

ADMISSION

Admission to the
Save Democracy for All event
is FREE.

Donations are welcome and greatly appreciated to help cover event expenses.

To ensure adequate seating and amenities for all attendees, please register by scanning the QR code or visiting www.SJAFS.org.

REGISTER



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EXHIBITORS

Visit exhibitor tables throughout the conference, featuring nonprofit organizations, advocacy groups, and community resources offering educational materials and opportunities for civic involvement.

To reserve an exhibit table for your organization or program, contact John Van Camp 313-686-1534.

SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsor acknowledgment does not imply endorsement of any political position, candidate, or party.

Interested in sponsoring this event? Contact John Van Camp 313-686-1534.



Safety and security provided by Venice Police, the Security Community Network, and Florida Veterans for Common Sense.



Social Justice Alliance of the Florida Suncoast (SJAFS)

SJAFS is a 501(c)(3) coalition of **23 organizations and many individuals** across Southwest Florida working to empower communities, support grassroots movements, and advocate for policies that advance equity and justice. Its members share a belief in democracy as the way to advance peace, prosperity, equality, sustainable development, security, and respect for the human rights of all. Through education, collaboration, and action, they work toward the goal to create a more inclusive and equitable society where all voices are heard and valued.

We actively support grassroots efforts and community-led initiatives that contribute to building a just and compassionate world.

This conference is educational in nature and does not endorse or oppose any political candidate or political party. Content is intended to promote civic awareness, community engagement, and democratic participation in accordance with applicable nonprofit guidelines.

VISIT US AT

<https://sjafs.org>

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SAVE DEMOCRACY FOR ALL CONFERENCE

Hosted by:

**Social Justice Alliance of the
Florida Suncoast (SJAFS)**

March 28, 2026

8:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Venice Community Center
326 Nokomis Avenue South
Venice, Florida 34285

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Our democracy is facing an era of sustained challenges to human dignity. Around the world and at home, authoritarian movements are undermining the rule of law, weakening democratic institutions, and damaging basic human rights. Increasingly, these actions rely on retribution, fear, and divisive culture wars to consolidate power, silence opposition, and erode public trust. In this moment, preserving democracy requires more than resistance—it demands action.

The **SAVE DEMOCRACY FOR ALL** Conference is dedicated to building a democracy that not only withstands authoritarianism but thrives. It brings together civic leaders, educators, advocates, legal experts, and other community members to advance a shared vision rooted in respect, accountability, inclusion, and democratic values.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Katherine Stewart
Author

Katherine Stewart is the author of the NY Times best-seller **Money, Lies, and God: Inside the Movement to Destroy American Democracy** (Bloomsbury, 2025), named one of the Best Books 2025 by Foreign Affairs. She has been covering the rise of the anti-democratic movement for over 17 years in The New York Times, The New Republic and Religion News Service. Her books have won prizes from the Religion News Association and the Morris B. Forkosch Best Book Award, and she was Executive producer of Rob and Michele Reiner's documentary God & Country.

PROGRAM

Doors open at 8:00 am for registration, refreshments and networking.

Conference opens at 9:00 am with plenary session and keynote address followed by a panel discussion. Snacks available all day.

Choose from the following workshops:

Free and Fair Elections – *Facilitator, Jessica Lowe-Minor*. Voting requirements have been in constant flux in Florida. How can we strengthen our constitutionally guaranteed right to vote to ensure election security, access, and confidence, and thereby encourage voter engagement?

Civil Discourse – *Facilitator, Michelle Jewell and Bill Woodson*. Combative rhetoric has replaced how we speak, listen, and disagree, but it doesn't have to stay that way. This interactive workshop offers practical tools for cultivating positive language, expressing opinions with dignity and respect, and minimizing harmful or hateful speech. Participants will practice how to have meaningful conversations on hard issues, uncover shared values, and move beyond debate toward solutions and concrete next steps.

Religious Freedom and Democracy – *Facilitators, Dr. Rev Amy Shaw and Norm Olshansky*, The separation of church and state is the cornerstone of religious freedom and democracy, protecting the sanctity of the church and the integrity of the state. How do we preserve the separation in a political climate that encourages the breaking down of the wall by privileging one religious group over the others?

Humane Immigration – *Facilitators, Maria Ines Robayo and Dale Anderson*. We are a nation of immigrants. Immigrants have been essential to our culture and heritage, yet are frequently scapegoated for the ills of this country. How do we celebrate the contributions of our immigrants and advance humane immigration policies?

Protect Our Public Schools – *Facilitators, Carol Lerner and Zander Moricz*. Public education, the bedrock of our democracy, is being dismantled all over the nation and especially in Florida. How are we turning this situation around, and what can we do to ensure that all of Florida has well-funded schools that thrive for all students?

CONTRIBUTORS

Reverend Dr. Amy Petrie Shaw - Amy is a pastor of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Venice. She obtained her PhD in Biblical Studies in 2025 at Queens College of Theology at the University of North Carolina. Her thesis focused on the failures of Christian Nationalism.

Norman Olshansky - Mr. Olshansky currently serves as President of the Suncoast Jewish Alliance, is the retired President of NFP Consulting Resources and author of *You and Your Nonprofit*. He holds a Master's Degree in social work and has held executive leadership roles with the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish Federation of Sarasota/Manatee, and the Van Wezel Foundation.

Jessica Lowe-Minor - Jessica has served three terms on the board of The League of Women Voters, cofounded the non-profit consulting firm Capacityworks, and has held management positions in several non-profits. She earned her MA in women and gender studies at Florida State University and taught at FSU and Tallahassee State College.

Zander Moricz - Founder and executive Director of the SEE Alliance, a non-profit for multigenerational organizing focused on public education. The SEE Alliance now has chapters in most Florida counties and has launched in 2026 a national campaign, *Midterms on Our Terms*, for public participation in Florida's education system and the 2026 midterm elections.

Michelle Jewell - Executive Director of Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity (SURE), Michelle's career includes service as a Bilingual Immigrant Victim's Advocate, court interpreter and judge in the Justice of the Peace Court, Sussex County, Delaware, an Equity Officer and Special Projects Coordinator in the Office of the Governor.

Maria Ines Robayo - Maria is a former professor of Hematology and Microbiology at Cundinamarca University in Colombia, continued her medical career at Duke Hospital and Wake County health system and facilitated a radio program providing resources and strategies for the Latino community. She currently serves as Chair of the Immigration Justice Coalition of Southwest Florida, where she leads initiatives on immigrant rights and community advocacy.

Carol Lerner - Carol Lerner has a MSW degree from University of Pennsylvania and a graduate certificate in supervision and curriculum development. She is the founding chair of Protect Our Public Schools Manasota, is a director of Support Our Schools, serves on the executive board of the Suncoast NEA-Retired and the Democratic Public Education Caucus of Manasota.