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The German Marshall Fund  
of the United States

STRENGTHENING TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION



# Achieving Political Inclusion

GMF Alumni Read-In  
for the Paris Inclusive Leadership Summit

September 18-20, 2019

*“Political inclusion is essential in order to sustain and strengthen our democracies. In this light, it is always an honor and inspiration for me and for the GMF team to convene and connect the powerful, rising diverse generation of political leaders who come together from both sides of the Atlantic through GMF’s leadership programs.”*

- Dr. Karen Donfried, President, German Marshall Fund of the United States, U.S.



*“When diversity is a primary value, everything changes. In today’s world, diversity, representation and opportunity are economically imperative.”*

- Thierry Déau, Founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Meridiam

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*With special thanks to our GMF editors Lora Berg, Counselor for Inclusive Leadership; Dr. Elandre Dedrick, ACLS/Mellon Public Fellow; Taylor Kelly and Xavier Sims (Student Assistants)*

# Introduction



Lora Berg, Counselor for Inclusive Leadership, GMF, Washington, D.C.

***In this reader we introduce themes for action, and share perspectives of diverse political actors and activists in the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) network.***

We define political inclusion as: engaging all in the community in political processes, such as civic education, voting, running for office, and offering input to representatives as policies and legislation are developed, thereby creating a sense of agency and belonging.

Democracies are facing serious stresses at this time. We believe that by making political practice in our democracies more inclusive, we will also make our democracies more robust and enduring, and better showcase this political system which is well suited to organize stable, peaceful and lawful societies for our world on the move.

We look toward democratic practice where the full involvement of citizens increases the total amount of power available in our societies, rather than zero sum approaches to democratic practice where power is considered to be limited and the temptation is therefore to monopolize and to withhold it.

We look toward reflective democracies where the representatives in our legislatures are reflective of the full range of diversity in our societies, and likewise our political parties are representative and offer the full range of choice that citizens require.

We look toward electoral systems where every vote counts, free of the undue influence of money, and where every voting age individual is supported and encouraged to learn about candidates and other ballot choices, get to the polls and vote successfully.

We look toward better understanding the power of new communication technologies, how to address misinformation and to ensure that our democratic processes are secure.

We look toward processes of civic education that teach and nurture democratic practices from an early age, equitably across our countries.

To achieve these goals within our bodies politic, we must be courageous and innovative. In Paris, we are working on principles for a shared vision of political inclusion, and discuss roadmaps of how to achieve this vision in our different country contexts. We are also spotlighting some of the work being done today by GMF Leadership Programs alumni and stakeholders toward achieving political inclusion. And we are considering steps that each of us can take as individuals to advance political inclusion from our own circles of influence.

# Host Country View: Inclusion in the French Political System

Kristel Ba, Program Officer for Inclusive Leadership, GMF, Paris, France

The concepts and practice of diversity and inclusion (D&I) are starting to gain traction in French public debate. Although the media, business, and education sectors have been praising the benefits of D&I for some time, the French political sphere has only recently begun to explore inclusionary policies in recognition that D&I can be a practice to fight discrimination and generate economic growth. The question remains: how can France ensure that the diversity of the French population is reflected at all levels in the political sphere?

In order to better understand the issue of inclusion in the French political sphere, we must first acknowledge the delegitimization of participative democracy and a crisis of representation in France. The problem of legitimacy is directly linked to that of inequality because represented citizens are fundamentally unequal in our society. This is principally due to a social culture which marginalizes certain populations. This marginalization is in turn mirrored in political life, creating a distrust of public authorities that are not representative of their constituents.



Furthermore, the structure of the modern French political system reinforces feelings of disenfranchisement and abandonment. An asymmetrical power structure – a “top-down” system that emphasizes the power of the executive – brings a twofold threat: undermining both the balance of power within the government, and the representative power of the citizenry. The constitutional approach of acculturation – the staunch declaration of colorblindness and secularism – declares that all citizens are equal, yet in practice this often means they are all invisible.

Exacerbating this sentiment of desertion is a disconnect between members of parliament and young people. In the absence of representatives who listen, young citizens are discouraged by the status quo and self-censor by not voting, intensifying the lack of communication in the French political system. A cycle of mistrust results and in turn, intensifies the lack of connection between public authorities and young voters.



Nevertheless, this widespread feeling of inequality is counterbalanced by the first parliamentary majority with gender parity and more diverse representation. Elected representation is increasingly diverse in some aspects including age, a step forward from earlier efforts of former President Nicolas Sarkozy to appoint diverse talent into government leadership roles. This is also exemplified in recent proposals that promote balanced

gender representation in decision-making. Yet despite a commitment to gender parity, a cruel lack of representation persists throughout society regarding a range of other diversity factors.

The question we must ask ourselves is: Where do we want to go and how do we get there? Here are five recommendations reached during a convening of the Inclusion Strategists at GMF Paris' Inclusive Leadership Hub, bringing together thought leaders from across sectors, generations, and ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds:

1. It is time for France to rethink minority representation in the media and politics with the aim of deconstructing stereotypes and bolstering the visible role of underrepresented groups. A lack of political representation leads to a lack of inclusion and can consequently weaken national identity and even stir contempt. It is essential for France, like the United States and Canada, to systematically engage diverse representatives in highly visible media and public office leadership roles. Greater legislative power can be entrusted to citizens by increasing civic engagement via town hall meetings, workshop debates, and overall inclusivity in policy making. The republican governing framework may be inhibiting France, when what is required is an approach that emphasizes social diversity and plurality.
2. The elite higher education system (Grandes Écoles) needs to have more open access in order to disrupt a cycle of social reproduction of the systemic structures of inequality; this would pave the way for marginalized populations to gain access and excel. Education serves as a lever for representation, and could model the celebration of diversity, ensuring that diversity flourishes in all aspects of France.



3. There must be a reinforcement of the synergy between the public and private sectors. The private sector recognizes the role of diversity in increasing productivity, and outperforms the public sector in D&I practices. This is the time to raise public-sector awareness about the benefits of D&I as both a source of wealth and innovation for institutions. Through the exchange of best practices, political representation of minority groups in the public sector would improve.
4. There is a need to challenge current policies on inclusion by, on one hand, implementing data collection and statistical analysis. This would allow the measurement of the impact of public policies by collecting data that would permit a deeper apprehension of various forms of discrimination. Such data practices are currently illegal in the public sector per the French constitution, posing a legal barrier to a full understanding of discrimination. On the other hand, implementing a quota system, while controversial, could prove effective if based on measurements of the efficacy of so-called inclusive policies.

The Inclusive Leadership Summit aims to understand the roadblocks to inclusion and formulate concrete propositions in order to effectively promote a diverse political class. Advocating for political diversity and inclusion will not only ensure better representation of all citizens, but above all the legitimacy of our democratic systems.

#### **LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:**

*We each have a role to play  
in strengthening diverse  
representation.*

# Generative Power

If each person in a community were at their peak level of personal power, the community would also maximize its collective power. Sources of power such as ideas, drive, imagination, innovation, and vision could be fully tapped, providing the energy and agency for civic and political engagement. Likewise a country is stronger when its inhabitants and localities are fully able to realize their capabilities and contribute to the country as a whole. This is a democratic ideal, one of generative power rather than zero sum thinking. Inclusive elected leaders are informed by this generous approach to power.

## Self: Unlocking Your Personal Power:

Nadja El Fertasi, Founder of EQ Emotional Intelligence Coaching & Consulting, Brussels, Belgium (MMF'18)

The famous quote “knowledge is power” is perhaps the key driver in how inclusion and leadership are defined in the digital age. We live in a society where we still measure success as a direct correlation to IQ, and thus we value IQ over EQ (Emotional Intelligence). An intelligence quotient (IQ) is a total score derived from several standardized tests designed to assess human intelligence. Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is a set of emotional and social skills that collectively establish how well we perceive, and express ourselves, develop and maintain social relationships, cope with challenges, and use information in an effective and meaningful way.

Digital transformation is redefining social and emotional intelligence as we know it in human interaction. Disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data are progressing at a high pace and are likely to replace many cognitive functions of the human mind. Soft-skills such as empathy, stress management, resilience and managing unconscious bias are essential components of building trust between different stakeholders in transatlantic relations to foster political inclusion.

So, what's the silver bullet?

Unlocking your personal power by leveraging your emotional intelligence is your silver bullet. Statistics from Harvard, Stanford, and the Carnegie Foundation show that 85–87 percent of our success accounts from soft skills, emotional intelligence (EQ), and personal skills, yet we only pay attention to the 10 percent of the time. Emotional intelligence is set to become the critical driver for social relationships in the next years and will help ensure that human interaction does not get lost in the perils of digital transformation.

Let's take myself as an example. I worked at one of the largest multinational defense and security organizations in the world for nearly two decades (yes, I am a NATO dinosaur!). During my tenure at NATO, I built trust and fostered political inclusion among diverse civilian and military stakeholders from over 40 countries. As the head of the Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Office, I was responsible for advising the general manager and senior leadership personnel on key political-military work streams to ensure our organizational objectives were

**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:** *In the digital age, it is even more critical to remember that we are all human beings with feelings.*

aligned with NATO’s strategic defense and deterrence posture. I represented the general manager on several senior committees, such as the North Atlantic Council, the Military Committee and the Deputy Permanent Representative Committees. As an ethnically diverse female professional who embraces her femininity and who went from secretary to senior executive in a male-dominated military environment, my IQ alone did not suffice in climbing up the institutional ladder in NATO. What helped me navigate the political-military institutional quagmire was leveraging and maximizing my emotional intelligence.

How does one unlock personal power by leveraging emotional intelligence?

I learned to recognize and understand my own emotions first (self-awareness), before I assessed the emotions of people I worked with (social awareness). In the digital age, it is even more critical to remember that we are all human beings with feelings. Anyone who tries to deny this, should probably be concerned with artificial intelligence replacing them! Jokes aside, as human beings we do not control the triggering of our emotions which are processed in the emotional part of the brain first, before the information is processed in the rational part of the brain. Therefore, managing our own emotions according to different situations is critical for building and navigating successful relationships at the workplace and in your personal life.

Figure one shows the scientifically validated EQ-I 2.0 model with the fifteen emotional subscales. If you master to balance these emotions accordingly for each situation, you will become the master of your mind, and you will start to unlock your personal power in the digital age.

