, with Wendy in mind, that they were technologists and coders but what they had to offer wasn't coding skills so much as artist skills – the skills of seeing patterns, improvising solutions out of limited resources, experimenting and adapting perpetually – which are, of course, citizen skills. Wendy and Ann and Mia and Jen will give anyone hope.

I have hope because this week Illinois became the 37<sup>th</sup> state of the Union to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. And this means only one more state is needed to cross the constitutional threshold for ratification. Now, yes, the thirteen remaining states are the former Confederacy plus Arizona, Utah, and Oklahoma. So, not the most fertile ground. And, yes, there is debate about whether too much time has elapsed since most of the states ratified. But remember, in 1982 and the next thirty-five years the ERA was as dead as disco, the Pinto, and Seventies hairdos. Until it wasn't anymore. Until Hillary Clinton became the nominee and almost POTUS. Until record numbers of women decided to run for office. Until #MeToo. Until a few citizens in Nevada last year in Illinois this year imagined what it'd be like to get the ERA across the finish line.

I also have hope because my colleague Pete Peterson, who's the dean of the public policy school at Pepperdine, a Republican and former candidate for California secretary of state, has been organizing thoughtful reformers on the right for a movement called "a conservatism of connection" – a conservatism that does not worship the market, does not demonize government, does not scapegoat immigrants, but does make an affirmative case for why citizens empowered to help each other should be the solver of problems of first resort. Pete and I part ways on many policy questions. But his conservatism of connection, like our civic counterculture, is about a shared civic spirit and civic purpose that materialism and immediate gratification can never satisfy.

But let me bring it home now.

I still have hope because the improvisation and occupation that became El Centro de la Raza in 1972, is now, nearly a half-century later, the magnificent centerpiece of a vibrant Beacon Hill and a beacon for immigrants and people of all races. The murals painted on the walls back then have become the beloved community in the plaza today.

I still have hope because with us here today are some of the high school students from Bothell and Seattle and Kent who made the March For Our Lives happen nearly spontaneously and are now organizing the Vote For Our Lives campaign to get high school students statewide to register and vote. They are living proof of my third law of civic power, which is that power is infinite. In even the most seemingly stuck and rigged situations, it is entirely possible to generate brand new power out of thin air and to reset the equation of power – through the magic act of organizing.

I have hope because the other night I gave a talk at the UW convened by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The Academy was founded in 1780, by John Adams

during the Revolutionary War, and this was the 2,068<sup>th</sup> Stated Meeting of the American Academy, and because I'm a sucker for lineages, this gave me goosebumps. And after my lecture one of the most thoughtful questions came from a man who, it turns out, is running against my friend Jamie Pedersen, the state senator from the 43<sup>rd</sup> District. This fellow, Dan, is a conservative, a label he emphasized over Republican, and he realizes just how outnumbered he is in this district that centers around Capitol Hill. But he thinks Seattle has gone tax-crazy. He thinks local government is out of control. And unlike others who might think so too, he is putting himself forward to challenge an incumbent because he believes that's what a citizen should do.

I want to be clear. All these people from our city and others don't make me *optimistic*. They give me *hope*. There's a difference. Optimism is appropriate for situations where you have no hand in the outcome. I'm optimistic that the Yankees and the Mariners will be in the playoff hunt all season long. But in my optimism, I am only a spectator. Hope is appropriate for situations where you have something to do with how things turn out. I am hopeful that our country and our city will not collapse into the hyper-inequities of an extractive Third World society – but that's only because I can help shape the course of events. Hope implies agency. Hope demands that we not waste our power.

Our agency, our authorship of the city and the nation yet to be written, depends on our mutual commitment to pledge our lives, our fortunes, our sacred honor to an ideal that says we are all better off when we are all better off, that treats liberty as a responsibility and not as a way out of responsibility. Our agency is expressed in whether we will live like citizens or like customers, as an active people or a passive mass.

Will we love one another enough? Earlier this year our team launched a Civic Seminary, through which we're training and shaping two dozen leaders in 2018, ranging in age from their early twenties to their late sixties, and coming from towns across the country, to lead their own Civic Saturdays and build their own congregations. From their time together, from our collective questioning of the texts and the creed that compose the foundation of America's civic charter, they came to see that just as all great faith traditions reduce finally to love, American *civic* religion can be distilled to *civic* love. Whenever we are in group messages, we usually sign off with #CivicLove.

To love your neighbor can be very difficult whether your neighbor is a selfish jerk who resists change or a crusading ideologue who is forcing change on others. To love your enemy can be difficult when you are arguing about what one of you thinks is a double standard and the other thinks is a single truth. To love a stranger can be difficult when radical inequality creates status anxiety creates scarcity thinking creates scapegoating.

