

how to
FIX
democracy

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How to Fix Democracy

How to Fix Democracy is meant to provoke discussion and curiosity. The opinions and views expressed in the series and this publication are solely those of the participants and do not necessarily represent those of the Bertelsmann Foundation, Humanity in Action, or their employees.

For more information on the series please visit www.howtofixdemocracy.org

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Editorial Note

Even the most eloquent and elegant speech sometimes needs a light editorial hand to help it shine on the printed page. To that end, the quotations that follow have been silently clarified and condensed. We hope these modifications reflect the changes the speakers themselves, given the chance to prepare their extemporaneous speech for print, would have made.

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SINCE ITS ORIGINS, DEMOCRACY HAS BEEN A WORK IN PROGRESS. TODAY, MANY QUESTION ITS RESILIENCE.

In 2019 the Bertelsmann Foundation and Humanity in Action teamed up with Andrew Keen, author of *How to Fix the Future*, to launch this video and podcast series exploring practical responses to the threats facing democracies around the world.

Since then, this series has explored why democracy is not delivering in Europe and North America and how it can be reinvigorated. These interviews bring our audience face to face with the origins, controversies, triumphs, and failures of democracy in the 21st century. Our goal is to analyze what is wrong with democracy and spark conversations about how to fix it.

The How to Fix Democracy series is produced by the Bertelsmann Foundation and Humanity in Action, in collaboration with the Institute for Canadian Citizenship. The series is made possible with kind support from the William H. Donner Foundation.

www.howtofixdemocracy.org

Bertelsmann Foundation

The Bertelsmann Foundation (North America), Inc., established in 2008, was created to promote and strengthen the transatlantic relationship. Through research, analysis, debate forums, and audiovisual and multimedia content, we seek to educate and engage our audience on the most pressing economic, political, and social challenges facing the United States and Europe. We are the U.S. arm of the Germany-based Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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Humanity in Action

Humanity in Action is an international organization that educates, inspires action, and connects a network of university students and young professionals committed to the values of pluralism, liberal democracy, social justice, human rights, and civic engagement in their own communities and around the world.

www.humanityinaction.org



Zara Keen

Zara Keen grew up in California, where she attended Credo High School, a Waldorf and One Planet school focused on climate solutions. At Credo, she became active in social and political movements while expanding her interest in the environment. Zara now attends Bryn Mawr College, where she plans on majoring in environmental studies.



Kenny Martin

Kenny Martin is a writer, editor, and pianist from Dallas, Texas. After graduating from Southern Methodist University, where he was a President's Scholar and the Phi Beta Kappa student speaker, he was a Humanity in Action fellow in Warsaw, Poland and a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Trujillo, Peru. Kenny splits time between Dallas and northern Minnesota and is at work on his first book of poems.

It may seem self-evident today, given the global events of the past few years, that democracy needs to be fixed. But that wasn't always so clear, so urgent, so complex as it is today. That's why we first came up with the idea of a bi-weekly podcast and video interview series, *How to Fix Democracy*, that would engage outstanding interlocutors in conversation with Andrew Keen about the day's most pressing issues of democracy. Each interview built on the others, each perspective reverberated with the others, and each facet of our inquiry became more intense over time.

Out of this treasure trove of inquiry, we are now taking a slightly different approach—one we think complements and enriches the interview series. We have asked Kenny and Zara to identify some of the most pungent, demanding, and evocative parts of the interviews to provide a different kind of illumination of *How to Fix Democracy's* central preoccupations. What makes this so special, from our perspective, is that Kenny and Zara watch, listen, and think about the issues differently than we do. Kenny is a Millennial, and Zara a member of Gen Z. The two of us are in the elder category, seemingly without a specific name. After spending hours watching, listening, discussing, and cogitating about the series, Kenny and Zara have identified what truly moves and challenges them. We need to know what they think about what others—the expert interviewees—think about.

It is our pleasure to share their wise choices of key moments that give insight into the pressing issue of our day: how to fix democracy. And it is our hope that this book fuels discussions that will resonate with those who hold power today and those who will hold power in the future.

Irene Braam
Executive Director
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Judith Goldstein
Founder & Executive Director
Humanity in Action

Introduction by **Kenny Martin**

On July 1, 2018, I arrived in Warsaw for a month-long fellowship with Humanity in Action, co-sponsor of the How to Fix Democracy interview series. The program brought 24 young people from a handful of countries to a small hostel on the historic Długa Street, barely a block away from the Polish Supreme Court building and the Warsaw Uprising Monument. Our purpose was to learn about human rights, pluralism, and democracy—not abstract concepts in Poland, where two days after our arrival, the ruling Law and Justice party passed legislation severely limiting judicial independence, one of the guiding principles of liberal democracy.

Protests erupted—thousands of Poles descended on the Monument square to shout out in defense of their democracy. And after long days spent discussing the erosion of Polish democracy, we fellows encountered a vivid real-life demonstration of the people’s response to that erosion—what some might call a classic example of democracy in action. Democracy can be a quiet, private matter: discreetly casting a ballot, writing polite letters to elected officials. But it is also the thunderous roar of thousands chanting the words “democracy” and “constitution” loud enough to be heard by an authoritarian president in his palace halfway across the city. Democracy may afford us the peace and security to sleep at night, but as I learned during that month in Warsaw, it can also keep you awake.

Inevitably, I joined the crowd. Some nights, I was unable to force my way through the throng of protesters and reach the hostel, so I took up a spot and did my best to join in the chants. I managed to snag a poster that has since become a symbol of the fight for liberal democracy in Poland—a fight that has only become more urgent since the summer of 2018. The poster, illustrated by Luka Rayski, proclaims the word KONSTYTUCJA (“constitution”) in bold lettering. Within that word, two smaller ones are highlighted: *ty* and *ja*, *you*

and *I*. The poster is a clear defense of the 1997 constitution, the foundation of contemporary Polish democracy—but it’s also an entreaty, an invitation. It reminds people of their duty to fellow citizens; it emphasizes that we are all in this together, for better or worse. Like Walt Whitman, who proclaimed in his poem “Song of Myself” that “every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you,” the Polish protesters were sending a message of fellowship, recognition, and profound belief in the human capacity for togetherness. The poster asks those who see it to join hands in the eternal human struggle for liberty and happiness.

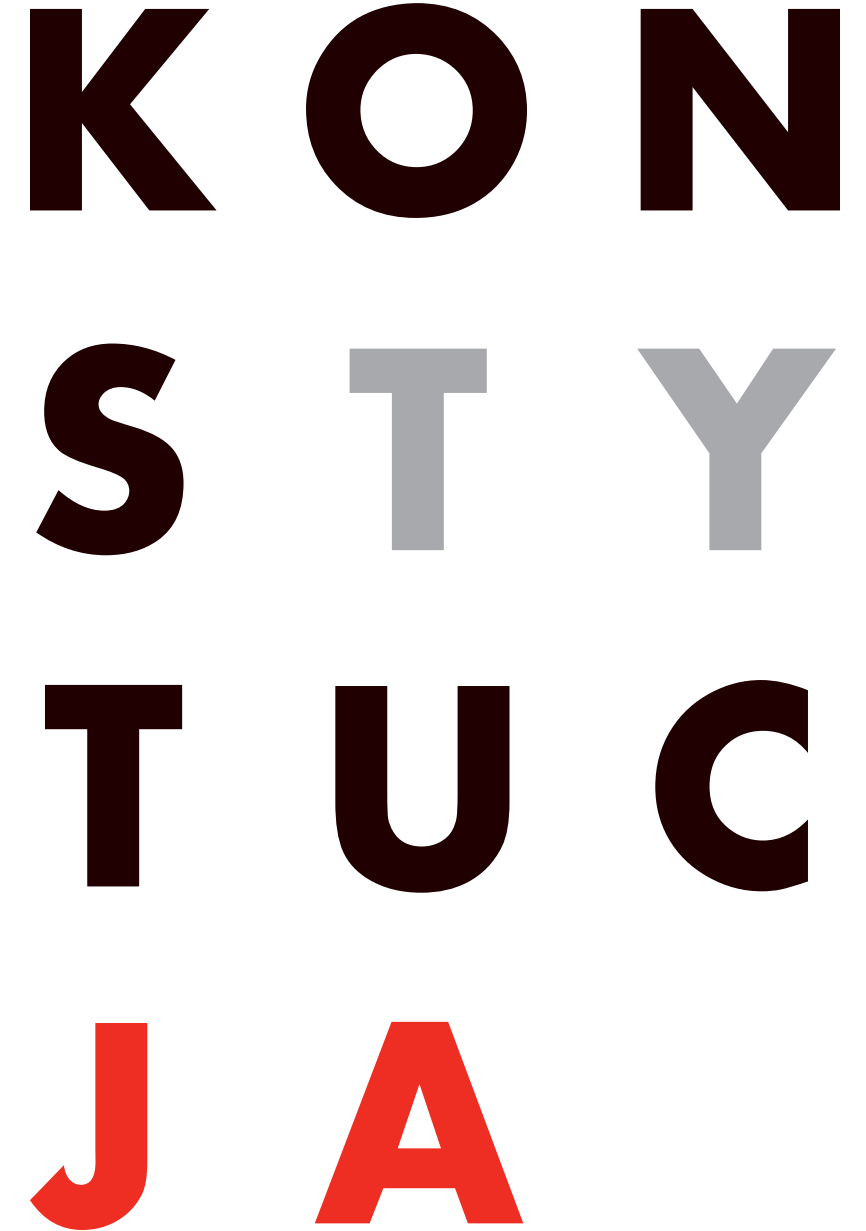
Those two little words also encapsulate the central tension that exists in any democracy. It’s no secret that *you* and *I*—people in general—don’t always get along. In all societies, disagreement is inevitable; balancing individual freedom with the collective interest is one of the reasons we need democracy in the first place. Under the freedoms guaranteed by liberal democracy, my right to swing my fist ends at your face, and vice versa. It’s up to democracy to establish the laws, customs, and institutions that, if they are successful, ensure no noses get broken in the course of the tumultuous business we call human civilization.

But democracy only works if both *you* and *I* are allowed to participate fully and make our voices heard. One of the chief tests of any democracy is its ability to allow—indeed, to *encourage*—a wide range of perspectives, a whole host of voices speaking their own needs, desires, and ideas. This book seeks to embrace the messiness and beauty of the polyphony that is inherent in democracy. By bringing together a wide range of voices—economists, writers, professors, politicians, activists, and beyond—the book aims to spark the thoughts, conversations, and debates that will be essential to fixing our breaking and broken democracies. From a rich cornucopia of

recorded interviews—available online in video and podcast form—we’ve chosen some of the most compelling snippets and arranged them in a way that, we hope, lets them play with and against each other. Just like citizens of a democracy, the interviewees quoted in the book sometimes agree; perhaps more often, they do not. By crystallizing some of their most provocative and insightful words on the printed page, we hope to stimulate similar moments of productive agreement and disagreement out in the world.

