

Braver Angels Civic Scholars Council

Purpose

To advance courageous citizenship as the defining civic ideal of our time, exploring the multiple meanings and traditions of citizenship which feed the concept in America's civic history, strengthening its practice, and shaping how it is understood, taught, and lived in American civic life.

Mission

The Braver Angels Civic Scholars Council advances courageous citizenship by bringing leading reflective practitioners and scholars together to define, challenge, and shape its meaning and practice in modern American life. The Council strengthens Braver Angels' efforts to inspire a culture of courageous citizenship through rigorous scholarship and theory-building grounded in real-world experiences and aiming at real-world impact.

Council Activities

1. Define and Advance the Concept of Courageous Citizenship

- Refine the theoretical foundations and dimensions of courageous citizenship.
- Help to launch a nationwide "Rediscover Civic America" initiative in 2026 to unearth, learn from, celebrate, and build upon the often forgotten civic treasures in our history, in communities, civic institutions, and as a nation.
- Explore courageous citizenship's roots across disciplines (political science, sociology, psychology, philosophy, communications, theology, history, etc.) and in traditions of civic work
- Clarify distinctions between courageous citizenship and adjacent concepts (civility, depolarization, deliberative democracy, engagement, etc.).
- Help articulate what courageous citizenship looks like in contemporary political, social, economic and cultural life.

Value Proposition: Establishes intellectual leadership and long-term coherence.

2. Produce Thought Leadership for Public Engagement (Braver Angels' INSPIRE strategy)

- Author essays, briefs, and op-eds translating courageous citizenship for public audiences.
- Contribute to Braver Angels' public narratives, campaigns, and America-250 framing.
- Participate in panels, lectures, podcasts, and public forums.
- Advise on framing courageous citizenship for key cultural and demographic audiences.

Value: Helps make courageous citizenship culturally credible, legible and aspirational.

3. Evaluate and Strengthen Braver Angels Programs (Braver Angels' EQUIP strategy)

- Acquaint BA Alliance leaders and other key actors with:
 - Short, effective ways to push back against today's critics of citizen and citizenship.
 - Short, compelling descriptions of several main understandings and traditions of citizenship which supplement and expand citizens beyond legal status (e.g. community member; volunteer; deliberator; steward; and co-creator).
- Review and assess data from Braver Angels workshops, debates, and convening formats, etc.
- Offer research-informed critique and recommendations for program improvement.
- Help ensure fidelity to the principles of courageous citizenship across offerings.

- Advise on the evolution of training methods and participant pathways.
Value: Grounds practice in evidence, experience and continuous learning.

4. Study and Interpret the State of Civic Culture

- Analyze trends in polarization, trust, media, identity, and civic engagement.
- Assess how courageous citizenship is showing up—or under assault—in U.S. public life.
- Identify promising practices, innovations, and warning signs in the civic ecosystem.
- Provide insight on structural and cultural barriers to courageous citizenship.
Value: Keeps strategy responsive to real-world conditions, proves impact, keeps us progressing.

5. Shape Measurement, Learning, and Impact Frameworks

- Help define indicators and outcomes related to courageous citizenship.
- Develop assessment measures for identifying public policies which erode courageous citizenship and civic life, and public policies which strengthen courageous citizenship.
- Advise on qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods.
- Support learning loops that connect research, practice, and refinement.
- Contribute to long-term understanding of culture change and civic renewal.
- Contribution to COURAGEOUS CITIZENSHIP INDEX (tracking study BA will pursue).
Value: Strengthens credibility, accountability, strategic clarity and public impact.

6. Inspire New Ideas, Pilots, and Partnerships

- Propose new approaches, experiments, or research agendas related to courageous citizenship.
- Advise on partnerships with schools, colleges and universities, faith communities, and allied organizations with a civic education dimension or mission.
- Help seed pilot projects or field research aligned with Braver Angels' mission.
- Connect Braver Angels to emerging scholarship and cross-sector innovation.
Value: Fuels innovation and long-term movement growth.

7. Serve as Trusted Advisors and Emissaries

- Provide counsel to Braver Angels leadership on strategy and positioning.
- Act as public intellectual emissaries and thought leaders for courageous citizenship.
- Lend credibility to Braver Angels' role in the civic renewal ecosystem and the larger public conversation.
- Support the cultivation of future scholars and practitioners in this space.
Value: Extends reach, legitimacy, and leadership.

Scholars and Reflective Practitioners' Modes of Participation

1. Writing and research
2. Advisory reviews
3. Public speaking and media
4. Program evaluation
5. Working groups, short-term projects, and initiatives like Rediscover Civic America
6. Annual or semi-annual convenings
7. Scholars Council Symposium (pre-gathering at BA National Conventions)