

**APSA Centennial Grant 2020 (Roll-Over 2021)  
Final Update for the Growing Democracy Project**

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The following report is an update for the Growing Democracy Project for the time period of January – May 2021.

### **Goals**

As outlined in our grant application, our primary goals are to: 1. Bridge the boundaries between academia and the community and to break down barriers between community members and political institutions by providing a unique approach to civic and political engagement; and, 2. Create a space for critical discussions and meaningful learning that takes place in the community and not in the classroom.

Our goals for January – May 2021 were to:

- Continue the Growing Democracy Podcast
- Creation of the Growing Democracy Blog
- Increase our Social Media Presence
- Strengthen our Relationship with Community Stakeholders.

### **I. Growing Democracy Podcast**

In response to the pandemic, the Growing Democracy Project sought alternative ways to foster civic engagement and fulfill its mission. Launched in June of 2020, the Growing Democracy Podcast is focused on civic and political engagement through weekly interviews with community leaders and area experts. In our end of year update the podcast had 32 published episodes and 2,225 listens. From January 1<sup>st</sup> to June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, the number of episodes has increased from 32 to 53, nearly doubling our listens to 4,261. Our listenership has continued to increase; in the last 30 days we have had 479 listens. Additionally, we held our first live podcast episode on Twitch in February 2021, focusing on the intersections between gaming and political engagement.

We currently have four podcast series, with two more planned to launch in Summer and Fall 2021:

**Series 1 – *Governing During Pandemic*.** This series introduces listeners to local and public officials, along with community activists, who are adapting and responding to the shifting needs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This series concluded with its 16<sup>th</sup> episode in May 2020. Examples of different topics include the issue of housing during the pandemic and in our final episode of the series we looked back to see how two past guests evolved and changed because of the pandemic. [Available here](#)

**Series 2 – *The Power of Civic and Political Engagement*.** This series introduces listeners to local elected officials, public officials, and community activists who discuss what civic and political engagement means to them. The series currently has 22 episodes. Some of the topics covered include union organizing and breaking down barriers to provide better access for all to higher education. [Available here](#)

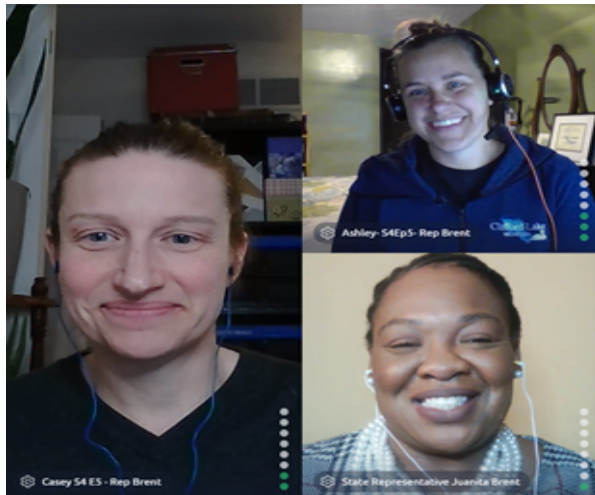
**Series 3 – *Gap Filling*.** This series introduces listeners to organizations that are filling the gaps when government and governmental institutions fail. There are 10 episodes in this series. Examples of some of

the topics include pop-up recess activities for youth in Cleveland and refugee resettlement in Akron. [Available here](#)

**Series 4 – *Serving the Public Interest*.** Our latest series introduces listeners to elected officials and public administrators who are serving the public interest for their communities. This series currently has 5 episodes. Topics included the youth movement in both political parties in Ashtabula County, Ohio and a discussion with a former state representative. [Available here](#)

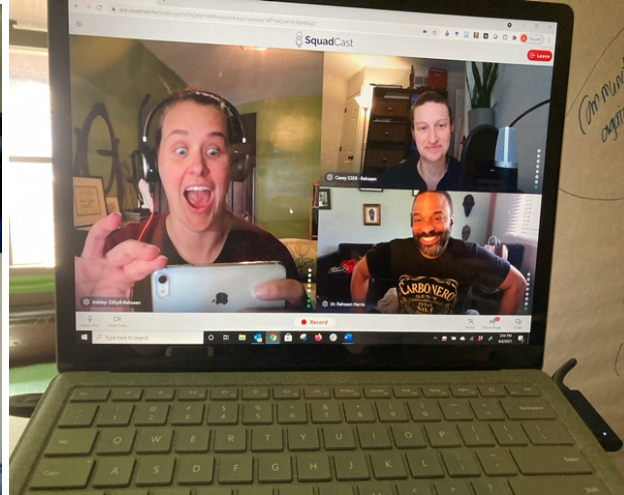
The most up-to-date [episode listing](#) is available on our website ([www.growingdemocracyOH.org](http://www.growingdemocracyOH.org))

Picture 1



Picture 1 - Casey and Ashley recording an episode with Ohio State Representative Juanita Brent.

Picture 2



Picture 2 - Ashley and Casey recording an episode with Dr. Rahsaan Harris, CEO at Citizens Committee for NYC.

## II. Growing Democracy Website & Online Toolkit

We launched the Growing Democracy [website](#) in June 2020. The website is a landing page for people interested in our work, in the podcast, as well as a site for the Growing Democracy online toolkit. While our curriculum and online toolkit continue to be a work in progress, our goal is to co-create free, accessible, and educational materials on issues important to our stakeholders and community partners.

The online curriculum and toolkit continue to expand. We now offer a range of multimedia materials available for people to access as we develop and refine, including:

- 8 recorded workshops and/presentations;
- 53 podcast episodes (and counting);
- 76 concept pages identified; and 5 fully edited [concept pages](#) published on our website.
- 15 articles on the Democracy Blog

**Growing Democracy Blog** – The [Democracy Blog](#) was launched on February 12, 2021, with an article entitled, “What even is Community Organizing”, by Anna Hutcheson. Since launching, we have posted 15 articles on a range of topics, written by a range of authors. Other topics include the Self-Aware Civic Leader, Community Development and Growing Democracy, and Community, the Heart and Soul of Democracy.

Of particular importance to this project, both the concept pages and Blog are authored by students and community partners and edited by Casey and Ashley. This is another way we are attempting to build bridges and amplify community voices.

### **III. Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach**

**Newsletter.** In October 2020 we introduced our monthly newsletter, per a recommendation from our stakeholder interviews. The newsletter includes information and links to our workshops, links to new podcast episodes, and a spotlight of an organization working to increase civic engagement within the community. We have had eight newsletters so far and have gone from 78 to 100 subscribers.

**Social Media:** We continue to expand our reach through social media, including [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#). We also broadcast our first live podcast episode through Twitch. We have increased our likes on Facebook from 140 in our last report to 162 and increased our followers from 145 to 171. We have increased our followers on Twitter from 96 to 180. With the help of our communications intern, we also increased our presence on Instagram.

### **Thank You!**

The Growing Democracy Project would like to thank APSA for its support in our efforts to foster civic engagement and amplify the amazing work already being done in Northeast Ohio. The conditions of 2020, and early 2021, created a unique set of challenges and forced us to adapt, which in the end has allowed the project to reach an even wider audience. Looking forward, we intend to continue our work of amplifying local elected officials, public servants, activists, and organizers. In the future, we hope to build on our success and launch a Growing Democracy Research and Learning Lab to compliment our current efforts.