

Voting as an Expression of Love and Gratefulness by The Gratefulness Team

As we approach the 2020 election in the United States (US), the Gratefulness Team has been reflecting on the gift of the right to vote here and throughout the world. Over the course of history, many have fought for this privilege with their lives, and we can show our gratitude by embracing the opportunity to vote whenever and wherever we can. This includes not only major national elections but all of the democratic decisions with which we're presented in our local communities and day-to-day lives.

Though we typically think of voting in purely political terms, we can think about every choice we make as a vote and every moment in our lives as an election. We vote with our bodies, energy, money, time, attention, and more. How do our choices reflect our values and our vision for the world? When we explore voting and democracy as ongoing opportunities to choose our values and participate in collective decision-making by adding our individual voice to the voices of others, we ground them in grateful living. We take nothing for granted, become present to that which matters most, and we act accordingly in service of one and all. We empower ourselves to "elect" love, belonging, reverence, and care. We offer the voice of our hearts in service of meaningful change and thriving communities.

How can you engage in civic activities in ways that reflect gratefulness, love, and your vision for a thriving world?

If you live in the US, we encourage you to use the resources below as an opportunity to explore the 2020 election. No matter how impaired or untrustworthy the voting process may seem this year, showing up for it matters: Indeed, it is the only way to preserve the integrity of our democracy. Explore issues of importance to you and your community and reflect on how you might vote with love and encourage others to do the same.

If you live outside the US, we encourage you to use the resources below that feel resonant and relevant as an opportunity to explore what it means to vote with love in your community.

You might use the resources as a starting point to reflect on the following questions: What matters most to you and your community, and how can you make choices in service of that? What might you explore learning about the democratic institutions and processes in your community? How can you engage in civic activities in ways that reflect gratefulness, love, and your vision for a thriving world?

We invite you to explore these supportive offerings with others on virtual platforms. Or you may simply reflect on your own. Approach them gently and with an open, grateful

heart.

Resources

Readings

Voting: A Practice of Love (3:00): In this essay, Kristi Nelson reflects on the ways in which voting is an act of love that is rooted in grateful living.

Voting is an Exercise in Empathy (3:00): Sharon Salzberg explores voting as a manifestation of our interconnectedness in this essay, suggesting that voting is about “taking responsibility as a human — to oneself, to other humans, and to the world.”

Video

John Lewis: Voting Matters (6:00): In this video, John Lewis encourages us to play our part for the greater good with joy as he underscores the sacredness of voting.

Poem

A House Called Tomorrow by Alberto Ríos

Practice

Voting As a Spiritual Practice: This article from Spirituality & Practice explores how voting can be an embodied practice of compassion, hospitality, gratitude, kindness, listening, peace, and reverence.

Election Season Meditation: Though created specifically for election season, this brief meditation from Sharon Salzberg offers support for any time in our lives when we feel triggered and seek to recenter ourselves.

The Vote is Precious: Organizations to Guide You: Explore the organizations in this guide and commit to taking at least one action that feels meaningful to you. As most (though not all) of the organizations included are based in the US, we encourage those outside the US to explore organizations and initiatives in their country that cherish the gift of voting.

Questions

What thoughts and feelings arise when I reflect on the privilege of my ability to vote?

What values do I hold dear, and how might I vote as an expression of those values?

How might gratefulness influence the way I engage in civic participation?

How does viewing every choice I make as a vote inspire me to move differently through the world?

When I think of voting as an opportunity to protect that which I cherish, how does my relationship to voting, democracy, and/or to society change?

When I gratefully offer my voice in service of the needs of the whole by participating in democracy – and when I help others do the same – what feels possible?