Of the many voices vital to a thriving democracy, perhaps none are so important as those of young people. With a few exceptions, the interviewees quoted in this book don’t quite qualify as young. However, the quotes have been chosen by two of us, a young Millennial and a member of Generation Z. We think there’s a lot to be learned from this generational interplay, and we hope the book inspires young people to make their voices heard—by speaking out, running for office, working in civil society, or simply by voting. I would riff on T. S. Eliot and implore my fellow youngsters: Let us vote then, *you* and *I*. Let us not allow this dark evening of democracy to give way to a quiet, authoritarian night.

Of course, youth has no monopoly on the revolutionary spirit that has always pushed democracy to evolve. During that summer of protest in Warsaw, the thousands of people in the crowd ranged from frustrated teenagers to equally frustrated grandfathers, from businesspeople carrying briefcases to mothers carrying newborns—the youngest generation who will one day, we can only hope, demand the dignity and freedom that democracy bestows on the people who are prepared to protect it.



Introduction by Zara Keen

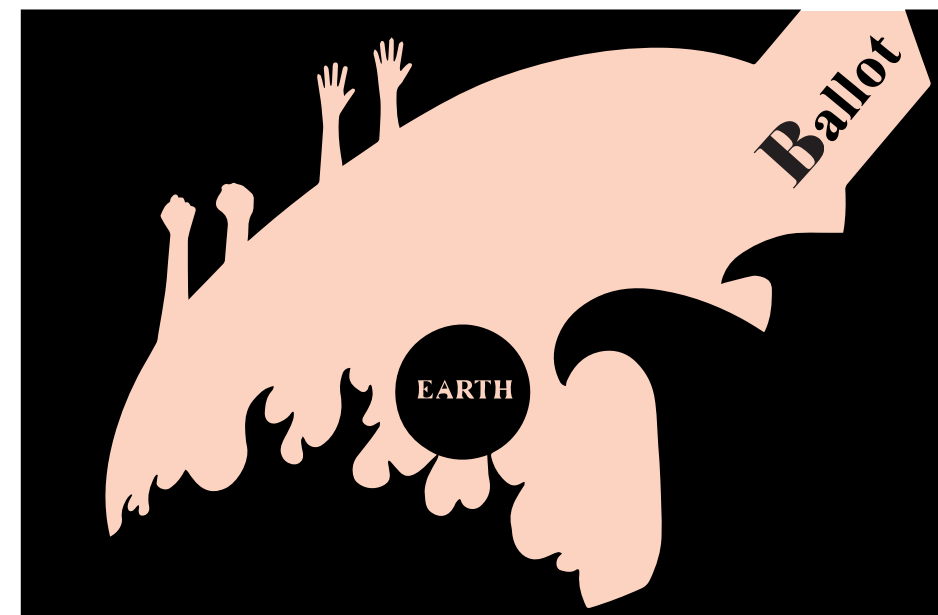
Kenny Martin writes about the importance of *you* and *I*—how people living in a democracy have a “duty to fellow citizens.” In other words, it is an active and healthy citizenry that creates an ideal democracy. Kenny writes that active citizenship can be either a “thunderous roar” or “a quiet, private matter,” but regardless of the type, *action* is clearly the hallmark of a healthy democracy. Democracy is constantly growing, improving, and being reshaped by its people.

The *you* and *I* within democracy are also changing. Marginalized groups are being included where they were once forbidden, changing the composition of many democracies and rewriting the definition of citizenship—and what used to be considered healthy citizenship is changing with its citizens. A citizen, according to the Kenyan writer and activist Nanjala Nyabola, is someone who has “a set of obligations that come with [being a citizen], including caring for the natural environment, caring for how your actions and the actions of others impact people.” True citizen, she claims, “always sees themselves as part of a bigger story.”

Climate change is one of those bigger stories. At the People’s Climate March on April 29, 2017, my mother, my grandmother, and I walked through Washington DC as participants in one of the many marches that took place that day. The marchers belonged to a range of generations, from my own Gen Z to my grandmother’s Silent Generation. Climate change may not affect you now—and it may never affect you—but it is leading to wildfires in the United States and Australia, to flooding in Germany and China, and to other disasters across the globe. If democracy is a system of government that depends on its citizens to look after one another, climate change is the problem that most needs democracy to look after it. At the People’s Climate March, many of the protesters were older. They marched for their children,

their grandchildren, and for all the other *yous* who will inherit a fragile democracy and an even more fragile planet.

There is a tremendous amount of stress and urgency among the members of my generation to fix the mistakes of previous generations—mistakes that have created the climate crisis, which is now at a breaking point. We are facing endless crises—including the widening wealth gap and the COVID-19 pandemic—and the responsibility to fix broken systems and a planet that cannot support the growing demands of our species has fallen on my generation. The old version of democracy has failed us too many times. We do not have enough time to fix democracy from scratch, but we do need to reform it. We can start by becoming true citizens and understanding that we—*you* and *I*—are responsible for both ourselves and each other. Only after we have become truly global citizens will a working democracy follow.



Introduction by Andrew Keen

democracy resembles modern jazz or the polyphonic jumble of city life.

Nobody can quite agree on what democracy sounds like not only because it contains multiple voices, but because those voices are always changing—always in dispute, from country to country and from generation to generation. That’s the inharmonic point, the untidy message of this collection of quotes and accompanying illustrations by my daughter, Zara Keen. As Kenny Martin says, the following words and images represent both “the messiness and beauty” that define democracy. Or, rather, that messiness of democracy *is* its beauty. Prepare to be simultaneously inspired and irritated by the thunderous roar of words that you are about to read. They don’t add up, but they aren’t supposed to—just like democracy itself.

Andrew Keen is the host of the How to Fix Democracy podcast & video interview series and author of How to Fix the Future.

This book, Kenny Martin tells us, seeks to capture what he calls “the polyphony that is inherent in democracy.” Polyphony—music comprising multiple melodic lines—does, indeed, capture the sound of the 2018 Polish democratic activism that Kenny celebrates. Those polyphonous pro-democracy demonstrations in Warsaw combined the “thunderous roar of thousands” that kept Kenny awake at night with the “quiet, private matter” of voting with one’s conscience and “writing polite letters to elected officials.” Such multiple tunes encapsulate the contradictory realms of the public and the private, the seemingly incompatible *you* (*ty*) and *I* (*ja*) of democracy.

I’m no musicologist, but in the dozens of interviews I’ve conducted over the past three years for our How to Fix Democracy series, my perennial inquiry into democracy has felt like a musical one. From Budapest, Brussels, and Berlin to New York City, Washington DC, and Zagreb, my question has remained defiantly monophonic: “What does democracy sound like?” I’ve asked everyone from Bard College president and American Symphony Orchestra director Leon Botstein to the Filipina-American pro-democracy activist and 2021 Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Ressa to the exiled Turkish journalist and author Ece Temelkuran.

So what, exactly, should democracy sound like?

In making the point that both Adolf Hitler and pro-democracy demonstrators in East Berlin embraced Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, Botstein reminds us that democracy doesn’t have a particular tune. But as Ressa contends, it *is* orchestral, or at least it is *ideally* orchestral, combining the timbres of many different instruments in a unified and harmonic whole. Temelkuran, for her part, prefers how the orchestra of the street captures the acoustic of democracy. She suggests that in its unpredictable and chaotic beauty,

Before we try to fix democracy, it is worth asking a deceptively simple question: What is democracy, anyway? Who started it—the ancient Greeks, the Iroquois Confederacy, someone else, or all of the above? And what’s so special about it, if anything? Is democracy a fixed system of basic values, or should we think of it as a set of aspirations—even if we may never fully achieve them?

Perhaps we should be asking ourselves a different set of questions entirely. What do we want our democracy to look like? Can we imagine new forms of democracy that may work better than the democratic systems we have now? And do we have what it takes to make our expectations a reality?



What's peculiar about democracy is that the aspirations, rhetorically, are very high. And therefore, the gap between expectation and reality is more painful. If you're under tyranny and autocracy, your aspirations are very low. You're relieved if it is not as terrible as you think it might be. Democracy is the other way around. The expectations are very large. You talk about freedom and equality and justice, and you talk about the sense of power and responsibility of the individual citizen—and then it doesn't exist. And then you think, well, there's too wide a gap. That's why dissatisfaction with democracy is so intense.

—Leon Botstein

Democracy is not a fancy beast. It's not highly sophisticated. It really is about the base, the legitimacy that comes from the citizenry, and then this building up of structures—which include school boards, water boards, mayoralties, towns and states and provinces, and national elections. It's an enormously complex and incredibly slow-moving object.

—John Ralston Saul

Democracy is not the expression of one's opinion or the expression of indignation. Democracy has to do with institutions, control of power, the system of justice, how the parliament works, and other factors—not just having a bunch of people expressing ideas with which you may or may not disagree.

—Angelos Chaniotis

I think it's really important to ground our discussion of Athens in the fact that democracy as a practice isn't something the ancient Greeks came up with. If we're just talking about people deliberating and deciding how to run their societies, that's something that human beings did in all sorts of places.

—Astra Taylor

Symbolically, there is something about how Europe broadly positions itself as the caretaker or promoter of democracy—and is literally allowing people to die every week in the name of strong borders. And Greece, this birthplace of democracy, then becomes this fulcrum, this point at which this whole debate is pivoting in real time.

—Nanjala Nyabola

Benjamin Franklin was really interested in the political organization of the Haudenosaunee [Iroquois] Confederacy, which is, they argue, the oldest extant democracy in the world, tracing back 500 or 600 years. I've thought about this before—are we really long-existing democracies, or are we something else? And I think it comes down to that definition of democracy. If we're talking about a participatory process that is egalitarian in the sense that people are not excluded based on gender or, for example, disability, then is that a democratic process?

—DeLesslin “Roo” George-Warren

We often forget this, but in as diverse and sprawling a nation as we are, there really is only one thing that binds us together, and that is a creed: a set of ideas and ideals that, when you stop and look at them, are rather flimsy. The only thing that breathes life into those ideas and ideals is not the sacredness of the Constitution as a piece of paper — the only thing that breathes life into those words is our collective, repeated, mutual agreement to make them mean something. And that requires practice, cultivation, and a sense of intentional spirit. To me, democracy is one of the most faith-driven activities there is; I don't mean faith in a deity, I mean faith in the possibility that we could govern ourselves successfully. Democracy works only if enough of us believe democracy works.

—Eric Liu

Democracy means, to me—as someone who's a descendant of American slaves—a form of government in which people have a say-so over their lives, their aspirations, and the aspirations of their communities. As someone who is a descendant of those who came to this country in chains and who have had to struggle over decades and centuries to secure their freedoms, democracy is something that is hard won, hard fought, deeply valued, and a form of government literally secured with blood, with blood sacrifice.

