ROBERT FALLS' NEW PRODUCTION OF HENRIK IBSEN'S TIMELY CLASSIC.

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

School Matinee Series Study Guide
An Enemy of the People
by HENRIK IBSEN
Adapted and Directed by ROBERT FALLS

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Walter Director of Education | Willa J. Taylor
Production Manager | Elizabeth Rice
Designer | Anna Gelman
Contributing Writers | Elizabeth Rice, Anna Gelman, Willa Taylor, Liam Collier, Ian Martin, Jorge Silva, Neena Arndt, Saya Jenks, Walker Zupan, Emmanuella Nwankwo

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What is the Responsibility of a Citizen in a Democracy: An Introduction to the Study Guide
by WILLA J. TAYLOR

“What is the responsibility of a citizen in a democracy?”

This is a question that we – Liz, Anna, Brandi, Adrian, Ian, Liam, Emmanuella, and I (Goodman’s Education and Engagement Department) - have been debating/interrogating/arguing/lamenting in some form or another since the presidential election. Is it to follow the laws of the government even when they are unjust, or is it to rebel against them? Is it to vote in elections, even when none of the candidates represent your interests or issues, or is it to sit out in protest or apathy? Do we sit in silence waiting for change, or do we take to the streets to demand it, even if it means the sacrifice of safety and comfort?

As Robert Falls, the Goodman’s Artistic Director, begun to work on the plays that had been planned for this 2017-18 season, he repurposed it to speak to the turbulent uncharted times we find ourselves in, a time where we cannot even find common ground for what is truth and fact. In response, we began to delve deeper into what our individual and collective responsibilities are, both as artists and as citizens in a democracy.

In a moment where we see, yet again, a movement led by youth, demanding changes to gun laws, and as school boards threaten students with suspensions and expulsion if they protest, it seems that we have lost the fundamental understanding of what democracy demands of its citizens. In the earliest study of the young American democratic experiment, Alexis de Tocqueville argued in 1835 that one of the essential qualities that would allow our democratic society to succeed was individualism. But de Tocqueville didn’t mean egoism or selfishness. Rather, individualism to him stood for independence of both thought and action. Individualism, he argued, was essential to a healthy democracy, because it ensured that citizens’ desire for equality never came at the expense of liberty. Indeed, he believed individualism would safeguard liberty and encourage the harmonization of private and public interests. That was his hope, and what he saw as one of the great strengths of the new nation.

Democracy also requires citizen engagement, and that engagement must take tangible forms to ensure economic, social, cultural and political development – and the provision of opportunities and resources for all. As former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright says often, “Democracy must deliver.”

But what happens to democracy when there is no shared definition of what it is or who it is for? When the wants of the many outweigh the needs of the few? Can a nation stand when it becomes so fragmented by inequality, capitalism, tribalism, foreign interference, a lack of transparency, and fake news?

An Enemy of the People wrestles with that question and with the struggle of one citizen who stands against the majority.

I would argue that this is a key element of how our democracy functions. Haven’t groups of citizens always challenged injustice and greed to fight for a greater good? It constantly amazes me how easily people forget that this country was built on protest and revolution. It’s in our blood. From our initial fight for independence as a nation, to the Women’s Rights movement, the Civil Rights movement, the anti-war protests, to Occupy Wall Street, and Black Lives Matter, and #MeToo. The list goes on. One of the most beautiful things about living in a democracy is that we have the freedom to protest. It is our right as citizens of this country to walk out into the street and shout at the top of our lungs, or “die-in” in the streets when something is not right. I would argue that it is not only our right but our responsibility.

Others would and do disagree.

Our department doesn’t have the
answers so we continually debate and question. Sometimes, it is more important to pose the questions. Questions are essential to setting a foundation. As we ask and inquire, answers arise, and we see possibilities we may not have imagined otherwise. Plutarch, the Greek philosopher, said: “The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled.”

We believe that; questions can set the mind aflame. That is why this study guide is different from the others we’ve written for you. We wanted to expand our questioning, our search for what it means to be a citizen, to include you. We want this guide to be an opportunity for all of us to question what we know, what think, what we’ve assumed. What we’ve been taught.

Schooling trends toward memorizing answers to predetermined questions. The focus is on the answers. But the beauty of art – the power of theater – is that it is all about the questions. It is about challenging what we think we know and who we think we are. It is one of the things I love most about what I get to do every day.

We hope this guide, and the questions we are posing, are the beginning of a conversation – with us at the post-show, in your classrooms, on the bus, and with each other.

Philip Earl Johnson and Aubrey Deeker Hernandez in rehearsal for An Enemy of the People. Photo by Cody Neiset.
“Work on this play has been a pleasure, and now that I am done with it, I feel a sense of loss and emptiness. Dr. Stockmann and I got along famously together; there are so many things we agree upon; but the doctor is much more chaotic than I am. Moreover he has other qualities that allow him to say a number of things which would not be tolerated quite so well if they were to come from my lips.”

—Henrik Ibsen, in an 1882 letter to his publisher

By the time he wrote *An Enemy of the People*, Ibsen was well acquainted with the controversy his plays triggered. His 1879 work, *A Doll’s House*, sparked riots in the streets of Copenhagen when its central character, Nora, left her husband and children at the end of the play. *Ghosts*, in which the characters openly discuss syphilis, left audiences and critics reeling: British critic Clement Scott referred to it as “an open drain, a loathsome sore unbandaged, a dirty act done publicly.” Ibsen, now revered for his then-controversial tendency to shine light on society’s dark corners, felt angry that his frank discussion of what he considered important issues went unappreciated. While 19th century mores dictated that the underbellies of marriage, sex and middle class society remain unexamined, Ibsen was determined to scrutinize them as a scientist would. Partly in response to his critics, Ibsen created the protagonist of *An Enemy of the People*. Thomas Stockmann, a doctor who discovers that the public baths in his small Norwegian town are polluted with illness-causing bacteria. He shares his findings with the mayor and fellow townspeople, believing they will laud him as a hero and remedy the problem immediately, regardless of cost. But just as critics derided Ibsen for pointing out an inconvenient truth, Dr. Stockmann’s cohorts respond not with adulation but with a complicated mix of resentment and antipathy, and a desire to protect their own self interests.

Though his name is nearly synonymous with Norwegian playwriting, Ibsen spent much of his adult life...
outside of his native land. Born in Skien to a well-to-do merchant family, Ibsen spent his early childhood enjoying the comforts of upper middle-class life. When he was seven, however, his parents’ finances faltered, and the family moved permanently to their small summer house outside the city. After leaving school at age 15, Ibsen was apprenticed to a pharmacist. He began to write plays in his late teens, and left pharmacology to work at Det Norske Theater in Bergen, where he was involved in the production of 145 plays. He moved eventually to Oslo (then Christiania) to work at the Christiania Theater, and continue to write. But Ibsen had grown disenchanted with his homeland, having spent much of his young adulthood in poverty. He moved to Italy in 1864 at age 36; though no one had specifically compelled him to leave, Ibsen often insisted that his exit was forced, writing later that “everybody was against me.” His whole life he harbored a sense—justified or not—that others failed to grasp the merits of his work and see the world through his eyes. The alienated writer spent 27 years abroad, penning his most famous works from his adopted homes of Italy and, later, Germany.

