

# COVERING AND REDUCING POLITICAL POLARIZATION AND CONFLICT

Journalists are Experimenting with New Techniques  
to Foster Civil Discourse and Understanding

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SBS

# NIEMAN-SBS FOUNDATION RESEARCH PLANNING COMMITTEE



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# INTRODUCTION

**C**onflict and polarization are rampant today, both in the United States and around the world. While the rise of social media has offered new opportunities for connection and amplified marginalized voices, it has also exacerbated divisions in society. Powerful currents of misinformation and deliberate disinformation have eroded trust in political institutions and the media, and citizens have become disengaged from each other, retreating into intellectually homogenous bubbles rather than engaging in civil discourse.

In this contentious environment, the media stands at an inflection point. Legacy media has declined in stature and influence in direct proportion to social media's rise. Too often, the mainstream news is seen now as part of the problem rather than part of the solution, attacked by both sides for its partisan lean, and criticized around the world for stoking conflict and societal tensions rather than helping to alleviate them. And yet, a robust news media is more essential than ever in providing the factual information and essential context for citizens to understand and act in their world.

In this highly charged environment, how can journalists regain public trust and cover political polarization and conflict without aping its worst qualities? What role can journalism play in healing the rifts in society while still staying true to its mission of fairness and objectivity? This white paper explores these difficult challenges and offers some solutions based on the current work of journalists in the field.

It stems from a session in October 2019 at the SDF ([SBS D Forum](#))\*, which explored how journalists and storytellers are using new formats and technologies to engage citizens in constructive debate. Organized by SBS (Seoul Broadcasting System), the oldest and largest private broadcasting network in Korea, SDF is one of the world's largest international conferences examining mid- and long-term social trends in this period of technological transition.

The session "Communication and Community" was jointly organized by the SBS Cultural Foundation and the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University. It featured presentations by James Geary, Deputy Curator of the Harvard Nieman Foundation and Editor of Nieman Reports; Karim Ben Khelifa,

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\* As a terrestrial broadcasting station that uses the public airwaves, SBS has since 2004 organized two non-profit global forums as a major knowledge-sharing project—SDF (Seoul Digital Forum) and FKR (Future Korea Report)—as a way to give back to society. Yet with issues pertaining to technology and society becoming increasingly inextricable, SBS in 2018 started SDF season 2 with the launch of SBS D Forum (also called "SDF"), that both merges and builds on the rich tradition of SDF and FKR. The D of SBS D Forum stands for, not just Digital and Data but also for Diversity, Democracy, Dignity and Dream etc.

photojournalist and creator of the AR/VR work, “The Enemy”; Ethan Zuckerman, Director of the Center for Civic Media at the MIT Media Lab; Eve Pearlman, co-founder and CEO of Spaceship Media; and Young Min, Professor in the School of Media and Communication at Korea University.

Several of these journalists and researchers also participated in a seminar jointly organized by the Korean Society for Journalism & Communication Studies (KSJCS) and the SBS Culture Foundation. Called “Social Conflict and Media,” the event was moderated by Hongwon Park, Professor at Pusan National University, and brought together Geary, Zuckerman, Khelifa, and Pearlman with prominent Korean journalists and academics, including Mina Lee, Professor at SookMyung Women’s University; Jaekook Lee, Professor at SungKyunKwan University; Sujin Choi, Professor at KyungHee University; and Jeonghwan Lee, CEO of Media Today.

This white paper explores the issues raised during both these discussions, as well as reporting on these trends by Nieman Reports, a website and quarterly print publication covering thought leadership in journalism; Nieman Storyboard, a publication which showcases exceptional narrative journalism and explores the future of nonfiction storytelling; and the Nieman Journalism Lab, an online forum that examines the future of journalism in the digital age.

# RESTORING TRUST

The media might seem a natural venue through which to correct wrongly held assumptions, but research shows that media is often seen as part of the problem.

The American public is, perhaps surprisingly, [not any more divided over policy issues than it was three decades ago](#). At the same time, the political rancor between political parties has increased dramatically. According to [a Pew survey](#), people hold increasingly negative views of the opposing political party, with for example, 70 percent of Democrats saying Republicans are close-minded, and 46 percent of Republicans viewing Democrats as lazy. A pretty close percentage of both Republicans and Democrats—45 and 42 percent respectively—view the other side as dishonest.

Citizens are even more negative about how the other side sees them, assuming that people in the opposite political party would be more opposed to proposals from their own side than they actually were, according to [recent research by Harvard psychologists Jeffrey Lees and Mina Cikara](#). The same study, in fact, showed that people also held more negative views about people in their own political party, thinking them more likely to obstruct proposals by the other side than they were themselves.

The media might seem a natural venue through which to correct such wrongly held assumptions and point people toward commonly held beliefs. Instead, study after study shows that the media is seen as part of the problem, viewed by both sides as biased and untrustworthy. In [a 2018 Pew survey](#) only 21 percent of Americans said they trusted the national media “a great deal,” and only 27 percent of Democrats and 11 percent of Republicans said the national media “do very well in keeping them informed.”