—Cornell Brooks

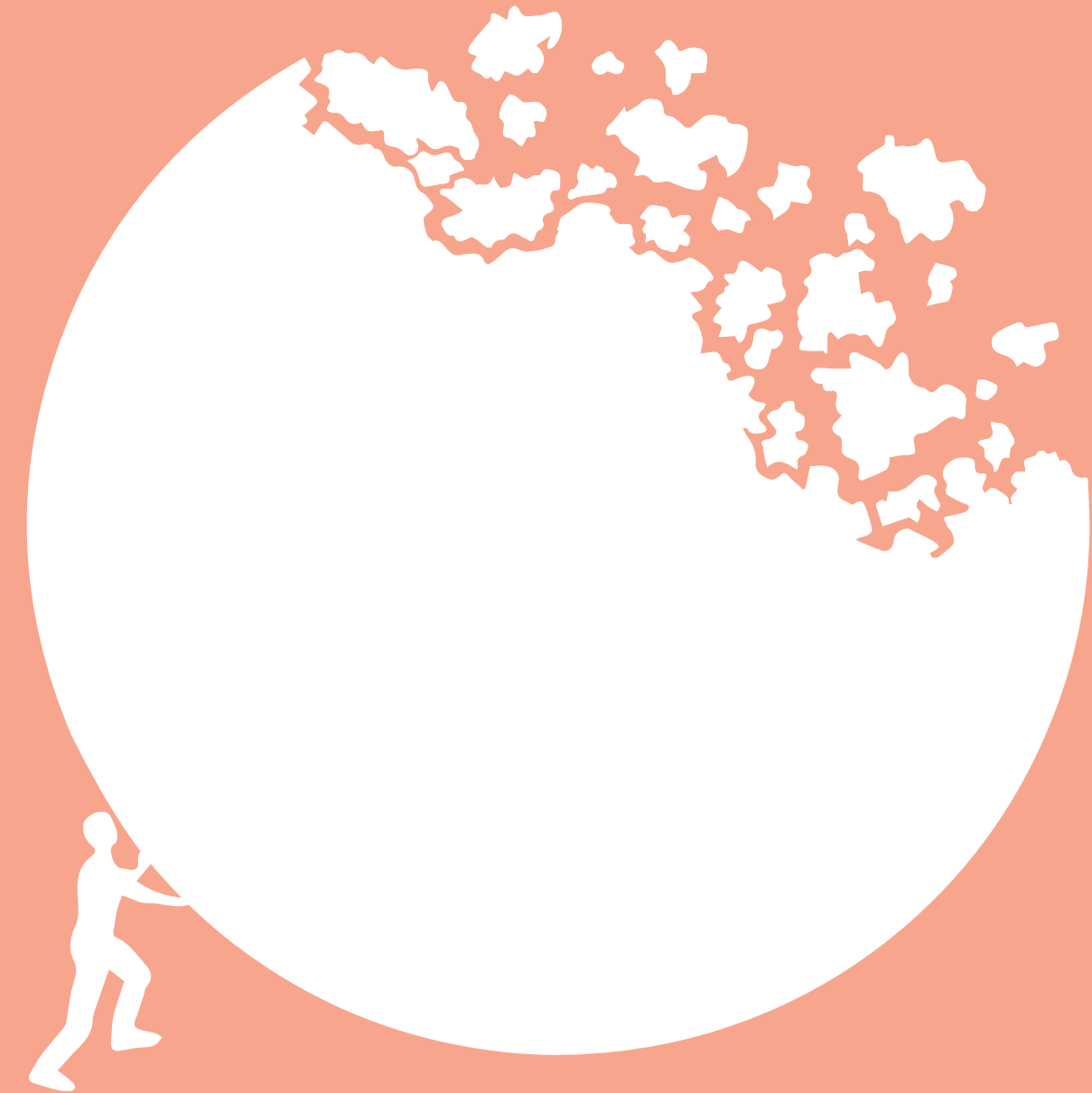
You have slavery built into the Constitution. What you also have, though, are these kinds of aspirational clauses in the founding of America, and that is where marginalized folk—African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Asian-Americans, women—have fought to make America what it says it's going to be, what it says it is.

—Carol Anderson

It's a commonly held belief that democracy has seen better days. Around the world, people are nostalgic for moments of consensus that stand in stark contrast to our contemporary moment of distrust and polarization. In this day and age, it is easy to imagine ancient Greece—or the United States in the years following the Second World War—and think, *Wouldn't it be nice to have that kind of democracy again?*

But perhaps signs of democratic struggle are actually the best indicators that democracy is *working*, just as it was designed to. Could struggle and disagreement be the keys to moving democracy forward?

Is global democracy truly in crisis, or are the problems we're witnessing simply the latest in a long line of growing pains as we progress toward a more mature, inclusive democracy? Has democracy ever *not* been in crisis? Or is it possible that democracy could be on the brink of imminent demise? Does it need to be fixed? And does it want to be?



Democracy is in crisis, and it has been in crisis for a while now.

—Danilo Türk

In a sense, the problem with American democracy is almost that it's too democratic. You have lots and lots of power given to the people. The problem with European democracy—and there is a profound crisis in European democracy—is in many ways it's not democratic enough.

—Adrian Wooldridge

A very good indication that the crisis of democracy may be overdone is that authoritarian regimes need to have good housekeeping, the seal of democracy. There is a legitimacy, both domestically and internationally, that is bestowed by the fact that you are perceived, you are, you call yourself a democracy. Yes, democracy may be in trouble, may be under pressure, may be in crisis in some places. But look around! Everybody wants to be called a democracy.

—Moisés Naim

You could say that compared to 50 years ago many societies are free, but you could also say that the tendency is going toward a more and more restrictive society, where the pendulum is swinging from globalization back toward nationalism and nativism to a large extent. This doesn't necessarily mean the reintroduction of dictatorships in many societies, but there is a sort of majoritarian self-imposed movement against liberal values.

—Annika Savill

We were very optimistic in the early 2000s that democracy was going to continue to expand, that freedom would continue to deepen, that the rule of law would settle in and penetrate much more substantially into the real lived experience of people in democracies around the world. And I'd say that since around 2006, we have been in a period of democratic recession. More and more countries have been losing ground in terms of freedom and democracy than have been improving in their levels of freedom, political rights, and the quality of democracy.

—Larry Diamond

Crisis or No Crisis?

There is no halcyon period in American democracy. There are better periods. One fundamental reality is that the period that most people look on as being a good one—the post–World War II period, when you had a lot of bipartisan cooperation—was an anomaly. And it was far from perfect because of racial divisions and a lot of other issues. There have been crisis periods in the past. We did have, after all, a Civil War.

—Norman Ornstein

I think the question is whether liberal democracy is in crisis now across the Western world. It's a word that is being used a lot. I think it is a word we perhaps sometimes use a little bit too loosely, but in this case, I think it is appropriate.

—Richard Reeves

I really do think that we're seeing a crisis of our democratic institutions failing to tackle some of these biggest issues of our day, and those are due to things that are design features—not flaws—in the system.

—Claudia Chwalisz

Crisis or No Crisis?

Looked at over the past 50 years, we are hugely stronger in terms of democratic values than we've ever been in the history of mankind.

—Sir Malcolm Rifkind

Democracies in general and historically have one weakness, and that is the weakness of complacency. Somehow democracies tend to believe that their procedures, their quality, their values, guarantee good results and that this will happen more or less inevitably. That's the complacency part.

—Danilo Türk

If I had to have a phrase for this age: it's the age of fragmentation.

—David Runciman

Who Are We?

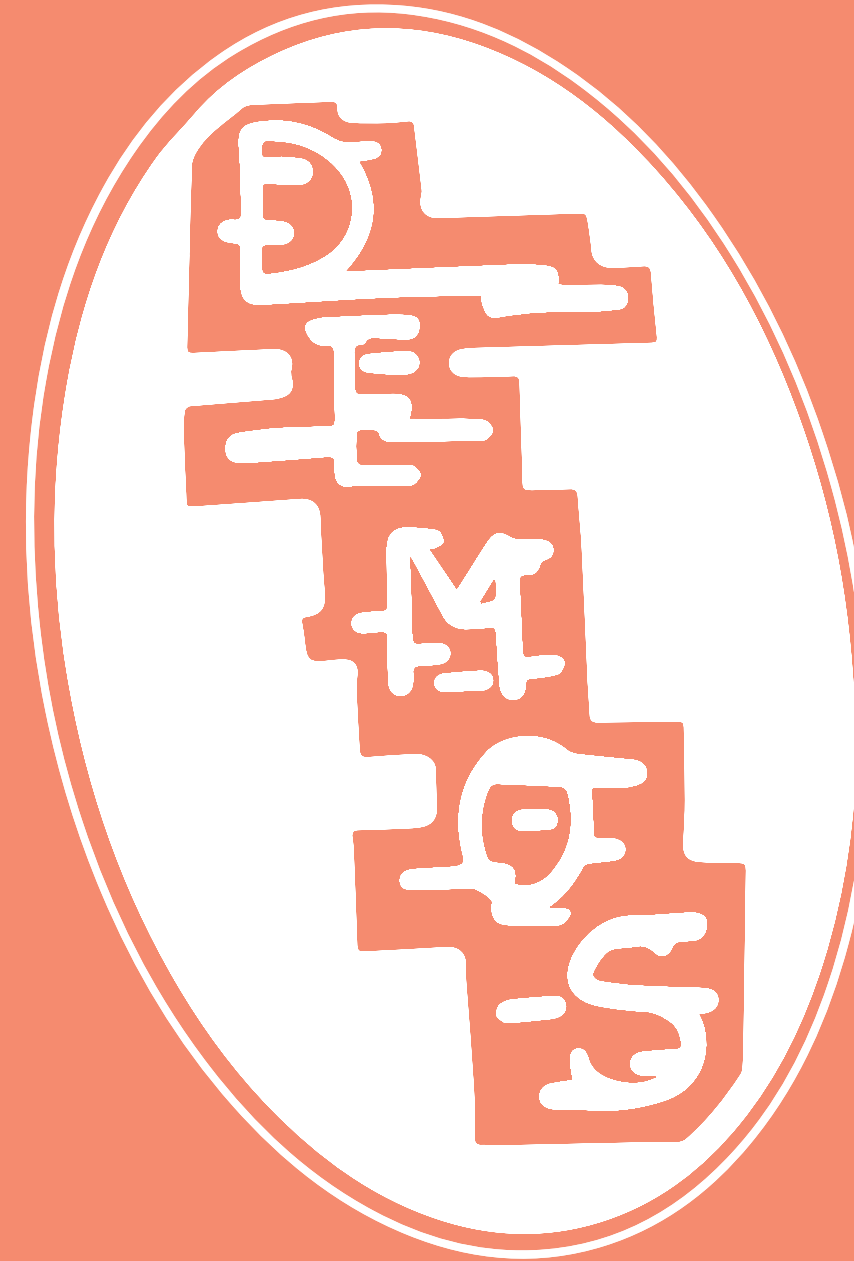
At the most basic level, democracy (*dēmokratiā* in ancient Greek) means rule (*kratos*) by the people (*dēmos*). But does our notion of what democracy is include some people and exclude others? Is it possible that global democracy has lost sight of what citizenship ought to mean?