Like Ibsen, Dr. Stockmann possesses a keen eye for society’s problems. In an era in which germ theory—that is, the idea that diseases are caused by organisms invisible to the naked eye—was not widely accepted or known by the common population, Dr. Stockmann ferrets out truth. Like middle class society, the water in the baths appears clean and respectable to the casual viewer. A closer observation finds that both are fetid. But in addition to their noble truth-seeking attributes, the two men also share a disdain for people. Both are so pessimistic about human nature that they fear democracy can never work because it depends on the populace to elect adept leaders. In Robert Falls’ adaptation, when Dr. Stockmann’s arguments are threatened, he declares, “The might of the majority does not make right, and you know it! Right is on the side of people like me. Of the enlightened few, of the great intellects of the visionaries, who see and understand the truth.” Ibsen, in an 1882 letter, wrote “the minority is always right.” While this disdain might spur Ibsen and Dr. Stockmann’s work, it also alienates them from the very individuals they endeavor to educate.

From Italy (and later, Germany), Ibsen continued correspondence with Scandinavian theaters, who produced his work even in his absence. During the decades of his self-imposed exile, his worldwide reputation improved considerably as the 19th century drew to a close and old morals gave way to new. Now often referred to as the “Father of Modern Drama,” Ibsen is applauded for exposing society’s issues—and indeed, modern audiences and critics consider social critique to be a hallmark of fine art. History has shown us that the minority, in this case, was right. But even if Ibsen stood on higher moral ground than his critics, did he have the right to consider himself superior? Might the townspeople have accepted Dr. Stockmann’s ideas more readily had he not insulted them? Is it better to possess great knowledge, or the ability to communicate it?
As a response to the results of the 2016 election, Artistic Director Robert Falls chose to produce Henrik Ibsen’s An Enemy of the People, comparing its themes of governmental corruption, environmental pollution, and “the all-consuming power of capitalism over the individual” to the changing political sphere in the United States today. However, for Falls, who’s known for working on such profound and introspective playwrights as Eugene O’Neill, Anton Chekov, and Arthur Miller, the available translations and adaptations of An Enemy of the People fell short.

Initially, Falls had intended to work with a playwright for this adaptation, much in the same way he had worked with Rebecca Gilman on Dollhouse, her adaptation of Ibsen’s A Doll’s House. However, lacking time to collaborate, he began the work of adapting the play himself. Falls spent three weeks at Ragdale, an artists’ retreat located in Lake Forest, IL, in August of 2017 to focus on the production. While the sole adaptor on this version of An Enemy of the People, Falls would share his work with Goodman Resident Dramaturg Neena Arndt for review and suggestions.

Since Falls doesn’t read or speak Norwegian, he primarily worked off Eleanor Marx’s translation, the first English translation of An Enemy of the People just five years after its 1882 publication. Translations are often linguistically clunky, lacking the poetry of the initial language for the saliency of meaning and vocabulary. Thus, Falls was tasked with multiple challenges. While for Falls, Marx’s translation was the closest to Ibsen’s intentions, he still intended to move the language out of the 19th century to something more contemporary for the Goodman’s modern audiences, managing to cut parts of the dialogue as well, a difficult task in other existing adaptations.

Additionally, as Falls is both the director and adaptor of this production of An Enemy of the People, he was able to address the financial and organizational obstacle of having children on stage. Instead, he changed the backstory of Katherine, Dr. Stockman’s wife, and cut Stockman’s additional children from the script, leaving only his eldest daughter, Petra. In Falls’ adaptation, Katherine Stockman is pregnant, to “create a stronger symbol of a future generation facing the economic disaster and times ahead of them.”

Falls would bring the bulk of his adaptation to the first rehearsal of An Enemy of the People, however much more work would occur as the cast became acquainted with their characters. Even while rehearsing, the adaptive process has not finished. By preview week, Falls and his cast are still working on revisions, re-inserting cuts, and addressing changes during the day, while they test them out during the performances in the evening. The process and the adaptation will not solidify until opening night.

An Enemy of the People will be Falls’ fourth adaptation, including his 1988 revival of the musical Pal Joey, 2010’s The Seagull, and the momentous task of adapting Roberto Bolaño’s unfinished behemoth 2666 for the stage during the Goodman’s 15/16 season.
Todd Rosenthal has designed scenery for many productions at the Goodman including Ah, Wilderness!; Uncle Vanya; Wonderful Town; The Little Foxes; Luna Gale; The Seagull; Venus in Fur and the annual A Christmas Carol. He received a Tony Award for August: Osage County and a Tony nomination for The Motherfu**er with the Hat. Additional Broadway credits include Fish in the Dark, This is Our Youth, Of Mice and Men, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf, and the upcoming Roman Holiday. His many credits include designs for Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Arena Stage, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, The Guthrie, La Jolla Playhouse, The Alliance Theatre, American Repertory Theater, Manhattan Theater Club, The Atlantic Theater Company, Lincoln Center Theater and others. International credits include designs for London’s National Theater, The Sydney Theatre Company in Australia, Theatre Royal in Ireland and London’s West End. Mr. Rosenthal was an exhibitor at the 2007 Prague Quadrennial International Exhibition of Scenography and Theatre Architecture in the Czech Republic. He also designs museum exhibits including MythBusters: the Explosive Exhibition and Sherlock Holmes: the Science of Deduction. His many accolades include the Laurence Olivier Award, Ovation Award, Helen Hayes Award, Los Angeles Backstage Garland Award, Bay Area Theater Critics Circle Award, Jeff Award and a Michael Merritt Award for Excellence in Design and Collaboration. He is a full professor at Northwestern University and a graduate of the Yale School of Drama.
An Enemy of the People is a “political play” -- but what does that mean? Politics and Theater have long been linked together, with some of the earliest plays in the western canon focusing on rulers, kings and power, but what does it mean for a piece of theater to be political or about politics in a modern context?

Theater About Politics
Earlier this season at the Goodman, Rogelio Martinez’s Blind Date joined a legacy of other plays about politics and historical figures, ranging from dramas to musicals. Politics are the perfect backdrop for theater: full of sacrifice, deception, and drama – and playwrights have taken notice. Peter Morgan’s Frost/Nixon dramatizes the 1977 interviews between David Frost and President Nixon, revealing the administration’s part in the Watergate Scandal. More recently, Lisa Loomer’s Roe details the 1973 Supreme Court case that legalized abortion, and Robert Schenkkan’s Building the Wall looks into the future of politics in Trump’s administration. Even Lin-Manuel Miranda’s Tony-award winning musical Hamilton finds its place as political piece of theater, fashioning cabinet meetings into rap battles. These pieces of theater that dramatize past or future politics take political events and reveal the humans behind what seems like a massive political machine, creating a greater sense of critical understanding of both the politicians, and the events themselves.

Theater about “Politics”
This past summer, The Public’s Julius Caesar made waves as audiences grappled with the production’s allusions to Trump’s administration. Although the text of the play is over 400 years old, there was something striking to some, and offensive to others, in seeing the famous Roman Emperor dressed as Donald Trump. The production was picked up by national news networks, and saw a huge spike in attendance, both from audience members fascinated by the parallels, and Trump supporters who came as an act of protest. The Public’s production isn’t an out of the ordinary occurrence: many of Shakespeare’s plays were written with a political aim in mind (for instance, Macbeth was written to please the King James, who was thought to be a descendant of Banquo, one of the play’s heroes), and have since been twisted to fit a modern political interpretation. Other classical plays with themes of power and politics have been performed with a modern lens as well. This past year, Chicago alone saw several takes on Alfred Jarry’s Ubu Roi, a 200 year old play about an evil idiot rising to
power, and various productions of Brecht’s *The Last Days of the Commune* and *Fear and Misery in the Third Reich* have explored political oppression of the early to mid-1900’s with new relevance. These productions of classic plays put a new spin on current events, which breaks down big political concepts onto a human level, but in a different way than plays like *Frost/Nixon*. Instead, by introducing entirely new, fictional, and sometimes well-known characters, productions comment on political events rather than directly dramatizing them. Similarly, *An Enemy of the People*, which Ibsen wrote in 1882, still finds relevance in 2018 by exploring the relationship between a vague local government and its people, which allows audiences to reflect on their personal experience with elected officials. “What’s so powerful about touching on moments in our history in contemporary settings,” says Diane Paulus, theater director, “is you’re able to reflect on it in a way [that’s removed from] the heat of living it.” To read more about Julius Caesar, as well as Diane Paulus, and playwrights Brandon Jacob-Jenkins and Robert Shenkkan’s thoughts on political theater, click here.

