

## Facilitation Plan: Exploring the *End of American Democracy?* Exploring the Culture of Democracy

### I. CONTEXT SETTING: Introducing the Discussion (2-3 mins.)

In this conversation, we want to explore the broader social and cultural aspects of democracy. What are the values, beliefs, or mindsets that are at the heart of a healthy democracy? What would a healthy culture of democracy look like? In a separate conversation, we might talk (or we have talked) about the different mechanisms, institutions, or processes that are essential for a healthy democracy. (These might include things like: mechanisms for free and fair elections that feed into proportional representation of the public will in our governmental bodies, having public institutions that are accountable to the will of the majority rather than the private interest of financial donors, etc.).

Beyond the structures or mechanisms for a healthy democracy, what spirit should animate those structures?

What values and beliefs are essential to make them come alive and help resist the threats to democracy?

That's what we'll explore in this conversation.

### II. DISCUSSION AGREEMENTS:

It helps to have some group agreements about how we'll engage in this conversation. Our suggestions are:

- **Be generous:** Helping each other to explore and remaining open to the truth others express
- **Be bold:** Opening ourselves up to new and different perspectives
- **Be connected:** We're here to make connections with each other rather than to win an argument

### III. ROUND ONE: ROUND ROBIN Introductions and Personal Connections to the Topic (5-10 mins.)

Take a minute or two to introduce yourself and share an answer to the following: When you think about a healthy democratic society, what's a belief or value that you think is essential for its ability to be a healthy democracy?

#### IV. ROUND TWO: OPEN DISCUSSION

##### Expanding a Sense of the Essential Beliefs and Values for a Healthy Democracy (40-60 mins.)

Let's continue to develop a sense of the beliefs and values that are essential for a healthy democracy. Beyond the institutions or mechanisms of democracy, what beliefs and values are needed to make it a healthy democracy? What are the essential features of a healthy culture of democracy? Share something that you would add to our list — and tell us something about how you understand that belief or value. Keep in mind, we don't all need to agree on what they mean.

- Think about how you expect people to relate to one another in a healthy democratic society. Think about how people should expect to be treated in a democracy. What beliefs or values underlie or animate these behaviors? If we think of democracy as a way of life, and not just as a form of government, what beliefs and values shape this way of life?
- Now that we have a sense of some of the beliefs and values essential for a healthy democratic society, let's explore where we see these beliefs and values being weakened or under threat. Where do you see an essential democratic belief or value at risk? What's a belief or value that seems weaker today than it used to be?
- When you think about an essential democratic belief or value, what would it mean to lose it? What would our society be like if we lost or destroyed this belief or value?
- Alternatively, what's a belief or value that is harmful or corrosive to a healthy culture of democracy? What are some antidemocratic beliefs or values?
- What are some goals or purposes we might have in mind to grow a healthy culture of democracy? What might we be aiming for?

#### V. ROUND THREE:

##### Looking Ahead and Wrapping Up (10 mins.)

Shifting perspectives, what might we do to foster a healthy culture of democracy?

- How might we help to sustain and grow the beliefs and values that are essential for a healthy democracy that can resist the threats against it?
- As we wrap up, what are some of the key insights or questions that you will take away from this conversation?