



Minnesota Character Council

# CHARACTER Connect

October 2021

Volume 2, Issue 5

## In This Issue

- Community Leadership
- Character as the Basic Question
- Book Review: Anthro-Vision
- Seeking Nominations for the 2022 Minnesota Ethical Leadership Award
- Virtual National Forum, Oct. 20–21

## Minnesota Character Council

Dave Adney  
 Matt Bostrom  
 David E. Foster  
 Hector E. Garcia  
 Michael Hartoonian  
 Todd Lefko  
 Bill Mittlefehldt  
 Todd Otis  
 Ambrose R. Russell  
 Don Salverda  
 Jack Serier  
 Barbara Shin  
 Steve Young\*  
 Deborah Yungner

\*Chair

*The MCC is administered by Synergy & Leadership Exchange. To learn more visit [www.synergyexchange.org/minnesota-character-council](http://www.synergyexchange.org/minnesota-character-council)*

Contact:  
 bbergseth@synergyexchange.org

## Community Leadership

Unfortunately, we live in a time where few are celebrating the “United” in United States of America or even the “Republic for Which It Stands.” We are having difficulty finding common ground on which most Americans are not only willing but eager to stand in order to make this a “More Perfect Union.”

Why Is That? One reason is that every one of us has choices we never had in my time — about what to believe is really going on. From a variety of media sources, too many of which are simply for sale to the highest bidder. Another reason we have trouble finding common ground on which to develop public policy is that money buys not only opinion news, but also the kind of partisans who make or stand in the way of making good public policy.

So, if we really want to restore the “Republic” for which we stand, I suggest we, meaning you and old veterans like me, start building a causeway to a new and better future. As a national community. One that is built on the communities in which each of us is raised up in or live in today. Take it from this old man, who has spent nearly 60 years doing the people’s business — at the community, state, and national level — most everything that really matters in life, and in legislation, happens quietly, behind the scenes and through a committed community of friends!

Growing up in Minnesota and serving Minnesotans by holding public office, I learned that you build the causeway to community by reaching out to others, by being a friend. When the challenges of governing were much greater than either Republican or DFL parties could meet on their own, they would reach across the aisle.



When I was Chief of Staff to Governor Harold Levander, such friendly reaching out resulted in Minnesota being labelled nationally as “The State That Works.” As a three-term United States Senator in Washington D.C., that’s the way we got things done for all the people of this nation.

## Community Leadership . . . continued

The very essence of leadership — going out ahead to show the way — derives from knowing the way. It's the ability to provide inspiration to those less willing. By clearly stating, and restating the goal, the special sense of purpose, the big dream or "the big deal", the visionary concept, the ultimate consumption of something that seems out of reach. These are the words Robert Greenleaf wrote in "The Servant as Leader" that made him famous.

More than 50 years ago Robert Greenleaf predicted that this country was moving away from the institution as a means of providing care and serving the needs of others. "Only community," he said, "can give us the healing love that is essential for health care and serving the needs of others. Only community, can give the healing love for the cognitively impaired, the elderly, the native, the immigrant, the refugee and the ethnic community."

—By Dave Durenberger, former U.S. Senator from Minnesota

## Character as the Basic Question

The answers to basic issues facing our lives or society as a whole are based upon the questions we ask. We often ask the wrong question about our choices, which determines a failed result. Because of complexity, the answers we require are intertwined with secondary and tertiary relationships with other factors.

Politics and institutions were supposed to be the channels where a democracy discussed and resolved the present and the future. This system has failed. Politicians of all parties have developed simplistic solutions through bumper sticker philosophies because they assume the average American lacks the capability for deeper understanding. Short phrases or advertisements seek immediate answers to complex issues, without revealing the necessary costs and sacrifices.

We have developed a culture that seeks to place both costs and potentially negative results until an undesignated future, which will be paid by another generation. We have not completely understood that "character" is a key factor in the desired approach to an effective decisional process. The system of character is both separate and integrated into our political, social, and business lives.

We need a different method of both the presentation and discussion of common issues. For example, the trial of Derek Chauvin provided disagreements over themes of defunding or punishing the police, but these are not the central questions. We need police to function in America. The question is how do we guarantee the decision-making ability of every officer in every situation to be able to make the best analytical decision?