Original forms of democracy—ancient Athens, early European nation-states, certain Indigenous tribes—had relatively small, homogeneous populations, which made the question of who counted as a citizen fairly straightforward. But in today’s globalized world, when countries have massive populations that include individuals from many backgrounds, questions of belonging are more complicated. To some, even our basic notions of nationality and citizenship are outdated.

Indeed, who belongs in a democracy? Is democracy *for* certain types of people and *against* others? Just how inclusive, globalized, and compassionate should a healthy democracy be? How should we define citizenship, and why is active citizenship vital to a healthy democracy?

In other words, who are we? Who do we need to be?

Who Are We?



Who Are We?

Belonging seems to contain within it the seeds, also, of othering.

—Abdul-Rehman Malik

If you look at the history of democracy, it's often people who were excluded—who were outside the boundaries of citizenship—who pushed democracy forward. They pushed for inclusion in the *dēmos*: they pushed for citizen rights, for those protections, for those freedoms. And by doing so, they expanded our conception of democracy, they transformed our democracy, they improved it.

—Astra Taylor

I've always been careful with citizenship versus residency. I think citizenship gets interesting as a word, in this time, because we hear a *lot* about rights. We hear very little about obligations.

—Bianca Wylie

Who Are We?

Global citizens are people who see themselves as part of a broader tapestry of the human existence. They're people who think of themselves as not just having rights to live and be in the world, but also having a set of obligations that come with that, including caring for the natural environment, caring for how your actions and the actions of others impact people who you might not necessarily see on a day-to-day basis, who might not be right in front of you, but who will live with the consequences of the choices that you make. Global citizens are people who always see themselves as part of a bigger story.

—Nanjala Nyabola

Democracy is about having a certain responsibility toward other people and also recognizing how one's achievements, in a way, depend upon all of those other people. It's understanding that we're engaged in a sort of scheme of social cooperation together. And we have a political responsibility for maintaining that scheme and ensuring its equity.

—Richard Bellamy

Who Are We?

It is not a vague idea that you can be a patriot of your state, yet be open to the world and be part of the international community. The choice is not between being a citizen of your nation and being a citizen of the world. This is not a choice anymore.

—Tzipi Livni

As real institutions fall away, people are looking for different kinds of communities, and very often they find those communities online. You can be very involved in a political movement now and never leave your house. People are very attracted to other kinds of communities. There's a reason why the idea of the nation has come back in so many places. It's something that we can belong to; it's got a defined limit. So, the question is: How do we re-create communities? What are going to be the new sources of identity and security in the 21st century?

—Anne Applebaum

Democracy is a government by the *dēmos*, the people.

What we strive for in the United States is not just democracy — it's liberal democracy, and liberal democracy means rule of the majority but the protection of minorities.

—Anne-Marie Slaughter

Who Are We?

Democracy requires a fully engaged citizenry.

—Carol Anderson

What it requires to live like a citizen is to go from mere basic intuition to intention and to the intentional practice of power. And that is a body of work best done not alone. It is best done in the company of others because in civic life all power is collective.

—Eric Liu

Even if you are a citizen in today's electoral democracy, you are mostly treated as a voter rather than as a citizen.

—David Van Reybrouck

People are right to feel like their voice doesn't count—because quite frankly, honestly, most of the time it doesn't.

—Claudia Chwalisz

We Need to Talk (Listen/Trust/Work Together)

Since its inception, democracy has been built on a foundation of conversation and debate. Freedom of speech is enshrined as a sacred right in many of the world's democracies. Law-making, protest, conversations with one's friends and fellow citizens—these all depend on our ability to speak and listen to one another.

But talking, especially to people we disagree with, seems to have gotten tougher in recent years. Ours is an era of polarization, division, and distrust. Is this state of affairs unique in the history of democracy, or is the imagined past of bipartisan consensus a chimera of nostalgia? How have people previously managed to work together in healthy, productive democracies, in spite of their differences and disagreements?

In an age of authoritarianism, populism, and extremism, are we prepared to do what it takes to be able to talk to one another again? And will we do what it takes to listen?

We Need to Talk (Listen/Trust/Work Together)



We Need to Talk (Listen/Trust/Work Together)

If we're going to fix democracy, I think we have to fix listening. We have to fix the voices that don't feel heard.

—Arlie Hochschild

I believe in a digital democracy where people can listen to each other. I think that's something that we have not figured out yet.

—Wietse Van Ransbeeck

The point of free speech is not speaking—it's listening, it's engaging. And that is something that is in danger of being lost in contemporary society.

—Richard Reeves

Civility does not mean passivity in terms of the assertion of one's rights. What it does mean is being open to dialogue, open to conversation, open to engagement.

—Cornell Brooks

We Need to Talk (Listen/Trust/Work Together)

The idea that you leave the room because you feel insulted, because you feel your identity has been threatened or challenged—that way madness lies! Politics is *about* being in rooms with people you don't like, people you don't trust, people you don't agree with, people who you feel actually demean or look down on your identities. I mean, just everybody settle down here! If we're going to create a broad-based coalition that can restore a redistributive state, a just society, a place where people feel included and don't feel terrified by global change, then we have to do it with a lot of people we don't like.

—Michael Ignatieff

It's abundantly clear that you could never run a business by splitting up your board of directors into two teams and telling them to kill each other at the same time that they're running the business. And yet, that seems to be what we've done with our country.

—Maya MacGuineas

We Need to Talk (Listen/Trust/Work Together)

There is something that begins with the idea that we can vociferously disagree, but we must sit in community with that disagreement—because one thing that I have to acknowledge is that the vast majority of my fellow citizens care for their families, care for their communities, want the common good, want equality of opportunity, and don't want to be living in places where they're marginalized, exploited, or oppressed. They want to see people who are homeless have homes, they want to see people who don't have opportunity have opportunity, and they want those who are resisting and fleeing violence to find safety.

That's the nature of a good society.

—Abdul-Rehman Malik

This idea that we had in the 20th century, that more self-expression was more freedom, was kind of embedded in jazz music and art and poetry. It was one of the great messages of the 20th century. But the trick is now, the more you speak, the more social media companies know about you. The more data is collected about you, the more you reveal of yourself, and actually, the less power you have.

—Peter Pomerantsev

We Need to Talk (Listen/Trust/Work Together)

So little of political debate now is about actually hearing your opponent. You may wait until he or she has finished talking, but you are not ingesting what he or she is saying.

—Annika Savill

The moment you try to make one step forward to try to understand the other party, you're killed by your own friends, who see you as a traitor. You no longer get likes on social media if you try to bridge the gap with people on the other side. It's much easier to talk about the others than to talk with the others. What deliberative democracy does is put people together who are no longer used to talking together.

—David Van Reybrouck

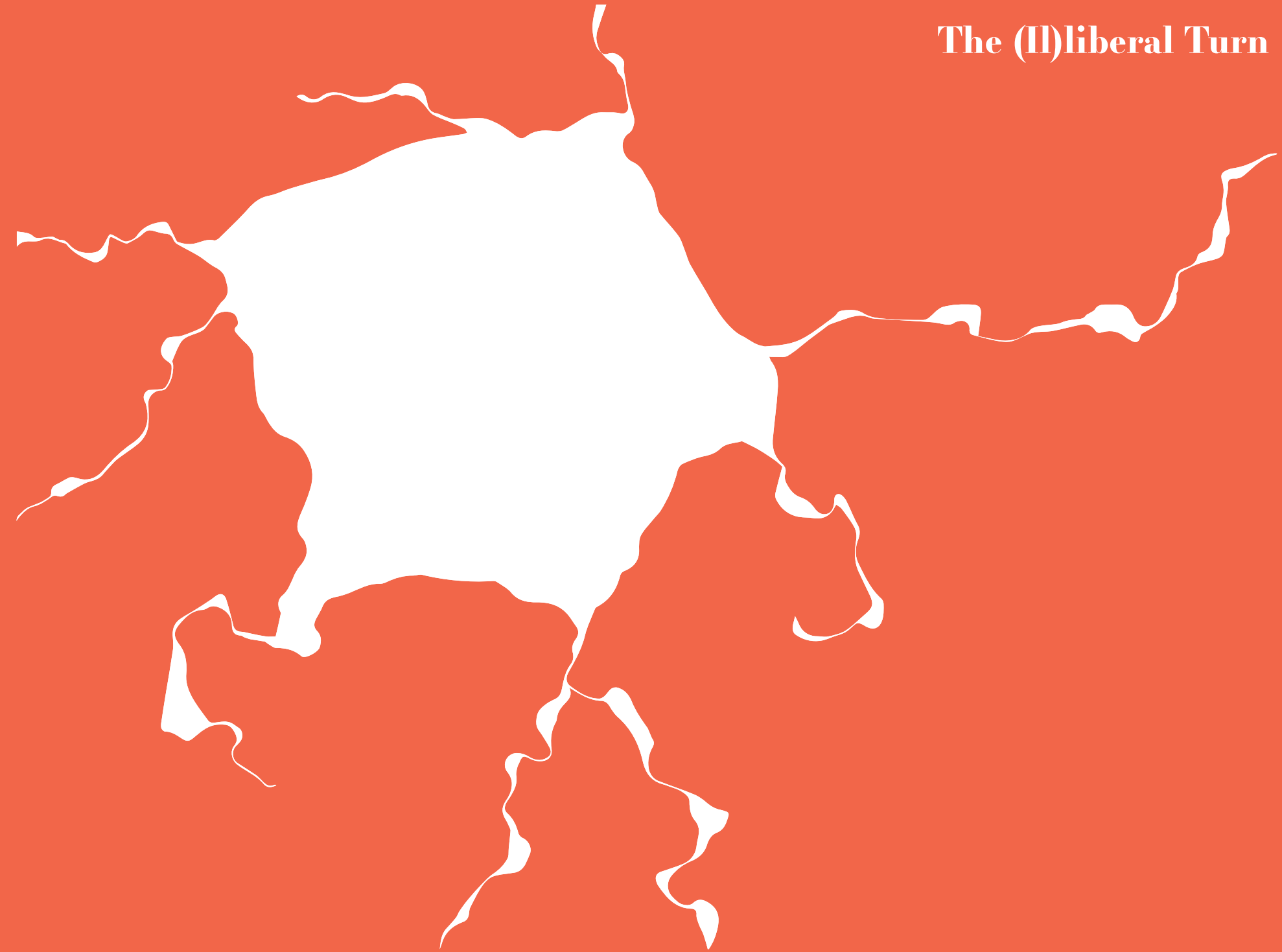
There are those who are willing to listen, and that is where the hope in democracy lies.