**Protest Theater**

Protest Theater, says Pushpa Sundar author and philanthropist, “is often used as a synonym for political theater, though it has a wider scope.” In her essay about the Indian experience of protest theater, she goes on to praise theater as a form of activism: “Theater not only makes an audience conscious of the wrongs being protested against, but it also arouses it to immediate action.”

This meeting of art and activism, known sometimes as “Artivism” has been prevalent around the world as a way of raising awareness and engaging in direct action. In 1965, the United Farm Workers created “the farmworkers theater,” – *El Teatro Campesino*. Performing on the flat beds of trucks, farmers found their voices as actors depicting their lives and raising awareness of their working conditions. During his exile in Brazil in the 1970s, theorist and educator Augusto Boal continued elaborating on Theater of the Oppressed, a technique using theater and direct interaction with audiences to address power inequities and oppression, that he had been developing since the 1950’s. Using Theater of the Oppressed, Boal engaged with both those performing and those watching to explore ways to transform their reality.

At the same time, but half a world away, the Soviet Union was utilizing *agitprop*, or communist propaganda through art. Rather than being about protesting a greater or oppressive power, agitprop came directly from the government, and was an artistic way to spread the communist agenda. However, the Soviet Union’s tool evolved into *agitprop theater*, which was the early versions of a more straightforward political theater, including the works of Bertolt Brecht, whose plays took on a subversive political agenda.

The United States has seen a resurgence of protest theater since the late 1990’s, with the formation of Billionaires for Bush, a protest theater group that would later become Billionaires for Healthcare, that created highly theatrical protests posing as billionaires and opposing economic benefits for major corporations. Some even argue that the Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011 was, in its own way, a version of protest theater.

**What does it mean?**

All forms of political theater aim to create engagement with political events and political process, at least in some form. But what happens when the world of politics itself becomes too much about theater and entertainment? “If there ever was a need for proof that politics and entertainment were now conflated, this election cycle proves it conclusively.” says Jeff Schechtman of Who. What. Why., commenting on the 2016 Presidential Election. In his article on what he calls “entertainment politics,” he continues to question many people’s assumption that Trump’s antics were pure performance, and what that means for the future of the political arena. Nelson Pressley, theater critic for The Washington Post, weighs in: “Our addition to political theater did us in.” His article, “The Perils of Spectacle,” breaks down the difference between political theater as it defines the world of politics, and political theater as it applies to art. He refers to political theater in elections as “an empty show,” and in the theater as “exemplary citizenship,” but discovers that their common ground is entertainment. He asks: “After a year and a half of high-ratings, low-content TV debates and drama-packed stadium rallies, who’s to say the 2020 sequel won’t be bigger? More spectacular? Altogether more gripping and worse?”
Classroom discussions about first-wave feminism in America traditionally focus on the campaign for Women’s Suffrage. Although in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the suffragette movement dominated feminist circles in the west, for years the fight for the right to vote was only a small piece of a larger crusade. Before the 1850s, women throughout Europe and the Americas could not own or manage property, file for divorce, work in most professions, gain custody of their children, or receive an education. Traditionalists viewed women as mere extensions of their husbands, not people in their own right; more often than not, the law supported this idea. Prior to the 1860s, only Denmark and Sweden recognized the “legal majority” – or independent personhood – of women; virtually every other country allotted women the same legal standing as children.

In most western countries, governments recognized the rights of unmarried women before married women. The Norwegian parliament, for instance, granted unmarried women legal majority in 1863 and recognized their right to engage in all types of commerce in 1864; these rights were not granted to married women in Norway until 1888 and 1894 respectively. During the intervening years, the institution of marriage stripped women of rights they would have otherwise possessed. Because of this reality, many feminists in the second half of the nineteenth century aimed to reform, or in some cases destroy, the institution of marriage. It was during this fraught political period that Henrik Ibsen wrote and published nearly all his plays.

Ibsen believed in the power of the individual to reform society. Because of this conviction, he saw the oppression of women as a major obstacle towards the betterment of society. How could intellectuals ever hope for progress if half the world’s population...
were denied their full capacity as individuals? Ibsen was close friends with many leaders of the women’s liberation movement including feminist novelist Magdalene Thoresen and Camilla Wergeland Collett, the founder of Norwegian Feminism. Progressive women also translated many of Ibsen’s first plays and funded his first productions outside of Norway. While some later admitted their support of Ibsen stemmed from their desire to perform well-written roles for women on stage, others, like Eleanor Marx - whose father wrote The Communist Manifesto - saw the potential Ibsen’s plays had to implement social justice.

Ibsen wrote what are widely considered his most progressive works (Pillars of Society, A Doll’s House, and Ghosts) in the 1870s and early 1880s. In Pillars of Society, Lona Hessel, an independent, unmarried woman from Norway travels to America to help so-called “spinsters” realize their potential as “New Women.” In A Doll’s House, Ibsen’s most scathing critique of contemporary marriage, a wealthy housewife named Nora discovers that she is unsatisfied in her marriage and leaves her husband and children to start an independent life. Audiences around Europe equally praised and protested A Doll’s House, bringing Ibsen international renown.

Ibsen’s allyship extended beyond his written work. In the spring of 1879, he proposed an amendment to the Scandinavian Club in Rome that would allow women to vote in their meetings. After the club’s constituents struck down the proposal by one vote, Ibsen stormed out in a rage. He returned later to interrupt an evening gala with a furious speech advocating for women’s rights.

Following the publication of A Doll’s House in 1879, Ibsen joined a campaign to secure property rights for married women. He simultaneously aimed to lift up of women’s voices, believing men’s opinions in women’s emancipation to be somewhat irrelevant. “To consult men in such a matter,” he once wrote, “is like asking wolves if they desire better protection for sheep.”

The two female characters in An Enemy of the People - Katherine and Petra - represent a turning point in Ibsen’s relationship with the early feminist movement. While these women retain aspects of Loma and Nora’s revolutionary independence, both conform to more conservative ideas of the role of women in society. Although Katherine refuses to remain silent when her husband’s actions threaten to plunge their family into poverty, her primary concern is taking care of her children, a traditional role for women to fill in nineteenth century Europe. When Stockman refuses to change his course of action Katherine does not follow Nora’s lead and leave her marriage. Instead, she commits to stand by her husband’s side for the sake of her children.

Petra, a self-proclaimed socialist, is far more defiant than Katherine. She attends University - a pursuit that only became legal for women in Norway in 1882, the same year Ibsen published An Enemy of the People. Petra also works as a teacher, one of the first professions that became available to women. She turns down a relationship that could potentially lead to marriage, and stands by her father in speaking up against a corrupted society. By the end of the play though, she decides to spend her life educating the youngest members of society, a role that conservatives in the 1880s and 1890s saw as a socially acceptable alternative to motherhood.

