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Democratic Civic Engagement: Transformative Local, Inclusive Decision-Making to Achieve Global Peace and Climate Solutions

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The Social Practice of Human Rights: Charting the Frontiers of Research and Advocacy

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Research Panel: Roundtable – Building Institutional Strength to Address Climate Change: Connecting Sustainability and Human Rights

Presenter: Leah Ceperley, University of Dayton

Title: Democratic Civic Engagement: Transformative Local, Inclusive Decision-Making to Achieve Global Peace and Climate Solutions

Abstract:

The UN Sustainable Development Goals call for action on Climate (No. 13) and Strengthening Governance (No. 16) as imperative to transform our world toward one that is resilient, just, and peaceful. Climate change is a global problem, marked frequently in the U.S. by indifference, with far-reaching impacts disproportionately burdening the poor and vulnerable worldwide. Global in scope, its sources, impacts, and fields of action are local. Combating indifference at the local level can strengthen local governance structures, build trust across ideological divides, and shift the conversation from indifference to action.

Using an example from a University of Dayton-sponsored National Issues Forum on climate choices, this presentation outlines a model for building public action and effective governance through democratic civic engagement. Beyond detached public opinion, this model of deliberative participation humanizes decision-making with face-to-face discussion and weighing values and trade-offs and arrives at public judgment better prepared for collective action for the common good above individual self-interest.

As a technique for the University and the local community, democratic civic engagement provides an antidote to indifference, humanizing a global problem to its local implications. It strengthens community action toward local climate governance. As a model for re-membering public life, it builds solidarity, compassionate action, and inclusive decision-making that extends its impacts to the global community.

About the presenter:

Leah Ceperley is a graduate assistant in the University of Dayton's Hanley Sustainability Institute, pursuing a master's in public administration and a certificate in nonprofit and community leadership. In the Hanley Institute, she is completing a comprehensive assessment of the University's sustainability initiatives and convening deliberative forum on climate solutions. She has a bachelor's in biology from Kenyon College and a master's in conservation biology from Antioch University New England. In addition to teaching youth and adults in environmental sciences and biology, she has worked to protect and restore forest and wetland habitats in central Appalachia and the Hudson Valley in the face of resource extraction and post-industrial land use. Most recently, her work has focused on the power of deliberative democracy to develop public judgment and to build public trust. She was recognized with a

University of Dayton Graduate Student Research Award for her work on factors influencing durable climate action planning in Midwestern cities.