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Change is in the air: Vive la révolution

Presentation by
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About Daniel Teitelbaum

Daniel Teitelbaum is the lead facilitator at Playful Thinking, an organisation that exists to discover playful tools in education, game design, theatre, philosophy, psychology and science to apply to the challenges of modern organisations. Daniel studied philosophy, law and theatre studies at Monash University, is a radio broadcaster on 3RRR and features weekly on ABC 774 afternoons with Jacinta Parsons. Daniel is a comedy cabaret performer, an Associate Teacher of Design at Monash University and chair of the board for Tiny Non-Profit, an organisation dedicated to project-led advocacy for sustainable living and dignified housing for all Australians. Daniel is part of the special projects team at Our Community.

About the presentation

Daniel stepped in at the last minute to replace scheduled presenter Professor Janine O'Flynn, who was unable to attend the conference.

Kathy Richardson

As Denis said when he opened the conference, we're here to make a plan for what our sector in society should look like as we emerge from the pandemic. So let's start listing our demands. We're all mad as hell. Let's start putting it down. What do we want to burn down and start again?

So I'm going to hand over to Daniel now to talk more about this and explain how we're going to tackle this, and there'll be something for you at home on this as well.

Thanks, Daniel.

Daniel Teitelbaum

Thank you. Thank you so much, Kathy. Thank you, Denis, and thank you, Maureen and the whole CIC team for having me here today, and thank you to you for coming and being here in person and online to participate.

So yeah, we're going to be confronting the big challenges of our time. I'll say very, very briefly who I am. The long-winded bio was plenty. But I run Playful Thinking and the idea is that I want to find ways to improve our lives as adults and I found that play and playful methodologies are really the best way to really address everything from work to relationships, creativity to leadership, all of the things we confront in our adult lives. Have a solution in play.

So I won't say more but if we look to art and design we can find methods and creativity and innovation. In performing arts, we can find a way to present and be confident and develop all of our leadership skills. Philosophy is great for strategy. I won't go through all of these. Science and education for learning and development and motivation, and we've just heard the importance of education, and I'll actually add to that that part of an economic inequality also leads to a deficit in play time for early childhood, and that also, I guess, redoubles the disadvantage as we get older, and all of these and games as well. So this is what I look into to find solutions to address all of the things I mentioned earlier.



Last time I was here it was a great privilege and I can't believe I'm back. I think I prayed harder than you, Kathy, and that's why it happened. The first thing I wanted to convince you of is that play is deeply intertwined with all of human life, and it is. I can't prove it to you right now. Play helps us find meaning and expression. I also convince you that play helps us create connected communities. And the fourth thing I said play does but I didn't elaborate on throughout the speech last year was that play helps us to think critically and to challenge authority, and now we have the opportunity to do that here today. All of us, together. Not me. All of us, as you're about to discover.

And given the weekend's events, I thought that a change is in the air, a change of government, a sense of change and perhaps even revolution, and so I thought we'd take as our inspiration today the French Revolution.

[Plays music]

That was meant to be much grander. An audio cue.

Anyway, today we will partly be learning the history of the French Revolution. It won't be our focus but it will be the narrative that helps us to come up with our list of demands that will be the product of the end of this session, the things that we want to see changed, and we're going to be doing that all together. We're about to get very interactive. And for online as well.

So the first thing to say is that in the era leading up to the events of 1789 and the French Revolution is known as the Ancien Régime. It's not a typo. It's Ancien in French. And basically very unpleasant for everyone whose name wasn't Louis. It was really not a great time to be around. And so here's an image of what it was like as the Third Estate. So this is what their Leunig had drawn at the time. The two at the top are the clergy and the nobility and the person at the bottom is the Third Estate being crushed by taxes and food shortages and other disadvantages and lack of privilege. Here's another one. The Third Estate carrying the other two on their back.



