

AMERICAN PUBLIC SQUARE

AT JEWELL

CIVILITY

We believe being civil to one another is paramount to our shared American identity.

HONESTY

We value honesty, even when it's uncomfortable.

PERSPECTIVE

We value diverse and divergent perspectives, believing that solutions are created out of the deeper understanding of each other's viewpoints.

FACTS

We believe facts are foundational to collaboration and we are committed to protecting the integrity of fact-based dialogue.

ACTION

We believe in the individual and collective value of facing our nation's biggest challenges.



LETTER FROM THE CEO AND CO-FOUNDER

When I think back on 2021, returning to the “convening” part of the American Public Square mission is what stands out. Certainly, APS has and will continue to embrace the notion of virtual and hybrid gatherings – while also getting back to its roots and bringing non-like-minded people together (in person!) to improve the tone and quality of civil discourse and find paths toward actionable common ground.



A highlight for me over the past year is a very personal one. The first hybrid event of the year focused on the difficult topic of antisemitism and was hosted in conjunction with the exhibit, “Auschwitz: Not Long Ago, Not Far Away.” at the historic Union Station in Kansas City. Entitled, “The Rise of Antisemitism From the Left and the Right,” the program struck a chord with me as my father, a German Jew, had himself been interned in a concentration camp and survived. The program featured scholars with vast expertise on racism and religious bias, with widely varying perspectives on the matter. Plus, in thinking of the generations of people impacted by the terrors of the Holocaust and of antisemitism, it felt especially meaningful as my eldest son, Dr. Ethan Katz, associate professor of History and Jewish Studies at the University of California-Berkeley, where he is also the chair of the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Jewish Life and Campus Climate and the co-founder and co-director of the Antisemitism Education Initiative, served so capably as the panel moderator. It was a proud moment for me.

“The involvement and passion of this community remains our constant inspiration.”

Separately, despite APS’ focus on the “non-like-minded,” it is always gratifying to find others with whom we do share similar missions. To that end, it was so special to welcome Dr. Robert Putnam, Malkin Research Professor of Public Policy at Harvard University, and his writing partner, Shaylyn Romney Garrett, as our featured guests for Evening at the Square 2021 to speak about their book, “The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again.” Their comprehensive analysis of economic, social, and political trends over the past century demonstrates how we have gone from an individualistic “I” society to a more communitarian “We” society and then back again. They shared how we can learn from that experience to become a stronger, more unified nation – exactly the perspective that APS conveys.

At Evening at the Square, we also had the chance to bestow the annual Founder’s Civility Award on our wonderful founding APS Co-Chairs, Mary Bloch and Peggy Dunn, both of whom exemplify the values that our organization stands for.

I continue to marvel at the generosity of our community. Despite the challenges our society has and will continue to face, it is our Members, Sponsors, and Partners who sustain our work and make it possible for APS to advance its mission. I feel privileged to get the opportunity to work with a team of dedicated, hardworking professionals who bring the vision of APS to life every day.

Our work continues. The involvement and passion of this community remains our constant inspiration.
I thank you for joining me on this journey.

AMB. ALLAN J. KATZ (RET.)

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I reflect on the year that has been, 2021 seems like both a memorable year, and a year that flew by absent many of our typical markers of time. As Covid led us through a series of stops and starts throughout the year, APS, along with the rest of society, did what we could to weather the tide and continue to adapt while still providing our community with meaningful opportunities to connect over the issues important to them.



We started the year ready to turn the page after the hotly contested 2020 election. No one could have predicted we would then witness the events of January 6th. The images of that day stuck with us as we produced our first signature event of the year, “E Pluribus Unum: The Mythological America,” which explored what Americans expect of our country and democratic institutions, as well as how these institutions and ideals inform our own identity.

“As we look to 2022, we are still faced with the tall task of urging neighbor to connect with neighbor and, despite differences of opinion, recognize that we have a shared responsibility to seek a more perfect union.”

We went on to address beliefs and concerns about the Covid vaccine, which began to roll out in earnest in the spring. We continued our collaboration with The Kansas City Star to address gun violence in the state of Missouri, occurring at increasing levels throughout much of the pandemic.

