



THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE



PARTNERSHIP
FOR THE
PUBLIC GOOD

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*THESE REMARKS WERE PREPARED FOR THE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
ON OCTOBER 5, 2017 AT THE ALBRIGHT-KNOX ART GALLERY.*

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BY: LOU JEAN FLERON

Thank you, Joe and everyone at the Albright-Knox, for hosting and inspiring this celebration of Beauty and Democracy.

And thank you all for being here tonight to mark this PPG milestone. Milestone celebrations seem universal signs of hope and progress—and it's a fine time for that.

Ten years ago last week was PPG's official birthday. The announcement was made at a national conference in downtown Buffalo: The High Road Runs through the City. The gestation was more than nine months; but it was a natural birth. Because PPG grew organically from this community—from the need for a way to strengthen unheard voices, to promote collaboration, to advance knowledge and experience sharing at the grassroots level, to improve local government policies.

All of that, as our mission declares, to build a more just, sustainable and culturally vibrant community through action-oriented research, policy development, and civic engagement. Working with our assets on our problems.



***“Working with
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Now, ten years later—like always at milestones—it's time to tally the progress. And since a picture is worth a thousand words, here are some pictures and some numbers.

- From the original three dozen, PPG partners now number over 270 organizations.
- These partners have created 94 community agenda planks since 2009, each with their own working group, resulting in scores of policy wins.
- 150 Cornell University High Road Fellows have come to Buffalo over the summers for hands-on community development work with nearly 50 PPG partners.
- Some things are countless: visits to public officials, testimonies at public hearings, press conferences, negotiation meetings.
- Through these ten years, we've had the benefit of 20 semesters of UB law students, each class tackling a different challenge.
- Over 300 radio shows, aired weekly on WUFO, featured our partners and their work.
- More than 400 publications have been produced—collaborative action research in the form of reports, policy briefs, articles, Buffalo Briefs—all applying directly to our community and what we can do to improve it.
- And all of those publications are on one new PPG website where they can be found at Buffalo Commons.
- Speaking of one, we were one of only three sites in the country chosen by Open Society Foundations for major civic investment in equality and justice, founding our sister organization, Open Buffalo.
- In the category of too many to count are bus tours, Buffalo Assets and Challenges Tours, so we and others can get to know our city better.
- And workshops for more and more exciting emerging leaders.
- Plus, to help us raise money: approximately 35 local celebrities have brilliantly performed Shakespeare for Shakespearian Idol; more or less that number played very competitive tennis; and hundreds came dancing at annual Movement parties.

So, how did all that happen? It started from the spark of Sam Magavern's amazing original idea (or the amazing Sam Magavern's original idea—either one works). Add the vision of our co-founders and the dedication of extraordinary board members. Multiply by the energy of creative, daring, committed staff and policy fellows, plus literally scores of volunteers—countless and priceless. The generosity of funders, donors, and supporters and the strength of our partners keep it all going forward.

To all of those—to all of you—you are PPG and this is what democracy looks like!



The beauty of PPG, like the beauty of knowledge and the beauty of democracy, is that there is no zero-sum game to it. The more you share, the more you have.

The beauty of democracy is that the people, we the people, get to make it more beautiful every generation, with every new voice. So the beauty of democracy is also in the struggle against oppression, intolerance and selfishness—ever formidable threats.

The beauty of democracy is that it is the only peaceable and fair way to resolve conflicts of interests, to solve problems with the benefit of everyone's ideas, to create a society based on the essential equality of all people.

The beauty of local democracy is an immediate sense that this is our community—all of us—our community. From the Haudenosaunee, whose land this really is and who represent the oldest living participatory democracy on earth, to the refugee who just came in search of the liberty we promise. And to all of us in between: those whose ancestors came as colonizers, those who came in bondage, those who came for a better life. Now all of us, as citizens and neighbors, we have a precious opportunity, and a profound obligation to one another, in everyday life in a democracy.

So happy birthday PPG and the many who make it what it is—a movement dedicated to the civic art of the public good, to bringing out the beauty in democracy. At 10 we look to the future with gratitude and optimism, and with the determination to stay forever young.



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