



DEMOCRACY'S

PATH MENDING A FRACTURED NATION

FORWARD SHAPING AMERICA'S FUTURE

DEMOCRACY'S PATH FORWARD

“WE ARE LIVING THROUGH A BATTLE
FOR THE SOUL OF THIS NATION”

JOE BIDEN

The United States today is a fractured nation. Our divides stem from many factors: the difficult legacy of race in our history; increasing social and economic inequities; immigration and its impact on families and our nation; how we make space for all gender identities and sexual orientations; a seemingly intractable separation between urban and rural life; and large portions of our population whose political ideologies seem to be completely at odds.

These fractures are showing up in alarming ways: from families split along political lines; to embattled politicians whose inability to come to agreement holds hostage the most basic government functions; to actual violence erupting between groups on opposite sides of these divides.

As painful as these fractures feel, they are not the primary challenge facing America today.

Our primary challenge is reminding each other that it is possible for our complex population to lean into and work through these fractures - together.

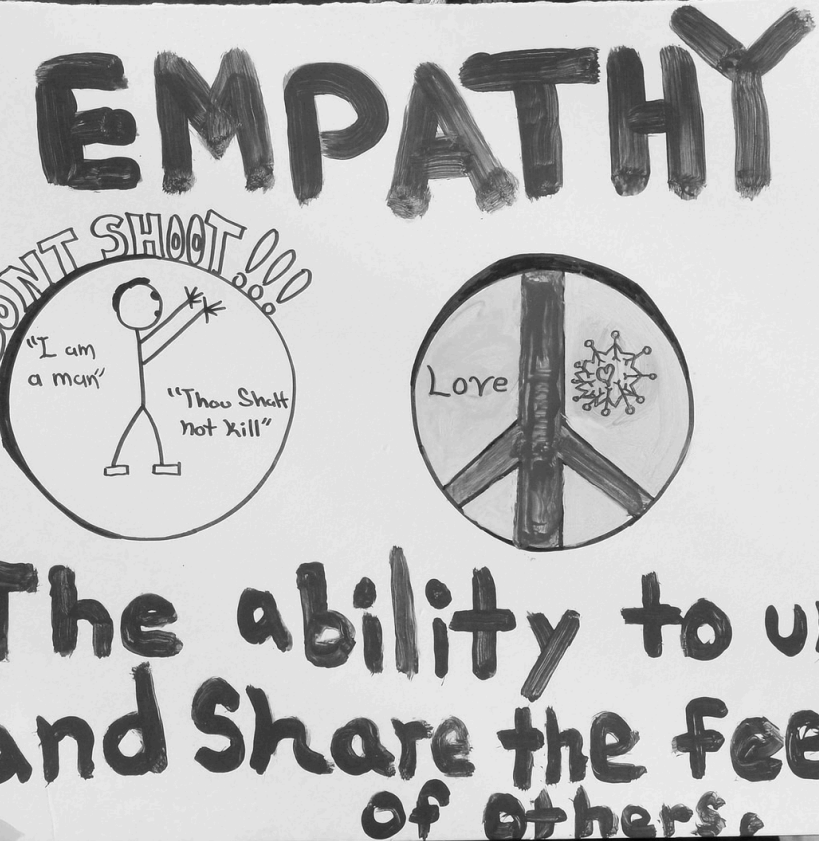
The roots of democracy run deep in our nation. Our country's founding documents — including our Declaration of Independence and Constitution — offer a set of principles that bind us together for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The challenge before all Americans, then, is to come together in peaceful struggle to develop a shared vision to carry us into a stronger future for each of us individually and for our nation as a whole.

All over the country, efforts are underway for the public to engage in this peaceful struggle – from “Dreamers” re-defining the meaning of legal status, to resurgent voices from rural and manufacturing communities, to the movement to insure equity in policing. More and more movements and voices are adding to this call to re-shape what democracy looks like in America.