As married women began to win the same basic rights as their unmarried sisters, the focus of the Women’s Liberation Movement turned to securing the right to vote. Ibsen, in turn, began to write plays that conformed to new conservative notions of womanhood, which acknowledged women’s place as independent members of society while also insisting that their role should be to act as mothers and educators, not thinkers and revolutionaries. Before his death in 1906, Ibsen denounced the feminist movement and the role he played in it:

“I must disclaim the honor of having consciously worked for the women’s rights movement,” he said in 1898, “I am not even quite clear as to just what this women’s right movement really is....The task always before my mind has been to advance our country and give the people a higher standard...It is the women who are to solve the social problem. As mothers they are to do it. And only as such can they do it. Here lies the great task for woman.”
One of the central conflicts of *An Enemy of the People* concerns the pollution of the local water source affecting the newly constructed baths and spas in town. Though Ibsen wrote the play in 1883, this concept is not lost on modern audiences. In fact, if one considers the current lead crises in both East Chicago, Indiana and Flint, Michigan, one might begin to understand why so many theaters across the country are also producing this play this season.

The current water crisis affecting Flint, Michigan is a modern example of *An Enemy of the People*, a case where cost-cutting measures led to the mass consumption of toxic drinking water.
Sarah Winkler lives in Detroit, which is just an hour south of Flint, Michigan. And even though she knew about the continuing water crisis in the city, she was surprised on a recent visit.

“That’s the money question, one that both residents and onlookers have been searching for an answer to ever since the news of Flint’s contaminated water broke nationally in 2016. Because the water filtering through the pipes has been laced with lead, Flint residents have been without clean drinking water since 2014. And the problem has not been fixed. “Right now, nothing is happening,” says Lawrence Young, a Flint resident and local actor. “All they’re doing is continuing to give us bottled water to use and putting extra money into the bridge cards so people can buy more food. But how is that going to benefit us if we still have to wash...”
with dirty water? If we still have to pay bills for water that we can’t use? Nothing’s really changing. They’re putting a Band-Aid on it, and that’s not acceptable.”

That is why Young, Winkler and a group of theater artists from around the U.S. and London are putting together three free public performances of Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People*. The goal is to raise awareness about Flint’s water issues, which are still ongoing even though the national conversation (and rage) has died down. The project, called *Public Enemy: Flint*, will be performed in a converted gym on the north side of town.

“I can’t tell you how many times I’ve talked to people about us doing this project, and I hear people say, ‘Are things better?’” says Winkler, who is the artistic director of the Detroit Public Theatre. “People don’t know if things are better, because it’s not in the news. So refocusing attention on it is a positive thing. I think public outrage tends to move public policy.”

The idea for *Public Enemy* came from British directors Purni Morell and Christian Roe, who first heard about what was going on in Flint last year, when they were working in the States. “I was watching the news, and I couldn’t quite believe that this was possible,” Morell recalls. “And we thought, ‘It sounds like *An Enemy of the People*.’ And I said, ‘Why don’t we just do that?’”

Ibsen’s 1882 play is set in an unnamed town which has built a huge public bath with the hope of economically revitalizing the area. But local resident Dr. Stockmann discovers that the pipes feeding water into the baths are contaminated. The town mayor tells him to keep quiet about his findings because it would be too expensive to fix the issue. And the play is not just being done in Flint. A new adaptation by Branden Jacobs Jenkins will play on Broadway next season, and theaters across the country (such as Goodman Theatre; Yale Repertory Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut, and the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis) have also slated Ibsen’s play in their 2017/2018 seasons.

“A lot of people started producing the *An Enemy of the People* because of Flint,” says Winkler. “I think now it has even more meaning, because our country is so divided—between the people who believe whistle-blowers are leakers who are trying to take down our country and people who believe whistle-blowers are responsible citizens trying to save our country.

Seven of the theaters have each sponsored an actor to participate in the project and rehearse in Flint over 10 days to prepare the performances. In adapting *An Enemy of the People*, Morell cut the play down to 80 minutes. She also turned the white male
Dr. Stockmann to an African American female character, Dr. Heather Stockman (played by Michole Briana White), in reference to the fact that Flint’s population is 56.6 percent black.

Morell didn’t add any references to Flint, but found she didn’t need to. “The discussion in Flint right now is the relaying of the pipes and the whole Ibsen play is about relaying pipes,” she says. “I’m not pretending it’s not about water—it’s still about a mineral bath, it’s still about a wellness resort. But if you say the word ‘pipes’ in Flint, everybody thinks of the same thing.”

Here’s a sample passage from the play, as spoken by Stockmann to the townspeople:

“You all know the history of this town, and the problems the city has faced, and you all know that what we built here had the potential to change our fortunes—to transform the city from a backwater into a vibrant thriving metropolis, with opportunities for all. But that dream has been shattered by the gross negligence of the authorities, the very people charged with building your futures, and now the resort, the water we depend on for this bright future, is contaminated—because some people here didn’t spend the money to lay the pipes properly.”

The text sounds very much like what happened in Flint, where in 2014, authorities opted to use water from the Flint River instead of purchasing from the Huron River in Detroit to save $5 million. The poorly treated, highly chlorinated water began to leach the lead from aging pipes into the residents’ drinking water. In recent news, Flint’s pipes have been reconnected to the Huron River, but lead still infects the water. The next step is to replace the lead pipes in Flint, a move that will cost $97 million.

“A couple of the actors said, ‘Oh, you adapted this quite heavily to fit the situation,’ when in fact, I haven’t—it just is like that,” says Morell. “The parallels are sort of astonishing. They’re just gifted to you on a plate; you don’t have to do very much.”

But Morell did make one big change to the script: She removed Act IV of the play, which features the community meeting. Instead, Public Enemy: Flint will have a real-life town hall and talkback with the audience, facilitated by one of the characters, before the action of the play resumes in Act V. “We’re going to invite the audiences to participate in the discussion about what they’re seeing and mostly what’s been going on in Flint,” Morell says.

“We’ve worked very, very hard to make sure that the community voices are louder and are the teachers of the national voices,” adds Winkler. “The Flint voices are louder and have more to say, and the project listens to the Flint voices most profoundly.”

Morell hopes the project will attract people from all around the city, from residents to lawmakers. She considers the problem bigger than one town, noting that lead poisoning is an issue in cities across America.

“There is a water problem and it’s a big water problem, and it’s there for a reason,” she says. “If we don’t fix the reason, we can send as much water as we can, but there’s going to be another one at some point.”

To Morell, the central issues are politicians’ lack of accountability to the people they serve and general apathy from the public. “The water in the play is a symbol,” she says. “It’s about everything else: How are our cities put together? What do we accept as governments? How do societies work? What have we given up in order to have some of the conveniences of modern life? How do we talk to each other? How do you know how to vote?”

Morell notes that the Barbican Theatre in London has expressed interest in staging Public Enemy after its Flint run. And actor Young has been on the ground in Flint, helping educate residents about the water crises in his work at the New McCree Theatre, the city’s African American theater company. For his part, Young hopes Public Enemy will help boost morale for the residents and reignite action within the community.

“Some people really have given up hope because of the lead; it’s been about three to four years,” he explains. He adds that he hopes the project will give residents “different ways and different perspectives on how to deal with the situation. And I hope they will take one of those perspectives and run with it and try to do what the people in the play are doing about the situation. And stay woke!”
Dr. Stockmann’s determination to expose the pollution of the baths, stand up for the well-being of his community, and prevent a deadly public health crisis calls to mind the efforts of the vibrant environmental justice movement here in the United States. As Ricky Stilley of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) writes, the movement is “championed primarily by Black, Latinx, Asian, Native and Pacific Islander communities...and addresses a statistical fact: people who live, work, and play in America’s most polluted environments are most commonly people of color and poor. This is no accident. Working class communities of color are routinely targeted to host facilities that have negative environmental impacts—say, a landfill, truck depot, sewage treatment plant, or chemical manufacturer,” a form of public policy that activists in the movement critique as blatant environmental racism.

Why are these communities disproportionately targeted?