Just as the world began to open back up in the summer, conflict was once again heating up between Israel and Palestine, and news from the region pointed our attention to the troubling rise of antisemitic incidents in the United States. APS hosted our first in-person event in 18 months on the topic at Union Station. The panel was electric, the conversation pointed but civil, and we heard from many who attended just how important the physical element of our gatherings can be. Thus, the “hybrid” model of our programming was born.

Our team is now proud to offer continued opportunities to gather in person to discuss the social and political challenges that often divide us, but we have also included a livestream element in each of our major programs to make these conversations accessible to those who, for any number of reasons, are unable to attend in person.

The lessons learned in 2021 have been many. In another year of uncertainty, APS has remained consistent in our mission to build community through improving the tone of public discourse. With you, our supporters and Members, we are committed to staying this course, no matter what comes our way. As we look to 2022, we are still faced with the tall task of urging neighbor to connect with neighbor and, despite differences of opinion, recognize that we have a shared responsibility to seek a more perfect union.

Thank you.

CLAIRE BISHOP

2021 AT A GLANCE



FOUR SIGNATURE PROGRAMS

1. E PLURIBUS UNUM COMPLEXITIES AND CONTRADICTIONS - A MYTHICAL AMERICA?
2. COMING TOGETHER (POST-JANUARY 6)
3. IMPACT OF VACCINATIONS
4. THE RISE OF ANTISEMITISM



**TWO STUDENT
PROGRAMS**
COST OF COLLEGE &
STUDENT LOAN DEBT



NOVEMBER 2021
**APS WAS
HONORED TO
RECEIVE A GOLD
PHILLY AWARD
FOR THE 2020
ANNUAL REPORT.**

40%
APS
SUPPORTERS
WERE NEW IN
2021



SEEKING SOLUTIONS
PROGRAMS



THE APS STORY: IT STARTS WITH ONE

American Public Square's origin is really a story of one individual's impact. Tired of the vitriol exhibited during a community wide disagreement about a coal plant, then city commissioner Allan Katz established The Village Square in Tallahassee to host civil conversations about shared challenges. The Village Square continues in Tallahassee today.

After his time as U.S. Ambassador to Portugal, Katz returned to Kansas City and subsequently created American Public Square in the same spirit as the original Village Square, fueled particularly by the support of many dedicated, early supporters. In 2019, Allan and leaders at William Jewell College agreed to a partnership that continues today.

Now in its eighth season, American Public Square at Jewell engages thousands nationwide through its virtual and in-person programming, making it a true testament to the impact one person can make when choosing to honor **civility, facts and perspective.**

APS' ACADEMIC HOME: WILLIAM JEWELL COLLEGE

In alignment with the ideals set forth by American Public Square, APS' academic partner, William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri, seeks to educate their community to ask reflective questions, apply critical thought, and act with purpose.

Together, APS and William Jewell College offer joint programming, deliver educational opportunities, and foster civic engagement.



“American Public Square and William Jewell College have a shared passion for critical thinking and civil discourse. I am excited that our students have the opportunity to intern, plan and participate in APS-hosted events.”

DR. ELIZABETH MACLEOD WALLS,
President, William Jewell College

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT EDUCATION
ENCOURAGE CRITICAL THOUGHT

CIVICS EDUCATION INITIATIVE

ENGAGING OUR NEXT GENERATION

HIGH SCHOOL

As we envision a society where citizens come together civilly to tackle big issues, meaningfully engaging our next generation is an essential component of our work. APS aims to reinforce that being capable of having fact-based, civil conversations with those who see issues differently is a critical skill that forms the basis of a great democracy.

During the 2021-2022 academic year, students, teachers and administrators continued to overcome challenges posed by the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Our Civics Education Initiative was a source of support to teachers and students alike.

At the high school level, APS offered a custom-created learning series called “Reimagine the Square,” taught in the fall at participating schools across the Kansas City community. Key questions discussed in this course include:

CAN YOU AGREE TO DISAGREE, BETTER?