**Figure 1**



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# Power in the City:

Interview with Mo Seifeldin, Councilman City of Alexandria, Virginia, United States (TILN'19)

**Q: Who holds power, and how are city dwellers included in the exercise of power?**

The Alexandria City Council is comprised of Democrats from diverse groups, three women and three men. Power is held and exercised by the people through this diverse group. Residents are also included in the exercise of power through the seventy-three boards and commissions of the City. Residents are appointed by the Council to tackle major issues and develop policies for Council recommendation. There is a bit of imbalance in the make-up of the city employees – specifically the senior staff, which may lead to unintended consequences in developing certain plans. The city is making great efforts to address this issue. For example, the city just budgeted for an employee focused on equity to address these concerns – and is seeking diverse candidates in hiring practices.

**Q: As a city leader and an inclusion activist, what steps do you take to share power, and to generate more collaborative power with your constituents?**

I collaborate with my constituents through social media, my monthly podcast, civic association visits, weekly Tuesday meetings, and town halls.

**Q: In your ideal city, how would political power be conceptualized, generated, and shared?**

It takes time to rebuild a political system that is skewed to serve some instead of all of the people. This begins by having people closer to the pain hold political power. Many local officials are part time, but in reality work overtime. Part-time pay and part-time staff make it challenging for some members of underserved communities to serve.

## LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

*It takes time to rebuild a political system that is skewed to serve some instead of all of the people. This begins by having people closer to the pain hold political power.*

## Power in the City:

*Interview with Mpanzu Bamenga, City Councilman, Eindhoven, Netherlands (TILN'15)*

**Q: Who holds power, and how are city dwellers included in the exercise of power?**

Eindhoven has a concentrated decision-making structure. Corporations have played a lead role; Philips for example attracted people from across the country, Catholics and Protestants, and organized the city so that people live and work together. As a result we are one of the least segregated cities in the Netherlands. We have triple helix cooperation among education, business and government. As the economic center of the Netherlands, we are a high-tech hub with an inclusive education system that prepares people to enter the economy. Apart from the City Council, a network and innovative-ecosystem called Brainport, where the city government, education and business advocate for economic, social and the cultural interests of the region. If a neighborhood wants to make a change, they can present a plan for consideration by the municipality. Citizen opinions are sought, and citizens can petition for changes. There is also crowd sourcing for citizens to help solve urban issues.



However, Eindhoven runs at two speeds: the highly educated and less so. Only 42 percent participate in local elections. We don't yet consult properly with communities; city government still consults largely with older, highly educated residents, who may label young people and people of migrant background as problematic instead of drawing these voices in. We are not gaining insight into the priorities of the whole community. Also, political parties are too important. Only 2 percent belong to a political party, so decisions are really being made by 2 percent, and further only 8 percent of them are really politically active. As a private citizen, it is harder to run independent from existing parties.

**Q: As a city leader, what steps do you take to share power, and to generate more power in collaboration with your constituents?**

We have many expats who are eligible to vote, but don't know they can. In 2018 my party took the step to translate its materials into English for expats. We raised awareness about this issue in the City Council and today more communications are being translated. I am also ensuring that when City Council members go to neighborhood meetings, the people who are at the meetings are reflective of the inhabitants. We need everyone in the conversation.

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**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:** *Diversity is not about control, but letting go of control: having faith in different perspectives to enrich decision-making.*

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**Q: In your ideal city, how would power be conceptualized, generated, and shared?**

This would be a city where people are motivated to be involved in the City Council, join the political process, and field candidates reflective of their communities. Power and diversity don't necessarily mix, because power is about control, knowing the results, controlling the process. Diversity is not about control, but more about letting go of control, having faith in different perspectives to enrich decision-making. I'm a believer in "Nothing About Us Without Us." More people need to be involved in political processes, with elected leaders and civil servants who reflect our demographics. As far as political parties go, in my ideal city, leaders would advance based on general support, not mainly the support of a specific party.

## Power in the City:

*Interview with Mariam Dawood, Council Member, London, United Kingdom (TILN'19)*

**Q: Who holds power, and how are city dwellers included in the exercise of power?**

The Greater London Authority (GLA) is the regional governance body of London and includes the mayor of London as well as 25 other members, each representing different areas of the city. The GLA shares powers with 32 London Borough Councils and improves coordination between them. Each representative, whether the mayor of London, GLA member or councillor, is elected into office and is therefore accountable to the public. Whether through public question sessions, campaign groups, petitioning or individual queries: the job of an elected official is to be responsive to the needs of the public.

The GLA shares powers with Councils on issues such as transport, strategic development, and housing. The nature of this shared power can be cause for heated debate, but under Sadiq Khan's direction as mayor, many Councils have been able to successfully bid for projects that favor local areas as well as GLA plans. As a councillor in Newham, I was pleased that my Borough received £107 million to build new affordable homes from the GLA – just one example of how this power sharing can work under the right leadership.



**Q: As a city leader and an inclusion activist, what steps do you take to share power, and to generate more collaborative power with your constituents?**

I grew up in Manor Park, the ward I represent in the London Borough of Newham. I had been part of local campaigns long before my election so naturally I understand the importance of activism and centering the concerns of local constituents. Since the election, residents often ask me to make representation on behalf of their campaigns so that their concerns gain wider recognition by my other colleagues on the Council. Collaborating with residents is vital as a form of representation, and centering their concerns is key.

As a councillor, I hold open meetings that allow any person living in the local area to visit without an appointment and discuss queries they may have. I often walkabout the area with my ward colleagues and speak with residents on different streets to gain their opinion on the changes being implemented by our Council.

One of my favorite things to do is to meet with residents from across the local area and understand their priorities. At the first of these meetings, residents were keen to tackle the issue of dumped waste on their streets, so I proposed a solution in the form of a policy motion to the Council that passed unanimously. Since then, Manor Park has hosted policy forums discussing anything from policing to healthcare – any topics that residents are all keen to explore.

**Q: In your ideal city, how would power be conceptualized, generated, and shared?**

In an ideal city, I would hope that political power is not exclusively for those elected into office, but that each resident feels they can make a difference to the political landscape, and on issues that matter most to them.

The great thing about being a councillor is that I can help to create an environment that allows for greater

### **LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:**

*One of my favorite things to do is to meet with residents from across the local area and understand their priorities.*

political participation. Whether through frequent door knocking, sufficiently advertising our open meetings, or ensuring that there is engagement with every resident group and campaign in the local area, there are endless ways to engage. I think that the responsibility of engagement lies with those who are elected into positions of power. It's not enough for politicians to make decisions without any real consultation with residents or accountability to them. It's up to us as representatives to create a space that is accessible enough for residents to want to engage, and for power to be shared among us.

## Nation: The Power of Dialogue

*Interview with Sabina Dazdarević, Former Member of Parliament, Serbia, (TILN'15)*

**Q: What is your vision for inclusivity in power at the national level?**

Everybody is a part of society. The stronger we each are, the stronger our society.

**Q: What steps do you take to share your strength?**

What I do is to be strong myself, and by being strong and doing what I believe in, I am able to make a difference. I am not afraid to take on an unpopular initiative. Sometimes it is very hard, but in the end there is the feeling of satisfaction that I've done something important. In particular as a minority leader, I must work on myself first to be strong, and as such I will contribute to making my society better.

At the national level, there needs to be dialogue. This is the simple way to get rid of prejudices. Once we sit and talk, we can see that we share common problems. For example, as a member of a national minority here in Serbia, I can't achieve anything if I just talk to people from my own community. We all need to discuss. This is the first step. Then, there is a long path from talking to achieving a vision. I include people across sectors in dialogue, convening all who have agency. There is ourselves as individuals, and as part of the whole. Together we achieve something. Even having coffee together, we share information and we become brighter.

**Q: When you served in the Serbian parliament, how did you shift the power paradigm?**

When I was in parliament, one of my goals was to see more women in power. To not just talk about this, but to be a woman, to be powerful, and to set this example, you are achieving your goal. In parliament, I underlined women in politics, women in power, and tried to exemplify this role. I think I was able to shift the position of women in power





in the Bosniak community. We now have more women taking positions in public service. Women's associations are being given more importance. In a way, it has become normal to be represented by a female politician. It doesn't seem strange to people anymore. I was the first Muslim woman in the parliament. Now women are more equally regarded with men.

**Q:** How are you sharing your vision now?

I have since shifted from politics and I am producing "Portraits of Serbia". In this work, I am already dwelling in that future world where inclusion is not an issue any more. That is how I look at people. It is no longer necessary to talk about inclusion, because everyone is included. This is what I am capturing. <http://portraitsofserbia.rs/en/about-exhibition/>

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**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:** *At the national level, there needs to be dialogue. Even having coffee together, we share information and we become brighter.*

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# Voting Systems

## For Every Vote to Count:

*Interview with Reta Jo Lewis, Director of Congressional Affairs, GMF, Washington, D.C., United States*

**Q: What is your vision of political inclusion from a voting perspective?**

My vision is to see every citizen have the opportunity for their vote to be counted and also to make sure that the suppression of diverse voices and diverse voters becomes a thing of the past. We have a lot of work to do. In the United States, we should make sure that all people are included, respected and valued thus allowing us to develop a culture of community that inspires all of us to work together to safeguard our democracy. This way, we can grow a world-class community, and therefore a world-class nation.

**Q: Are there efforts to restructure voting systems in the regions where you are a member of the Bar, Georgia and Washington, D.C.?**

Because the District of Columbia does not have the right to elect its own voting member of Congress, the citizens of the city constantly feels disenfranchised: we send our residents to war, we pay taxes, but we do not get the right to have full congressional voting rights and self-government for the District. The very laws of our land are being created in D.C.! So, are there efforts to restructure? Yes. The first big thing is getting the right to vote by having D.C. become the 51st state. This year, it was an historic moment when the speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, endorsed and gave her strong support for a vote to take place on DC statehood. Thus, paving the way for passage of the D.C. statehood Legislative H.R. 51 in the 116th Congress. Since many Republicans in the Senate are opposed to the idea of D.C statehood, that is one of the biggest challenges we must overcome before we see passage in this current Congress. Yet, today's efforts are at their best stage ever to educate citizens throughout the United States and lawmakers in Congress as to why D.C. should have the right over its own laws. Whether it is through legal, civil rights, religious, labor organizations, the Democratic presidential candidates and the 51st statehood efforts everyone is pulling in the same direction to try to make D.C. statehood become a reality.