Ricky Stilley of the NRDC argues that “corporate decision makers, regulatory agencies, and local planning and zoning boards have learned that it is easier to site such facilities in low-income communities of color than in primarily white, middle-to-upper income neighborhoods. Poor communities of color usually lack connections to decision makers on zoning boards or city councils that could protect their interests as well as the resources necessary to hire lawyers and fight a siting in court.” On top of this, they are often denied access to information on how a particular facility will affect their community’s well-being; potential consequences are described in dense, jargonistic handbooks and often printed solely in English.

While communities of color have organized to oppose environmental threats throughout the 20th century, many activist-historians identify a massive, 1982 demonstration in Warren County, North Carolina as the beginning of the movement. At this demonstration, Giovanna Di Chiro writes, “hundreds of predominately African American women and children, as well as a number of local white residents, used their bodies to block trucks from dumping poisonous, chemical-laden dirt into a landfill near their community. The largely African American, working-class, rural communities of Warren County had been targeted as the dumping site for a toxic...
waste landfill that would serve industries throughout North Carolina. This demonstration opened the gates for a series of subsequent actions by people of color and working-class folks throughout the country.” For many of the activists of color who would soon become leaders in the movement, the events in Warren County, Stilley writes, were but “an extension of the racism they had encountered for decades in housing, education, and employment.”

The remarkable growth of the movement over the course of the next decade came into focus in October 1991 with the meeting of the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington D.C. The conference brought together over 500 leaders of the environmental justice movement from the U.S., Canada, Central America, and Marshall Islands to share personal experiences, build coalitions, and articulate a coherent movement strategy. Decisions were made by consensus as the summit affirmed its commitment to non-hierarchical, “leader-full” organizational processes and structures and ultimately put forth the “Principles of Environmental Justice” and “Call to Action,” two of the movement’s foundational documents. A copy of the Declaration of Principles created by the summit can be accessed [here](#).

As the activists and organizations represented at the summit fought for national recognition, many also struggled to build connections with the mainstream environmentalist movement. While some of these groups were open to incorporating the ideas of the environmental justice movement into their work and hiring more folks of color on their staffs and governing boards, many remained indifferent, if not downright hostile.

While the movement faces perhaps its greatest threat in recent history with the election of Donald Trump, many of its constituent grassroots organizations (including Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles, West Harlem Environmental Action, Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, and Mothers of East L.A.) remain powerful forces in their respective communities.

For more information on a number of vibrant environmental justice organizations operating in Chicago, check out the following links:

Click here for sources:
[1] [2]
Water, Water, Everywhere, and Not a Drop To Drink
by WILLA J. TAYLOR

Cape Town, South Africa is the second most populous city in the country, with more than 3.75 million people living there, which is similar in population to Los Angeles. Cape Town is the third largest economic hub city on the African continent, and one of its most affluent metropolises. It also has the highest number of tech companies in Africa. Cape Town is a popular global tourist destination for its white-sand beaches, its architectural history, and the beautiful Mediterranean climate.

And by July 15th, Cape Town will run out of water.

It is hard to fathom how a city that sits on a body of water (Table Bay) as Chicago does (Lake Michigan) could run out of water, but a record three-year drought, population growth and overdevelopment, and climate change have forced the city to count down to “Day Zero,” the day when city officials will turn off the taps to homes and business because the reservoirs will be too dangerously low.

Since January, citizens have been limited to 50 liters per day – that’s just 13 gallons! To put that in context:

- If you let the water run as you brush your teeth, you are using about 3 gallons
- Every time you flush the toilet, you use between 1.5-5 gallons.
- If you take a 10-minute shower, you are using 25 gallons.

And none of that takes into consideration the water used to wash dishes, do laundry, or prepare food. Calculate how much water you use on average here.

Water is one of the world’s most abundant resources; 71% of the Earth’s surface is water. Yet, most of it is undrinkable, and in many regions clean water is in critically short supply—endangering the economy, public health, energy production, and food supply.
Here are some reasons why the world faces a growing water crisis.

Although Cape Town sits on Table Bay, the drinking water comes from reservoirs that are filled from rain and dammed fresh waterways. The Bay is salt-water, and for it to be potable, it needs to be desalinated. It will take at least two years to build a desalination plant in Cape Town and will cost $84 billion. In addition, a plant would require at least 25 acres of land with enough pipes laid to reach the sea and to transport the filtered water back to the city. That doesn’t take into account the enormous amount of electricity needed, which would adversely impact existing businesses and homes.

While the Capetonians’ water crisis is not the same as Flint, where the water is contaminated, part of the crisis in Flint was exacerbated by the privatization of water from Lake Michigan, the source for Chicago’s drinking water. And while Chicagoans are yet to face a potable water shortage, as in the case of Cape Town or Flint, Lake Michigan is not an endless fountain.

This is what it’s like living through Cape Town’s crisis, read this. This is how inequity plays a part in water crises.

Cape Town may be the first major city to run out of water, but there are others facing similar situations. Sao Paulo, Brazil’s largest city, has suffered severe water shortages in the past. In 2015, nearly two-thirds of residents faced water scarcity. Roughly 18% of Mexico’s citizens don’t have access to clean water on a daily basis, and another 32% don’t have enough to cover basic needs. Drainage and lack of infrastructure only contribute to the problem.

Los Angeles has been facing a historic drought since 2011. With a horrendous wildfire season in 2017 compounded with the demands of agricultural producers, government officials estimate that nearly 99% of California was in some stage of drought during the peak of the dry spell.

And according to the Greater London Authority, Londoners use more than 68 billion gallons of water a day. Considering that London draws most of its water from rivers and sees very little rainfall annually, officials predict serious shortages by 2040.

So could it happen here? Yes.

Want some resources? Click below to learn more about water issues for the Great Lakes and Chicago:

- On Flint
- Lake Michigan Drinking Water Rates
- Chicago Water Shortage
- Water Resources in Chicago
From cooking to showering, fresh coffee and laundry, we often take the availability of clean water for granted. Yet when Henrik Ibsen wrote *An Enemy of the People* in 1882, the specialty of bacteriology was in its infancy, and viruses had yet to be discovered, so scientists had just begun to understand how diseases could spread through contaminated water. Humans had tried for millennia to stanch the spread of contagions, but ignorance of these invisible-to-the-naked-eye life-forms prevented much progress. Nonetheless, many cultures developed strategies to purify their water, and we have savvy minds and societies to thank for the modern water safety enjoyed by most.

In ancient Egypt, shrewd citizens discovered that the chemical alum, when applied to water, caused the sediment to stick together and form clots large enough to remove. Quenching one’s thirst became a much more pleasant experience. A millennium or so later, the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates grew disenchanted with the grit in the water he used for medical
treatments. He fashioned a crude system of filtering: pouring water through a cloth bag. This system came to be known as the Hippocrates Sleeve. He also advised boiling water before drinking, for flavor enhancement.

Until the 19th century, however, most efforts focused on removing visible contaminants from water; for much of human history, the notion of invisible contaminants would have seemed far-fetched. In both Europe and China, people subscribed to the miasma theory—or the idea that disease was spread through bad air. Those in Western cultures commonly considered night air as particularly dangerous, securing their doors and windows when evening fell; however, this caused disease to spread faster, as people spent nights in close quarters with others, including sick family and friends. As early as the 17th century, pioneering microbiologists such as Athanasius Kircher and Anthonie van Leeuwenhoek observed microorganisms under microscopes, and postulated they might be the cause of disease. Others dismissed their theories; the miasma theory held strong and infectious diseases ran rampant.