I am telling you this to remind *myself*. Because I do not automatically love my neighbor or my enemy or a stranger as myself. "With malice toward none and charity for all" is not my default setting. Let's be honest; that's true for most of us. Even Lincoln said those words only after having made clear to the Confederacy in his Second Inaugural that he

was quite willing to see that “every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword.” His morality was as much Old Testament as New.

Will we hold ourselves and each other to account, lovingly, when we are lapsing into absolutist binary ways of being? That takes commitment. It takes a social contact. We hope that you have come here today or will leave here today with someone who can enter into a pact with you: a pact to call each other out when you start acting like cable and Twitter provocateurs – even when you agree with them. Especially when you do.

Will we know how to discern among shades of gray, even if doing so makes us seem insufficiently woke or unfashionably out of line with the party or the tribe?

Will we learn to listen to the people and will we remember we *are* the people and so we must each find our own voice and must know our own mind and our own heart without cues or scripts supplied by others?

Will we remember that democracy is no guarantee of freedom or equality – that only liberal democracy is, and only liberal democracy with the spirit of a republic, which is to say, the spirit that says I claim this, I must lead this, I must *be* this, I *am* the public?

Will we be a strong people? Strong enough to keep our republic?

I am hopeful. I believe we are enough. But I have no illusions. When you drive around our churning city and see so many homes being torn down or built up, when the staircase to the oversized mansion isn't finished and the ugly retaining wall and drainage pipes are exposed, when gentrification knocks down the slanted bungalow and the sad beauty of the land is revealed anew – in such moments of phase shift we pierce the illusion generated by finished buildings with finished trim: the illusion of stability. Nothing is stable. Nothing is fixed except as we fix it.

And that is our opportunity. If Maestas were here, he would remind us: let's not get too attached to this shiny new place. Let's keep on the lookout for another abandoned school to occupy and, without permission, let us teach each other anew how to govern ourselves.

**Readings to Precede the Sermon**  
**June 2, 2018**

**Ella Baker**

**Quoted in *Moving the Mountain: Women Working for Social Change*  
By Ellen Cantarow and Susan O'Mally, published 1980**

First, there is a prerequisite: the recognition on the part of the established powers that people have a right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. And it doesn't matter whether those decisions have to do with schools or housing or some other aspect of their lives. There is a corollary to this prerequisite: the citizens themselves must be conscious of the fact that this is their right. Then comes the question, how to you reach the people if they aren't already conscious of this right? And how to you break down resistance on the part of the powers that be toward citizens becoming participants in decision making?

I don't have any cut pattern, except that I believe that people, when informed about the things they are concerned with, will find a way to react.... In organizing a community, you start with people where they are....

You didn't see me on television, you didn't see news stories about me. The kind of role that I tried to play was to pick up pieces or put together pieces out of which I hoped organization might come. My theory is, strong people don't need strong leaders.

**From *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*  
By James Agee, with photographs by Walker Evans  
Published 1941**

Human beings, with the assistance of mules, worked this land that they might live. The sphere of power of a single human family and a mule is small, and within the limits of each of these small spheres the essential human frailty, the ultimately human mortal wound which is living and the indignant strength not to perish, had erected against its hostile surroundings this scab, this shelter for a family and its animals: so that the fields, the houses, the towns, the cities, expressed themselves upon the grieved membrane of the earth in the symmetry of a disease: the literal symmetry of the literal disease of which they were literally so essentially a part.

The prime generic inescapable stage of this disease is being. A special complication is life. A malignant variation of this complication is consciousness. The most complex and malignant form of it known to us is human consciousness.

**From “A Way Forward: A Conservatism of Connection”  
By Pete Peterson, Rich Tafel, and others  
Published 2018**

Authentic conservatism is essentially about three connections:

1. Connection to the Past: We retain from our heritage what is valuable and worth cherishing, 2. Connection to Our Future: We innovate as conditions change to adapt inherited ways to new conditions, 3. Connection to One Another: Through America’s famed mediating institutions, we connect to one another in achieving the common good.

In his last major political address to the GOP Convention of 1992, Ronald Reagan perfectly connected these three elements: “We can no longer judge each other on the basis of what we are, but must, instead, start finding out who we are. In America, our origins matter less than our destinations and that is what democracy is all about.”

American conservatism recognizes that today’s crisis of spirit has repeated itself throughout our history. Episodes of alienation and estrangement not only punctuate our history, but also reveal our deepest ongoing challenge. America’s gradual incorporation of an astonishing array of peoples and cultures into a common civilization is a true, powerful, and profoundly important story, even as each stage of that development as a nation has required us to overcome tragic periods of exclusion, particularly racial and ethnic exclusion. This too is an “identity politics” of a very dangerous sort, which must be rejected.

We must restore the American Project by repairing the three conservative connections that demonstrate our principles and draw us into the risky but rewarding work of active citizenship.

**Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution  
Passed by the U.S. Senate and submitted to the states  
March 22, 1972**

Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.