I was born, grew up and went to school in Georgia. Recently, there have been a great many efforts to restructure and reform the voting system in Georgia and throughout the south, where the disenfranchisement of minority groups is well documented. Recently, based on what happened in the controversial 2018 Georgia gubernatorial



election, there are new efforts that have been launched by voting rights advocates to secure the voting rights of all Georgians. Former State Representative Stacey Abrams (MMF'04), the 2018 Democratic nominee for governor of Georgia, who narrowly lost to the current Republican governor, created an organization called Fair Fight. Fair Fight not only educates voters about elections and their voting rights but also encourages stronger voter participation to promote fair elections. In Georgia, African Americans and people of color for too long have not been afforded an opportunity to stage a fair fight in voting. In 2018, voting irregularities included allegations of: voting equipment failures; people being disqualified and purged from the voter rolls; people being asked for voter IDs; voters given the wrong date for voting; voters told to vote at a time when the polls would be closed; heavy police presence at precincts; voters waiting in long lines for hours; absentee ballots of voters of color reported lost or rejected; just to name a few. If we find solutions to the above-mentioned problems that have hindered minorities and people of color from having all of their votes counted, this will be the best indicator for success in restructuring Georgia's voting systems. And so, the primary way organizations and advocates are looking at voting reforms in Georgia, Florida and throughout the country is to first promote voter education such that voters know their rights and to encourage voters to vote early and in person before Election Day.

**Q: How should we re-examine our voting systems? And how often?**

Voting rights advocates and election officials have been clamoring for years about the crisis we face with the use of old and outdated voting equipment. When you talk about our system being broken, one thing that comes to mind is voting machines that do not have paper backup as we all witnessed in Florida during the Bush-Gore election of 2000, and since Russia's attack and interference on our voting system in the recent 2018 presidential election. So how do we resolve that paradox? Do we get some type of federal mandated legislation that allows us to standardize the process throughout the country?

One reason that citizens advocate for some form of federal legislation and federal mandate for standardization is that you want everybody in the country to have the same opportunity – to make sure that the vote they cast is counted. Do they get the same opportunity? Probably not. Every state has different budgetary concerns. Every voting commission or secretary of state's office that oversees the elections have different funding mechanisms as to the updating of voting machines, the way they use technology, the way they deploy poll watchers. Who are they paying to work the polls to oversee this? I think we can resolve these problems, but it is going to have to be all of us working together. One state cannot solve this problem alone. We have got to have some form of uniformity.

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**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:** *You want to make sure that people are included, respected and valued to develop a culture of community that inspires all to work together. This way, we can grow a world-class community, and therefore world-class nations.*

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How often? Instead of waiting for the presidential election cycles to reevaluate our system, I would advocate for a re-evaluation every two years. I like the idea of a permanent, nonpartisan task force of city, state and federal officials that is non-partisan, to oversee this arduous process of re-examination. I do not believe one person, nor one office can do it. I think that on a state by state basis, our leaders, Democrats, Republicans and independents have a responsibility to call officials together on a regular basis, to let citizens know that someone is watching, being vigilant in upholding the sanctity of their vote. Such an initiative could inspire confidence in our voting systems, knowing that when you do go to the polls, your vote is going to be counted. It does not help citizens after the fact when they hear about election interference, voter fraud, absentee ballots not being counted, early vote ballots not being counted, or tampering with the election system that occurred in North Carolina. Examples such as these erode the confidence of every citizen who has taken the time to vote. Although under our constitution, the federal role is limited – the time has come for a review of what is the proper role.

A new Pew Research Center report finds the American public have expressed declining confidence and trust in our institutions, our leadership, the media, our government and fellow citizens. If done right, this system knows no bounds or limits to freedom. We have to fight for it. We have to put a stake in the ground, and we have to understand this system is still one of the best in the world. It is everybody's right to say, I am going to vote, I want my vote to be counted, I want to be educated about the issues and how to vote so that we can continue to have confidence in the system – since that confidence is fundamental and integral to supporting freedom and democracy globally.

You want to make sure that people are included, respected and valued to develop a culture of community that inspires all to work together. This way, we can grow a world-class community, and therefore world-class nations.

## Voting in a Young Democracy:

Salome Mukhuradze, Senior Program Officer, Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy, Georgia (TILN'19)

Georgia has a mixed electoral system, combining proportional representation and single-member district systems. Issues with Georgia's political system are rooted in the development of one political party having most financial resources and therefore the best opportunity to advance and have the most impact in politics – was best placed to win everything. The results of the parliamentary elections of 2016 demonstrate the bias of the existing political system towards the ruling party, having received only 48.6 percent of the popular vote, but obtaining 76 percent of the seats in the national parliament.



Furthermore, the current political system excludes women and various minority groups from meaningful political representation. For example, although women represent 52 percent of Georgia's population, they are vastly underrepresented in politics, holding only 15 percent of parliament. Ensuring diversity and inclusion has never been on the top of Georgian political parties' agenda either. The institutions are weak and mainly focuses on elections rather than policies dedicated to integration. In addition mainly recruit 'wealthy, ethnic majority men' to be involved in politics.

The next parliamentary elections will reflect a fully proportional system with zero percent of the electoral threshold. Changing the electoral system from a mixed to a fully proportional was one of the main demands of the demonstrations in June 2019. In response to the protests, the government agreed to reform the electoral system for 2020, instead of 2024, which was previously planned. The new electoral system will hopefully create a solid foundation for a level playing field for small political parties and movements. In the current parliament, only three political parties were able to overcome the five percent of the electoral threshold, thus severely limiting the diversity of political representation.

Although proportional representation systems tend to elect more women than with mixed- or single-member district systems, it is essential not to lose momentum and continue lobbying for the mandatory legislative quotas for women. This is an opportunity to achieve gender equality finally and truly empower women in Georgian politics.

## **LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:**

*Facilitating multi-party dialogue helps foster electoral system improvements, women's inclusion and national minority inclusion initiatives.*

# Candidates: Widening the Circle

## Getting the Party On Board:

Interview with Abena Oppong-Asare, Executive Committee Member, Labour Women's Network, United Kingdom (TILN'16)



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**Q: How do we attract a political candidate pool that is inclusive of today's demographics?**

One strategy is to encourage political parties to conduct a race audit. This allows us to get a sound understanding of the demographics in the political sphere, and to see where there is a lack of diverse representation and where we need to improve. The race audit would also provide us with useful information to address salient topics in a timely way. In addition, the race audit would allow us to compare demographics amongst the parties and other groups within the political sector. This would enable individuals to push for change and to take action against political groups that do not address a lack of diversity. The goal would be to get officials and party

leaders to commit to policies that encourage a percentage of representation that reflects the public demographics and also ensures that this trend continues with the following generations. Another strategy would be to implement diversity awareness trainings at all levels of the political sector including campaign workers and activists, as well as to encourage the training of diverse groups so that they have the opportunity to be elected to office. For example, I sit on the Labour Women's Network Committee, which runs political leadership training programs to help women run for political office, and gives strategies on how to navigate and succeed within the political sphere. The training helps women advance to the next political stage. An additional strategy would be to the implement a policy of measures and quotas to ensure that the demographics of the public are fairly represented in office, which would result in underrepresented communities' issues also becoming salient and addressed properly. The Labour Party uses all women shortlists as an affirmative action to increase the proportion of women in parliament and local councils. This has been credited with breaking down prejudices that impede the selection of women.

**Q: What are some obstacles to achieving this goal?**

The first obstacle would be the lack of will to put into place measures to address the lack of diversity. I hear a lot of talk but see little action. There is still complacency amongst the members of the political sector, and little taste for change or progress. The second would be the misconception that ethnic community members lack the will power to run for office and are not interested in politics. On the contrary, many are qualified for and capable of running for office, and could make a great impact. The problem is a lack of opportunity. Breaking that glass ceiling is such an obstacle for many. The last obstacle would be cuts to the public budget, which has led to a de-prioritization of this issue. Often efforts are focused on other important challenges such as the universal credit, the rising cases of homelessness, etc. This takes away energy and manpower that is needed to encourage the push for better diversity in political organizations.



**Q: How close are you to achieving this goal within the Labour Party in the United Kingdom?**

Some progress has been made; for example, the Labour Party has recently implemented the Bernie Grant Leadership Program to address the under-representation of Black and Ethnic Minority (BAME) members in elected roles. However, there is still a lot of work to be done, especially when it comes to Black representation. A race audit would highlight the areas where representation is poor and lead to an implementation of measures to help address this lack of diversity. We need to engage in diversity awareness training both for public officials and local people who are working on the ground for the party; take action against those who fail to deliver on diversity at the cabinet level; and ensure that the local government is also diverse and representative, reflecting the community.

**Q: What do you advise political leaders to help them achieve inclusivity?**

Make it your key mission to listen and engage with the people you represent. If you don't know, be honest about it, and make sure you take time to understand the issue. Always think about how every action you take and strategy you use can be inclusive.

**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:**

*Make it your key mission to listen and engage with the people you represent.*

## Passion Framing the Micro Issues:

*Interview with Cici Battle, Activist, Speaker and Organizer, Young People For, Washington, D.C., United States (TILN'19)*

### **Q: How do you widen the circle of candidates?**

In a political system and structure such as America's, where citizens have been conditioned to think of candidates having to look a certain way; talk a certain way; have certain experiences, accolades or wealth; it is critical to widen the circle in order to have progress. It isn't only about winning. Political campaigns also function as a platform to exchange ideas and thus foster more robust conversations about the issues we face. Running for office isn't only about representation and selecting new leaders. These processes also broaden our cultural understanding and expand our policy horizons, thus serving as an integral part of problem solving in our society.



It's no secret that political inclusion is sub-optimal, so how do we get to a place of ideal political activism? I created a method called passion framing such that we can radically educate citizens to understand not just the political theory governing their legal systems but how that system impacts the micro-issues affecting them. The key to unlocking a robust pool of diverse candidates lies in educating/equipping people affected by micro-issues with the tools to dismantle the institutions/ideas perpetuating such injustices.

### **Q: How did you develop the passion framing concept?**

Passion framing focuses people on micro-issues that help them to understand who holds power and why it is important to engage in elections. This in turn brings people to want to put forward candidates who will have a positive role moving forward issues they care about. We have to be realistic about the history and by and for whom the systems we work within were created.

The concept of passion framing evolved from my activism as a college student in Miami where students and I conveyed the micro-issues that upset students to the body politic associated with each respective issue. Emerging from frustration with an opaque institutional approach of addressing pressing college issues, my goal now is to provide an understanding of a confusing political system such that citizens can have the opportunity to effect change meaningful to them.