In 1854, London physician John Snow doubted that “bad air” was the cause of a deadly cholera outbreak. He traced the illness back to a water pump that pulled from a sewage-polluted section of the Thames River, and convinced city officials to disable the pump by removing its handle. On further investigation, Snow discovered that the pump’s well was adjacent to a cesspit in which a choleric baby’s diaper had been washed, and he suggested that the disease had spread via the fecal-oral route. This theory, however, proved too revolting to swallow for city officials, who replaced the pump’s handle as soon as the immediate crisis passed. The miasma theory still prevailed. In the late 1850s and 1860s, French chemist Louis Pasteur made further advances in germ theory by discovering microorganisms originated from other microorganisms, and proving that microorganisms were the cause of a disease that affected silkworms—and in turn, the silk industry. German physicist and microbiologist Robert Koch elaborated on previous scientists’ work by creating a set of criteria for determining whether a particular microorganism caused a particular disease. “Koch’s postulates” stated that the microorganism: 1. must be found in all organisms suffering from the disease, but not in healthy organisms; 2. must be able to be isolated from a diseased organism and grown in culture; 3. should cause disease when introduced to a healthy organism; and 4. must be re-isolated from the inoculated, diseased experimental host, and be identified as being identical to the original specimen. Although these have since been amended (in particular, many organisms are exposed to disease but never become ill), they served as an important tool to isolate the cause of late 19th century bacterial illnesses. As more scientists and doctors accepted germ theory, they considered ways to apply their knowledge to prevent the spread of illness. English surgeon Joseph Lister used carbolic acid to sterilize surgical instruments and clean wounds, and his patients immediately suffered fewer post-surgical infections. Now considered a father of modern surgery (his memory is honored daily by garglers of his namesake, Listerine), Lister faced skepticism from many colleagues of his day.

As late as 1869, at the annual meeting of the British Medical Association, surgeon Thomas Nunneley charged that germ theory was incorrect, and therefore, Lister’s methods ineffective. By 1882, when Ibsen penned An Enemy of the People, germ theory had earned the acceptance of the scientific community with few remaining dissenters. But scientists, doctors, engineers and city planners had not yet implemented their knowledge, nor had chlorinated drinking water or swimming pools become a solution. The widespread safety of tap water in developed countries would later rank among the most monumental human achievements of the 20th century. Yet, even as a man of the 19th century, Ibsen demonstrates a remarkable understanding of germ theory and bacteriology.
The term “democracy” isn’t a new phenomenon. It can be traced to two Greek words, demos (people) and kratia (power or authority). So simply put, it is a form of government that gives power to the people.

Great scholars and philosophers have penned down their opinion on the concept of democracy, and Aristotle is no exception. In The Politics and the Constitution of Athens, he suggests that:

“Democracy arises out of the notion that those who are equal in any respect are equal in all respect, because when men are equally free, they claim to be absolutely equal.”

Democratic countries pride themselves in their ability to administer justice and fairness when governing their citizens, while dismissing the tyranny of other forms of government.

The United States is the chief proponent of what is referred to as modern democracy. When the Treaty of Paris of 1783 ended the American Revolution, it gave birth to a new independent nation that would “establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty…”

Prior to independence, the Articles of Confederation served as the major source of law and governance in the Thirteen Colonies. However, this document didn’t give the new central government enough powers to regulate the decisions of the thirteen states. The need for a federal government that could operate at the executive, legislative and judicial levels instigated the constitutional reforms of 1788 with George Washington elected unopposed as
the President in 1789.

The Constitution, however, wasn't without loopholes. It originally did not define who was eligible to vote, allowing each state to decide which citizens had electoral rights. Most states only gave voting rights to white, male, property owners. Eventually, the 15th Amendment of the Constitution stopped voting discrimination based on race, color or previous condition of servitude, while the 19th and 26th amendments required that voting rights could not be abridged because of sex or age for those above 18.

The U.S. isn't the only nation with a long-standing affiliation with democracy. Any current nation with a democratic system of government draws upon the experiences of 4th – 5th century BC Athens. Athens' system of government was well-structured, allowing freedom of speech, equal political rights, and opportunity to participate directly in politics to all its approximately 30,000 – 60,000 male citizens. The Assembly, a gathering for all Athenian male citizens, met at least once a month, in a dedicated space big enough to accommodate about 6000 men. During this time, citizens would speak on multiple issues, including military and financial magistracies, organizing and maintaining food supplies, initiating legislation and political trials, sending envoys to neighboring city-states, and the raising and spending of public funds. Voting occurred by hand raise, and majorities would settle disputes. It was also the duty of the Assembly to ostracize any citizen who had become too powerful and dangerous to the state. These decisions were usually conducted through secret ballots where voters wrote a name on a piece of broken pottery known as ostracon. This protected each citizen's identity and right to speech. Although Athens boasted a "free" and well-structured political system with checks and balances, its government, just as in the early United States, didn't make provisions for certain groups of people and thus cannot be characterized as a complete democracy.

At the time nations like the U.S. were amending their constitution to accommodate all levels of its citizenry, most countries in Africa were fighting for freedom from colonial rule. Apart from Ethiopia, which was never officially colonized, African nations didn't begin to gain independence from oppressive powers until the 19th century. However, the years following independence from colonial rule were punctuated by
military regimes, coup d’états, autocracy, increasing lack of freedom of speech and expression, and monopolies of media.

Nigeria, for example, started its democratic journey in 1979, but was disrupted by a military takeover in 1983. Coup after coup took power until democracy was finally restored on May 5th, 1999. Ever since, democracy in Nigeria has consistently evolved. Previous elections recycled leaders in key political offices because the opposing parties were not strong enough to stand up to the ruling party. Between 2012-2015, Nigeria witnessed increased freedom of expression in the media with more youth actively involved in its electoral process. This allowed an opposing party to defeat the incumbent government in the recent 2015 election. The incumbent president conceded defeat and congratulated his opponent even before the results were officially announced. This political feat launched Nigeria into a new era of democracy with the international audience applauding this peaceful transition.

This proves that even countries in Africa are coming into their ability to administer justice with regards to human rights and freedom. With the global clamor for justice and fairness, we should pause and ponder on the true concept of democracy.

What does democracy mean to you? Here are some thoughts from the Goodman. Let us know what you think:

“I believe that democracy is just a political word that does not exist in its totality because human opinion is constantly influenced by various factors and the same people in a different environment, within a different given situation would process and analyze thoughts differently.

With this, I would rather see democracy, not as the power of the people, but the power of certain group of people to successfully influence popular opinion.” ~ Nwankwo Emmanuella, Education and Engagement Intern

“Democracy is an organizational method in which the members of a community choose their own rulers or rule themselves. If every voice in a given community is not heard, democracy is not functioning properly.” – Liam Collier, Education and Engagement Intern

“Democracy is a system of government that is defined by the opinion of the people it governs, and depends on its people to maintain a healthy balance of power between representatives and citizens.” – Anna Gelman, Curriculum and Instruction Associate

“Democracy is a political structure that claims to give the power of governance to the people.” – Ian Martin, Community Engagement Coordinator

Muhammadu Buhari, the current President of Nigeria
Trust Your Reps!
by LIAM COLLIER

In a constitutional democracy, it is a citizen’s responsibility to play their role in the system. They should be educated voters, but trust that their elected officials understand governance better than they do, and therefore know what is best.

When the Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution, they revived a social experiment that no western nation had attempted in centuries: democracy. The notion that a people should choose their own rulers and make their own laws was so radical at the time that America fought a seven year war with England just to get the chance to try it out (To be fair, Americans also really didn’t want to pay their taxes.)

Even after the war, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson proceeded with caution. Without a tried and tested democratic model to replicate, they turned to the words of Ancient Greek philosophers. What they found were grave warnings about the dangers of self-government. “Tyranny,” wrote Plato in one of his seminal works, “is probably established out of no other regime than democracy.” Plato argued that, given the chance, free societies would sow the seeds of their own destruction. Citizens in a democracy, he believed, would come to despise those in power; one by one they would tear them down until the political establishment was so weak that a strongman could easily take over.