- What does it mean to be civil? • How do people interact in a civil fashion when they do not agree on a topic? • What should be the rules of engagement for discussion the rest of the year?

HOW DO WE IDENTIFY MISINFORMATION, DISINFORMATION AND EVALUATE BIAS? EVEN OUR OWN!

- What is the media and what role does it play in society today? • What is misinformation/disinformation and how can you spot it? • How do I critique sources so I don't spread it? How do I burst my thought silo?

ARE YOU DEBATING OR DELIBERATING?

- What does it mean to deliberate and how is that different from a debate? • How is deliberation about a wicked topic different from a debate, and why is this important? • Why is deliberation necessary for a thriving democracy?

For the 2021-22 school year, APS partnered with six high schools from the Kansas City region. A very intentional approach, educational partners were diverse in many ways including geographic location, student body make-up, curriculum, and other factors. It is with great appreciation that APS highlights partnering schools and teachers:

- Belton High School, **Joni Harrell**
- Guadalupe Centers High School, **Keith Schoen** and **Kate Sweeney**
- Lee's Summit West High School, **Mary Humphries**
- Notre Dame de Sion High School, **Mary Murphy**
- Oakhill Day School, **Joy Jackson**
- University Academy High School, **Dr. Leah Edens**

ENGAGING OUR NEXT GENERATION CONTINUED

What students learn in the fall semester is then applied to a project-based learning experience in the spring semester, which gives participating students from all six schools the opportunity to work together to build their own APS style program.

“The whole program itself taught me and encouraged me to go on and do more studying on topics being presented around the world, but more so my community.”

“In the APS program, I was able to learn different viewpoints and perspectives on a variety of topics. I never sided with a group as I would just watch them fight or talk over themselves. I always wanted to understand both sides and try to get them to a middle ground.”

THE COST OF COLLEGE

Produced by students of the Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts, Crossroads Preparatory Academy, and the Barstow School.

Overview: College Board shows the price of tuition has inflated

78% IN THE LAST 30 YEARS

leaving some with crippling loan debt and prospective students with loaded questions about their future. Is cost a barrier for prospective students, not only those coming right out of high school, but for those who want to return as adult learners? How does college readiness influence a prospective student's ability to make choices about affordability and whether college is right for them?

- The program featured four expert panelists and moderator, **Dr. Rodney Smith**, vice president of access and engagement at William Jewell College
- **225** program views (virtual) to date

Learn more at americanpublicsquare.org/event/the-cost-of-college

On April 29, 2021, APS' 2020-21 student ambassadors delivered a program focused on the rising rates of college tuition as part of APS' Student Month.

ENGAGING OUR NEXT GENERATION CONTINUED

COLLEGE

Engagement. Service. Student-Led. Civility. Diversity.

At the college level, the APS staff saw an opportunity to deepen the relationship with William Jewell College students through increased programming and campus activities. Six student interns were engaged to help grow APS' on-campus presence.

- **Casey Booth**, studying Institutions & Policy and History
- **Teresa Mainzer**, studying Institutions & Policy, International Relations and Economics
- **Michelle DiStefano**, studying Communication and Psychological Science
- **Dakota Houchin**, studying Business Administration, Applied Critical Thought & Inquiry, and Digital Media Communications (Army Veteran)
- **Ashlyn Steller**, studying Literature & Theory and Spanish

These students worked together to develop a mission for their work on campus:

In the US, the political culture has become divisive and contentious which has deeply affected young people. We believe that bridging the divide begins on college campuses. Therefore, we at the American Public Square Student Initiative seek to engage a diverse student body in promoting high-quality civil discourse to create common ground on important issues facing the next generation of American leaders.

Q+A WITH APS INTERNS
TERESA AND CASEY

Q: What does the future look like for APS on WJC's campus?

A: APS has the capacity to have a wide appeal to the student body. We think increasing a focus on civic engagement, community building and volunteering could be beneficial in drawing more participation from the student body to give their feedback or share their voice.

Q: What was your approach to increasing APS' presence on campus?