As the executive director of Young People For, a life-long social justice leadership network for young adults, I focus on delivering the required tools and opportunities for passionate people to create a social impact project and then, make social change in their industries. On my own, I am working to create an app where people can identify their micro-issue that will then be paired with the respective body that addresses said issue.

**Q: What is your approach to candidate recruitment and training?**

Although we, together with our sister organization, Young Elected Officials, execute country-wide candidate trainings, I struggle with the idea that education, not candidate training, is paramount. How do you develop strong candidates prior to candidate training? Education. How do you foster a community that will vote for, support, and sustain these candidates? Education. Thus, in order to solve the problem of political inclusion we must dig deeper than superficial representation. We must develop communities from the foundation up such that they can sustain their representation while also being activists rather than figureheads of minority engagement. In-depth education is what underrepresented communities need in order to understand power, the workings of political institutions, and how to access and leverage such institutions for their benefit. We are trying to solve the problem not just by changing the fruit, but also by changing the roots.

Considering only two of the 50 states require civic education, it appears that people in power want to keep disenfranchised citizens politically illiterate so as to perpetuate oppressive systems. In America, there are two paths to power: that of business and that of democracy. Historically, minorities have been refused access to education, fair business practices, equal opportunity to grow wealth, and equal access to income. As a result, the business pipeline to power is obstructed for many people of color. Furthermore, as a result of Jim Crow, redlining, and gerrymandering, minority votes have long been excluded from the democratic process. Thus, years of conditioning to believe one's vote does not matter (and recently with the assistance of Russian hacking schemes) have imbued within people of color a reluctance to vote that further silences their voices. Thus, it appears as if power is incompatible with being a minority.

In order to reverse such seeming incompatibility, politicians and representatives must act, rather than suggest rhetoric that appears to alleviate the repression of minority voices. They must organize initiatives to educate their communities about the political system, the power of politics, the existing power dynamic in politics, and register their constituents to vote. In doing so, politicians will formulate a long-term vision of change within the community, providing systemic tools for citizens to self-substantiate while also invigorating change amongst those in power. By producing local initiatives focused on change, representatives endear themselves to communities who feel left behind.

Young People For focuses on educating citizens on the political structure of America, such that they understand the importance of engaging in elections. We aim at dismantling the system by educating citizens about for whom and by whom the political system was created. It's not just this seat, it's a whole system. You can't piecemeal elections and think you will get consistent progress.

Politicians need to offer deep education to communities about power dynamics, to get them registered to vote, and have a long-term vision as to how things will change. Don't come to a community just before an election. Come months before and talk about citizenship and pathways to power. Keep it real, keep it so people can understand why we engage.

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**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:** *Passion framing focuses people on micro-issues that help them to understand who holds power and why it is important to engage in elections.*

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# Inclusive Policy Making

## The Lens of Immigration:

Bee Nguyen, State Representative, Georgia, United States (TILN'19)



### **Q:** Give us an example of how your action in the legislature changes policymaking?

Of the 236 elected officials in the Georgia General Assembly, I am the only Asian American woman. My lived experience provides me with a lens that is missing at the legislature. Part of my work is to empower the Asian American community to participate in our democracy. We have the lowest voter turnout of any demographic, in part because of the lack of voter outreach, voter education, and voting laws that impact voters of color.

For example, under the “Exact Match” law, Georgia required that the name on voter registration documents match the name from the Department of Driver Services or Social Security. Crucially, voter registration documents are processed manually and subjected the fallacy of human error. Due to clerical errors, typos emerging from unfamiliarity with ethnic names, and other mismatches, over 50,000 voter registrations in Georgia were frozen in 2016. Although other states resolved this problem by allowing for ID presentation at the polls, Georgia required citizens themselves to fix the problem with the Department of Registration prior to going to the polls. First-time voters and non-English speakers who did not understand this extra step were fast-tracked to being purged from the polls entirely.

Though I was elected in 2017, my passion to reform this legislation emerged from watching the 2016 Georgia General Assembly floor debate that ultimately passed this bill. This was further fueled in 2018 when the data highlighted that 80 percent of frozen voter registrations affected people of color. I was committed to reforming this un-democratic bill, but I also knew that as a member of the minority party it would be almost impossible to pass such a controversial bill.

Instead of dropping an independent bill, I drafted my reform as an amendment as part of a larger voting bill. I signed up to testify in committee. In my testimony, I argued that the policy disproportionately impacted voters of color, using the many examples of my name being misspelled on the state government website and committee hearing notices. Noticing that my African-American colleague's name was also misspelled on, I posited to the committee that if it were possible for elected officials of color to have their names on official documents misspelled multiple times, the same was possible for voter registration documents. I offered my amendment, and the General Assembly passed parts of the language. However, the sections/portions passed legally triggered other changes

that ultimately led to nearly all aspects of "Exact Match" being repealed. After a review conducted by legal counsel affirmed the legal ramifications of having passed parts of my reforms, the committee reconvened and adopted most of my amendment, which repealed nearly all aspects of "Exact Match".

Because I understand the barriers to voting for communities of color and for my community specifically, I was able to understand the magnified impact these policies have upon historically disenfranchised groups. Using concrete examples, I illustrated how non-Anglo-Saxon names can cause minority citizens to be disproportionately impacted by a poorly designed policy. It became much harder for Assembly members to deny the discriminatory impact of the policy after using my name and other

elected colleagues as humanizing examples. The debate evolved from a "them" problem affecting faceless citizens to an "us" problem affecting the Assembly. Although misspelling one's name seems inconsequential, it can disenfranchise thousands of citizen, which fosters rifts in our society.

With immigration at the forefront, I have the opportunity to share my story and to remind my colleagues about the humanity of immigrants. As the daughter of refugees, I'm able to represent the American story through the lens of immigration. When I share my personal

## LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:

*By sharing my personal story, I refuse to let people delineate between "good" and "bad" immigrants. Families, whether leaving by boat as my family did or wading across the Rio Grande, are in search of a better life.*

story, I refuse to let people delineate between “good” and “bad” immigrants. Families, whether leaving by boat as my family did or wading across the Rio Grande, are in search of a better life. Period.

We can help spread this message of inclusivity via elected office. Democrats are 15 seats away from changing the power within the Georgia House of Representatives. Nearly a third of the members of the General Assembly are women now. When we win more seats, we can promote diversity, while acting as the bulwark against discrimination.

## Indigenous Influence in Political Systems Designed for and by Others

*Interview with Johan Vasara, Mayor of Kautokeino, Norway (TILN’19)*

**Q: Do you see unique approaches to political inclusion for indigenous people?**

As most minorities, indigenous people also need to adapt themselves to the power systems that are in place. This requires diplomatic skill. Being an activist is also about adaptation, finding your place in society such that you can adapt yourself to existing power structures. While this is not always easy, we need to understand this in order to succeed in realizing some of our visions, which is better than realizing none. In the folklore of the Norwegian Sámi community, we compare ourselves to the cleverness of the fox: we are small, far weaker than a bear, and so we need to be smart to get far in life.

As a Sámi belonging to an indigenous minority, I am also a member of the nationwide state structure of my party, the National Social Democratic Party (SD). I’m consciously using the SD’s principles as my basis for being in the party, and this is rooted in caring for the disenfranchised, and empowering the weak. While in a national party there are also opposing voices, I have the advantage of the party’s Sámi-friendly principles on my side.



**Q: How does your participation in the legislature change outcomes?**

There are proposals I’m able to bring straight to the power center of the party as a member and especially as a mayor. As I am in agreement with many of the policies that are decided in the national congress, this gives me leverage to also promote issues that are important to Samis.

On the national level, I am proud of being part of a team that passed a revision of the white paper entitled, “The Sami Language Act of Norway”. Written in the 1990s, this paper had not been updated to reflect social changes such as the growth of digital communications. In 2012, through the Sámi Parliament, which is the representative body for people of Sámi heritage, we persuaded the government to initiate the updated law, now in the final stages of passage. The Language Act ensures the sanctity of Sámi schools that teach Sámi language and traditions, thus preserving the heart, mind, and identity of a small oppressed indigenous people.

I am also proud that in my four-year term as mayor I was central to planning a new school in our community. Built in the 1950s, our school was in desperate need of renewal. Because our city only has 3,000 citizens and a small annual budget, the decision to build and fund a school was a once in a lifetime opportunity. As a former student of the school, I hope that its rebuilding can be my mayoral legacy. I have also served as the political advisor to the President of the Sámi Parliament and as a member. In 2015 I became the mayor of Kautokeino, after which it became challenging to combine the different positions.

**Q: What keeps you motivated despite the challenging issues you work on?**

I began my career in the Worker’s Youth League, a youth organization affiliated with the Norwegian Labour Party, which in 2011 was attacked by a far-right terrorist. Every time I feel like I’m tired or want to have a break, I am reminded of how that attack ripped away many of my closest friends. I am aware of the cost of neutrality. I’m filled with both anger and hatred at what the terrorist stood for, but I’m trying to turn that pain and anger into something constructive. That’s the battery which keeps me going. I can’t leave this because this is who I am.

I am a champion of power structures that respect human rights and within that also indigenous peoples’ rights. Enough with the myriad legislation “securing” minority rights that supposedly augment our role in decision making. To effect true change we need power structures that intrinsically respect universal human rights. We cannot change the status quo by simply adding addendums to a broken system; we need to change it from the inside out. Only when we revise the way the existing power structures view human rights can we genuinely solve our problems.

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**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:** *We cannot change the status quo by simply adding addendums to a broken system; we need to change it from the inside out.*

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# Achieving Inclusive Political Parties and Lists

*Interview with Sir Simon Woolley, Co-founder/Director, Operation Black Vote, London, United Kingdom (TILN Thought Leader)*

**Q: How do we get more diverse representation in parties and at the top of candidate lists?**

It's vitally important we have inclusive, representative democratic institutions and political parties. A key element in this challenge is senior political leadership. What do we mean by senior political leadership? Two things: first is for leaders to acknowledge and own the uncomfortable truths about democratic deficits and lack of representation. Without this acknowledgement, you can't deal with the problem. It's such an important first step. The second is for senior leadership to have a comprehensive plan to address this deficit, and to gain buy-in from other leaders within the administration and team. Often, a leader will say, "I want change." But when he leaves the room, no one is inclined or empowered to drive that change. So acknowledgement, a plan, and the empowerment of other leaders are critical.