—Carol Anderson

In our age, does liberalism—the Enlightenment ideal that prizes individual sovereignty, economic choice, civil liberties, state institutions, and social tolerance—have anything to teach us about how we should shape our democracies? Must democracy, by definition, be liberal, or is it possible (as democratically elected authoritarians seem to suggest) to embrace *illiberal* democracy? What might we lose if we choose to jettison a common belief in liberalism?

It isn't just authoritarians who are skeptical of liberalism's relevance to modern democracy. Progressive populists, too, often distrust its emphasis on individual liberty and representative institutions. Instead, they suggest, we should prioritize collective prosperity, direct democracy, and the united voice of the people.

What happens to democracy when it claims to be illiberal? Can democracy stay relevant in an increasingly illiberal age?



The (II)liberal Turn

The big mistake we made after 1989 was that we had this concept called liberal democracy, and we thought that liberal democracy was *one thing*, and you either had it or you didn't have it. What we've had to come to terms with is that it's not one thing; it's two separate things. There's democracy, and there are liberal values. Sometimes they're combined and sometimes they aren't.

—Sir Malcolm Rifkind

How do we prevent American democracy from declining into something more authoritarian by making sure that people who disagree on policy prescriptions at least agree on the rules of how we will resolve our policy disagreements in a peaceful manner? That's the notion of democracy at its very root.

—Ian Bassin

Populists are not necessarily anti-democratic, but they are surely anti-liberal. And it highlights how difficult it can be to reconcile those two things, even though over the post-War period in the West we came to assume that they went together. Historically, they have not, and today they're coming apart in many places.

—Sheri Berman

The (II)liberal Turn

Democracy is a battle for power between adversaries, not a battle with enemies. An enemy must destroy you; an enemy must eliminate you. An adversary only has to beat you today and could be your ally tomorrow. Liberalism understands one thing, which is that the purpose of politics is to avoid war, to avoid civil war, to avoid societies becoming so polarized that they can't resolve their conflicts.

—Michael Ignatieff

There are two categories of people who think that life is about rights without responsibilities: one is toddlers, and the other is sociopaths.

—Eric Liu

You can't call a country a democracy until everybody can actually engage themselves in it. That's where many countries have a big gap. Are they, theoretically, liberal democratic? Perhaps. But in practice, who is at the table? We have to be honest that what's happening now is that a lot of people aren't there and the representation mechanisms aren't working.

—Bianca Wylie

There are a number of democracies that are very illiberal—and increasingly, this is part of the problem we’re living in now—that are impinging upon freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of the Internet, freedom of movement. The goal has to be *liberal* democracy—liberal not in any economic sense, but in terms of strong protections for rights and the rule of law.

—Larry Diamond

It is vital that America can show as an alternative to China or to other countries that in fact liberal democracy can deliver. It can deliver racial equality, it can deliver prosperity, it can deliver environmental sustainability, and it can deliver enough social cohesion to be able to govern itself. That’s a different kind of leadership. That’s what Thomas Jefferson meant by *the ball of liberty will roll around the world*.

—Anne-Marie Slaughter

I think we can reinvent the liberal ideal, but it will have to be reinvented, not simply reinterpreted or recalled.

—Danilo Türk

I think that you need to understand the sort of long-term structural reasons why people aren’t as committed to democracy as they once were. First, you have the stagnation of living standards for ordinary citizens. Second, you have a set of important cultural and demographic transformations, which mean that groups that were once dominant in places like North America and Western Europe no longer get to have the same set of privileges over others in society. And then third, you have the rise of the Internet and social media, which make it much easier for outsiders to have a real voice in a broken system. This can be a good thing, but it can also allow people who are full of hatred and want to spread fake news to have a real voice. At a time when people are already economically frustrated, already afraid of some of the cultural transformations we’re seeing, that can become a very dangerous cocktail.

—Yascha Mounk

In the twenty-first century, it is barely possible to escape the constant influence of technology in our lives. Technology, and especially Big Tech, has allowed us to connect with each other in unprecedented ways. It creates jobs, extends the possibilities of art and personal expression, and facilitates ways of communicating with loved ones and strangers across the globe that were previously unthinkable.

But in an age when technology brings us together, is it also driving us apart? Its ubiquity raises concerns about privacy, personalized advertising, and the pernicious ability of falsehoods—misinformation and disinformation alike—to proliferate and pass for the truth. Social media, in particular, has compromised the integrity of elections while also contributing to seemingly unprecedented levels of polarization.

But perhaps technology doesn't *have* to be so big and bad. Perhaps we can learn to be bigger and wiser about how we use it—and how we don't.



Ours is a republic of fans. What is important about the fans is that anytime you're losing, it's unfair, and loyalty means supporting you when you're wrong, not when you're right. The fact that your favorite football club is going to win does not make you richer, but emotionally for you this is so important. The shift is about *emotional reward*—this is a totally different idea of political loyalty. This type of fan mentality, which is being strongly encouraged by new technology and media, creates a situation in which words matter, but sentences do not matter.

—Ivan Krastev

What social media has done is to amplify the lies—lies laced with anger, pounded a million times. It's manipulation, and it has played to our worst character, our worst human nature.

—Maria Ressa

I personally believe that digital forms of communication can enhance and strengthen democracy, but I still believe face-to-face interaction is the most important. I do think that we shouldn't get too carried away with digital democracy to the point where, eventually, we can't really tell if democracy is representative of the wider population.

—Metu Coban

Initially, those of us who studied democracy and social media or information technology thought it was going to be very democratizing, that it would allow people to have free access to information and be able to talk to each other. I think it turned out to be very much a double-edged sword because the input is unclear. There are those who use it for their own purposes with propaganda and false information. It also disaggregates voices. In order to have democracy, I think you do need either political parties or organizations that can be a force multiplier of people's desires for freedom.

—Madeleine Albright

I spend a lot of time looking at old newspapers from 100 years ago, and there was a lot of nonsense in them! Human beings have always had a tremendous capacity to spread lies, to spread untruths, to spread myths about people they don't like. It happens more quickly today. It happens instantaneously with the Internet.

—Adam Hochschild

We cannot understand the role that technology will play in public and political life if we don't understand society first. Tech isn't going to do anything that people don't make it do. There's decision-making, there's agency, there's human action that is part of the equation.

—Nanjala Nyabola

What's the real challenge now to free speech? It's not just that some dictatorial government will come to take you over. Or as in the George Orwell novel, that somebody will cut up the newspaper and shred the politically incorrect articles and put them down the memory hole. No, we have the opposite problem now, which is that an authoritarian government—or indeed, a group of people online—can flood you with information. In other words, voices can be drowned out. We're all facing this problem of there being *too much* information and, possibly, of that eventually undermining any sense we have of information's value.

—Anne Applebaum

More and more people are coming to the debate without being properly prepared for it as consumers of news because they are being fed tidbits of information without verification.

—Annika Savill

I think people overplay how social media platforms undermine democracy. I think they underplay how much they can do to fix democracy. Why wouldn't Facebook be telling people, here are the three branches of government, here is your responsibility as a citizen? That's nonpartisan, that's bipartisan. The platforms can do that.

—Richard Stengel

For much of history, democracy and capitalism have grown and thrived hand in hand. There are exceptions, but the freedoms that democracy guarantees at the ballot box and in the statehouse have often coexisted with analogous freedoms in the supermarket and the boardroom.

Is this intertwining of democracy and capitalism a good thing in our age of global, technological, and increasingly unregulated capitalism? Or has it led to a hollowing of the middle class and a fading sense of the dignity of work? Have rising inequality and the increasing influence of the super-rich on elections caused ordinary working people to feel alienated from democracy?

Can we be sufficiently compassionate and imaginative to reshape the harsh economic realities that often portend democracy's unraveling? Can we get capitalism under control and make it compatible with thriving democracy? Or should we replace it with a new system entirely?



Democracy has two basic things going for it: it's a problem-solving form of politics and it's a dignity-enhancing form of politics. It gives people a sense of respect because they have a voice, and it gives them prosperity and welfare. If the problem-solving goes one way - the problem-solving essentially becomes an increasingly technical exercise because the machines are so much better at it—and the voice and dignity go the other way, then this thing really does start to come apart.

—David Runciman

If you do a simple analysis of what is considered democracy today and look at countries that are capitalistic, the association between capitalism and democracy is relatively weak.

—Branko Milanovic

You have to start from the premise that there is no one way that capitalism supports democracy or that democracy supports capitalism. In the United States we have allowed capitalism to infect our political system in a way that means our democracy is really not working very well, if at all. We the people, preferably all the people, have the ability to reshape our democracy and to decide what kind of capitalist rules, or socialist rules, or some mix of the two we want to live under.

—Anne-Marie Slaughter

You know, people say, *Oh, if you intervene, that kills the capitalist system.* No! We've seen systems with regulation and incentives produce outcomes that make everybody think, *Wow, that's a terrific resolution to that problem.* Don't throw out the system that's generated the wealth explosion that we've seen over the past two centuries. Harness it. Make use of it.

—Robert H. Frank

Democracy is actually a rather blunt tool for delivering significantly higher equality in the economic sphere.

—Walter Scheidel

The Second World War forged a sense of social solidarity. From 1945, for maybe 20 years, there was a miraculous period where the successful people felt themselves to belong to the same community and society as the less successful and were willing to pay to help them—and that's what we've lost.

—Sir Paul Collier

We are pushing the disparity of wealth and income in this country to a point where we're not just going to be talking about a populist movement, the way it's talked about now, but we're going to talk about revolution.

—Richard D. Wolff

There's been a lack of effort on the part of progressives around the world to articulate a clear and convincing platform that would address the rise of inequality and demonstrate how it's possible—because I think it's possible—to reconcile globalization with economic justice.

—Gabriel Zucman

Capitalism is simultaneously one of the greatest inventions of the human race and a major disaster. We are losing social mobility and economic equality of opportunity—or even roughly plausible freedom of opportunity—yet people say that capitalism generates prosperity and freedom. Yes, but if the prosperity isn't shared and if the freedom is only for people who are lucky enough to be born in the right zip code, to the right parents—if most people can't participate, that's a serious problem.

—Rebecca Henderson

Markets are a tool for enormous social good, and if you let parts of the market system that are behaving badly make people so angry that they throw the whole thing overboard, then that would be a shame. Capitalism has a future, but it has to be fixed—and if we don't fix it, then we'll get a revolution.

—Sir Angus Deaton

When you have the middle of the economy go, you have the middle of politics go too. When you have the hollowing out of the middle of the economy, you tend to hollow out the political middle ground too, and people polarize.

—Edward Luce

This isn't just a problem in terms of the way our economy functions. It's also a problem for the way our democracy works—or doesn't. Extreme concentrations of wealth give rise to such power over the political process that it becomes corrosive to our democracy.

—Stephanie Kelton

I was very proud when Václav Havel became president of the Czech Republic because of his morality and his philosophical approach to things. One of the things he said is that there's so much dignity in work, and if people get too separated from the product they are producing, they don't feel that dignity of work. And I think that we need to figure out where people get their dignity. What gives people a chance to understand who they are, what their responsibilities are? Work—and how one identifies—is very important.