A: Our approach was to increase APS' presence on campus by promoting Signature events, hosting casual get-togethers and involving students in the committee. We were surprised by how interested students were in activities that allowed them to give their feedback or share their voice.

Q: How have students responded to what APS has to offer?

A: We continue to have a lot of opportunity to grow on campus. There are a lot of distractions and competing priorities for college students, so we definitely faced an uphill battle getting students to commit to signing up and following through with attending events. We particularly saw interest from political science students, so that's definitely an opportunity for us.



ENGAGING OUR NEXT GENERATION CONTINUED

STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Student Month at APS centered on the rising cost of higher education in the United States and ran from April 6 to April 29, 2021.

To kick off APS 2021 Student Month, the 2020-21 college committee hosted, "The Impact of Student Loan Debt."



Charisma Sewell
Assistant to the
CEO



Jaycee Roe
Marketing &
Communications
Intern



Trevin Davis
Program Intern



Minnie Goodbody
Marketing &
Communications
Intern



Morgan Brown
Program Intern



Luz Moreno Chepe
Program Intern

Four summer interns also supported APS staff in 2021, working in the areas of development, marketing and program planning.

- **Hannah Cole**, Northwestern University
- **Hugo Juarez Avalos**, Donnelly College
- **Luke Dema**, Pembroke High School
- **Ellen Swanson**, Texas Christian University

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

TRICIA MAXFIELD

Attorney, expatriate, teacher and now APS Civics Education Associate

Tricia joined APS in 2021 to lead the Civics Education Initiative. A lawyer by background, Tricia was inspired to give back to her community after living abroad for some time. When she returned, she stepped away from practicing law to pursue a new career in teaching. After serving as a middle school Social Studies teacher for seven years, friend and APS program committee member, Jenny Garmon, connected Tricia to APS. Now leading the Civics Education Initiative, Tricia has leveraged her expansive background to elevate the APS education experience for students across the KC metro.



For their support of our 2020-21 and 2021-22 Civics Education programs, special thanks go to:

- Our student participants
- Oppenstein Brothers Foundation
- The W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Our educator and administrative partners
- The Sherman Family Foundation
- The McDonnell Foundation

APS 2021 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

BRIDGING OUR COMMUNITY (JANUARY)

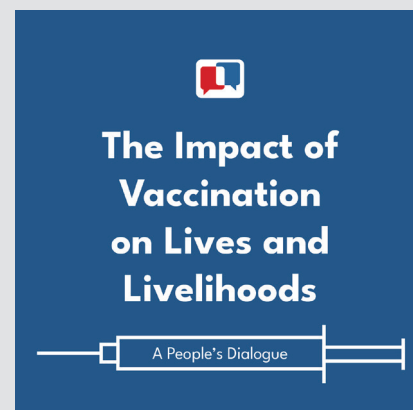
In response to the continued divisiveness of the 2020 presidential election and the subsequent events at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, APS CEO Allan Katz presented an OpEd in the Kansas City Star that presented the question, "Can we bridge our country's divisions?" This piece became the platform on which the APS Coming Together project was created.

The premise was simple—reach out to someone who disagrees with you, have a conversation and seek understanding. In response, APS Member SuEllen Fried sat down with Steve Cloud, someone with a different voting record and political perspective than her. Of that opportunity, SuEllen said, "In response to APS' Coming Together Project, I contacted three opposite-party voters to listen. One refused; however, two were open to the discussion. Though I disagreed with them, they shared compelling reasons for giving their support to their candidate."

PEOPLE'S DIALOGUE (APRIL)

The availability of a COVID-19 vaccine was among the top headlines of 2021 and with it came widely varying perspectives and fierce passion from multiple angles. APS took the opportunity to offer a "people's dialogue" centered on the impact, concerns and availability of the COVID vaccine.

Taking a slightly different approach to this program, community members served as panelists. Erica Blacksher from the Center for Practical Bio-Ethics partnered with APS Program Director, Denesha Snell, to structure the program according to best practices identified through her extensive studies on the subject of deliberative democracy. What transpired was an enriching conversation that enabled participants to find their voice on one of the most important topics of the year.