The second related aspect is a bottom-up approach. That is the civic and political empowerment of minority communities. Central is the acute understanding that politics is a numbers game. Understanding the process and using the numbers in critical areas will ensure that communities usually locked out of decision-making tables can exercise their political clout and demand greater representation and policies that reflect their concerns. The danger of having only bottom-up is that you get political enclaves, factions that do not see beyond their own small tribe or group. The danger of just having top-down is that you end up with patronage politics in which the leader will hand pick a few minority candidates who don't necessarily represent the community. It is critical to engage in both top-down and bottom-up with a philosophy that diverse views are beneficial to the whole of society.

In regards to parties and lists, leadership would dictate that you have to proactively address race and gender in ways that some describe as “zipping” one woman and/or one minority. I’m not opposed to all black or all minority shortlists or all women shortlists. All women shortlists have been a way to circumvent a system that locks out women. This is a list that presents only women or only minorities, but with the caveat to all political parties: we shouldn’t care how they do it as long as they do it.

To get higher on the lists, the bottom up approach makes demands on leadership, and works with enlightened leaders to say: if you put minorities 3, 4, 5, actually this is worse than discrimination, because you are claiming to be on the side of minorities whilst in full knowledge that they will never get elected. We need to be at the top of the list to get through.

A final word: representative and inclusive democracy is not as some argue a zero sum game. If women and minorities are in, men lose? No. When we have diverse chambers reflecting the concerns of all communities, we will have better policy, we will have a greater sense of belonging, and we will have communities that can live and work with each other in a collaborative and meaningful way that benefits us all.

### **LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:**

*Central is the acute understanding  
that politics is a numbers game.*



# Diversity in Government

## Barriers to Access and Retention:

*Interview with Alfiaz Vaiya, Coordinator, Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup, European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium (MMF'20)*

Representation is the greatest catalyst to inclusive policymaking and achieving profound change in politics and society. Democratic governance requires Diversity & Inclusion. Who should occupy which positions at the senior, advisory, staff, and civil servant levels is the great employment question. If people are excluded from that question, effectively silencing them, can we say our government is truly democratic?



One barrier at the European level which creates exclusion and that needs to be addressed is access to the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) exam. Although anyone matching the requirements can apply to take the entry exam, it is very difficult to pass. Thus, in order to pass the exam, one must have the resources to know about and facilitate test preparation, further segregating job opportunities along socio-economic lines. A full understanding of society's needs requires diverse talent, especially on the European stage, which spans 28 different countries. Thus, in order to augment minority representation in the European institutions, we must revise how people are informed, educated and helped in relation to the EPSO exam.

In the European Parliament, elected officials of diverse backgrounds help to align and introduce policy with pressing issues affecting underrepresented minorities. These issues most often would not be introduced by non-minority officials. Thus, it is important to look beyond surface level representation to examine how to improve retention of diverse talent in the civil service, including those serving on political staff, and in political institutions. It is important to develop a welcoming environment where people can excel and grow. Often, underrepresented employees, once hired, feel vulnerable and/or ostracized, thus fueling sentiments that the job is unfit for them, or they are unfit for the job. So retention is also a barrier – many staff from minority backgrounds raise issues around discrimination and a lack of a safe place, feeling this isn't for them. They are made to feel different.

Is important that we improve access and retention if we want to have systemic change in government systems. Underrepresented peoples, the vanguard of promulgating changes to improve systems, have to believe that they can apply and have a career where they can execute the changes that are required.

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**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:** *Representation is the greatest catalyst to inclusive policymaking and achieving profound change in politics and society.*

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## A Work in Progress:

*Interview with Niombo Lomba, Policy Analyst, European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium (MMF'03)*

### **Q:** What needs to be happening in terms of diversity in government organizations?

A lot! There have been several articles in the last two years at the European level. For example, Politico featured “Racism Persists in the Heart of the EU,” discussing the lack of people of diverse backgrounds working in European institutions. You know, in the European institutions people always say we are so diverse, we come from 28 member states. But the point is that if you look at the ones coming from those 28 member states, at first sight it’s true, but at second sight most have families with academic backgrounds. They are coming from the same group of milieus in their countries, and they are white and fit into the majority religion of their societies. So, no, if you look at diversity, there is something missing. Yes, there is something missing on gender diversity, which is still far better than diversity of ethnic backgrounds and migration experience, for example. So you would really need to re-think, in my understanding, the way you hire staff.

I read recently a view that we will have a problem when the United Kingdom is leaving with Brexit, because in the European Parliament, most of the people with migration backgrounds work for British members. Or they came via the British administration because the United Kingdom is so much ahead of other EU member states when it comes to inclusion. If Brexit is coming, we will feel that there is no strategic approach to deal with less diversity. For me personally, I work at the moment in the European Parliament and I used to work for three years in the European Commission. I see that the staff in the European Parliament, at least in the settings where I work, is much more diverse than in the other institutions. So yes, there needs to be a more strategic approach, there needs to be re-thinking. The point that some people are participating in European personnel selection competitions, the so-called Concours, doesn’t help because you have to ask yourself why other people are not applying. Some might not even be aware this could be a place where they can work. So, I think there is a lot to do. If you look at the different member states, several have regions or cities that are working on approaches: doing campaigns,

changing the way they hire people, and also the way they address racism and how to include people. And there are, theoretically, also approaches within the European institutions but this doesn't necessarily mean that you will be hired, and this doesn't mean that if you are there, you will be promoted.

**Q: Share a story about the positive change toward inclusivity in your city?**

I served as City Council member in Stuttgart from 2009 to 2014. Historically the diversity/integration topic had been addressed for years in the city. Stuttgart addressed this far before other cities in Germany. Our mayors understood that if you have big players like Daimler and Bosch, you need to be attractive to people from different backgrounds. For example, Dr. Wolfgang Schuster, at that time mayor, said that we need to address integration as a high priority, and took this as a task. He formed a staff unit dealing with integration issues and they along with the mayor in charge of administration and others started a campaign which was built on the idea that people with a migration background could work for the city. The city of Stuttgart has around 600,000 inhabitants, and maybe about 20,000 people working from kindergarten to public gardens to cleaning to a properly functioning public administration. They created a public campaign to staff city positions, "Your City, Your Future". The campaign was quite successful, and recognized by an award in 2015 from their regional government of Baden-Wurttemberg, for hiring people with a migration background. They went from a baseline of 11 percent of people with a migration background working for the city to 31 percent by 2011 and 38 percent by 2013. At that time around 40 percent of the people living in Stuttgart had a migration background. The campaign was really necessary. People just didn't know before that that they could work in the administration. These are approaches other cities have also taken. It's important to actively change the way you hire people, not just to say on paper, yes, we are attractive for you. As an employer, you need to select people and that's where it gets tricky. Stuttgart managed to change this.



**Q: Share a story to shine light on why D&I in the administration is important?**

The European societies we are living in are not made up exclusively of male academics. Taking a step back, how can you make decisions and work for a society if you don't reflect the society? I'm sorry, but how can this be? The

administration and politics should look like the people we are doing politics for, the people we are working for as an administration, and we should be able to understand different perspectives. Look at all the studies that we have on what diversity does for the private sector – why shouldn't this be the same asset for the administration? Personally, what should I tell you? It's less about my experiences or what people think about my situation, and more about the fact that I am part of the administration and I don't want to be on my own. In Germany, we don't

have so many black people for historic reasons. And I have been in meetings with another black person, but I can count them on one hand and those meetings were mostly connected to the topic of integration.

## **LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:**

*It's important to actively change the way you hire people, not just to say on paper, yes we are attractive for you.*

In the European Commission, it was rare as well for me not to be the only one. In the European Parliament, it is different: I have a Belgian colleague with Congolese roots, and this is interesting for me. We can share experiences. This gives me a different feeling than when I am on my own.

There is discrimination, and if people are in their bubble and always meet the same people, then it's easier to discriminate and to make decisions. At times even without thinking that you are discriminating because you are unaware. So if you are entering that bubble, you are sometimes discriminated against – not always, I have many colleagues who do not discriminate at all, but I have also had experiences with colleagues who were doing so sometimes very frankly and openly. In some cases, I was only told later by other colleagues that a colleague was actually racist; I was aware that something was not going well but I didn't understand why. There mostly isn't an appropriate mechanism to help and I was not feeling empowered.

The European Commission and the European Parliament are aware of these issues and trying to do something. There are charters on diversity and values being worked on and/or further developed. So, it's not that there is nothing; it's just a work in progress.

# Civic Engagement for all Generations

## Promoting Intergenerational Involvement:

*Interview with Nadeem Javaid, Senior Adviser to the Mayor of London, United Kingdom (TILN'19)*



### **Q:** Why is civic engagement important?

Civic engagement is important because it allows anyone and everyone to feel part of something bigger. It is crucial that any political system is not only reflective of society in the way it looks and the way it acts, but also it is a two-way reflection: people are civically engaged to make a difference in their own communities and able to hold representatives accountable to the values that they care about.

### **Q:** How do you increase civic engagement?

Civic engagement is about making people feel empowered, knowing that through their voice and actions that can make a difference in their community and the wider world. Increasing civic participation is about working with people demonstrating how they can be change makers in their society.

While execution vary per community, if one tinkers with the message to apply to a wide range of audiences, one can begin to effect change. This does not mean creating a different manifesto for different minority groups, but rather using shared values to construct policies that meet everyone's needs, thus developing a message that resonates.

### **Q: How do you interest young people?**

I led a national campaign called GetInvolved, teaching underrepresented young people ages 16-25 in the United Kingdom, regardless of party affiliation, why politics matters, how to canvass, and how to run voter registration drives. I'm passionate about empowering young people to participate in the political process. One of our missions on the GetInvolved program is to highlight to young adults the importance of being politically active and how they can partake. The questions of "why?" and "how?" are often a big barrier to young people participating in political processes. Our goal was to break this down to show how easy and accessible it actually is. Following training, our program paired participants with political representatives in their area so they could put new skills into practice. Our results were staggering. In addition to graduates working in cabinet, city halls, parliament, and standing as candidates, we have proudly produced 5,000 new activists while also successfully registering thousands of new voters.

### **Q: How do you gain the interest of people in other age groups?**

Where people often segment political activism by age, GetInvolved uses an intergenerational model of encouragement that brings people together along shared values. By pairing young people and experienced activists to learn what is important to each other using examples, you begin to find similarities despite the differences in age. For example, you may find young people struggling with housing issues aligning with older generations on values of wanting a better city for the next generation. We hope that creating a shared value platform fosters greater civic participation and political representation.

