



The Potluck Project: Investing in the First Step Toward Civic Health and Social Cohesion

Disconnection is Undermining Every Issue We Care About

From democracy and public health to education and racial equity, our efforts are hitting a wall of:

- Isolation
- Mistrust
- Social fragmentation

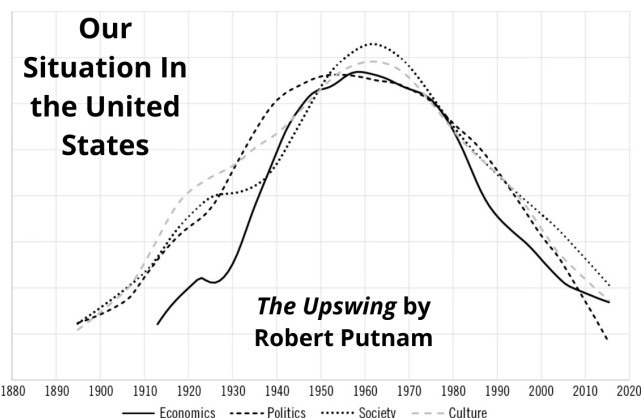
We cannot build effective systems or movements on a foundation of fear and alienation. We must **repair the relational fabric first**.

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 polarization that 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

A Scalable, Trust-Building Strategy

The Potluck Project is a grassroots strategy to do just that.

It offers a low-cost, high-impact way to:

- Bring people together across lines of difference
- Create organic relationships between groups
- Lay the foundation for deeper civic and social engagement

This is infrastructure work—not of roads or tech, but of belonging.

Why It's Worth Funding

- High-leverage. One event sparks relationships that ripple outward
- Low-barrier. Designed for replication by nonprofits, schools, faith communities, and local governments
- Culturally adaptive. Works in urban, suburban, rural, and multifaith settings
- Complements other investments. Potluck can be paired with dialogue, organizing, advocacy, or civic education programs

What Support Makes Possible

Your funding helps:

Expand the national tour to more towns and cities

Translate and culturally adapt materials for broader accessibility

Train facilitators in relational trust-building

Document stories and outcomes to strengthen the movement

Sustain the toolkit as a free, public good

Let's Fund the Relationships That Make Change Possible

Social trust is not a nice-to-have.

It's a public good. A civic necessity. A foundation for everything else.

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



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