In the end, the Framers set up a system of checks and balances where multiple branches of government would hold each other accountable, existing governing bodies would need to confirm appointed officials, and smaller states would be able to stand up to larger ones. Although politicians and historians often describe this system as an attempt to balance power

The founding fathers. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.
within the government, it was also meant to limit the power of the public if they ever attempted to elect a tyrant or implement policies that were detrimental to the United States.

In the decades following the constitutional convention, some of the Founding Fathers established America’s first political parties. Their purpose, at least in part, was also to guard against demagogues. Parties acted as gatekeepers, admitting those who upheld certain norms and rejecting those who broke them. While this system was guilty of reinforcing historical injustices (for years, political “norms” barred women and people of color from campaigning for higher office), it also withheld power from individuals who threatened democracy.

Unfortunately, in the last eight years, both of the United States’ political parties have turned in on themselves. In 2009, the Republicans saw the rise of the Tea Party, a new ultra-conservative branch of their organization that ousted many long-serving politicians. Leaders of the Tea Party movement villainized “career politicians,” painting them as out-of-touch and corrupt. Many have argued that the Tea Party’s open defiance of political norms paved the way for Donald Trump’s presidency. On the left, Democrats faced Bernie Sanders, an independent Senator from Vermont whose grassroots campaign to win the nomination for president threatened Hillary Clinton’s path to the White House. Like the Tea Party, Bernie criticized the political establishment, focusing particularly on corrupt politicians who had been purchased by billionaires. These insurgencies and the shifting political sentiments that accompanied them left both America’s parties in shambles.

Today, the Republican Party caters to fringe voters while Democrats scramble to decide what, if anything, they stand for.

Without political gatekeepers, truly anyone can be president. All they require is the support of the people. Throughout history, tyrants have proved especially adept at using anger and prejudice to win this support.

One alternative to representative democracy is direct democracy. Citizens in direct democracies may vote politicians into office to write laws and negotiate matters of state; however, unlike in a strict representative democracy, these citizens also have
the opportunity—or at times the legal obligation—to vote on these laws themselves. Switzerland is the only country that currently operates as a direct democracy, although many other countries have allowed their citizens to vote in referendums on specific topics.

In the US, ten states allow citizens to vote directly on legislation. In California, the largest and perhaps most directly democratic of all these states, citizens vote on various propositions each election cycle. In 2016, Californians received a 224 page booklet laying out the seventeen propositions that they would vote on; these ranged from legalizing marijuana to eliminating the death penalty.

Here lies one of the major problems with direct democracy. Voters are expected to quickly understand and form informed opinions about complex issues that politicians spend years studying. They must then boil these opinions down to a strict yes or no vote, when in reality effective solutions are more complicated.

Representation allows for a more nuanced debate. Behind closed doors, politicians can find solutions. From the outside, these compromises can look a lot like corruption; from within, they look like governing. In a representative democracy, we will not always get all of what we want, but neither will our enemies. Without the possibility of negotiation, we are governed by extremes. In 2016, for instance, British citizens voted by referendum to leave the European Union, a decision with enormous economic and cultural ramifications for all of Europe. Later that year the citizens of Colombia voted by referendum to reject a peace treaty that would have ended a fifty year armed conflict between the Colombian government and guerilla forces. In both instances, the middle path was decimated when politicians turned decisions over to a general vote.

We must trust our representatives because the alternative is unacceptable: a broken system governed only by extremes. Yes, the establishment is corrupt. But if the people demolish that establishment, the country will have no defense left against authoritarianism.

That is how democracy dies.

Want more Resources?


“Democracy vs. The Mob” by Damon Linker in The Week.

“Democracies End When They Are Too Democratic” by Andrew Sullivan in New York Magazine.
In a constitutional democracy, it is a citizen’s responsibility to uphold the constitution alongside their representatives. This means criticizing their government, voting officials out of office, and protesting to uphold the constitution if they feel the representatives are not.

The idea of a democratic country, in theory, is that the people run the government. They decide who becomes an elected official, and every election period face the decision to keep that person in office or to vote them out. What the model, then, implies, is that the people are ultimately the gatekeepers of a healthy and safe democratic society, with voting as their most powerful tool. To fulfill their responsibility to the democracy, citizens must be informed, involved and exercising not only their right to vote, but also their voice as a powerful tool to criticize and fight those in power if they aren’t properly listening to what the people want. In the United States, are citizens exercising their responsibility? And what does citizen involvement mean for how the government functions?

In the 2016 Presidential Election, more than nearly 139 million eligible American voters went to the polls. That impressive number broke election records, surpassing the 132 million voters who turned out for the 2008 election between Barack Obama and John McCain. But even in this best of all possible scenarios, voting participation is only 60% of voters in the United States. In one of the most divisive elections in American history, 40% of the population chose to be silent, ignoring their right and responsibility to have a voice in the country’s political future. Those numbers aren’t as reassuring as one would hope, when it comes to citizen participation. But to make matters even more complicated, the 60% of the voting population that went to the polls voted Hillary Clinton into office, who won the popular vote by almost 2.9 million votes, but lost the electoral college, and thus the election, to Donald Trump. As the system failed the majority of the country that did choose to vote, the 2016 election...
also brought to the forefront another key to citizen participation in the democratic process: complaining.

“Of all the liberties guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution,” writes New Yorker Columnist Kathryn Shulz, “the most underrated by far is the one that gives us the right to complain to our elected officials.” In her article on what impact calling elected officials can actually have, Shulz goes on to underline the impact one person could have if they are persistent: “I’ve written bills that became law because people called to complain about a particular issue I was unaware of,” Akin of Senator Wyden’s office, said. It was constituents, for instance, who educated Congress about America’s opioid crisis and got members to delegate funds and draft health legislation to begin dealing with it.” And while with larger issues a call may seem fruitless, Shulz emphasizes that “That kind of policy change isn’t impossible, and it isn’t unprecedented, but it is extremely rare. When I asked past and present Congress members and high-level staffers if constituent input mattered, all of them emphasized that it absolutely does. But when I asked them to name a time that a legislator had changed his or her vote on the basis of such input, I got, in every instance, a laugh, and then a very long pause.”

There’s no doubt that a system reliant on listening is flawed, and that even in moments of extreme participation, politicians can choose to ignore their constituents. Still, Shulz cites a handful of massive legislative battles won by citizen outcry, ranging from Congress pay raises to immigration reform. And with services like resistbot, which makes it easier for phone-shy citizens to fax and email their representatives, and reminds subscribers to resist daily; making your voice heard is easier now than ever before.

When calling or faxing isn’t enough, however, the language of citizenship turns to protest. The Women’s March became the largest protest in United States history, boasting between 3 and 5 million participants who took to the streets in major cities across the country, as well as the Washington Mall the day after Donald Trump’s inauguration. Demonstration and civil disobedience is rooted deeply in American history, dating back to the Boston Tea Party, to the Civil Rights Marches of the 1960’s, to now – when protests are such a hot button issue that Donald Trump has made unfounded claims that protests are actors paid to create the image of dissidence. To some, protests might seem like an unproductive output of anger and leave many people wondering if they accomplish anything at all. The Women’s March didn’t remove Trump from office. There is still massive wealth disparity in the U.S. post-Occupy Wall Street. And Black Lives Matter protests across the country haven’t eliminated police brutality against people of color. But if the history of the United States has taught us anything about protest, it’s what Ta-Nehisi Coates points out in the tagline of his article on Civil Rights Protests being unpopular: “Activists can’t persuade their
contemporaries -- their aiming at the next generation.” He goes on to point out that protest creates a culture of a slow but determined changing of perspectives. Put simply, “The point is the future.” The Civil Rights movement was extremely unpopular (with 63% of Americans having a negative opinion about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1966), but eventually it changed (and is still changing) the conversation about equity in the United States. And without a demonstration of throwing tea in the Boston Harbor, who knows if our country would exist at all?