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**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:** *By pairing young people and elders together to learn what is important to each other using examples, you begin to find similarities despite the differences in age.*

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## **Educating for Engagement:**

*Interview with Maia Espinoza, Executive Director/Founder, Center for Latino Leadership, Washington State, United States (TILN'19)*

Minorities can often feel excluded and may perpetuate this exclusion by not voting and not engaging. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The more that we can disrupt this cycle, the better we can chip away at the perception of government as a super elite of elected officials. Though it sometimes feels insurmountable, we must get the message across: this is your government; you are free to vote; the only consequences come from not voting.

Civic education is one key to reversing a mindset of disempowerment. Developing and sharing a curriculum that focuses on pertinent issues and the impact they have on students and their families helps give people the impulse to be politically active. Civic engagement is not taught enough in our schools; it counts for one credit in Washington state high schools. Such a dearth in civic education sets the stage for families in power to stay in power. How can we hope to achieve inclusion when children of underrepresented groups that do not have the same access to political life and then do not receive information on how to contribute effectively in our political system? To address this, I am developing an after school program for middle and high school students that simultaneously functions as youth care for families and as a life-skills school that includes civic education and participation.

Although civic engagement starts at a young age, rectifying the decline of civic participation also requires engaging with adults. We conduct year-round political events (town halls, debates, discussions) throughout the state and host community-specific focus groups to tackle tough issues to stimulate participation in local politics. Similarly, politicians should engage in any opportunity to develop a more intimate understanding of the problems constituents face. In addition to cultivating new information for those in elected office, community engagement with constituents demonstrates that their problems are being discussed directly, further engendering trust and a desire to participate in politics. If we encourage adults to vote and connect community members with local leaders, we may hope to affect greater civic engagement by modeling this behavior as a norm for the community. We should also build on the fact that older populations already tend to be more politically engaged.

However, these tips depend on citizens' access to the institutions and political processes. Too often government systems create barriers, the process is slow or unclear, or just attending meetings to express your concerns isn't possible. As America moves toward a majority-minority demographic, community engagement methods and approaches must shift too. The needs of these communities are different and so is the experience in active civic engagement. My organization helps build these foundational relationships between citizen advocates and political leaders so that alliances can be built and progress on issues can be achieved. If we can demystify local politics and increase civic engagement, we empower previously disenfranchised communities to bring about meaningful change.

#### **LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:**

*Civic education is one key to reversing the mentality of disempowerment.*

# Tech and Political Inclusion

Paul Waters, Senior Program Associate, Democracy Fund, United States (TILN observer, '19)

**Q:** How can tech best be leveraged to make politics more inclusive? Can you please provide one strategy that you have seen work well?

Online tools and social media platforms provide powerful mechanisms for the public to participate in political action and share information concerning politicians, elections, and major issues facing their community. This only works if everybody is able to fully participate without fear of being attacked, and if the information is reliable. These tech tools have provided the basis for successful online and offline organizing by groups like Color of Change and Change.org that work to raise the profile of important civic ideas and support grassroots networks across the globe. By their very nature, tools like Twitter and Facebook allow conversations to happen instantaneously across borders and divides that have historically created challenges for organizing. Through these tools, Color of Change and similar organizations have been able to build new constituencies and translate that energy and connections into on-the-ground mobilizing that has impacted policy and community outcomes. These online coalitions have also been at the forefront of the campaign to ensure that major tech platforms are accountable to their users.



**Q:** Is there a danger that the tech divide will lead to disenfranchisement?

Technology has expanded the reach of marginalized voices in their own communities and across the globe; however, this benefit is not automatic and as leaders we must champion policies that create onramps and safe spaces for those conversations online.

Many of the same systemic forces that created inequality in housing, employment, and education, have also created inequity in access to digital tools. The rapid spread of mobile devices among historically disenfranchised groups has somewhat lessened this digital divide, but there is still a significant gap in broadband access. Beyond access



concerns, online platforms like Google and Twitter face new challenges in fulfilling their public accommodation duties in the digital public square.

Social media has become an essential component of our public square; however, harassment and discrimination against people of color and women has become a feature of many of the major platforms. The ability of these online spaces to provide civic benefits are under threat from discriminatory targeting by the platforms' own algorithms and by the hateful activities of malicious users. Too often, these tactics encourage harassment, hate speech, and physical acts of violence against women and people of color. Efforts to combat these hateful activities include direct support for targets of the attacks through organizations like TrollBusters and policy proposals to address the systemic issues of platform governance like Change the Terms.

**Q: Share your top cybersecurity recommendation related to achieving political inclusion?**

During the 2016 presidential election in the United States, platforms like Facebook and Google failed to counteract coordinated mis/disinformation campaigns to subvert the democratic process. Similar attacks have occurred across the globe and are particularly difficult to counteract in a way that protects privacy and free expression. In the United States, these attacks focused on racist and bigoted content that targeted Blacks, Muslims, Latinx, and women through paid content and inauthentic groups created to spread disinformation.

Cybersecurity officials identified platform transparency as an important antidote to disinformation because it encourages greater engagement in the political process and provides increased access to important political information. Analyses of these attacks show that platforms should provide greater transparency, so the public can better understand how harmful content spreads online, what its provenance is, and develop smart policy and effective tools to combat it. Facebook and Google have created political ad archives to provide information about the paid content on their platforms that relate to elections or issues of national importance. However, independent analysis by Mozilla has shown gaps and deficiencies in the ways the platform transparency tools operate.

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**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:** *Technology has expanded the reach of marginalized voices in their own communities and across the globe; however, this benefit is not automatic and as leaders we must champion policies that create onramps and safe spaces for those conversations online.*

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# Building Diverse Coalitions

Interview with Raumes Akbari, Tennessee State Senator, United States (TILN'18; TILN facilitator; MMF'20)



## **Q: How does coalition building relate to political inclusion?**

Our political discussions today are charged with historically disenfranchised Americans trying to get a seat at the table. While this has become a point of contention, I am of the opinion that everyone has a voice and we need more diverse groups at the table. However, in order to execute on people having the opportunity to speak, we also must reach out across sectors, to the business sector, civil society, and politicians. One needs to reach into the community as this input is essential for developing inclusive policies. For example, I work with an education group – women who don't have fancy jobs, some of whom had never been to the state capital but who are now meeting with the governor and the speaker of the House to let them know what matters for them and their children by sharing their perspectives and the policies they want to see in order to have better lives.

## **Q: Can you share an example of how you built a coalition for more effective legislation?**

A diverse coalition advocating for solid legislation always makes a difference. I'm one out of five Democrats in the Tennessee Senate which has a total of 33 seats. I wanted to pass legislation around the fee for expungement (clearing someone's political record of a nonviolent offense). Prior to this legislation, we had the third highest fee in the country. I had to build a coalition by engaging those who have records to advocate for themselves, while also engaging law enforcement, the District Attorneys, prosecutors, and the Republican Party, all of whom traditionally might not have supported the bill. This coalition of diverse backgrounds allowed for a myriad of inputs, leading to a more comprehensive bill that effectively eliminated any opposition. This way we were able to convince the

opposition that the bill is in their interest. We passed this bill in two versions, one in 2017 and one in 2018. In 2019, the governor completely eliminated the expungement fee.

**Q:** Could you share your 'how to'?

My recommendation on forming coalitions is to start from the ground up. Don't come at someone with a policy and try to shove it down their throats. Form the policy together from the foundation, steeped in community need. For me, it was important to give people a second chance and give them the opportunity to vote. For my Republican colleagues, it was important to get people back to work and able to take care of themselves. We may not believe in this for the same reasons, but we can get to a common goal for different reasons.

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**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:** *We may not believe in this for the same reasons, but we can get to a common goal for different reasons.*

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# Role for the Private Sector?

*Interview with Thierry Déau, Founder of Meridiam, Paris, France*

**Q: Is there a role for the private sector to strengthen civic engagement in our democracies?**

Our core belief is that the private sector has an essential role. We're first and foremost an impact investment firm, and impact means investing for future generations by addressing societal challenges that generate competitive balanced risk reward returns for investors and high impact solution for communities. This commitment is the bedrock of our DNA as an organization and none of this would be possible if the vast majority of our colleagues and partners at Meridiam were not committed to a cause that reflects our common values: inclusion by working with associations and regional NGOs to support entrepreneurial projects with talented migrant people (PLACE) or women in Africa (EmpowHER), to foster leadership in emerging talents from all ethnic or social origins with the Inclusive Leadership Hub in partnership with the GMF, and to promote dialogue amongst fellow citizens with Up4Humaness.



**Q: How do forward-looking business leaders widen the circle and engage across sectors, helping communities to thrive and become more inclusive?**

When diversity is a primary value, everything changes. In today's world, diversity, representation and opportunity are economically imperative. Energetically supporting economic empowerment, capacity building and leadership opportunities will drive growth for our clients, our communities, our people and our entire stakeholder spectrum.

We are firm believers that investment projects like many of those we have led – Madagascar Airports redevelopment, our national multiple public hospital campus projects in Turkey, our highly successful solar development in Senegal and Addis Ababa, our innovative partnership with a farmer's collaborative on biogas cogeneration in France, our redevelopment on LaGuardia Airport in New York where 400+ newly created, permanent jobs will go to the immediate community on a project that was recently awarded the first-ever Envision Platinum Award for resilience and sustainability – all create a paradigm where opportunity, inclusion, capacity and sustainability meet, and that convergence point is a place where all boats rise and societal transformation becomes possible.



**Q:** What about a role for the private sector in encouraging democratic practices in young democracies, such as transparency, government accountability and rule of law?

Free enterprise itself is a key ingredient in democracy. Unleashing the power of the individual entrepreneur in the marketplace to compete freely has been shown to be critical to a successful economy and hence an inclusive society. Public private partnerships (PPP) create the opportunity for business associations, particularly public private

partnerships, to play a role in supporting democratic norms and institutions. Democracy requires the emergence of a middle class, of cities, and wealth to support education, financial institutions for the mobilization of capital, civil society and civic commitment. Private sector business is eminently well-placed to help promote cultural pluralism, civic society, and prosperity through capacity building and access to opportunity. The very nature of a PPP is that of partnership between the public and private sector, and the long term aspect of our commitment makes it possible to support and foster transformational change during the course of a generation and beyond.

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**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:** *Create a paradigm where opportunity, inclusion, capacity and sustainability meet, and that convergence point is a place where all boats rise.*

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# Case Studies

## Toward Greater Roma Political Participation:

Ivan Ivanov, Executive Director European Roma Information Office, Belgium (TILN Stakeholder)

Roma form the largest minority in the European Union numbering more than 6 million and yet remain the most disadvantaged and socially excluded group. The Roma population has been largely left out of political and economic life, discriminated against and marginalized through poverty and segregation. According to the 2018 report of the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, 80 percent of Roma still live at risk of poverty and 27 percent live in households where at least one person went to bed hungry at least once in the prior month. In some member states this proportion is even higher.