APS PROGRAMS CONTINUED

THE RISE OF ANTISEMITISM (SEPTEMBER)

As the community united around the history and lessons of the Holocaust, in large part due to the 2021 exhibition, "Auschwitz: Not Long Ago. Not Far Away." housed at Kansas City's Union Station, an alarming rise in antisemitic events continued to transpire in Kansas City and around the nation.

To address this, APS joined JCRB | AJC and the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City to offer, "The Rise of Antisemitism From the Left and the Right." Hosted at Union Station's Regnier Extreme Screen Theater, this program marked APS' return to in-person programming with a variety of health protocols in place to support safe participation of guests and panelists.

Panelists took participants deep into the nuances of antisemitism, debating such things as the very definition of antisemitism, the priority in which antisemitism should be given in the national discourse and how the audience could engage in deeper learning on topics such as the state of Israel, Zionism, and more.



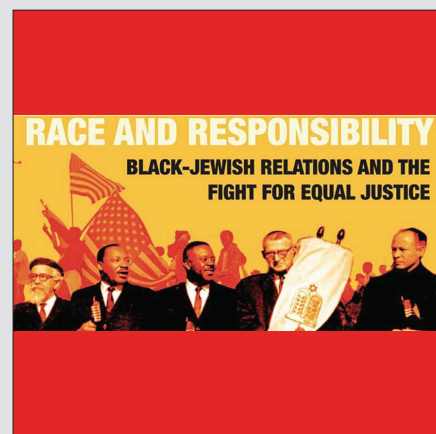
COMPELLING CONVERSATIONS
VOICES & VARYING PERSPECTIVES

APS PROGRAMS CONTINUED

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS FROM APS' 2021 PROGRAMMING LINE-UP INCLUDE:



A program focused on dissecting the complexities and contradictions of the long-standing theological underpinning for the United States, E Pluribus Unum, "From Many, One."



A conversation on whether the efforts of Black and Jewish communities to combat racism and antisemitism should be seen as separate struggles, and how their historical experiences are at once distinct and interconnected.

Hosted by Berkeley; supported by APS.



A series centered on gun violence in Missouri and covered related topics, such as poverty, economic mobility, food and housing insecurity and more.

Learn more about each program and view full program recordings at americanpublicsquare.org/events, then click 2021.

OUR 2021 PROGRAMMING PARTNERS:

- Berkeley Center for the Study of Religion
- The Center for Democracy, Toleration and Religion
- The Center for Jewish Studies
- Center for Practical Bioethics
- The Graduate Theological Union
- Health Forward Foundation
- The Hellen Diller Institute for Jewish Law and Israel Studies
- JCRB | AJC Kansas City
- Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City
- The Kansas City Star
- Missouri Foundation for Health
- Newsweek
- The Othering and Belonging Institute
- Report for America

FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF OUR 2021 PROGRAMMING, SPECIAL THANKS GOES TO:

- **Denesha Snell**, APS program director, for her leadership in creating space to address challenging topics in fact-based, engaging, and civil ways
- **2021 program sponsors** for investing in civil, fact-based discourse for the entire community
- **2021 program committee** for their support in developing a robust program plan
- **Roving reporters** who play an instrumental role in engaging the audience and asking the tough questions
- **Fact checkers** who help maintain the integrity and accuracy of the important information discussed in our programs
- **Our 2021 program panelists** whose expertise, experience, and commitment to civility bring unparalleled richness to each program. To learn more about all of our esteemed panelists, visit americanpublicsquare.org/events.