—Madeleine Albright

How do we really wrestle with the dignity of labor in an automated world?

—Earl Lewis

With technological change, the requirements of people entering the market are increasing. And unfortunately, our ability to support them to get those good jobs the market throws up is diminishing. What we have across the industrial world is a disappearance of good jobs in the middle—the routine jobs that have been displaced by automation or outsourcing—and a lot more jobs at the lower end that don't require many skills, which is why we've got low unemployment. But most people want jobs at the upper end, which require substantially more skills than the average person has. That skilling process is not available to all today, and that's why capitalism is now an uneven playing field.

—Raghuram Rajan

From its beginnings, democracy has been more exclusionary than its proponents would like to think. Senators in ancient Athens owned slaves, as did the founders of the United States of America. Historically, a group of elites—usually educated male landowners—have established democracy to benefit themselves at the expense of others, even while claiming to believe in the inherent equality of all people.

Over time, those others—whether women, people of color, Indigenous people, LGBTQ people, disabled people, or religious minorities—have gained ground in their struggle for inclusion. All around the globe, people have organized, protested, and fought for the civil rights and social acceptance on which robust political participation depends.

The fight is far from over. Will we embrace others as fellow citizens? Can we push past mere tolerance and reach true acceptance? And will we embrace the idea that a more diverse democracy may well be a stronger, truer democracy?



I think it is a bad thing when you have a parliament that doesn't have as many women as there are in the larger population, or as many Blacks as there are in the larger population. It's not because I believe that only women can represent women or only Blacks can represent Blacks. It's because I think it's a sure sign that you are lacking in the relevant cognitive diversity. It means that you have somehow homogenized your selection process along certain lines—and you deprive the group of the resources it needs to address very complex issues.

—Hélène Landemore

There are still very deep structural inequalities in our society, but they have been going down in terms of gender, in terms of race—by no means enough, but at least there is a certain trajectory in terms of identity, in terms of sexual orientation. Those inequalities have been going down.

—Walter Scheidel

You cannot be Black in America without hope.

—Carol Anderson

Things aren't static. You can't stay still on a moving train. Some of the most creative, challenging theological voices in the worlds of Islam right now are the voices of women theologians, jurists, and others who are actively engaging tradition, who are actively engaging the past, who are arguing, debating, writing, positing.

—Abdul-Rehman Malik

Women are always part of revolutionary movements.

—Soraya Chemaly

We have gotten so much from Indigenous people. We have borrowed so much from them. And their idea of belonging, their idea of the circle—they do everything in circles—is that they say, *All we have to do to include you is to let go of one hand, and you come in and you hold our two hands, and you're part of the circle.*

—Adrienne Clarkson

Democracy of Many Colors

It's going to take a lot of hard work, but I do think we have a generational opportunity to take a different course and a different road than we did in 1968. To choose the beloved community of Martin Luther King, Jr. over the law and order of Richard Nixon, which begat the troubles and the divisions and the inequities that we see in our society and globally today.

—Peniel Joseph

If democracy means inclusion, we have not included half of the world's population on a systematic level. So, the democracies that we have right now are half-baked, if not a third-baked.

—Irene Natividad

Democracy of Many Colors

We have not, in my view, dealt with one of the original sins of this nation and this democracy, which was slavery.

—Earl Lewis

That narrative of American exceptionalism elides and just tramples over the realities of the past. It silences slavery, it silences the genocide of native Americans, it silences the anti-immigrant policies of the United States. It silences the kind of policies that were racially discriminatory, ethnically discriminatory. It elides all of that, and so you get these narratives that then lead into policies that continue on with the lie.

—Carol Anderson

This Land Is Our Land

In many early democracies, only landowners were permitted to vote and hold public office. Today, questions like *Where were you born?*, *When did you move here?*, and *How long have you lived here?* determine the extent to which some of us are able to participate in democratic society.

Though the Statue of Liberty—a shining example of democracy’s friendliness toward immigrants—claims to welcome the “huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” the heartbreaking reality of global immigration policies causes many to question democracy’s willingness to embrace new types of people.

Yet even the most inclusive nations depend on some division between us and them, those permitted to enter or stay and those who are either kept out or sent back. If everyone is allowed to belong to the *dēmos*, the thinking goes, the people may lose the sense of identity and nationality that bonds them.

Can we find a way to truly make the land our land? And could we change who we mean by *our* to help carve a path forward for a just, welcoming, and prosperous democracy?

This Land Is Our Land



“Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.”

This Land Is Our Land

What I tell my students now is that as children or grandchildren of people who migrated, who moved from place to place, you have a superpower. And that superpower is the ability to have your two feet in four places at the same time—your ability to navigate through what others might consider fault lines. For you, it is natural.

—Abdul-Rehman Malik

Many immigrants like myself who have fled authoritarian systems see through a lot of the weaknesses and flaws within American society, but we still acknowledge that the good that's already been built is worth celebrating, hanging on to, making better, and developing.

—Roya Hakakian

When you come to Canada and to the United States, both big immigrant countries, you are transformed. You are not the same person that you would have been if you had stayed in Serbia or France or Sri Lanka.

—Adrienne Clarkson

This Land Is Our Land

Normally in democracy, we tend to believe that power changes when people change their minds. But also, power changes when people change. When different people are coming, they're coming from different traditions or different ideas. And I do believe this understanding—that certain types of majority groups understand that tomorrow they could be a minority—creates the strange situation in which everybody has the feeling that they're losers, that they're persecuted.

—Ivan Krastev

From the very first days it was absolutely clear to me that I could be 100 percent American because being American had nothing to do with where you were born, the language you spoke, or your culture, religion, or ethnicity. It was this idea that, if you embraced it, was yours.

—Tom Malinowski

There is something exceptional here in the United States that can and must be preserved. There is a competitive advantage that the United States retains—if we don't blow it. And the way to understand that advantage is this: America makes Chinese Americans. China does not make American Chinese, period.

—Eric Liu

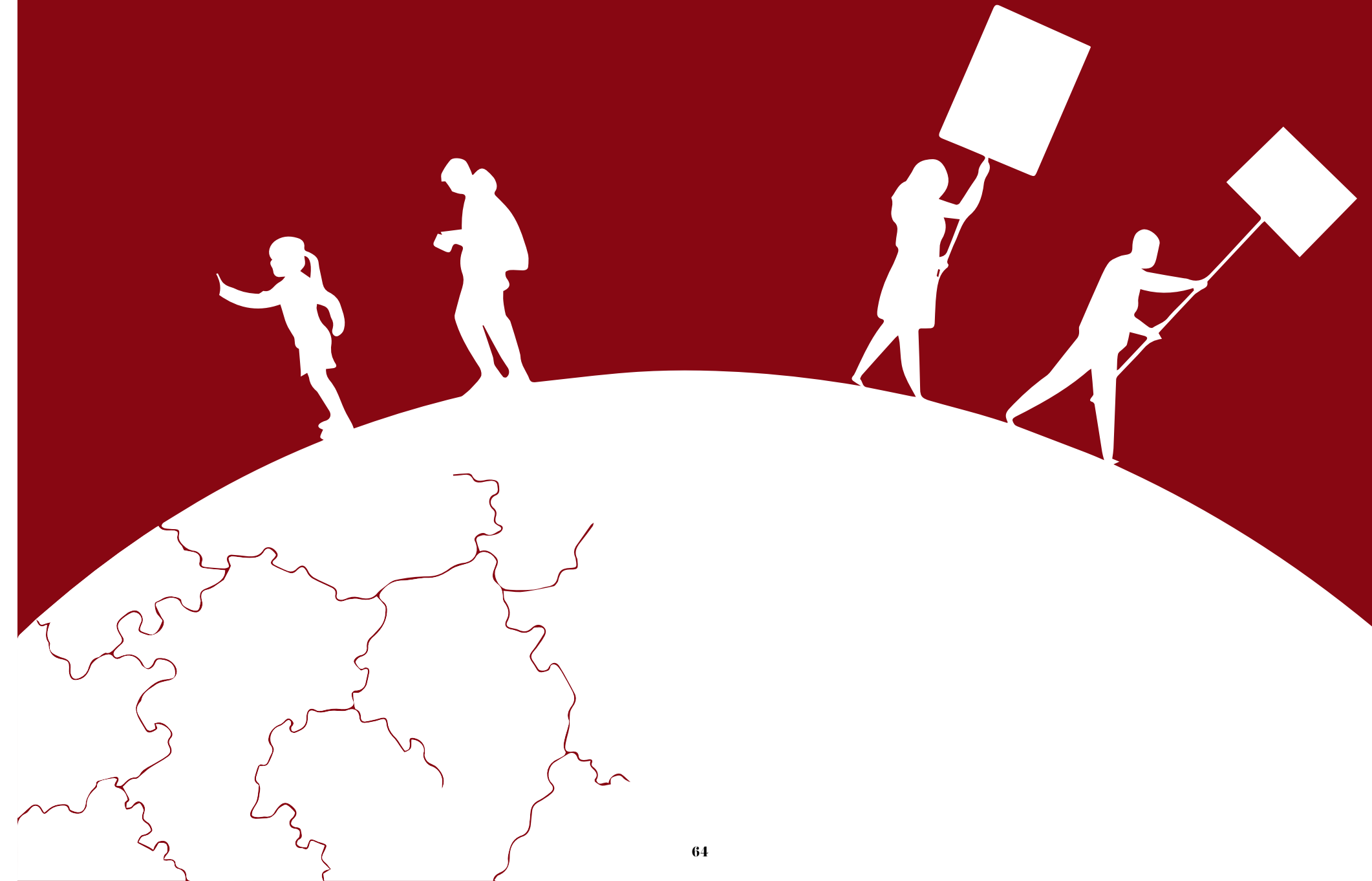
Remember the Young

If democracy is a political system defined by fresh ideas, lively conversation, and the struggle to understand and be understood, young people should be a natural, vital part of it. And they often are—young people are leading protests, winning public office, crafting legislation, and working for governments and NGOs.

Yet in many countries, and especially the US, young people vote at lower rates than any other cohort. Even as some young Millennials and members of Gen Z throw themselves headfirst into democratic politics, others express profound skepticism as to whether democracy is relevant at all. Many authoritarian, illiberal, and anti-democratic movements are being fueled by frustrated young people who feel they have been economically and socially disadvantaged by the actions of older generations.

How can the young make democracy stronger? Is youth a potentially destructive impulse—one that should be kept in check by the wisdom of older generations and the stability of state institutions? Or is it just the thing we need to change our democracies for the better?

Remember the Young



Remember the Young

People's expectations—particularly my generation's expectations—of politicians are different to your generation's. And that comes from what I believe is a consumer-driven world where you pay for a product online and you instantly receive it. The problem with politics is that because we're not educated about our democracy, people therefore put unrealistic expectations on politicians. And that coupled with politicians overpromising and underdelivering creates this big problem.

