



Speaking of DEMOCRACY

The word “democracy” may derive from ancient Greek—*Δῆμος* (*demos*, the people) and *κράτος* (*kratia*, power or rule)—but the concepts it embodies transcend time and place. It speaks of values, process, and institutions.

Drawing from diverse historical and geographical sources, this exhibition explores the roots of, threats to, and promise within democracy. It aims to provoke the viewer—you—to do two things.

One is to think. Democracy is complex and untidy. Tasks like listening to the voices of a vibrant civil society, balancing rights while upholding the rule of law, or building resilient institutions do not come easily.

And the other is to act. Many cannot. An enduring and healthy democracy means getting involved.

— The Hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario



OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF ONTARIO
BUREAU DE LA LIEUTENANTE-GOUVERNEURE DE L'ONTARIO

Definitions & Defence

Oxford English Dictionary

Government by the people; ... (more generally) a system of decision-making within an institution, organization, etc., in which all members have the right to take part or vote.

Le Petit Robert French dictionary

Political doctrine that vests sovereignty in citizens; a political organization ... in which citizens exercise this sovereignty.

Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine

In addition to social equality, we need political liberty. Without it, we will have no future; without it, our needs cannot be satisfied.

George Orwell

In the case of a word like democracy, not only is there no agreed definition, but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides. It is almost universally felt that when we call a country democratic we are praising it: consequently the defenders of every kind of regime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using that word if it were tied down to any one meaning.

Reinhold Niebuhr

Man’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man’s inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.

Jennifer Welsh

But what has happened to the positive allure of liberal democracy? Where are the voices trumpeting its capacity to bring dignity, to empower, and to build collective consciousness? Growing inequality has fostered widespread amnesia about democracy’s positive, foundational values—above all the value of fairness.

Student from Overtown, Florida, USA

But it’s about government, like different branches, things like that. They don’t ask us, ‘Oh, how do you feel about the school?’

Irene Parlby

If politics mean ... the effort to secure through legislative action better conditions of life for the people, greater opportunities for our children and other people’s children ... then it most assuredly is a woman’s job as much as it is a man’s job.

Opposites & Opposition

Yuval Noah Harari

Even if some societies remain ostensibly democratic, the increasing efficiency of algorithms will still shift more and more authority from individual humans to networked machines. We might willingly give up more and more authority over our lives because we will learn from experience to trust the algorithms more than our own feelings, eventually losing our ability to make many decisions for ourselves.

Maria Ressa

A lie told a million times becomes the truth.

Édouard Louis

Among those who have everything, politics changes almost nothing. What’s strange is that they’re the ones who engage in politics. Though it has almost no effect on their lives. For the ruling class, in general, politics is a question of aesthetics: a way of seeing themselves, of seeing the world, of constructing a personality. For us it was life or death.

Democracy is a work in progress. So is democracy’s undoing.

David Frum

Democracy begins with

freedom from hunger,
freedom from unemployment,
freedom from fear, and
freedom from hatred.

Vandana Shiva

THE FIRST PRINCIPLE WAS **PEACE**,
THE SECOND WAS **EQUITY AND JUSTICE**,
AND THE THIRD ONE WAS **THE POWER OF THE GOOD MINDS**.
AND THAT’S GREAT POWER, BUT **IT’S A COLLECTIVE POWER**.
IT DOESN’T WORK UNLESS **IT’S TOGETHER**.

Oren Lyons

Response & Responsibility

Damon Keith

Democracy dies in the dark.

Edmund Burke

When the leaders choose to make themselves bidders at an auction of popularity, their talents, in the construction of the state, will be of no service. They will become flatterers instead of legislators; the instruments, not the guides, of the people.

Rosalie Abella

For me, the components of democracy are most starkly revealed in comparison to its antonym, totalitarianism. What democratic societies promote—and repressive ones do not—are the rights of its citizens and their participation in decision-making about the rules they will be governed by. Democracy promotes choice, voice and access to rights. Totalitarianism promotes none of those.

Walter Lippmann

The battle for us, in short, does not lie against crusted prejudice, but against the chaos of a new freedom. This chaos is our real problem. So if the younger critics are to meet the issues of their generation they must give their attention, not so much to the evils of authority, as to the weaknesses of democracy.

Gro Harlem Brundtland

Changes are needed, both in the North and the South, but these changes will not happen unless they stand the test of democracy. Only when people have the right to take part in the shaping of society by participating in democratic political processes will changes be politically sustainable. Only then can we fulfill the hopes and aspirations of generations yet unborn.

Queen Elizabeth II

All of us who have been blessed with young families know from long experience that when one's house is at its noisiest, there is often less cause for anxiety.

Beverley McLachlin

What has the decline of democracy and civil liberties as we are witnessing it got to do with courts? Everything. When political rights and civil liberties decline, we can be certain that this is accompanied by a decline in the independence and accessibility of the courts. Independent judges are the guarantors of political rights and civil liberties. So long as courts are accessible, independent and their orders are enforced, political rights and civil liberties are sustained. When the courts are inaccessible or constrained by the government and majoritarian forces, political rights and civil liberties decline. The connection is as simple as it is clear.

Arnold Chan

The other thing I would simply ask all of our colleagues to consider is that while we debate and engage, what we are doing right now, when we listen, that we listen to one another, despite our strong differences. That is when democracy really happens. That is the challenge that is going on around the world right now. No one is listening. Everyone is just talking at once. We have to listen to each other. In so doing, we will make this place a stronger place.

Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector

A professional and non-partisan federal public sector is integral to our democracy.

Roman Krznaric

Modern democracy—especially in wealthy countries—has enabled us to colonise the future. We treat the future like a distant colonial outpost devoid of people, where we can freely dump ecological degradation, technological risk, nuclear waste and public debt, and that we feel at liberty to plunder as we please.

Supreme Court of Canada

No one has a monopoly on truth, and our system is predicated on the faith that in the marketplace of ideas, the best solutions to public problems will rise to the top. Inevitably, there will be dissenting voices. A democratic system of government is committed to considering those dissenting voices, and seeking to acknowledge and address those voices in the laws by which all in the community must live.

Winston Churchill

Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.

**We realize
the importance
of our voices
only when
we are silenced.**

Malala Yousafzai

**Democracy is
not just a question
of having a vote.**

It consists of strengthening each citizen's possibility and capacity to participate in the deliberations involved in life in society.

Fernando Cardoso

Speaking of Democracy

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The exhibition can be viewed at:

<http://arts.lgontario.ca/democracy-democratie>