



essential PARTNERS

# DONOR NEWSLETTER

A QUARTERLY UPDATE FOR OUR ESSENTIAL PARTNERS | **SPRING 2024**

## FEATURED STORY

### Preparing Communities and Schools for the 2024 Election

## ALSO IN THIS NEWSLETTER

Navigating Israel-Palestine Dialogues in  
the Midst of War

Meet Claire Lindsay, Our New  
Development Manager!

## EP PROGRAM UPDATES

Interfaith America Highlights EP in  
Higher Education Bridging Report

Teachers and School Leaders Attend  
Free Workshop at BB&N School

Hidden Brain on EP's Landmark  
Abortion Dialogues

**EP CAN ONLY COMMIT TO  
THIS IMPACT-FIRST, OPEN-  
SOURCE ETHOS BECAUSE OF  
THE TIRELESS SUPPORT OF  
DONORS LIKE YOU.**

## IMPACT & INFLUENCE

I am proud of Essential Partners for many reasons. First, I'm proud of the organization's dedication to real, lasting impact. This team works tirelessly, often behind the scenes, to create real and lasting change. I'm also proud of the way EP boldly addresses the most contentious and explosive issues—such as the Israel-Hamas War and the 2024 Election—bringing decades of expertise and offering it to everyone who seeks peace, repair, and belonging.

But I think the thing I am most proud of is EP's influence. Whether it's the 92Y's Share Our America Program or the Starts With Us 3Cs Classroom curriculum, EP's Reflective Structured Dialogue framework serves as a cornerstone for the entire field of bridging, pluralism, and democracy.

From our prominence in the Interfaith America report on bridging in higher education to our featured place in Charles Duhigg's new book, *Supercommunicators*, EP is not just one of many groups doing this work—it is the leading organization.

I hope you feel as much pride as I do. Because look at everything we have accomplished, together.



In community,

Brendan Abel  
*Chair, Board of Directors*





FEATURED STORY

## PREPARING AMERICA FOR THE 2024 ELECTION

BY DANIEL PRITCHARD

EP DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

According to the Pew Charitable Trust, 61 percent of Americans say that talking about politics with people they disagree with is stressful and frustrating. This dismaying experience of political discourse contributes to what Pew characterized as the public's "unrelentingly negative" view of American politics last year.

Now we face the 2024 Presidential Election season, which may become the most polarizing political contest in living memory. Again.

While polarization may be a natural tendency, it is not inevitable. The cycle can be stopped, and we have an effective and flexible approach to stop it. **Thanks to donors like you, we're able to make these tools available for free.**

**Our new election resources have already made their way into hundreds of classrooms, campuses, religious spaces, and kitchens, empowering people to transform the way their community navigates the differences that matter most.**

Polarization happens precisely because the differences matter. We can't rely on common ground to heal divisions. There are genuine, meaningful differences of perspective on critical issues like healthcare access, public safety, and economic opportunity. We don't all agree on policies and values—but that is the fundamental power of a free, diverse, democratic society.

Decades of research and experience all tell us that polarizing forces—media narratives, social media, political campaigns, and human tendencies—can be overcome by the powerful experience of community. When people feel they belong, when they have authentic relationships with people from the "other side," when they have built trust and understanding across irreconcilable differences, then they cannot be inspired to fear, belittle, or dehumanize others.

Our new suite of election resources have already made their way into hundreds of classrooms, campuses, religious spaces, and kitchens, empowering everyday people to transform the way their community navigates the differences that matter most.

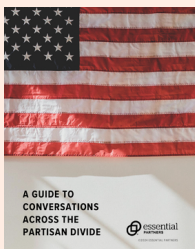
**Community is not just our focus—it is the way out of this spiral of polarization.**

By engaging in open dialogue with the people they live, work, worship, and learn with, the folks who put our guides to use become the single most powerful force against polarization that we have. They build the bonds of community that can effectively stop cycles of polarization.

These resources are a small but powerful investment in American democracy that we have made together. Your support allows us to disseminate our model widely, impacting hundreds of thousands of lives each year.



## RELATED RESOURCE



***EP's 2024 Guide to Dialogues Across the Partisan Divide***

**DOWNLOAD FREE GUIDE**

## THINKING BEYOND THIS YEAR?

### Consider a bequest or legacy gift.

Bequests and legacy gifts—sometimes known as “planned gifts”—help sustain EP's crucial mission for future generations.

**Establishing a simple bequest in your will can be as easy as sharing this instruction with your attorney or financial planner:**

**“I bequeath \$\_\_\_ or \_\_\_% of my estate to Essential Partners, EIN 22-3432160.”**

If you've already established a bequest or legacy gift for EP, or would like to discuss doing so, please contact Claire Lindsay:



[claire@whatisessential.org](mailto:claire@whatisessential.org)





## NAVIGATING ISRAEL-PALESTINE IN THE MIDST OF WAR

**BY KATIE HYTEN**  
EP CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

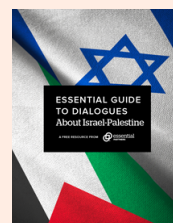
In October 2023, every project seemed to be consumed by the Israel-Hamas War in Gaza. Whatever divisions a college, organization, school, or community faced, they were exacerbated and magnified by the conflict.

Thankfully, we were prepared. Nearly two decades ago, co-founder Maggie Hertzog produced a guide to dialogues about Israel-Palestine in collaboration with the Jewish Dialogue Group.