—Metecoban

We've got a younger generation who understand that climate change is an existential threat to them—because they would like to live until they're 80. We have younger people who realize that what they're spending on an education relative to the income that's generated from it simply isn't worth it in many cases. And they're increasingly drowning in debt and have no corresponding assets because they're all held by the old.

—Mark Blyth

Remember the Young

There is the absence of new generations in parliaments, in government. Instead, they're on the outside, trying to influence, as opposed to having a majority and voting through laws.

—John Ralston Saul

I'm optimistic about what the young people bring in terms of their views, especially their social equity views, but I'm concerned about the lack of speed bumps as we move toward so much change so quickly without really understanding all the ramifications. That said, young people are here to stay. They're going to be incredibly influential. So, I think we make the best of a really bright, smart, talented, driven group of young people and hope that we don't smash into too many walls and break too many things along the way.

—Maya MacGuineas

Remember the Young

In a way, young people are both the problem and the solution. Obviously, there's a lot of ignorance and lack of awareness, but also there's a lot of idealism. They just need a sense of direction. You can't defer to them—you have to work with them, and you have to talk about these things with them. You have to show that you believe in this and that it's something authentic. You can't lecture to them. You have to take them seriously and bring them along and talk about common values.

—Carl Gershman

If you can't believe, between the ages of 18 and 21, that you can change the world—the rest of us be damned, because we're in real trouble.

—Earl Lewis

Remember the Young

I think that our generation is genuinely being asked to be architects of our own fate and of our own democracy.

—Constanze Stelzenmüller

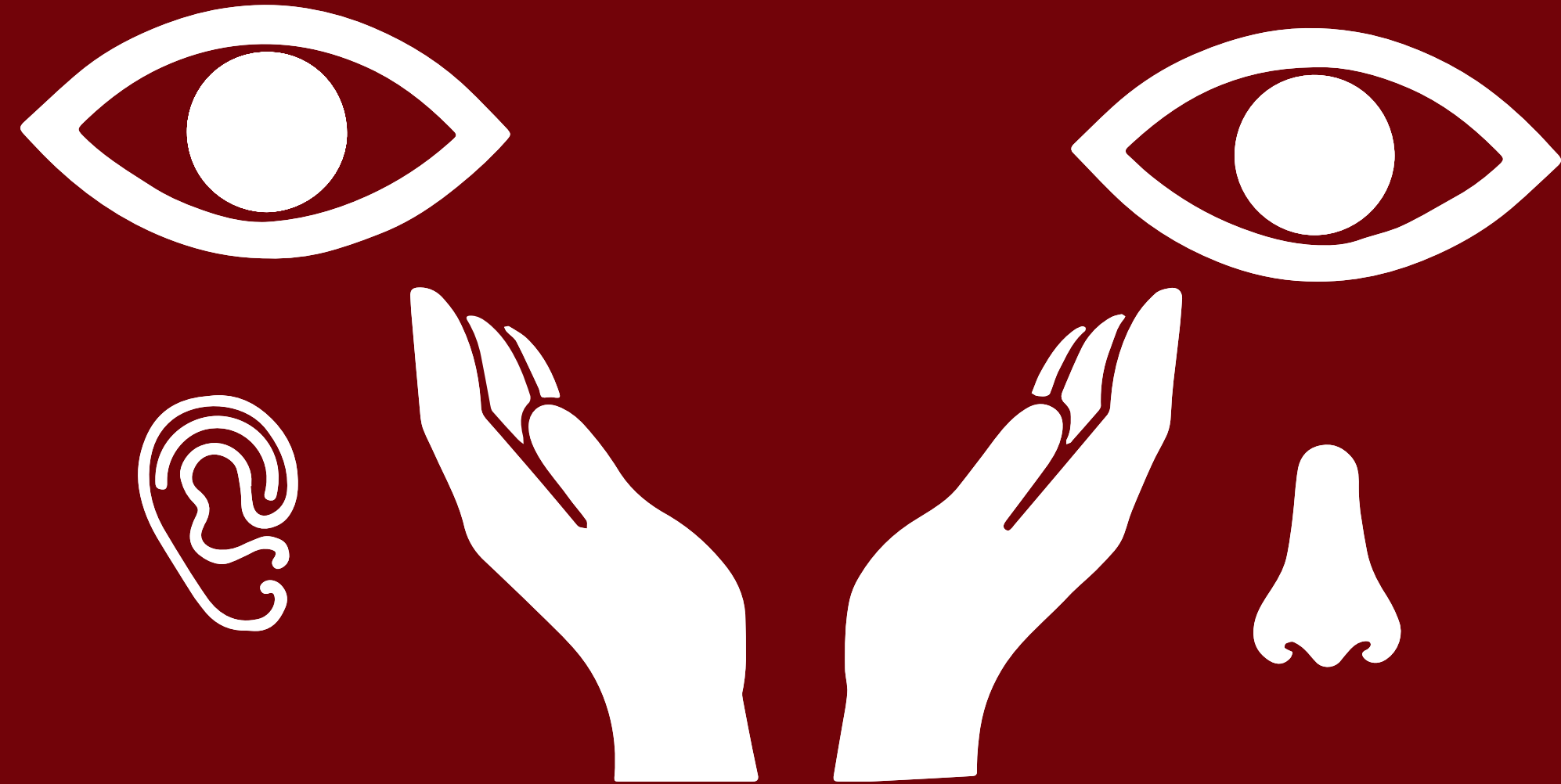
Of older Americans, those over 65, three-quarters believe democracy is a necessary form of government. Of Americans under 30, only a third do. We're facing a crisis of confidence in the notion of democracy.

—Ian Bassin

Does democracy have an identifying sound, a catchy theme song, a defining musical score?

Perhaps democracy is a story—something good, beautiful, and enduring that we pass down from one generation to the next. When people hear that story for the first time and are invited to add their own nuances—to envision their own ideal ending—democracy might become richer, stronger, and more resilient for us all.

What kind of story have we been telling ourselves about democracy? Can we tell it better?



Cary Grant, the famous American actor, once went to a charity cocktail party, and he forgot his ticket. There was this kind of tough woman at the front of the room who said, “Show your ticket.” He said, “I forgot my ticket.” She said, “You cannot enter.” He told her, “I am Cary Grant.” She looked at him and said, “You do not look like Cary Grant.” And he said, “Nobody looks like Cary Grant.” And this is the story about democracy. In a certain way, we were telling ourselves a story of democracy that was not always there. There is one important thing about democracy, and this is the thing that matters for me. Democracy is the political regime that has the capacity for self-correction, and democracy is in a deep crisis only if it loses this capacity.

—Ivan Krastev

Democracy should sound like an orchestra. It’s amazing. Everyone is playing something different, but all together—the bows rise and come down at the same time. And it’s beautiful. That, to me, is a democracy.

A world without democracy is chaos. You can’t hear the strain, you can’t hear the melodies, you can’t hear anything that makes sense. When it’s really broken, will it just be one note from a dictator?

—Maria Ressa

We associate certain kinds of pieces—the Ninth Symphony for example, the last movement—with democracy. That’s a conceit. The same piece was played by Hitler in ’41 in honor of the first veterans of the invasion of Russia. So, it’s hard to make an argument that there’s an inherent connection with music and democracy.

—Leon Botstein

In a democracy nobody sings the same tune, but that doesn’t mean that democracy is a tonal, experimental, super boring thing. It is more like life, the music of democracy—it is like a busy street. It may sound like jazz, or an improvised jam session.

—Ece Temelkuran

I want people to understand that the stories they've been told might not be adequate to tell the history of this country and of other places. And I want people to understand that I am just one person coming from a very specific context as a Catawba, and that Indigenous people have many, many, many experiences and insights to share about the world that we're all living in.

—DeLesslin “Roo” George-Warren

Parents who want to nurture children to not just respect democracy but to *love* democracy must tell them stories. We liberal democrats must have stories—we need powerful narratives. Liberal democracy is relatively new. It just dates from the 18th century in its current form. We are battling ideologies, some of them, that are the worst of millennia—so we need our own stories. Tell your children stories about democracy!

—Norman Eisen

The sound of democracy? There is an element of cacophony. There is an element of a lot of people speaking at once and wanting a tantrum. It can be loud, but if it is too loud and too strident and too angry, it is hard to sustain, and this is the fundamental tension of all democracies. Democracy requires pluralism, difference, disagreement, argument, maybe even loud argument. But if it is too intense and people lose some underlying foundation of mutual respect and common ground, then it becomes zero, and then it becomes very dangerous.

—Larry Diamond

The sound of democracy is an ability to laugh, it is the freedom to laugh. There may not be so much to laugh about in a bad, totalitarian, upset, insane system.

—Michael Žantovský

The story we should be passing down to our children is the symphonic power of liberal democracy.

—Andrew Keen

I've been organizing and visiting quite a number of these citizens' assemblies, and the sound of democracies in practice, for me, is the buzz in the room as you enter. It's so different from today's democracies. Today's electoral democracies are places in which we vote in silence—we're not even allowed to speak in the voting booth, in the polling station—and then after the vote we go back home and shout in silence on social media. This is what we do. And then it's moving and impressive to come into this room where 100 people, or 500 people, or 40 people, depending on the size of the citizens' panel, are just sitting together. They're seated around these round tables—it looks like a Belgian wedding party, though there's no fighting and shouting and no dancing on the table—but people are seated around these round tables trying to come up with solutions, talking to each other, exchanging arguments, learning, listening. This is happening way too rarely in today's democracies. For me, that is the sound of contemporary democracy.

—David Van Reybrouck

Identity politics has encouraged a tendency to only want to see what you already believe, read what you already believe, find yourself in the story. We're not encouraged to take a journey of any kind anymore—whether of the head, of the heart, or to empathize with strangers. So yes, I think we've lost a certain cosmopolitanism that democracy needs.

—Darryl Pinckney

If you can appreciate the contradictions in human nature that are highlighted by great writers like Tolstoy and Shakespeare, you're going to be more open to understanding the contradictions in human nature that democracy tries to acknowledge with its system of checks and balances.

—Adam Hochschild

If democracy is broken, or at least on the cusp of breaking, then how should we fix it? Should we think in specific terms—about securing voting rights, protecting the integrity of elections, restricting gerrymandering—or go back to basics? Could a return to foundational, shared values repair a breaking system? Is the notion that a diverse population could ever share a set of common values a sacred aspiration, or a ridiculous delusion?

If democracy is going to live up to its own high expectations, we've got work to do. Let's get down to it.



Find the Fix

We who believe that democracy is a worthy goal—and indeed, a moral imperative—have to have a better answer to challenges to democracy than the fact that it’s simply not as bad as any authoritarian alternative that has ever been attempted.

—Larry Diamond

While we need to avoid falling into the nostalgia trap of fetishizing antiquity, there is one chapter in the Greek story of democracy that is worth retelling today. That’s the story of citizens’ assemblies, the Greek lottery system for nurturing active political engagement. It’s this civic format that can help us rescue our democratic process.