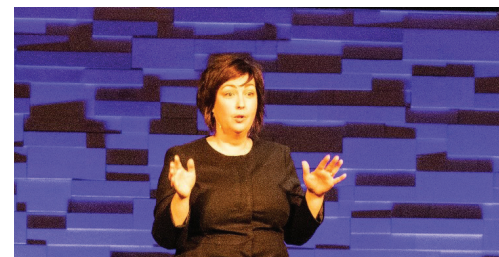
2021 PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Ward Katz, Chair
Gary Armstrong
John Carney
Mara Colbert

Maggie Collins
Steve Cloud
Jenny Garmon
Shakedra Knight

Jennifer Sykes
Dr. Mary Pflanz
Debbie Chasteen

American Public Square at Jewell, along with honorary co-chairs Stacy & Bill Pratt and Ann & Bob Regnier, hosted its annual gala, Evening at the Square, on October 5, 2021.



The program's featured guests were award-winning authors and researchers, Professor Robert Putnam and Shaylyn Romney Garrett, whose literary collaboration, "The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again," delivers a call to action about improving the tone and quality of civil discourse. The conversation proved engaging, revelatory and directly aligned with the APS mission.

Hosted virtually from the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Evening at the Square included a discussion with the authors moderated by APS Executive Director & COO, Claire Bishop, and civil rights attorney & APS Board Member, Shaun Stallworth. The conversation took guests through history to showcase how the United States has gone from an individualistic "I" society to a more communitarian "We" society and then back again, and how we can learn from that experience to become a stronger, more unified nation.

“We are not the prisoners of history. We make our own history by the choices that we make. If [we] make the right choices and collaborate with one another, [we] can turn this thing around.”

ROBERT PUTNAM

Proudly, at Evening at the Square, APS also conveyed its second annual Founder's Civility Award on two deserving Kansas City icons, **Mary Bloch** and **Mayor Peggy Dunn**. In presenting the award, APS founder, chairman, and CEO, Ambassador Allan Katz, recalled that, at the launch of American Public Square, and for the next four years, Mary and Peggy served as the very capable and engaged co-chairs of the new organization. Their leadership and the values they demonstrated helped to shape and establish a place for APS in the Kansas City community and beyond. Today, APS remains on solid footing largely as a result of the tone they created at the beginning.

Special appreciation goes to the sponsors of Evening at the Square who make it possible for APS to continue its work:

PRESENTING:

- Stacy and William Pratt
- William Jewell College

PLATINUM:

- The McDonnell Family Foundation
- Greg Orman
- Ann and Bob Regnier
- The Wiley Foundation

GOLD:

- Tom and Mary Bloch
- Paul and Linda DeBruce & The DeBruce Foundation
- Peggy and Terry Dunn
- JE Dunn Construction
- Eller Corporation
- Allan Katz and Nancy Cohn
- Lewis Nerman and Sue Seidler-Nerman
- R. Lee Smith
- Jerry White and Cyprienne Simchowicz

SILVER:

- Bud and Jennifer Bacon
- Jill and Bill Coughlin
- Ecco Select
- Joe Falk
- Sandi and Ed Fried
- Regina and Bill Kort
- Beryl Raff
- John and Marny Sherman

BRONZE:

- Sarah and Jonathan Baum
- Irv Belzer and Sue McCord-Belzer
- Bert Berkley
- Claire and Denton Bishop
- Phil Blank
- Herb and Bonnie Buchbinder
- Center for Practical Bioethics
- City of Kansas City, Missouri
- Commerce Bank
- Rebecca and Harper Coulson
- Country Club Christian Church
- Sam Cullan and James Landrum
- Donnelly College
- Forward OP & Johnson County Community College
- SuEllen Fried
- Gillian and Scott Helm
- Irv Hockaday
- Howe Street Group
- Jenny and John Isenberg
- Cindy and Vince Johnston
- Mark and Mary Jorgenson
- Donna and Ward Katz
- Marli Klumb
- Howard Lubow
- Marti and Pat McLarney
- Alana Muller and Marc Hammer
- Lydia and Eric Muller
- Lynne and Mark O'Connell
- Jerry and Patty Reece
- Bill Rubin
- Shaun Stallworth
- Ursula Terrasi
- UMKC Department of Political Science
- Lauren Weinhold and Scott Fuller
- Wickham James Strategies & Solutions
- Beth and Karl Zobrist

