

### ***United we stand, divided we fall.***

Most of us learn that line at a very early age. We believe it. Our parents believed it.

And, yet, we've learned to live in a country being destroyed by divisiveness. Many are calling for an end to this cycle.

Destroyed is a big word. Maybe bigger than needed for this article. But if we look around us, we see a destructive cycle playing out everyday, day-in and day out. Here's what feeds the cycle...

- We each have unique life stories and perspectives. But, our uniqueness is lost by being put in one of two labeled boxes: "Red" and "Blue".
- We avoid conversations - significant conversations - with colleagues, family, neighbors, and friends. We listen to people and media that reinforces our thinking and keeps us in our box.
- We make all sorts of assumptions about how others think, about who they are, and about what's happening around us.
- We see one-sided solutions to multi-sided problems. We lose opportunities to expand our thinking and to explore creative possibilities, together.

The "cycle of divisiveness" is problematic for us as individuals, for our kids, for our communities, and for our country. Most of us don't want to be a part of it and yet, we are.

Fortunately, efforts have popped up all over the nation to break this cycle. Here are just a few definitely worth subscribing to:

[Common Sense American](#) is an ongoing effort to expand our awareness of issues and to generate collaborative solutions. Their approach includes four steps: Identify issues, develop briefs, get input from a diverse cross-section of people, advocate for issues with widespread support.

[Braver Angels](#) is a citizen's organization uniting Americans in a working alliance to depolarize America. Through local alliances and national convenings, the group is seeing great success opening people's minds and strengthening communities.

The [Makeshift Coffee House](#) is a community-based innovation that "bridges the political divide with coffee, music, and face-to-face conversation." Coffee houses have been held in-person and virtually, planned jointly by leaders in Democratic and Republican circles.

The [Flip Side](#) is an innovative news feed that objectively puts forth different sides of the issues that are in the news on any given day. The Flip Side format is a great way for people to daily explore issues from multiple angles. You can [sign up here](#) for free.

These initiatives offer ideas and a new vision for the future and challenge each of us to do our part to break the "cycle of divisiveness." The focus of all these organizations is NOT to change minds but to listen and understand positions that we may not agree with.

A group of women in New Orleans have taken on this challenge by establishing a new initiative called Connect, NOW. In 2020, Connect NOW hosted an inspiring virtual gathering with leaders of Ellevote LA where we learned a lot about each other's values, and priorities -- an important first step toward being able to ultimately work together on issues of shared concern. In 2021 Connect NOW will continue to partner with Ellevote LA in a variety of ways. For example, through this e-newsletter we'll share national resources as well as opportunities for local action.

To share your own ideas, requests and resources with Connect, NOW, email: [action@nowlove.info](mailto:action@nowlove.info), subject line: Connect NOW. We look forward to learning with you!