

“ . . . Knowing the names of the people who represent you at the local level is literally the bare minimum of what is required to be an effective participant in local democracy. You also need to know things like what your representatives stand for, who’s contributing to them, and who’s running against them.

Most importantly, though, you need to be calling them and writing them and writing *about* them to the editor of your newspaper on a regular basis. If you aren’t, then you have no right to complain about what they do and what they don’t do. Everyone in this room has a voice, and if you don’t use it, then you have nobody to blame but yourself. Moreover, it’s the obligation of every single one of us to speak up for those who are currently locked up and can’t speak for themselves.

Ultimately, we live in a squeaky wheel democracy. The squeaky wheel gets the grease. As a result, it’s our job to make sure that we’re all squeaking louder than the Corrections Corporation of America and all of the other institutional interests that have never remained on the sidelines. Or, as Congressman John Lewis puts it, it’s time for all of us to “stand up, speak up, speak out, and get in the way.”

And make no mistake about it: your voice is important. There is no amount of money in politics that can overcome the power of people in politics. We all get exactly the same number of votes at the ballot box as Charles and David Koch – one vote each – so it’s long past time that we stop complaining about the way that things are, and start campaigning to make sure that things become the way that we would like them to be.”

-Daniel A. Horwitz, Nashville Re-Visioning Justice Conference: *A Formula for Change: Advocacy in the Courts, the Legislature and the Streets*— April 19, 2015.