So we need a revolution and today we're going to go through a bit of a checklist. How to start a revolution. The first thing you do is you talk, but what do you do before you talk? You have coffee. You have coffee before you talk always. And so to set the scene, also during the Ancien Régime was other positive things that were occurring, and that were the coffee houses throughout Europe. Coffee, I think, entered Europe in the late 1600s. By the 1700s, people were spending a lot of time in coffee houses meeting and talking.

Before coffee houses, I think the average French person drank litres of wine. I don't know the exact number but they were basically drunk all day. So you can imagine coming in to the coffee houses to have a coffee and a conversation. You've sobered up. You think actually, maybe we should change a few things around here.

So this is actually a specific café. It's Café Procope, and this is the birthplace of the Revolution in many ways. It's where people actually met. It's where the encyclopaedia was first conceived. It's really cool. So anyway, this is where they met, this is where they hung out, and a revolutionary fervour of conversation was filling all of the coffee houses throughout France. Are we ready to step into a coffee house together here today right now?

Audience

[Softly] Yes.

Daniel Teitelbaum

No, no, no. Are we ready to step into a coffee house here today right now?

Audience

[Loudly] Yes.

Daniel Teitelbaum

Yes. Wonderful. *Yes And*, in fact, is the game that we're going to be playing. *Yes And*. Great. All right. So the way we play this game is I want you to now, as I talk, find a partner. Someone closest to you. If you're a solo, you are going to have to move and get up and find somebody else to chat



to. If you're in a group of three, that is okay. I'll explain how it works. But if you can, find a partner. Find a partner. All right.

So turn to the person next to you, right, and pick Person A and Person B. It really doesn't matter who's who. Just pick Person A. Great. Person A, put your hand up. Person As. Great. And Person B, just so you know who you are. Person B. Great, okay.

So I'm going to explain it before we begin. The way it works is I'm going to give you a starting sentence and Person A will begin and they'll begin with the sentence that I give them, and Person B is going to respond with the words "Yes and," and continue the story. So I'll give you a sentence as Person A. You'll start the sentence then complete it. Person B will respond, "Yes and," completing the story, adding to the story, and then you will respond, "Yes and," and add to the story, and back and forth for a minute or so we're going to say, "Yes and, yes and, yes and." Are we all good?

Audience

Yes.

Daniel Teitelbaum

Yes and. Great. Excellent. So we're going to do this twice. First one is – ready Person A – Remember when we went to Hawaii and (I picked Hawaii on purpose). Hawaii and. You tell the story. "Yes and, yes and." Ready, set go.

Thank you very much. All right, good. Was that fun? Was that interesting? Did you have a good time? Yes, great.

Our next one, now we've warmed up, is much more on topic, but now that you've got the creative juices flowing we're going to get into the next one. For this one, don't rush. I know that we're improving, we're backing and forthing, but don't rush too much. You can have a little bit of time to think and have a slower conversation, but keep it moving. The other thing I want



to say before we do this one is I'll count us down. Once I show you the sentence – I'll read it to you so you know it – and then I'll count us down and Person As, maybe we can all start at once just in case it happens in unison. If not, doesn't matter, keep your conversations going but let's see.

So the statement is, "I'll tell you one thing that really drives me bananas about the government and their systems," and then you're going to finish the sentence and it'll be, "Yes and", "Yes and," and you're back and forth as you free flow about the things that annoy you and frustrate you and upset you about government and their systems. Are we ready? All right. Person A get ready. Three, two, one.

Everybody

I'll tell you one thing that really drives me bananas about the government and their systems.

Daniel Teitelbaum

Go ahead.

Welcome back. Thank you for that. I hope we've started to get some of our gripes – I hope we're starting to feel a sense of revolutionary fervour, perhaps. Yep? Okay. So the next thing we do – we've done talking – the next thing you need to do in order to start a revolution is to think. And so one thing that was also occurring in the lead-up to 1789 was the Enlightenment, and to summarise that enormous period of time with lots of thinkers, everybody was kind of just saying, "Hang on a sec. Let's have another think about that," for everything.