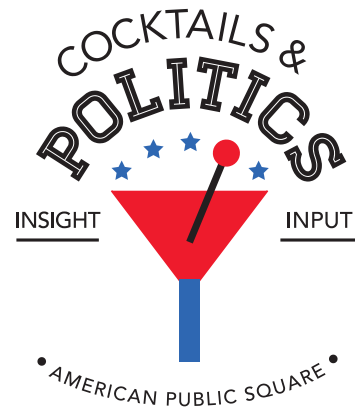
IN KIND SPONSORS:

- Bliss Books and Wine
- Boulevard Brewing Company
- The Kansas City Star
- KCUR
- Marriott Kansas City Downtown
- Mike's Wine & Spirits

- United Methodist Church of the Resurrection
- zTrip

PATRON PARTY SPONSORS :

- Beryl Raff and Paul Russell



Building on the success from its inaugural year, Cocktails & Politics continued in 2021 as a way for Members and non-Members to engage with dynamic guests in an informal and fun way.

To watch these episodes, grab a drink and visit americanpublicsquare.org/events

COCKTAILS & POLITICS FEATURED GUESTS:

Senator John Danforth discussed the “us versus them” mentality that has taken hold in America.

Professor Eddie Glaude, Jr. spoke to the difficulties of race in the United States, and the challenges faced by our democracy.

Batya Ungar-Sargon welcomed Members in person to share insights from her book, “Bad News: How Woke Media is Undermining our Democracy.”



COFFEE & POLITICS FEATURED GUESTS:

Congressman Don Beyer participated in the conversation on the cost of education during Student Month.

Ambassador Sam Brownback outlined his ideas for racial reconciliation in America.



Made possible with support from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, six nonprofit organizations, including APS, united to form the KC Media Collective in Fall 2021.

The collective is a collaborative initiative designed to support and enhance free and fair journalism. In addition to APS, members of the KC Media Collective include Kansas City PBS| Flatland, KCUR, Missouri Business Alert, Startland News and The Kansas City Beacon. Together, the partners seek to deepen their understanding of the people who make up our region, reduce barriers to access, and earn trust.

Each outlet brings diverse reporting and audiences to build a vibrant network of local journalism and programming. The ultimate goal of the KC Media Collective is to better meet community information needs by maximizing resources through new lines of communication, content sharing and collaborative reporting. Members of the Collective will jointly focus some of their coverage on topics of local importance and share their work across platforms.

“We have three primary objectives with the KC Media Collective. To earn, build and nurture trust within the communities that we serve; we also want to reduce barriers to access to information and engage broad swaths of the community that are quite diverse in terms of perspective and ethnicity and theology; and finally, strengthening journalism. Not for the sake of journalism, but for the sake of our community at large.”

CLAIRE BISHOP, executive director and COO of American Public Square





Implemented in 2020 in response to pandemic-driven programming disruption, Both Sides represented a growth opportunity for APS in 2021. The design of the podcast is to cover the “news of the day” from the Left and the Right, leveraging the unique perspectives of APS CEO and Founder, Allan Katz, and longtime APS supporter, Mike McShane, director of national research, EdChoice. Mike and Allan come from different generations and political parties and bring their distinctive worldview to the podcast each month.

As the team considered the opportunities available through podcasts, it leaned into the immediacy of the platform. While programs take time to develop, podcasts can offer APS Members and listeners more immediate engagement in what’s going on in the world at that time. With that, the podcast covered important topics, such as foreign influence in US politics, racial reconciliation, labor shortages and more.

Another key change in the podcast programming in 2021 was in the way it was leveraged to extend the content provided through our Signature and Cocktails & Politics programs. With much more content to offer than a 90-minute program can cover, the podcast came to serve as an extension to the rich conversations started during programs. This enabled the APS team to provide more depth and diversity of content when covering important issues.



In June 2021, Allan Katz joined Newsweek’s “The Debate” podcast for a friendly debate with Armstrong Williams, talk show host and media entrepreneur. On the podcast, the two came together to discuss new GOP voting laws that limit early and mail-in voting.