Dramatic levels of anti-Gypsyism fueled by the media and largely unchallenged by the states, feed the cycle of discrimination against Roma. Racist stereotypes too often serve to justify ongoing discriminatory practices. The most recent survey of the European Commission on discrimination in Europe, the Eurobarometer, confirms the persistence of anti-Roma prejudices. On average (in the 28 EU member states), 20 percent of respondents would feel uncomfortable having a Roma colleague (71 percent in the Czech Republic, 59 percent in Slovakia and 57 percent in Bulgaria). 55 percent of respondents would not be comfortable if their son or daughter had a relationship with a Roma person, and only 18 percent have Roma friends or acquaintances.

Despite commitments undertaken, the situation of Roma has improved little in the last decade. Anti-Gypsyism obstructs implementation of measures to tackle Roma poverty and social exclusion. Another obstacle is the lack of political will of non-Roma politicians, as Roma exclusion from political processes makes their integration and equal treatment dependent on the political will of others. The severe under representation of Roma in elected bodies and in public administrations is a significant barrier to integration. This absence of Roma voices contributes to marginalization of Roma concerns on the political agenda.

There are some false assumptions about the participation of Roma in public life. One is that the Roma community's needs and demands can be addressed within the political process in publicly elected bodies, by individuals who are not Roma. The assumption is that since elected bodies represent all citizens and Roma are citizens, then they are represented too. But the lack of political will to deal with Roma issues in most EU member states is a fact. Most political actors give low priority to promoting Roma social inclusion and equal treatment and, at worst, aggravate anti-Gypsyism and discrimination.

Another false assumption is that placing a few Roma in the government administration can have an impact on Roma integration policies. Placing one or two Roma in low-level positions in a few public offices has failed to lead to satisfactory Roma-related policy design and implementation, and has even proved to be more damaging than beneficial. In addition, lack of action to prepare Roma for positions in public institutions has resulted in an

inability to bring about change. Rather, the result is alienation between Roma communities which expected to see their needs and concerns addressed, and their representatives who have neither the power nor the knowledge to fulfill those expectations.

In contrast, when fully prepared and engaged Roma leaders take office, we can see the positive change they bring about, as in the case of former member of the European Parliament Soraya Post of Sweden who during her tenure advocated for human rights not only of Roma people but for all. Post is inspiring new generations to run for office, and with such efforts, the dial can be moved faster toward Roma inclusion.

If Roma are to advocate for better opportunities and effective solutions, they will need to become more active participants in political processes. Roma have to take responsibility for implementing policies aimed to bring about equal treatment and social inclusion. This would be in contrast to being passive beneficiaries of policies designed and, at best implemented by non-Roma politicians. By being part of the political decision-making process and representing their communities in office, Roma will become independent from the political will of others. They should know that to vote and to be elected is a basic human right. It is true that political rights cannot be measured by the existence of legal instruments guaranteeing democratic principles. Account needs to be taken of the capability of citizens to exercise these rights. The case of Roma demonstrates that equality in political participation on paper is aspirational, and does not guarantee access and inclusion in practice.

Assuring full access to all forms of public participation is also a duty of EU member states arising from their European and international human rights obligations. Given the almost complete absence of Roma from the political scene, the EU should urgently take steps to promote Roma participation on an equal footing with other members of society in mainstream decision-making institutions, in elected bodies as well as the public administration. This obligation of the state should translate into positive measures to ensure an equal start for Roma in political affairs, including policies targeted at increasing the participation of Roma in politics and, more importantly, mitigating anti-Gypsyism which is the main obstacle for Roma to access equal participation.

One method for Roma to have an opportunity of obtaining seats is via the creation of Roma political parties. States can support such parties through actions such as waiving minimum

## **LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:**

*If Roma are to advocate for better opportunities and effective solutions, they will need to become more active participants in political processes.*

thresholds for representation in proportional election systems or reserving seats in elected bodies, hence amending legal conditions that make it difficult for Roma and other minorities to form parties. Another way for Roma to obtain representation is by running within mainstream political parties or parties representing other minorities. If Roma representation in these parties is to improve Roma participation in decision-making, these parties will also have to be open to this change. Roma candidates should be presented where they have opportunities to be elected and these parties should also place Roma interests on their agendas in a meaningful way.

States can also seek to increase the representation of Roma within public administration through positive measures. This can involve sharing information about vacancies and application procedures and offering skills development order for Roma to gain the required competencies to fill positions in public administrations.

The absence of Roma in elected bodies and public administration at all levels of power throughout Europe indicates a failure of democratic processes. Potential remedies include: European states must take measures toward the equal inclusion of Roma in public service. Roma organizations must step up to train rising Roma leaders to run for office and to meet the requirements of office once elected. Current Roma leaders in public service must step up as role models, and reach out to and inspire new generations. To ignore the issue of Roma's absence from the political scene should no longer be an option for European states.

## Achieving LGBTQ Political Inclusion:

*Interview with Luis Abolafia, Program Manager, Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund and Leadership Institute, United States (TILN Stakeholder)*

### **Q: Why is it essential to increase the number of leaders who are LGBTQ in elected office?**

Ensuring LGBTQ people are represented in our governments and in our political systems is one of the most effective ways to advance equality for our community. We need to have our voices heard and unique needs considered, and there is no better way than having LGBTQ people in the institutions where decisions are made. Our democracies should represent the diversity of our countries. Having LGBTQ elected officials helps educate the public about our issues, deconstructs stereotypes and provides role models for LGBTQ young people.

Our elected officials also cultivate alliances with other politicians, changing the dynamics in the legislatures where they serve. Statistics show that people are less homophobic and transphobic when they know someone who is LGBTQ, and the same principle applies





to LGBTQ elected officials and their straight cisgender colleagues. LGBTQ elected officials also help to build bridges with civil society – further extending their impact.

**Q: Where are we now in terms of LGBTQ political inclusion?**

We are getting better. In the United States we have about 700 LGBTQ elected officials, but this is barely 0.1 percent of elected positions nationwide. So we still have a long way to go to achieve 4.5 percent – the number that is equivalent to our representation in the overall population. In fact, we need to elect 22,000 more LGBTQ leaders to achieve equitable representation in the United States. Currently we are seeing a wave of LGBTQ people, women and other underrepresented groups being elected, and these officials are typically on the forefront of the fight against intolerance and nationalism on both sides of the Atlantic.

**Q: Where do we need to be?**

We deserve equitable representation in government at every level of office, from city council all the way up to the U.S. Congress and beyond. That means our goal is at least 4.5 percent of elected official nationwide – about 23,000 in all.

**Q: When do you know you have achieved success in this mission?**

We still have a long way to go. Consider that women have been working to have a balanced gender representation in politics for over a century and are still a long way from equity. We don't foresee achieving the mission any time soon. At the same time, we keep achieving new milestones, such as electing Lori Lightfoot mayor of Chicago just this April. She became the highest-ranking LGBTQ mayor in U.S. history and is the only African American lesbian currently serving. We now have more LGBTQ people in Congress than ever before. In Europe, an LGBTQ head of state served in Iceland, Prime Minister Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, followed by heads of state in Belgium, Luxembourg, and Ireland. So we are moving in the right direction.

**Q: How do we get there?**

We keep working; keep training people to run for office and ensuring LGBTQ people understand politics and the importance of being active in them. We keep working with political parties, especially in countries where parties are the bottleneck for inclusion. We keep working for political influencers to understand that diversity enriches democracy. We keep forging alliances among politicians and civil society groups, working with allies who open doors for LGBTQ political participation.

**Q: Are there unique factors on each side of the Atlantic, or is the situation largely the same?**

I think the situation on both sides of the Atlantic is largely the same; leaders who are women, LGBTQ, and other underserved groups are at the forefront of the fight for democracy, especially in the face of the new wave of



nationalism. There is always a bad and a good side. For example, Poland and Hungary are among those who are moving backward, yet in those same countries, there are many LGBTQ leaders who are doing a great job, and who are very active in politics. There are challenges in such places, but we are fighting to make sure our rights are respected and our voices are heard. Places where homophobia and transphobia are prevalent such as the Balkans are slowly but surely moving in the right direction. Serbia appointed a lesbian prime minister; this says something about the move to be inclusive. Even where things are more challenging, there is light, and we are taking small but mighty steps. We've seen in Latin America, Europe and the United States that religiously intolerant movements follow a script that leverages political participation to curtail the rights of minorities. We've seen that clearly. But we are taking a page from their playbook, with LGBTQ people, women, and other underserved groups also leveraging political representation to make sure that such attacks are stopped and will not succeed.

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**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:** *Statistics show that people are less homophobic and transphobic when they know someone who is LGBTQ, and the same principle applies to LGBTQ elected officials and their straight cisgender colleagues.*

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# Working Across Borders for Political Inclusion

*Interview with Dr. Mischa E. Thompson, Director of Global Partnerships and Innovation, the United States Helsinki Commission, Washington D.C. United States (GMF Fellow, TILN Thought Leader)*

## **Q: Why is it important to work across borders for political inclusion?**

We live in an interconnected world; whatever happens in one country has an impact on others. Our communities are interconnected because of trade, security issues, human rights concerns. For example, one of the things we've been seeing are connections in extremist behavior across borders. To support our democratic institutions at large, we have to increasingly work together, ensuring that all of our societies are able to flourish. This can only happen if countries ensure that all parts of society are valued and able to contribute in meaningful ways.



## **Q: How do we do this? Offer a few examples?**

The Transatlantic Inclusion Leaders Network model offers a way to work across borders in part by bringing rising diverse leaders together from different countries so that they can understand the commonality of contemporary problems and also of possible solutions. In the new age of technology it is much easier to sustain these relationships than in the past when people had to physically convene. Now, tech offers a means for people to meet and build sustainable relationships, exchange models and ideas for legislation and programmatic initiatives. Other examples of excellence are Roma and Anti-Racism Weeks, civil society initiatives organized with the support of European parliamentarians that brings close to 300 advocates from Roma and other diverse communities together across borders to develop and support inclusive policies. Also for close to a decade, Helsinki Commissioners have held annual hearings and other events in the U.S. Congress with African descent and other European political and civil society leaders from diverse communities that have led to innovative policy initiatives on both sides of the Atlantic.