So that was the Enlightenment. And some of its great thinkers – this is one. This is Voltaire, who defends your right to say things even if he doesn't agree with you. Also around at the time of the Revolution. Another person was the abbé Sieyès, who wrote a pamphlet called *What is the Third Estate?* and in it provided a sense of collective identity to the 27 million



people that made up the Third Estate in France, and so we've started to galvanise their revolutionary spirit and gave them a sense of direction.

What we're going to do now is do something that the enlightened thinkers used to do, which is just to sit for a moment with our own thoughts and to have a think about what we would like to demand from our government. What are the things that you'd like to see change? And the way we're going to do this is because at the end we are actually going – we're going to capture these and so you're going to take a moment to think, you're going to complete this sentence: We, the people of the community sector, demand – and you'll see there are QR codes on your tables everywhere. There should be a couple. You can share them around. If you scan that, that QR code – you might be able to scan it from here – you will find the form where you can answer that question. We, the people of the community sector, demand. And so you can put it in there. You can write it on your own piece of paper and then translate it into there. If you're online, you should receive a link now that will allow you to get to that form where you can fill in what it is that you demand, and we are collecting all of these for a purpose, which I'll reveal at the end. So take the time to open that up and start to fill it out. This is the Enlightening. I'll give you about three minutes now to do that, and go ahead.

Okay. Thank you for doing that. You can continue to do that throughout today. You can submit multiple. If you're still on your phone not doing that, you don't have to be on your phone anymore. You can put them away. And we'll continue the story of the French Revolution.

And so 1788 was a terrible year. There was extreme famine. The price of bread had raised to about 50% of the working class wage. 50% on bread is what they were spending. Extreme shortages. And so Louis was also bankrupt, the whole of the kingdom was bankrupt, and so he needed to raise more taxes, and back then, in order to do that, you had to call what was called the Estates General, and the Estates General is where the three



tiers of society – the clergy, the nobility and the Third Estate – got together to have a vote, and the way it worked was there were about 130,000 clergy in the First Estate. They got one vote. There were about 350,000 nobility in the Second Estate. They got one vote. There were 27 million in the Third Estate who also got one vote.

And so they didn't like that. They'd been drinking coffee, talking and thinking for a century, so they thought, "No, this isn't good. Instead, we're going to call our own national assembly. We're going to go across to the tennis court on the other side of the road and we're going to declare that we will meet and continue to meet until we have seen a change in this country." And so the third thing that we do after we think and we talk is that we meet. And we're going to do that now but we're going to do that in a particular way, and the way we're going to do that is we're going to do that using the books of grievances or *cahiers de doléance*.

And from March until May in 1789, once the Estates General was called, there was this period of national survey, and basically they went around to all the towns and villages, asked people to put together lists of things that they demanded from their king, from the Estates General, what they wanted to see resolved. And so what we're going to do right now is we're going to gather as they once did to write our books of grievances.

And so each table is its own town hall. If you are on a table of three or less people, you will have to – like they did if they were in rural villages – go to the nearest town to participate in the writing of the books of grievances, all right? So if you'd like to do that, now is the perfect time to get up and find another table, a small table of two or three, so that you have enough people there, and then I'll explain how they work.

And so if you're doing this online, you're going to be put into break-out rooms right now. So the break-out rooms is where you're going to get to chat and discuss these are your own town hall online. For those of us in the room, thank you for shuffling to a nearby town or village. And this is how



we're going to do it. So it'll take a bit of explanation and then I'm going to leave you to your own devices.

So the first is I need you to choose an emissary. For each group, there'll be an emissary. I'll go through what an emissary does. You're going to choose a scribe, and everybody else is a citizen, okay? If you are chosen as the emissary, you are facilitating your village's democratic process. I'm just making sure you're responsible for things flowing because I can't be at every table. Keep order, a reasonable pace and an eye on the scribe as citizens share their grievances.

So as the scribe, you're going to capture the grievances, you're going to filter for similar grievances as you write them down if you want and tweak them. You can do a little bit of that kind of editing. And then let the emissary know if you need a moment if you're struggling to write things down. But you've got big pieces of paper for the scribe on each table.