There’s no doubt that sometimes, citizen voices aren’t enough. In a system in which the winner of the popular vote can lose the election, members of Congress can choose to ignore phone calls for their own political gain, and citizens feel, more and more, that they are pushed into demonstration and protest, the question presents itself: is citizen participation the problem, or is it the government they are butting up against? Not only is it a responsibility of a citizen in a constitutional democracy to use their voice when their representatives stray from their wishes, it is exactly what the American people have been doing from the beginning.

Sources and Resources
Business Insider on The 2016 Election
The New Yorker - What Calling Congress Acheives
CNN On the 2016 Election
The Washington Post on The Women’s March
The Atlantic - Civil Rights Protests Have Never Been Popular
The Role of Media in a Democracy

by EMMANUELLA NWANKWO

The media is often referred to as “the fourth pillar of democracy,” The Business Dictionary defines media as “communication channels through which news, entertainment, education, and data or promotional messages are disseminated...”

Over the years, people have devised multiple means of sharing information with each other. Initially, humans used word of mouth to pass information from one person to another. As people migrated from place to place, they created other tools of communication. For example, pigeons and ravens have been used to carry messages over great distances. During the Middle Ages, town criers would roam the streets announcing news, proclamations and new laws.

This method of information sharing changed when Johannes Gutenberg, a German blacksmith, goldsmith, printer, and publisher, invented the first printing press in 1445. The invention of the printing press caused information to spread faster, sparking an intellectual awakening and inspiring new communication innovations, which have continued to evolve over time.

Media assists in multiple ways to uphold democracy. It is the duty of the press to educate and inform citizens by reporting information that concerns them as a nation and as part of the global community. They can expose leaders’ actions and the government, in turn, relies on the feedback of the public to assess its performance.

Courtesy of Affinity Magazine.
News reporting has been especially integral to the history of democracy in the U.S. For example, the Washington Post broke the story of the Watergate scandal in 1972. They reported that a team of burglars had been arrested inside of the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate office complex in Washington, D.C. Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein revealed that the prowlers, who were connected to President Nixon’s re-election campaign committee, were caught stealing documents and wiretapping phones in the Watergate office. Initially, Nixon denied the claims, however, five of the seven conspirators pleaded guilty. White House Counsel John Dean also pleaded guilty, revealing that Nixon had paid huge sums of money to the burglars and had instructed the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to impede the FBI’s investigation on the crime. He confessed that the President had tapes containing these discussions. Nixon refused to release the tapes, and the House of Representatives voted to impeach him for obstruction of justice, abuse of power, criminal cover-up and several other violations of the Constitution. Nixon resigned from office on August 5th, 1974, just three days after he finally released the tapes to the authorities.

The media also serves as a watchdog for the people, exposing oppressive government while provoking citizens to action. Social media has allowed people more access to information, making it more difficult for corrupt or ineffective governments to continue in office. The 2011 Egyptian protests, known as Arab Spring, exemplified the power of the media to oust an autocratic leader. On January 25th, 2011, hundreds of thousands of Egyptians gathered at Tahrir Square demanding the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak, who had presided over Egypt for 30 years. The country’s youth took to social media to express their enmity regarding low wages, high unemployment, police brutality and widespread corruption. Mubarak’s regime constantly abused human rights. Freedoms of expression, association, and assembly were limited. The press was regulated, and police brutality ran rampant. In 2009, The Human Rights Watch estimated between 5,000 and 10,000 Egyptians were held without charge. To subdue its citizens, the state shut down the internet for five days, but that didn’t deter the world from following the political unrest in Egypt. After 18 days of protest, Presi-
dent Mubarak resigned.

The Egyptian uprising had been inspired by a 2010 protest in Tunisia. On December 17th, a young man named Mohamed Bouazzi burnt himself in the city of Sidi Bouzid to protest against the corrupt government of President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali. This action sparked a global response, and the citizens of Tunisia took to the streets and demanded the President’s resignation. The revolution opened the door for the democratic movements that began in these nations.

Media also provides a platform for public debate. In the United States, the 2nd Amendment safeguards citizens’ rights to keep and bear arms. However, over the years, incidences of mass shootings have triggered public debates on gun rights. The recent shooting in Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida has sparked the most recent debate on gun control. On March 8th, Florida legislature passed the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, changing the minimum gun purchase age from 18 to 21, establishing a three-day waiting period for gun purchases, and making bump stacks illegal. The bill also intends to arm school employees with guns after receiving gun handling training, fund school security, and expand mental health services and regulation. While most citizens describe the bill as a good move, the National Rifle Association (NRA) challenged the bill as unconstitutional and a violation of the 2nd amendment, the rights to bear arms, and the 14th amendment, the right to equal protection under the law.

The rise of social media has opened doors for more people to air their views, not just locally, but on a global scale. In the United Kingdom, Statistic Portal records that at the beginning of 2017, the total number of social media users had reached over 39 million with estimates going up to 42 million users. While some argue that social media cannot be relied on to report facts, others believe that it has deepened the concept of democracy, allowing more people to be informed about the happenings in their environment. The virtual advantages of social media also help safeguard citizens’ freedom of speech. Whatever the medium, the role of media continues to assist citizens in the democratic process.
What Should I Wear?
For a lot of people, going to the theater is a special event, and they like to dress up for it. Remember: even though you are on a field trip you should dress according to your school’s dress code. The Goodman is air conditioned, so bring a sweater or extra layer in case you get cold.

Be respectful to the artists on stage, and to your fellow audience members. No talking during the performance, no feet on seats, and no kicking. No use of phones or electronic devices -- the glow from the screen is distracting to your fellow audience members and the actors (and yes, they can see it)!

Please remember: no smoking, and no eating or drinking while inside the theater.

What if I need to leave the theatre during the show?
Only if it is an emergency. Otherwise, it’s very disrespectful. Make sure to use restrooms before the show, or wait until intermission.

How should I respond to what’s going on on the stage?
Honeslty but appropriately. Theatre is very different from watching a movie at home. Always remember that you are in a room full of people who are there to watch the performance. They can hear your responses just as well as you can hear theirs. Most importantly, the actors can hear and see you. They will appreciate any appropriate feedback but might be offended if it is inappropriate. Whether you enjoy the play or not, you owe respect to the actors.
What to do before the show:
When you arrive at the Goodman, you will be given a ticket and asked to. It is a good idea to arrive at least 15-20 minutes before the performance. If you are late, often you will not be allowed to enter the show until after intermission. Once your group is called, an usher will lead you to your seats and hand you a program. Please promptly sit where you have been assigned. Remember that the show needs to begin on time and everyone needs to be seated.

What to do during Intermission:
Most plays have a 15 minute intermission. This gives you time to stretch your legs, use the restroom, get some water, and discuss the play with your friends. We do ask that you remain on the floor where your seat is – there are restrooms on both levels. When intermission is over, the lights in the lobby with flash several times. That is your cue to get back to your seat, because the performance is about to begin!

What to do after the show:
There will be a post-show discussion immediately following the performance. Members of the cast will come out on stage and answer your questions. Feel free to ask anything that’s on your mind about the show, but please remember to be respectful.
As a patron of the theatre, it is important to know how to read your ticket and find your seat. Generally, seats for all performances in the Goodman’s Albert Theatre are assigned seating, so be sure to know how to be able to find your seat. When you come with your school, you will be ushered to a section where you and your fellow students can sit and enjoy the play together.

Below is an explanation of how to read your ticket, and all of the information that you can get from your ticket. If you have any problems, ask an usher for help. They’re here for you!