



## Celebrating Culture, Building Connection, and Creating Community Safety

### Cultural Identity Is a Strength—But Isolation Can Be a Risk

Cultural centers and immigrant organizations play a vital role in helping people find belonging, preserve heritage, and access needed services. But many immigrant communities also face:

- Social isolation and invisibility in the wider community
- Language and cultural barriers that limit relationship-building
- Rising fear, discrimination, and targeted harassment
- Lack of local networks to support safety and resilience

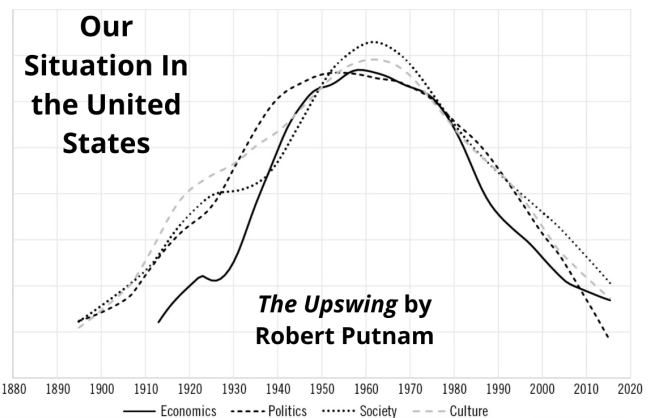
In today's climate, cultural celebration and public connection must go hand-in-hand.

### The Challenges We Face Together

Across the United States, communities are facing a wave of division and disconnection that threatens both individual well-being and our shared civic health. Key challenges include:

- The rise of political extremism that fuels polarization and erodes democratic norms.
- Widespread loneliness and isolation, made worse by social media and cultural fragmentation.

These issues are deeply interconnected. Social isolation makes us more vulnerable to fear and manipulation. Polarization erodes our ability to collaborate across difference. According to the Rippel Foundation, **belonging and civic muscle are the foundation** of a society. Group-to-group and person-to-person relationships are not a nice to have, they create the possibility for everything else. The question is: how do we respond?



**Jonathan Haidt:** Vibrant Democracies have Social capital | Strong institutions | Shared stories

### What the Potluck Project Offers

The Potluck Project is a simple, flexible tool to help cultural centers and immigrant-serving organizations **build bridges with other local communities**—while honoring their own traditions.

It's not about losing identity—it's about **sharing it** in ways that build mutual respect, understanding, and trust.

Through shared meals and personal stories, people discover one another's humanity. Walls come down. Friendships form. And when communities know each other, everyone becomes safer and more supported.

### Why This Matters

- When people know you, they're more likely to stand with you
- When cultures are celebrated publicly, fear and suspicion decrease
- When bridges are built, opportunities grow for shared events, partnerships, and advocacy

The Potluck Project helps immigrant and diaspora communities:

- **Be seen and known** in a positive light
- **Build neighborhood-based relationships** for safety and solidarity
- **Create partnerships** with local governments, nonprofits, schools, and faith groups
- **Celebrate heritage** through food, music, and story—while inviting others in

## A Simple and Flexible Approach

We offer:

- A free toolkit that makes it easy to host a potluck event and story-sharing circle
- A national tour that highlights local leadership and models inclusive gatherings
- Ongoing support and connection to a growing network of bridge-building communities

The toolkit includes:

- Step-by-step event planning guidance
- Sample invitations and flyers
- Story prompts that work across cultures and languages
- Facilitation tips for safe and respectful conversations

## What You Can Do

- **Host a potluck at your cultural center**—either within your community or with other local groups
- **Use the toolkit** to build connection with schools, faith communities, libraries, and public agencies
- **Partner with us** to bring a Potluck Project Tour stop to your area
- **Help community members feel seen and safe**, while showing the broader community the beauty of your traditions
- **Share your story** so others can learn from your leadership

## Sharing Culture, Building Safety

The Potluck Project doesn't ask anyone to set aside who they are. It creates a space where **your heritage can shine**—and be received with gratitude, not suspicion.

When people eat together and hear one another's stories, they stop seeing "strangers" and start seeing neighbors.

**This is how we build stronger communities—one table at a time.**

## About PTU:

Paths to Understanding is a 501c3 working for a world in which all belong and all can thrive. We do this work in partnership with local and regional organizations in Washington State and across the nation. Our partners include secular and religious bridge building organizations and networks.

THE <b>potluck</b> PROJECT	
<b>Who can host a potluck?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individuals</li><li>• Groups of Friends</li><li>• Community Groups</li><li>• Wisdom Communities or Interfaith Group</li></ul>
<b>What do you need to get started?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 or more people ready to organize</li><li>• A date and time for your potluck</li><li>• A location to host your event</li><li>• Courage to gather with others</li></ul>
<b>What will you find in this toolkit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sample invitation</li><li>• Pre-event press release template</li><li>• Event agenda &amp; considerations for planning an intercultural event</li><li>• Post-event press release template</li></ul>
QUESTIONS? Contact us via email   <a href="mailto:Together@PathsToUnderstanding.org">Together@PathsToUnderstanding.org</a>	



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