

Facilitation Plan

Truth and Democracy: News Media

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

In this discussion we will explore the relationship between truth and democracy and how this relationship is at risk. It's easy to see how truth is important for democracy to work. How could participants in a self-governing society make meaningful decisions without information about reality, and without some sense of truth? In this particular conversation, let's focus on the news media as one way that participants in a democracy can have access to truth.

With the freedom of the press embodied in its Constitution, US democracy has long recognized the importance of the news media for a healthy democracy. But, the relationship of the news media, the truth, and democracy is not always a positive one. Some news outlets misinform the public and report in a way that makes people fearful and more likely to support authoritarianism than democracy. Many people get their news via social media, which is often filled with misinformation or intentional disinformation. In this discussion, let's help each other to explore the challenges for truth and democracy that arise from different forms of news media, including social media. Let's also help each other to explore the possibilities of different ways that we, as a democratic society, could meet those challenges.

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 so to introduce yourself and share a question or concern you have about the news media in relation to truth and democracy.

IV. ROUND TWO: OPEN DISCUSSION **Expanding our Sense of the Topic (40–60 mins.)**

What role(s) do you think the news media plays (or should play) in connecting truth and democracy?

- What challenges for truth and democracy come up with different forms of news media, including social media?
- What would it look like for a democratic society if the majority of the citizens were misinformed? Or, what could be the consequences for democracy of untethering the news media from truth-telling?
- What guiding purposes and values could or should shape the news media--and how do these mesh with the purposes and values of a healthy democracy?

V. ROUND THREE: **Looking Ahead and Wrapping Up (10 mins.)**

- What are some different ways that a democratic society might address the challenges that emerged in our conversation?
- What are different possibilities for improving the connections of news media, truthful information, and democracy?
- As we wrap up, what are some of the key insights or questions that you will take away from this conversation?