Every system has basic questions, often answered by a lack of decisions. We put funding off until the next generation, so the real costs become hidden or hopefully resolved by our children. We need the ability to ask basic questions in our public decision-making. These include, but are not limited to: What additional costs and benefits are involved in our decisions? Who pays these costs and how are any losses reimbursed? What impact will new technologies have upon our decisions now and in the future? What do we do if the real issue is beyond the capability of our existing institutions?

Most emerging issues are in direct conflict with the realistic pressures of populism and immediate demands of national controls. We need a decisional system that allows us to link costs and benefits, long-term thinking, ability to pay, fairness, and a high standard of justice. We need this

## Character as the Basic Question . . . continued

with a context of believing in the capability of citizens to resolve the issues facing their lives. If we cannot believe in each other, then our resolutions are not achievable, for they assume that elites or specialists will resolve what we cannot.

At the center of this process is the capacity of individual and society character. Character reflects an ability for consideration and deliberation. Character assumes the ability of democracy to seek and developed systemic responses, which answer our basic values.

The issue remains, how can we integrate “character” into the education and daily discussion of America. If we do, the resolution of basic questions is possible. But only if we build a common understanding of the definition and value of character.

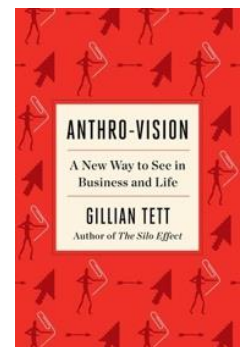
We are currently having a public discussion over the renewal of American physical and social infrastructure. This discussion must include the key elements of character because this factor will determine outcomes of cost and benefits and the future of the United States.

—By Todd Lefko, President of the International Business Development Council and MCC member

## Book Review

**Anthro-Vision: A New Way to See in Business and Life** (2021), by Gillian Tett

In her new book, “Anthro-Vision,” Gillian Tett brings together two unusual complements of knowledge and expertise: finance and anthropology. As an award-winning Financial Times journalist and PhD in social anthropology, Tett provides a more comprehensive and broader perspective on the crisis humanity has been facing to address the inconsistencies and blind spots she’s observed during the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



Whereas anthropology was used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a tool to justify racism and empire, it can now be constructively used to demonstrate that cultural assumptions can be complementarily different, not better or worse overall. It can help us define and optimize our common humanity.

The book’s core message is that “we find it hard to see what is really happening in the world around us today and need to change our vision.... Big Data tells us what is happening. It cannot tell us why since correlation is not causation.”

Tett presents an alternative to our usual analysis of specialized tunnel vision, which results in a mentality of I’m right-you’re wrong and tribalism. Anthro-vision allows for self-examination, seeing the world from other points of view, empathy and wisdom. Instead of allowing technology to define our lives and moral concepts through sequential and binary logic, anthropology proposes that “an ethnographic conversation is the bridge to the moral.”

Though technology and physical science have provided us with powerful analytical tools, these are ineffective without context and culture. Narrow visions of reality lead to confusion and fear. Broader contexts and meaning empower us with hope and purpose. Anthro-vision can allow us to connect the dots and improve our management of reality.

—By Hector E. Garcia, President of Mex-US Global, LLC and MCC member

## Seeking Nominations for the 2022 Minnesota Ethical Leadership Award



Minnesota Ethical  
Leadership Award

The Minnesota Ethical Leadership Award was developed by the Minnesota Character Council and is administered by Synergy & Leadership Exchange to honor exemplary community programs that are building character strengths and ethical leadership skills in its participants.

The award uses a nomination and application process. Honorees are celebrated at the Character Recognition Awards ceremony. **Place your nomination by Dec. 3.** [Learn more or place a nomination.](#)

## Virtual National Forum Oct. 20-21

Join Character.org for three days of learning with character development leaders, practitioners and researchers from across the country. Six keynote speakers to inspire you on topical issues, access to 30+ on-demand breakout sessions, networking and a celebration of the 2021 National Schools of Character. More details at <https://www.character.org/forum>.

Watch your thoughts for they become

**WORDS**

Watch your words for they become

**ACTIONS**

Watch your actions for they become

**HABITS**

Watch your habits for they become

**CHARACTER**

Watch your character for it becomes  
your

**DESTINY**