But if you're a citizen, you're going to share your grievance, you're going to share your passion. We're going to go round the table. You'll be brief and succinct if you can and consider the scribe as you share so they can write it down, and you're commanded to feel a sense of revolutionary fervour.

So citizens go around the table. Once you've got your emissary and your scribe, share your grievance. You can chat a little bit about it. We're going to have about seven or eight minutes so you can go around the table. Spend about 20 seconds on each, 20, 30 seconds each person sharing their grievance. It is important to meet and hear each other, not just to write them down. Emissary will call on you and the scribe will keep record. Okay. Any questions? No. Fantastic. Go for it.

Okay. So I'm sorry to interrupt your planning the revolution. I'm sure you're not done and that's okay because we have the – we're going to collect those but you can also always add throughout today. The rest of today you



can add to – find the QR code and you can add your grievance. That's the more important place to write it, even though we will collect these. Okay.

So we're butting up against lunch so we don't have long left, so we're going to get to the end of the revolution now, and we've done some thinking, we've done some talking, which we're still doing, which is great, but we'll slow it down now, and we've done some meeting, and so the Estates General was called. Believe it or not, in asking for more votes, the Third Estate lost two to one in the voting. It's tight. So what do you do? Well, I mean, you know, we've done our best. Time to riot is the best thing that you do. When all else fails.

So to move very quickly through it. On the 14th of July, we know about the storming of the Bastille, which was – there were only seven prisoners in the Bastille, so it wasn't that big a deal, but it was strategically very important. But 15,000 people in Paris is nothing. You need the peasant revolt. Peasants rioting all around the country, burning the houses of feudal lords and burning all their documents which gave them title to the land. Very helpful.

Then one of my favourite events in the whole of the Revolution occurred in a single night. These are the nobility who have thrown off their noble clothes and are beating them, and they gave up all of their privileges as nobles and as feudals in what was called the Night of Patriotic Delirium. So that was on the 4th of August. And then nothing obviously really changes or happens until the women get involved.

Audience

Yay.

Daniel Teitelbaum

Yes, as we learnt on the weekend, didn't we?

Audience

Cheering.



Daniel Teitelbaum

Correct. And so on the 5th of October in 1789, the king and queen, Louis and Marie Antoinette, were hiding in Versailles and the women, led actually by the fearsome fish market women who were actually the leaders of this – we had 15,000 people at the storming of the Bastille. The women gathered in Versailles to demand change. By the morning they were at 20,000 and by that second day they were at 60,000 people, the largest gathering in one place, I think, throughout the Revolution, and it was only then that the king and queen were marched back to Paris. The king was forced to sign a declaration and the rest of the Revolution continues.

But the point is that when all else fails, we need to riot, so that's what we're going to do right now. Yeah. You can't really play this online. It's not a work-from-home rioting. Doesn't work like that. But in this room the way we're going to riot is through a game called Rock Paper Riot or Rock Paper Scissors. If you don't want to play, I should say, you can just stay where you are, stay seated. No stress whatsoever. If you do want to play, you're going to get up in a minute. It's the normal rules for Rock Paper Scissors. Here's a recap in case you don't remember. You play anyone near you, anyone that's closest to you, doesn't matter who. You're going to play them in one game of Rock Paper Scissors, which goes like this. One, two, three. One, two, three. Okay? That's official now. You're going to play anyone near you and, if you win, the loser becomes your revolutionary supporter, and they have to stand behind you chanting your name.

So if I were to win, they would go, "Daniel, Daniel, Daniel," until I fight my next competitor, and if I win again, I adopt all of their supporters until I gather a crowd, like in a riot, chanting my name. So supporters chant your name as you go looking for new conflicts. You play someone else and keep playing and keep playing until we probably end up with two people one-on-one with a chorus of supporters behind them. Are we ready to riot? All right. Stand up if you're playing Rock Paper Riot. And go for it.



Do we have a winner? Yeah. Okay. Well, I mean, at this point I think it's just easiest to go to lunch than to sit back down, so lunchtime.

ENDS

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