Listen to the full podcast or read a transcript at:
<https://www.newsweek.com/gop-keeping-people-voting-instead-giving-them-reason-opinion-1603058>.

PODCAST HIGHLIGHT

HOW COULD THEY DANCE AFTER SUCH HORROR?

In support of the Holocaust exhibit hosted at Kansas City’s Union Station in 2021, many organizations, including APS, joined in the storytelling of this critical chapter in world history. In June, Mike and Allan were joined on the Both Sides podcast by Brad Austin, the director of “All These Delicate Sorrows,” a PBS documentary that followed the journey of Holocaust survivors from liberation to the Midwest.

During the podcast, Mike encouraged Allan to share his family’s own Holocaust experience in what became one of the most poignant podcasts of the year.

The stories of the Holocaust and the community’s tribute to this time in history set the stage for APS’ fall program, “The Rise of Antisemitism From the Left and the Right.”



The Both Sides podcast has enabled the APS team to provide more depth and diversity of content when covering important issues.

HOW WE DO IT

THE APS APPROACH

The topics covered during APS programs often elicit strong emotions, whether for panelists or members of the audience. We believe that it is important to create a space where discussions of these issues can address different points of view while ensuring they are substantive, respectful and based on facts. We use “Civility Tools” to help keep things on track even when the dialogue gets challenging. They include:



MODERATED DISCUSSIONS.

APS events are moderated by objective facilitators who ensure panelists are given time to represent their positions on tough but fair questions.



FACT SHEETS.

APS compiles a fact sheet in advance of each panel, which is reviewed beforehand by the panelists and distributed to the audience.



ROVING REPORTER.

Our Roving Reporter, usually a representative from a credible local media outlet, is engaged during the program to gather and curate audience questions.



FACT CHECKERS.

Programs feature real-time fact checkers to confirm the validity of comments made during the program.



CIVILITY BELLS.

The Civility Bell is a symbol for engaging the community in our mission—to improve the tone and quality of civil discourse. These are provided to audience members to ring and “reset” when panelists wade into false, overly dramatic, or hyper-emotional territory.



SO WHAT? NOW WHAT?

At the end of each event, panelists are given the opportunity to make closing statements in the form of answers to these questions. This allows our experts to restate their position on the topic at hand in a way that is actionable for the audience.



NO APPLAUSE.

No applause is allowed during a program except at the beginning and end of the event. This ensures perspective is not swayed one way or another in the midst of the discussion.

APS MEMBERS

American Public Square at Jewell Members share a common bond with others who find value in engaging in fact-based, civil conversations about issues important to our community. Members directly support all we do to achieve our mission of improving the tone and quality of public discourse.

Members enjoy access to all APS programs including Signature Events, Both Sides podcasts, and exclusive Cocktails & Politics events. While the first part of 2021 was limited to virtual APS programming, in December, APS Members gathered for food, fun and facts at a Members-only Cocktails & Politics featuring author and Newsweek op-ed writer, Batya Ungar-Sargon.

2021 was a year focused on the Member experience. In addition to launching a new monthly Member newsletter, we also celebrated APS Members during “Member Month” in October with weekly perks and discounts, Member spotlights and featured reads.

We are honored to include Members in the work of elevating the level and quality of civil discourse in our communities. Together, we can create space for meaningful conversations so that we can disagree, not less, but better. To learn more about becoming a member, visit americanpublicsquare.org/membership.

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LAUREN WEINHOLD, Director of Development Fundraiser, friendraiser, and inspired supporter of civil engagement



A longtime member of Kansas City’s philanthropic community, Lauren has applied her talents in several different ways for numerous local organizations. In the summer of 2018, as the country was gearing up for mid-term elections, Lauren, outside with her campaign yard signs had a chance encounter with neighbors donning opposite-party political gear. In what ended up as a very pleasant interaction, Lauren came to acknowledge her own political biases and pre-conceived notions. In subsequent years, as political tensions continued to increase, Lauren decided she wanted to be part of the solution and transitioned from her career with the KC Art Institute and joined the APS team as director of development in 2021.

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Our work is as important as ever, and their championship makes it happen.



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