WHY COMMUNITY MATTERS: CONNECTING EDUCATION WITH CIVIC LIFE

BY NICHOLAS V. LONGO

I BOOK REVIEW

BY GRETCHEN RYMARCHYK

"AMERICAN DEMOCRACY IS AT RISK" P.1



DWINDLING RURAL ECONOMIES AND POPULATIONS, AND INCREASING POVERTY ARE RESULTING IN DECREASED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT. AMONG OTHER THINGS, THIS MEANS...

FEWER PEOPLE AT THE VOTING BOOTHS,

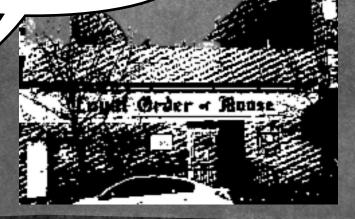


FEWER PEOPLE ACTIVE IN RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS, AND





FEWER PEOPLE JOINING CLUBG AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS.





OUR ANSWERS TO SOCIAL PROBLEMS OFTEN RESULT IN TURNING TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO EDUCATE STUDENTS AS PART OR ALL OF THE SOLUTION. HOWEVER, SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN TEACHING CIVICS FOR A WHILE, YET WE ARE STILL SEEING COMMUNITY DECLINE IN RURAL AREAS.

IT'S TIME TO EXPAND OUR THINKING, LORNE



IN ORDER FOR
COMMUNITIES TO THRIVE, THEIR
CITIZENS NEED TO BE ACTIVE
AND INVESTED!



SHOULDN'T
TEACHING STUDENTS TO BE
INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY...
HAPPEN IN THE
COMMUNITY?

MEÁN... LOOK AT HULL HOUSE!



WHAT STARTED OUT AS A VERY DIVERSE, OVERCROWDED AREA POPULATED BY POOR IMMIGRANTS, GREW INTO A THRIVING VILLAGE WITH DAY CARE, MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES, CITIZENSHIP CLASSES, CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES. THIS IN TURN, POWERED A REFORM MOVEMENT THAT INCLUDED LEGISLATION FOR LABOR PROTECTION, JUVENILE PROTECTION, AND A PEDERAL CHILD LABOR LAW. (1)

THE WAY THIS HAPPENED WAS BY TAKING EDUCATION INTO THE COMMUNITY, WITH A PHILOSOPHY THAT EVERYONE CAN TEACH SOMETHING. NEIGHBORG LEARNED FROM EACH OTHER, CREATING STRONG BONDS WITHIN AND ACROSS THE NEIGHBORHOOD.



THAT ALL SOUNDS NICE, BUT DON'T YOU THINK YOU'RE A LITTLE BIASED, JANE?



LET ME FINISH, LORNE...





HIGHLANDER
FOLK SCHOOL
TRAINED CITIZENS TO BE
LEADERS IN THEIR HOME
COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING
ROSA PARKS AND MARTIN
LUTHER KING JR, AMONG
OTHERS. LIKE HULL HOUSE,
THEY ALSO USE A PROCESS
THAT ALLOWS EVERYONE
ELSE.



AND!! THE NEIGHBORHOOD
LEARNING COMMUNITY IN ST.
PAUL, MN HAS UNIFIED A
PREVIOUGLY FRAGMENTED,
CONFLICT-LADEN NEIGHBORHOOD
WHO WANTED THE SCHOOLS TO DO
MORE. "A LEARNING COMMUNITY
CALLS ON EVERYONE EVERYWHERE IN
THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO SUPPORT
AN EDUCATIONAL
ENVIRONMENT" (2)



GO YOU GEE,
LORNE, THE ANGWER TO
COMMUNITY DETERIORATION AND
DEMOCRATIC DIGENGAGEMENT IS TO
DEMOCRATIZE EDUCATION AND CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT TRAINING BY SHARING
COMMUNITY RESOURCES IN RADIALLY
OPEN WAYS.

AND YOUR EDUCATION



THE BOOK GIVES IDEAS, EXAMPLES, AND INSPIRATION FOR COMMUNITY-WIDE SUSTAINABLE BENEFITS WITH A HEALTHY DOSE OF REALISM THAT THIS REQUIRES INTENTIONAL AND SIGNIFICANT SHIFTS IN PHILOSOPHY, PRACTICE, AND POWER.

THIS IS VERY ALIGNED WITH, AND EASY TO INCORPORATE INTO, THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS MODEL THAT NY IS INVESTING IN RIGHT NOW.

I FOUND THIS BOOK TO BE INSPIRATIONAL AND COMPELLING, FOR MANY REASONS:

> CONCEPTS ARE SUPPORTED BY OTHER

EVERY SCHOOL HAS A COMMUNITY OUTSIDE ITS WALLS

BUILDING
POGITIVE
PELATIONGHIPS
WITHIN THE
COMMUNITY GOES
A LONG WAY IN THE
VOTING BOOTH

WE
CANNOT SOLVE
THESE ISSUES BY
SEPARATING THEM
INTO STERILE
CATEGORIES DEVOID OF
CONTEXT AND
PRACTICAL
EXPERIENCE.

GOOD
EXAMPLES OF
WIN-WIN OPPORTUNITIES
TO ENRICH EDUCATIONAL
EXPERIENCES AND
OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN,
WHILE DEVELOPING INTEREST
IN LOCAL PROJECTS AND
ISSUES - LEADING TO
IMMEDIATE AND LONG
TERM CIVIC
ENGAGEME

ABOUT THE AUTHOR ...

NICHOLAS V. LONGO IS A PROFESSOR AT CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY. HE HAS A PHD IN EDUCATION, AND THERE IS A BRIEF AND RICH DESCRIPTION AT <u>WWW.CCSU.EDU/COMMUNITYENGAGEMENT/</u>LONGO_HTML

IN A NUTGHELL, HE IS AN EXPERT IN THE COMMUNITY- AND SERVICE LEARNING, LEADERSHIP AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT. HE IS WELL QUALIFIED TO WRITE THIS BOOK. HE GIVES A THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORY AND UNDERPINNINGS OF THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS CONTRIBUTING TO CIVIC DECLINE, AS WELL AS THE SOLUTIONS THAT HAVE WORKED IN THE PAST WITH COMMUNITIES WE THINK OF AS HAVING VERY LOW RESOURCES.