

OSTROM WORKSHOP **TOCQUEVILLE LECTURE SERIES**

Robert T. Gannett, Jr.

Executive Director, Institute for Community Empowerment

“The Politics of Imagination: Community Organizing in Chicago as a Response to Tocqueville’s Challenge”

Friday, September 23, 2016

12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Ostrom Workshop, 513 N. Park

Cosponsors: Tocqueville Program, Ostrom Workshop, and Lilly School of Philanthropy



Veteran Chicago community organizer Robert T. Gannett, Jr. will analyze the intellectual legacy bequeathed by Alexis de Tocqueville, French philosopher, American traveler, and author of *Democracy in America*, to Saul D. Alinsky, “radical” Chicago community organizer. Tocqueville issued a challenge to America when he published his book in 1835–40. One-hundred years later, Alinsky read *Democracy*, grasped the challenge, and created the modern profession of community organizing to meet it.

Dr. Gannett will explain how and why community organizers have used Tocqueville and how their work since 1939 has given ordinary citizens the ability to create self-governing institutions. Central to their efforts has been the ability to invent a “politics of imagination” that can confront the hyperbole, partisanship, and paralysis that mark national politics today. Gannett will conclude by speaking of two campaigns of his own organizations in Chicago that demonstrate these possibilities.



Robert T. Gannett, Jr. is the Executive Director of Chicago's Institute for Community Empowerment, an organizing and training institute that works on issues of affordable homeownership, mental health services, and lessons of citizenship for middle school students. Gannett is also an independent scholar who has written about the problems faced by American civil society. He is the author of *Tocqueville Unveiled: The Historian and His Sources for The Old Regime and the Revolution* (University of Chicago Press, 2003) ([website](#)).

This talk is part of a year-long series on civil society and voluntary organizations made possible by two generous grants awarded by the College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University and the Apgar Foundation.

Presentations are open to the public, and you are welcome to bring your lunch. For questions, contact Allison Sturgeon (sturgeon@iu.edu; 812/855-3151).