MENDING A FRACTURED NATION SHAPING AMERICA'S FUTURE



Democracy's Path Forward is a new national initiative designed to connect and harness the power of hundreds of these local, state and national efforts. Through inclusive and non-partisan, digital and in-person platforms, the goal is to raise, connect, and listen to the voices of the American public in an effort to heal our present, honor the roots of our past, and choose our future.

A primary tool used in this effort will be The Question Campaign. Rather than identifying and promoting particular goals, ***Democracy's Path Forward*** will solicit and bring forth questions, literally by the millions, that the public feels our nation must address. This process cuts through the noise of opinion makers, the media and political parties and directly promotes the public's voice about the questions they believe are most central for this country.

These questions will be collected into themes, coded geographically, and made available to communities throughout the nation in order to foster a truly democratic conversation where the American public can struggle together over the fundamental question we are all facing: The shape and direction of America's future.

Our first task is to build a broad partnership network that will both guide and carry out the work. Once the network is built, we will:

- Engage local and national communities in online and face-to-face discussions to identify and grapple with the public's top questions about the current and future states of our nation.
- Activate policy makers, academics and local experts to inform these discussions.
- Facilitate the emergence of shared understanding of principles that will guide us into the future.
- Inspire and build capacity to take action on preferred strategies for realizing these principles.

DEMOCRACY'S PATH FORWARD TIMELINE

America is not people who fly their flags out in the open.
It is people who ask their questions out in the open.
America is a conversation
that takes form around a whole set of questions
that are not easily asked...
so that it takes courage and the commitment of many lives
to ask them properly and ask them well.
May the courage of our questions make us sane.

-- Michael Bridge

SEEKING KEY PARTNERS

In the coming weeks and months, **Democracy's Path Forward** will actively be reaching out to the partners needed to build, expand and sustain the network to carry out these efforts. We have immediate initial needs for both resource partners and robust community partners. On the resource side, support is needed to identify key staff, secure needed technology and other resources, raise complete funding, and develop organizational, marketing and business plans. For initial community partners, **Democracy's Path Forward** is designed to exist side-by-side with and add value to projects that participating networks and their members are already doing. The task here is to create openings for and awareness of the project in as wide and deep a manner as possible.

Creating infrastructure that is simple to navigate and has nimble access points will be key to the success of Democracy's Path Forward. We estimate that design and full roll-out of the initiative will cost approximately \$5 million - reaching 3 million people across 50 states and establishing the civic infrastructure necessary to carry forward a shared vision for the future of American democracy.

The time is now, the need is great. Your ideas and support are critical. Please join us!

CONNECT

OCT 2017 - FEB 2018

Invite over 500 institutions to join Democracy's Path Forward: networks, organizations, funders, community based organizations, and communities will participate in strengthening the public's role in identifying and addressing key questions and issues of our time and engage their members in the Question Campaign.

DESIGN & PRODUCE

OCT 2017 - MAY 2018

Identify and organize national and local creative and technical partners to create the communication and social media tools for the Question Campaign.

ASK & LEARN

APR 2018 - MAY 2018

Launch intensive 21-day media and organizing campaign resulting in 3 million people donating their questions about the future of America. In real time, questions are organized into themes, geocoded, and made accessible to the public using a variety of communication tools.

SELECT

MAY 2018 - JUNE 2018

Local communities select their top questions to frame dialogue, knowledge exchange, and action in the work going forward. Conduct national campaign to select key questions for the nation.

ENGAGE & ACT

JUNE 2018 - AUG 2018

Organize people, on the ground and online, around central themes and top questions to engage in dialogue, knowledge exchange, and reaching agreement on local actions to address the top questions in their community.

CONVENE

SEP 2018

Delegates from partner groups convene to construct a vision and action plan for the future of America.

What does it mean to be poor in the richest country in the world?

Jonathan Smith, San Fransico, CA



What's Your Question for America?

DEMOCRACY'S
PATH
FORWARD

Democracy's Path Forward is a collaborative movement initiated by the Civic Design Network at MIT, The Athena Group and Innovation by Design.

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