—Andrew Keen

The only thing that can save a democracy from tyranny or authoritarianism are the first three words that the Founders put in the Constitution: *We the People*. The ultimate check on tyrannical rule is what the people do. And what does that mean? It means being *active* citizens, not passive citizens. It means speaking up in communities, talking to neighbors. A lot of people don’t like talking about politics. You know what? In countries where freedom is on the line, people do talk about politics because it’s existential. It’s existential here.

—Ian Bassin

Find the Fix

We should be completely revamping our social contract.

—Maya MacGuineas

We’ve got to experiment. We’ve got to be radical. It’s a challenge of imagination, but we could do radical local democracy—participatory democracy. We could actually give people *more* choice in some areas.

—David Runciman

We have to actually do the work. We have to keep bashing our head against the wall until our moment comes, and then we have to seize it and we have to push to the next level. It’s our duty to be hopeful.

—Astra Taylor

Find the Fix

The South should go North; the North should go South. The coast should go inland, and the inland to the coast. You give people training in civics and in democracy and in mediation. How do you listen? How do you talk? Get this going on a national scale, and I think it would do a lot to strengthen democracy in America.

—Arlie Hochschild

I go back to the community. What can you change in your neighborhood, your block? You can become frustrated thinking you're going to change Washington—you may, by voting someone in or voting someone out. But you *can* change your block, you can change your neighborhood. You can do it in coalition, with others—it sometimes requires you to stand up and say, *Alright, I'm going to take it upon myself.*

—Earl Lewis

If we can't limit the supply of noxious ideas, I think we have to try and limit the demand for them. The way to do that is to actually fight for our values, to explain to people why living in a society in which we have individual freedom—and in which we *together* actually rule ourselves—remains incredibly important.

—Yascha Mounk

Find the Fix

We've got to have a new deal for the gig economy. There has to be more redistribution of wealth. I'm talking about saving capitalism. I'm talking about the price we must pay for social peace.

—Edward Luce

There are all of these inherent design flaws in an electoral democracy that tend toward short-term-ism, that put reelection over the public good, that put political party logic over the common good as well, where debate is more important than deliberation, where competition matters more than cooperation—these are all things that have been designed into what our democratic institutions are like today. Whereas if we hark back to the ancient Athenian democracy and draw inspiration from random selection, we see that it can be adapted to the modern context such that we have a democracy that is actually more, well, democratic in its inclusivity, in the diversity of who's actually involved in the decision-making. Random selection also creates the conditions for people to be able to grapple with complexity and find consensus and common ground on what are often controversial issues.

—Claudia Chwalisz

We have the power. You know our Constitution starts out with *We the People*—not *We the Congress*, not *We the Corporation*. That’s a *huge* asset for democracy. We have to stop delegating our power without any conditions to Congress or the White House or state legislatures. We just have to look at ourselves in the mirror and ask, *Why aren’t we doing this? Don’t we want to do it? What’s more important?* We certainly have the time to do it, and it’s only one percent of the people, historically, that it takes to turn the country around.

—Ralph Nader

All these ideas that sound fanciful—like the idea of an open democracy centered around randomly selected legislatures—are actually feasible. I think they are doable. It is just going to take a lot of courage to devolve power from elected legislatures to these kinds of bodies.

—Hélène Landemore

Part of the story of trying to fix this problem is getting a format that involves continuous engagement, which in my view is really essential for the rescuing of the democratic process.

—Harold James

There’s the whole idea that there is this sort of Greek exceptionalism, and that European democracies are the direct heirs to that tradition, and that it is our duty and our task to spread the word of democracy to the rest of the world—and we send the whole package like an Ikea piece to Afghanistan and make sure they assemble it correctly. I find that highly problematic; I find it a form of electoral evangelization. There are so many democratic and proto-democratic traditions and institutions in non-Western countries, and we would be silly not to learn from them. I at least have been able to learn quite a bit about different ways of doing democracy by looking at African societies. So let us stop thinking that democracy is a one-way street from Europe or from the West to the rest of the world.

—David Van Reybrouck

Find the Fix

It's important for us to make the case for hope. Hope is morally chosen, not empirically demonstrated. You choose to hope, you choose to believe, you choose to think that we can improve this democracy.

—Cornell Brooks

Ultimately, we can talk about as many policies as we like. We can talk about as many different solutions to democracy as we like. Until we educate our citizens on how to engage better with our democracy, there is no long-term fix.

—Mete Coban

Find the Fix

The most powerful political reform we could adopt that would give us the greatest leverage in repairing and reversing our democratic tailspin in the United States is to adopt ranked-choice voting.

—Larry Diamond

Democracy functions on the basis of legitimacy. Legitimacy lies in the citizens. That is where it comes from. If you don't deal with that basic foundational idea about the role of citizenship, you can't have democracy.

—John Ralston Saul

Interviewees

In alphabetical order

Madeleine Albright: Former U.S. Secretary of State

Carol Anderson: Charles Howard Candler Professor of African American Studies at Emory University

Anne Applebaum: Pulitzer Prize–winning historian, staff writer at *The Atlantic*, and Senior Fellow at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and the Agora Institute

Ian Bassin: Co-founder and Executive Director of Protect Democracy

Richard Bellamy: Professor of Political Science at University College London

Sheri Berman: Professor of Political Science at Barnard College

Mark Blyth: William R. Rhodes '57 Professor of International Economics at Brown University

Leon Botstein: Conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra and President of Bard College

Cornell Brooks: Professor at the Harvard Kennedy School and former president and CEO of the NAACP

Angelos Chaniotis: Professor of Ancient History and Classics at the Institute for Advanced Study

Soraya Chemaly: Author, activist, and Director of the Women's Media Center Speech Project

Adrienne Clarkson: Co-founder of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship and former Governor General of Canada

Mete Coban: Councillor for Stoke Newington in the London borough of Hackney and CEO of My Life My Say

Sir Paul Collier: Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government and a Professorial Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford

Claudia Chwalisz: Innovative Citizen Participation Lead at the OECD Directorate for Public Governance

Sir Angus Deaton: Winner of the 2015 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences and Senior Scholar at Princeton University's School of Public and International Affairs

Larry Diamond: Senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University

Norman Eisen: Senior fellow in Governance Studies at the Brookings Institution, former special counsel to the House Judiciary Committee, and former Ambassador of the United States to the Czech Republic

Robert H. Frank: H. J. Louis Professor of Management emeritus at Cornell University's Johnson Graduate School of Management

Interviewees

In alphabetical order

DeLesslin "Roo" George-Warren: Queer artist, researcher, and organizer from Catawba Indian Nation and a Humanity in Action Landecker Fellow

Carl Gershman: Founding president of the National Endowment for Democracy

Roya Hakakian: Author, Persian-language poet, and founding member of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center

Rebecca Henderson: John and Natty McArthur University Professor at Harvard University

Adam Hochschild: Author, historian, and Lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism

Arlie Hochschild: Professor of Sociology emerita at the University of California, Berkeley

Michael Ignatieff: Former Rector and President of Central European University in Budapest and Vienna

Harold James: Professor of History and International Affairs and the Director of the Program in Contemporary European Politics and Society at Princeton University

Peniel Joseph: Founding Director of the Center for the Study of Race and Democracy at the University of Texas at Austin

Andrew Keen: Author, digital commentator, and host of How to Fix Democracy

Stephanie Kelton: Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Stony Brook University

Ivan Krastev: Chairman of the Centre for Liberal Strategies in Sofia and permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna

Hélène Landemore: Professor of Political Science at Yale University

Earl Lewis: Founding director of the Center for Social Solutions and Thomas C. Holt Distinguished University Professor at the University of Michigan

Eric Liu: Co-founder and CEO of Citizen University and Director of the Aspen Institute's Citizenship and American Identity Program

Tzipi Livni: Former Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Justice, and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel

Edward Luce: U.S. national editor and columnist at the *Financial Times*

Maya MacGuineas: President of the bipartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget

Abdul-Rehman Malik: Journalist, cultural organizer, and Associate Research Scholar and Lecturer in Islamic Studies at Yale Divinity School

Interviewees

In alphabetical order

Tom Malinowski: U.S. Representative for New Jersey’s 7th congressional district and former Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Branko Milanovic: Visiting Presidential Professor at CUNY and senior scholar at the Stone Center on Socio-economic Inequality

Yascha Mounk: Associate Professor of the Practice of International Affairs at Johns Hopkins University, Contributing Editor at *The Atlantic*, and Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations

Ralph Nader: Consumer advocate, author, lawyer, and former U.S. presidential candidate

Moisés Naím: Distinguished Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former editor of *Foreign Policy*

Irene Natividad: President of the GlobeWomen Research and Education Institute

Nanjala Nyabola: Kenyan writer, researcher, and political analyst

Norman Ornstein: Senior fellow emeritus at the American Enterprise Institute

Darryl Pinckney: American novelist, playwright, and essayist

Peter Pomerantsev: Author and Senior Fellow at the London School of Economics and the Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University

Raghuram Rajan: Katherine Dusak Miller Distinguished Service Professor of Finance at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business and former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India

John Ralston-Saul: Co-founder of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, writer, and former President of PEN International

Richard Reeves: Senior Fellow in Economic Studies and Director of the Future of the Middle-Class Initiative at the Brookings Institution

Maria Ressa: Filipina-American journalist and author, co-founder and CEO of Rappler, and winner of the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: Former Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom

David Runciman: Professor of Politics at the University of Cambridge

Annika Savill: Executive Head of the UN Democracy Fund

Walter Scheidel: Dickason Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Classics and History at Stanford University

Interviewees

In alphabetical order

Anne-Marie Slaughter: CEO of New America and former director of policy planning for the U.S. Department of State

Constanze Stelzenmüller: Fritz Stern Chair on Germany and trans-Atlantic Relations in the Center on the United States and Europe at the Brookings Institution

Richard Stengel: Former editor of *TIME* and former U.S. Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs

Astra Taylor: Writer and director of the documentary film *What Is Democracy?*

Ece Temelkuran: Turkish novelist and political commentator

Danilo Türk: President of the Club de Madrid and former President of the Republic of Slovenia

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: Co-founder and CEO of CitizenLab

David Van Reybrouck: Flemish writer, archaeologist, cultural historian, and co-founder of the G1000 Citizens’ Summit

Richard D. Wolff: Professor of Economics emeritus at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Visiting Professor at The New School

Adrian Wooldridge: Political editor and Bagehot columnist at *The Economist*

Bianca Wylie: Co-founder of Tech Reset Canada and Senior Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation

Michael Žantovský: Executive director of the Václav Havel Library and former ambassador of the Czech Republic to the United Kingdom, the U.S., and Israel

Gabriel Zucman: Director of the EU Tax Observatory and the Stone Center on Wealth and Income Inequality at the University of California, Berkeley

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Irene Braam & Judith Goldstein

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Kenny Martin



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