## **Q: Why is it so important for diverse leaders to gain experience on the international stage?**

Increasingly, issues at a local level are actually emanating from the international level, everything from how trade barriers and opportunities impact communities, to community members serving in the military and fighting abroad. If diverse leaders aren't participating at the international level, they are not part of these decision-making

conversations at a higher level that are increasingly having a local impact, though this is not necessarily intuitive in the sense of fighting for great schools or quality housing. Having worked in international affairs for close to two decades, I can attest that one also learns how very similar problems are at home and abroad. Instead of reinventing the wheel, we can learn and share innovative solutions through international exchange and collaboration. This allows us to see and share different models of leadership and hone our own leadership styles, making us better representatives for our constituents.

**Q: What is your vision for political inclusion at the international level, in an ideal frame?**

Global policies that are being made would be inclusive from the start and constructed as such. For example, when people make decisions to go to war, to change economies, to engage for human rights, from the beginning, women, people from ethnic, faith, and other diverse backgrounds would be part of the conversation so that we wouldn't have to circle back later to address mistakes and include people in policy making retroactively.

**LEADERSHIP INSIGHT:**

*To support our democratic institutions at large, we have to increasingly work together, ensuring that all of our societies are able to flourish.*

With the issues that we are combatting nowadays, that are making it less safe for people to live where they have traditionally lived, to the rise in extremist voices and violence, political leaders are holding greater responsibility to serve and protect their communities in order to ensure a shared future for us all. Political leaders are public servants and that service is greatly.

# What to Read Next: GMF Alumni Authors on Political Inclusion

Dupree Walker, Nicole Lorenz, Rita Freischlad (GMF Student Assistants)

We would like to highlight some interesting recent books by alumni from the United States, Germany, and France. But first, why the book form? How does writing a book specifically help you to advance your leadership?

Founder and president of new American Leaders Sayu Bhojwani (TILN Stakeholder) explains, “I wanted to share multiple stories and illustrate several systemic issues as part of a larger narrative about our democracy being broken, and a book was the best way to do so. The book has served as an important tool to advance conversation about our work and about strengthening democracy to wider audiences and over time, will help build a larger following for our organization and its mission.” Dr. Wesley Bellamy (TILN



'18), Charlottesville city councilor observes, “This form has advanced my leadership in a variety of ways. Since the book, and the subsequent book tour, several municipalities across the country have reached out about the equity package; there is discussion taking my legislation to the state and federal levels; and I have seen a wave of leaders throughout the country be empowered. The book provides a vehicle for me to speak tangibly about the work that I have done, how the work was done, and allows me to take others down the highway of equity at a pace to their liking.

And now, the books:

***Minority Leader*** by Stacey Abrams (MMF '04) published in 2018, and *Lead from the Outside* in 2019: Abrams describes, in the following quotation, as an opportunity to “share my own experience and give practical advice to others on how to take charge and fight for change... We need people who will lead in their workplace, faith community, and neighborhood association. Because real change doesn't come from politicians or government;

it comes from the people.” In contrast, Abrams highlights her personal journey in *Minority Leader* of building self-confidence, aiming high, and growing as a political figure who is working to shape a more inclusive political system in the United States. Abrams notes, “Not everyone’s ambitions will be world domination or Carnegie Hall, but we should be driven beyond what we know and feel safe doing.”

***Monumental: It was Never About a Statue*** by Wesley Bellamy (TILN ’18), published in 2018, offers a memoir of the year before and after the white supremacist attacks in Charlottesville, Virginia. Bellamy shares his journey serving as the only African-American councilor at the time. In the course of efforts to right the wrongs of the past and the events that ensued, Bellamy was able to push through equity legislation in his city that is now serving as a model nation-wide.

***How We Win: How Cutting-Edge Entrepreneurs, Political Visionaries, Enlightened Business Leaders, and Social Media Mavens Can Defeat the Extremist Threat*** by Farah Pandith (TILN Visionary), published in 2018, focuses on the global presence of extremist groups, and how greater inclusion can change this dynamic. Pandith traveled to over eighty countries learning for this book. Former Secretary of State, Madeline Albright writes, “Drawing on her decades of experience, Pandith unweaves the tangled web of extremism and demonstrates how government officials, tech CEOs, and concerned citizens alike can do their part to defeat it.”

***People Like Us: The New Wave of Candidates Knocking at Democracy’s Door*** by Sayu Bhojwani (TILN stakeholder) published in 2018, illuminates the power of including first generation Americans in political office. Bhojwani highlights the diversity of rising candidates who are challenging the status quo, winning against the odds, and paving the way for others to follow. Quoting from the Kirkus Review, “*People Like Us* is an astute appraisal of how the state of American democracy is being preserved by unexpected political newcomers...An enthusiastic, optimistic update on how immigrant Americans are changing the political landscape, promoting reform, and providing an all-encompassing voice for our multiracial society.”

***Do not stay in your place: How to get where no one was expecting you to go*** by Rokhaya Diallo (MMF’15) is published in 2019 in French. Diallo is a journalist, a host of BET (Black Entertainment Television) France, and an activist for racial, religious, and gender equality, as well as a serial author on inclusion topics. In her new book, Diallo tells the inspiring story of her journey as a black, Muslim woman to become a journalist and television presenter. She shares the strategies she used and explains how others can draw on their resources and mobilize themselves to enter and advance in fields that are not yet open to women in leadership.

***I am a Gypsy and Will Remain One*** by Anina Ciuciu (TILN ’18). Ciuciu is a Romani lawyer and author living in France, and a TILN fellow from 2018. In her book collected and reported by Frédéric Veille, “Je suis Tzigane et je le reste,” she recounts her journey from her childhood in Romania to becoming a law student at the Sorbonne University in Paris and the obstacles, humiliation, and insults she and her family faced along the way. While she recognizes her good fortune, she embraces her origins and hopes to inspire other young people of her community by demonstrating that another future is possible for the Roma living on the margins of society.

***Fair opportunities: Discrimination against children and adolescents with a family history of immigration within the framework of educational structures*** by Orkan Oezdemir (TILN '12), published in Germany in 2016, examines the discourse about participation, recognition and a certain image that is demanded by Germany's majority society, i.e. a socialization-capable identity. Oezdemir questions the discourse about "the refusal to integrate" which addresses in most cases not migrant workers of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, but rather second and third generations – largely young people with Turkish, Kurdish and Arab migrant backgrounds who are subjected to this accusation. These young people have little relation to the country of origin of their parents and/or grandparents. This work addresses the nuances of how language and labels influence integration and inclusion policies and experiences.

***20 Beautiful Women: 20 More Stories That Will Heal Your Soul, Ignite Your Passion and Inspire Your Divine Purpose***, Volume 6, is a best-selling anthology edited by Sherman Turntine and Jennifer Wilkes, in which Nadja El Fertasi (MMF '17) shares a personal account "The Journey of Belonging". El Fertasi offers pathways for personal empowerment, necessary to be effective as well in advancing political inclusion and action. In the anthology, the authors "bond together for the common goal of sisterhood, and to transform women from the inside out."

***Portraits of Serbia: Hope for the Future*** is a collaborative project written and produced by Sabina Dazdarevic (TILN '15) featuring photographs by Wesley Channell. The accompanying exhibit officially opened on March 14, 2019 at the Ethnographic museum in Belgrade. The works portray people who express their hopes for the future of the country. The 116 people interviewed express the diversity of Serbia, coming from 29 cities in Serbia as well as two cities abroad.

***180 Amsterdammers***, co-founded and co-authored by Ahmed Larouz (MMF '08) features 180 portraits and interviews with people of 180 different nationalities living in Amsterdam. The initiative highlights the diversity and richness of the city due to the presence of so many different cultures and is developed for Amsterdammers of every nationality to feel comfortable and free to express themselves. The project takes even greater purpose in the context of recent far-right nationalism.

And upcoming, Sarmia Hathroubi (TILN '14) has embarked on a GMF alumni grant journey to weave a transatlantic network of trendsetters in advancing inclusion, with the expectation of a book to follow. Each of these GMF alumni and stakeholders through their thought leadership raises awareness about the importance of political inclusion.

## LEADERSHIP TAKEAWAYS: Steps We Each Can Take

By sharing my personal story, I refuse to let people delineate between “good” and “bad” immigrants. Families, whether leaving by boat as my family did or wading across the Rio Grande, are in search of a better life.

In the digital age, it is even more critical to remember that we are all human beings with feelings.

Representation is the greatest catalyst to inclusive policymaking and achieving profound change in politics and society.

Passion framing focuses people on micro-issues that help them to understand who holds power and why it is important to engage in elections.

Make it your key mission to listen and engage with the people you represent.

If Roma are to advocate for better opportunities and effective solutions, they will need to become more active participants in political processes.

We may not believe in this for the same reasons, but we can get to a common goal for different reasons.

Diversity is not about control, but letting go of control: having faith in different perspectives to enrich decision-making.

Technology has expanded the reach of marginalized voices in their own communities and across the globe; however, this benefit is not automatic and as leaders we must champion policies that create onramps and safe spaces for those conversations online.

Facilitating multi-party dialogue helps foster electoral system improvements, women’s inclusion and national minority inclusion initiatives.

You want to make sure that people are included, respected and valued to develop a culture of community that inspires all to work together. This way, we can grow a world-class community, and therefore world-class nations.



Statistics show that people are less homophobic and transphobic when they know someone who is LGBTQ, and the same principle applies to LGBTQ elected officials and their straight cisgender colleagues.

By pairing young people and elders together to learn what is important to each other using examples, you begin to find similarities despite the differences in age.

It's important to actively change the way you hire people, not just to say on paper, yes we are attractive for you.

It takes time to rebuild a political system that is skewed to serve some instead of all of the people. This begins by having people closer to the pain hold political power.

At the national level, there needs to be dialogue. Even having coffee together, we share information and we become brighter.

To support our democratic institutions at large, we have to increasingly work together, ensuring that all of our societies are able to flourish.

Civic education is one key to reversing the mentality of disempowerment.

Create a paradigm where opportunity, inclusion, capacity and sustainability meet, and that convergence point is a place where all boats rise.

Central is the acute understanding that politics is a numbers game.

We cannot change the status-quo by simply adding addendums to a broken system; we need to change it from the inside out.

We each have a role to play in strengthening diverse representation.

One of my favorite things to do is to meet with residents from across the local area and understand their priorities.

**Thank You to Our  
Inclusive Leadership Partner**



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