



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

This book is the convergence of three imaginations: a Prophetic/Sacred Imagination, a Community Imagination, and a Workplace/System Imagination. Imagination is fundamentally a shift in lens and language—whose voices we listen to, where we look to construct an alternative future. Each of us has, over too many years, cultivated different fields which came together in the conversations producing this book.

Here is a short and very cryptic list that hints at the paths that brought us together:

Walter: Prophetic Imagination, Exodus, Lamentation, Contestation, Gratitude, Interruption, Un-credentialed King, Wilderness, Covenant, Crying Out, God, Covenant, Empire

John: Community, Neighborliness, Association, Gifts, Hospitality, Friendship, Care, Service, Triangles and Circles, System

Peter: Partnership, Consultation, Stewardship, Empowerment, Authenticity, Social Contract, Convening, Large and Small Group Structures, Conversations of Possibility and Ownership

PETER BLOCK

Peter Block was born in Chicago and spent most of his early years in the Midwest. After college, he went to New Jersey and was involved in the early days of creating the field of organization development. This entailed some years at Exxon Research and Engineering Company and then the formation of a consulting firm with Tony Petrella. Marvin Weisbord joined in 1971, and the firm played a part in many of the large change efforts of that era.

In 1980, Peter started Designed Learning, a training company that offers workshops based on the ideas in his books. It still thrives and works to help staff people in organizations to have more influence and impact.

In 1995, Peter became involved with city government and city managers through conferences held by the Innovations Group based in Florida. This led to his interest in building community, which has been his obsession ever since. Peter met John at a community conference convened by Police Chief Mike Butler in Longmont, Colorado. This is where their common view of the world became obvious to both of them, which eventually culminated in writing *The Abundant Community* together.

Peter has written seven other books, including *Flawless Consulting*, *The Empowered Manager*, *Stewardship*, *Freedom and Accountability* (with Peter Koestenbaum), *The Answer to How Is Yes*, and *Community: The Structure of Belonging*.

The community work is now centered in Cincinnati, Ohio, where Peter lives with his wife, Cathy Kramer. He is engaged in developing a civic engagement network called A Small Group, plus a series of other projects working on building the capacity of this urban community to value its gifts and see its own possibility. His most recent work there is with Walter Brueggemann and others in the Economics of Compassion Initiative of Greater Cincinnati, supporting alternative economic systems marked by justice, community, and relationship.

WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

Walter Brueggemann is one of the most influential Bible interpreters of our time. He is the author of more than one hundred books and numerous scholarly articles. He continues to be a highly sought-after speaker.

Walter was born in Tilden, Nebraska, in 1933. He often speaks of the influence of his father, a German Evangelical pastor. Walter attended Elmhurst College, graduating in 1955 with an A.B. He went on to Eden Theological Seminary, earning a B.D. (equivalent to today's M.Div.) in 1958. He completed his formal theological education

at Union Theological Seminary in 1961, earning the Th.D. under the primary guidance of James Muilenburg. While teaching at Eden, he earned a Ph.D. in education at St. Louis University.

Walter has served as faculty at two institutions in his career: Eden Theological Seminary (1961–1986) and Columbia Theological Seminary (1986–2003). He is currently William Marcellus McPheeters professor emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia.

Walter's primary method with the sacred texts is rhetorical criticism. Words matter to Walter, and one can tell that by listening to him speak as he hangs on to particularly theologically significant words. His magnum opus, *Theology of the Old Testament*, is a rhetorical-critical look at the Old Testament through the lenses of "testimony, dispute, and advocacy."

Many have come to know Walter through his book entitled *The Prophetic Imagination*, originally published in 1978. His best-known work, however, may be with the Psalms. Numerous church leaders have used his *Message of the Psalms* as a new way of organizing and processing the Psalms. He has been writing about the Psalms since 1982, and he continues to this day with a commentary published in 2014.

Walter touches many of the themes in *An Other Kingdom in Journey to the Common Good*, in which he uses biblical texts to illuminate what is required to move from isolation and distrust to a practice of neighborliness.

Church leaders find a friend in Walter, an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. His work inspires, energizes, and persuades, and he always makes time to interact personally with those to whom he speaks at large events.

Walter and his wife, Tia, currently reside in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he has been a driving force for the region's Economics of Compassion Initiative. He is a longtime St. Louis Cardinals/Browns fan.

JOHN L. MCKNIGHT

John L. McKnight was raised a traveling Ohioan, having lived in seven neighborhoods and small towns in the eighteen years before he left to attend Northwestern University, in Evanston, Illinois. There, he had

the good fortune to be educated by a faculty dedicated to preparing students for effective citizenship. He graduated into the U.S. Navy, where he had three years of “postgraduate” education in Asia during the Korean War.

John returned to Chicago and began working for several activist organizations, including the Chicago Commission for Human Relations, the first municipal civil rights agency. There he learned the Alinsky trade called *community organizing*. This was followed by the directorship of the Illinois American Civil Liberties Union, where he organized local chapters throughout the state.

When John Kennedy was elected president, John was recruited into the federal government, where he worked with a new agency that created the affirmative action program. Later, he was appointed the Midwest director of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, where he worked with local civil rights and neighborhood organizations.

In 1969, John’s alma mater, Northwestern University, invited him to return and help initiate a new department called the Center for Urban Affairs. This was a group of interdisciplinary faculty doing research designed to support urban change agents and progressive urban policy. John’s appointment was an act of heroism on the part of the university, as it gave him a tenured professorship, though he had only a bachelor’s degree.

While at the center and its successor, the Institute for Policy Research, John and a few of his colleagues focused their research on urban neighborhoods. The best-known result of this work was the formulation of an understanding of neighborhoods focused on the usefulness of local resources, capacities, and relationships. This work was documented in a guide co-authored with John P. Kretzmann titled *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, describing an approach to community building that became a major development strategy practiced in North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. As an aside, it was during this time that John was one of the trainers of Barack Obama as he learned the skills of community organizing.

John is also the author of *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits*, a classic critique of professionalized social services and a celebration of communities’ ability to heal themselves from within.

John began working with Peter in practical explorations of how communities become “villages” with the capacity to raise their children, which culminated in their 2010 book, *The Abundant Community*. John and Peter also currently collaborate on www.abundantcommunity.com, which reflects their latest thinking on community work and documents stories of community-building efforts around the world.