Expanding upon that formative work in this new context, in collaboration with numerous partners, we are proud to announce the publication of a new revised **Guide to Dialogues About Israel-Palestine**. As ever, the dialogues in this guide are designed to help people reach new mutual understanding and authentic connections with those around them—not to arrive at a new position on the topic. We do not ask people to stop advocating passionately for what they believe is right.

So many leaders called us in crisis, and thanks to donors like you, we have been able to answer their calls. We continue to support universities and nonprofits, interfaith alliances and government bodies, educators and community leaders through the difficult urgency of this moment. We will be with them as they make mistakes and make repair, as they reach new understandings and build new authentic bonds, as they find a new way of living, working, and learning together in community.

### RELATED RESOURCE



***EP Guide to  
Dialogues on  
Israel-Gaza***

**DOWNLOAD FREE GUIDE**



## MEET OUR NEW DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, CLAIRE LINDSAY!

We're excited to announce the arrival of Claire Lindsay to our team as our new Development Manager! Under the guidance of our co-Executive Directors, Claire will focus on donor stewardship and strategize fundraising efforts to support Essential Partners' mission.

To her new role with Essential Partners, Claire brings more than six years of experience in development and communications for community-driven nonprofits. In her most recent role at Legal Outreach, a New York City nonprofit that supports college access for underserved youth, Claire led the Development Department's annual fundraising campaigns for four and a half years and also spearheaded their 40th Anniversary Gala. In 2019, she earned her Masters Degree in Public Policy with a concentration in Nonprofit Management.

Before dedicating herself to the nonprofit sector, Claire worked on organic produce farms in the Hudson Valley as an event coordinator and farmer. Working with the local farmers, she helped develop an agricultural community center, which hosted farmers markets, artisan fairs, and cultural events.

That experience, in part, is what inspired Claire's interest in pursuing a career in the nonprofit sector. She saw that working for community-focused organizations would ultimately lead to a more fulfilling career. With that mindset and several years of experience under her belt, Claire is excited to advance the mission, vision, and strategy of Essential Partners.

“

I've always sought out organizations that work to empower communities from within. In my brief time at Essential Partners, I can already see how deeply the team cares about the communities they work with, dedicating themselves to create lasting change. I look forward to lending my support and expertise to this vital work!

”

Claire joins the Essential Partners team remotely from Bloomfield, New Jersey where she lives with her husband and two cats. Please join us in giving Claire a warm welcome! She can be reached via email at [claire@whatisessential.org](mailto:claire@whatisessential.org).

## ESSENTIAL PROGRAM UPDATES!

### INTERFAITH AMERICA HIGHLIGHTS ESSENTIAL PARTNERS IN THEIR NEW HIGHER EDUCATION BRIDGING REPORT

For three decades, we have collaborated with faculty, leaders, administrators, and students to help build cultures of dialogue in more than 350 colleges and universities around the globe. So it was particularly gratifying to find our impact so prominently highlighted by Interfaith America in their new report, “Bridgebuilding in Higher Education: A Landscape Analysis.”



In a report that includes so many great organizations—Heterodox Academy, Sustained Dialogue Institute, Bonner, Braver Angels, Constructive Dialogue Institute—Essential Partners was cited more times than any other. It categorizes EP as “Long established higher education leaders” with an evidence-based model, strong networks, and powerful free resources.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE REPORT](#)



### GREATER BOSTON TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS ATTEND FREE EP WORKSHOP HOSTED BY BB&N

Buckingham Browne & Nichols School, one of the most prestigious and influential secondary schools in Greater Boston, hosted a free Essential Partners workshop that drew more than 75 teachers and school leaders from across the Greater Boston region.

“

[This workshop] gave me a powerful foundation of understanding in human behavior and the actions we have control of, even within challenging and sometimes contentious moments and relationships.

— BB&N TEACHER

”

We are proud to support teachers in public, private, and parochial schools alike—all of whom face complex challenges as they educate and develop students into leaders. It is truly a privilege.

## ESSENTIAL PROGRAM UPDATES!



### HIDDEN BRAIN ON EP'S LANDMARK ABORTION DIALOGUES

Peter Coleman, Professor of Psychology and Education at Columbia University, recently spoke on the popular podcast

and radio show Hidden Brain to talk about the challenge of polarization. Coleman and host Shankar Vedantam talked in depth about the “extraordinary story” of EP’s landmark dialogues between pro-life and pro-choice leaders, holding it up as a model for what effective interventions to combat polarization might look like—and what’s needed for them to actually work.

“

One thing that strikes me about the example you gave about these women in Boston,” reflected Vedantam, “is that they really approached their conversations almost like a bomb disposal squad. They didn’t wander in blithely and say, Okay, there’s a bunch of wires here, let’s figure out, maybe we should cut this one, let’s see how it turns out. They actually sat down and very carefully took apart what they were doing, they took their time, they weren’t in the public eye, they were doing this in private. I think when it comes to conflict resolution, a lot of us imagine that we can just simply show up with a pair of clippers and sort of clip a wire to disarm a bomb and that’s gonna be it. We are underestimating how complex and how difficult the challenge actually is.

”

Coleman also writes about our work in his most recent book, *The Way Out: How to Overcome Toxic Polarization*. Listen to the complete interview at the [Hidden Brain website](#) (discussion of the abortion talks begin around 35 minutes).

**THANKS FOR READING—AND FOR SUPPORTING OUR MISSION.**