In [a 2017 survey](#) by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and YouGov of 18,000 people in nine countries, two-thirds of respondents pointed to bias, spin, and agendas as reasons they didn’t trust the media—a view held particularly by Americans, especially on the political right. [This seems especially true for national media](#), which seems to emphasize polarization and conflict, [a trend that has become starker as local news has declined](#). The advertising freefall in the last decade has particularly hit local newspapers, which have seen a 66 percent drop in ad revenue and a 40 percent drop in circulation. [An analysis by professors from Louisiana State University, Texas A&M University, and Colorado State University](#) found that political polarization increased in communities after the closure of a local newspaper, with voters more likely to vote for a straight party ticket in elections rather than split their ticket.

The situation is no better in Korea. [A 2019 study](#) by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and Oxford University [ranked South Korea last on the list of 37 countries in trust of media](#), with only 22 percent of people saying they trusted the news. Another study by the Korean Social Conflict Resolution Center found media coverage to be a top source of tension in society (along with social and financial inequality).

That has led citizens to seek out alternative sources of information such as social media





Young Min, a Korean University professor, said the media should do more to explain the origins of conflict in society

and messenger apps, said Korean University media studies professor Young Min at the SBS D Forum. “This digital space can become a polarized divided space,” she said. “Instead of creating a diversified forum for discourse, the problem is when we denigrate other opinions or attack other groups or send out hate messages. The whole debate can become extremely polarized.” In a study Young conducted between 2007 and 2017 to gauge the maturity of public conversation, she found that the number of people classified as “communicators,” who were able to rationally express opinions and listen to others, had dropped, while people who were classified as loud and noisy increased.

Reversing the distrust in the media and restoring the media’s place as a mediating force in society could help to address these trends. That means a re-commitment to upholding ethical standards, including a focus on being fact-based, presenting multiple sides and angles, and providing sufficient context for understanding. But it also means overcoming the negativity that audiences perceive in news coverage. “Instead of showing and explaining the context of the conflict and how it started, the media merely focuses on highlighting the tension between the two opposing sides,” Young said, “which means that readers and viewers will only remember the conflict without really understanding why it started and they are finally left with the perception that the gulf between the two sides is actually much bigger than it is.”

## FOCUSING ON SOLUTIONS



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Mina Lee and her colleagues conducted a survey of South Koreans' views on traditional news media reports, finding respondents' views to be overwhelmingly negative

One potential antidote to this negativity bias in news reporting is “solutions journalism,” in which stories are framed not by conflict, but by the solutions to conflict. “I am not saying the media has to give us a solution,” Young said, “rather that it must give more emphasis and value to reporting the conflict mediation process, not just focusing on the first chapter of an incident, but the middle and later chapters as well.” [A solutions-oriented approach](#) would focus on making people aware and involved in issues, providing information that can help them become personally involved and take action.

Mina Lee of SookMyung Women's University, Kim Sunho of the Korea Press Foundation, and Ha Ju Yong of Inha University explored this idea in South Korea in a survey of 800 people. Asked about their views on traditional news media reports, respondents' main emotions were “frustration” and “outrage.” Those kinds of negative emotions, Lee said, are contributing to the distrust and cynicism people feel toward media, leading to pessimism and disengagement. “Focusing on criticism and conflict is a part of the DNA of the media, but the Korean people do not seem to have a positive view on the media that focuses on these things,” Lee said.

To test these ideas, the researchers showed survey participants pairs of news articles on



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Young Min, Korean University media studies professor

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the topics of treatment of food waste and falling birth rates. In each case, one article highlighted conflict over the issue, while the other focused on potential solutions. After reading the solutions journalism article, readers felt more positive and engaged compared to after they read the traditional article, and also felt more trust toward the reporter. For the food waste article, people were also more motivated to seek out facts and share the story with others.

Writing [solutions journalism](#) can be more difficult and time-consuming than traditional journalism, requiring an investment of resources or collaboration with news nonprofits in order to implement. Just as importantly, it can require a change in mindset among reporters trained to focus on conflict by seeking out the most contentious sources on both sides of an issue. It also may not be appropriate to pursue for some kinds of stories—for example, global issues on which it is difficult for individuals to take immediate action. Overall, however, it can help engage citizens in issues in more productive ways.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel may have had this in mind in 2017 [when developing their Ideas Lab](#), a solutions journalism-focused initiative that has replaced their op-ed section. Now, rather than providing opinion and editorials, [the newsroom reports on responses to social problems in Wisconsin](#)—from gerrymandering to teen suicide and domestic violence—and seeks independent evidence to support the solutions they write about. Recent stories by Ideas Lab include reporting on how bystander intervention programs are leading to a decrease in violence on local college campuses and a look at how protected bike lanes make the streets safer for everyone, motorists included.

# CREATING DIALOGUE



Spaceship Media co-founder Eve Pearlman uses the term “dialogue journalism” to describe Spaceship’s method for facilitating conversations on divisive topics such as gun control.

**T**he role of media in creating a space for dialogue between people with opposing views is increasingly seen as another way to address political polarization in society. Much of the ideological conflict between people has been driven in past years by a lack of conversation between people in opposing camps. With more and more people getting news from social media, they are able to curate their newsfeeds to only see stories that support the views they already hold, and interact with homogenous groups online, isolating themselves in their own digital news ecosystem. Nearly a decade ago, [internet activist Eli Pariser termed that phenomenon a filter bubble](#), “your own personal, unique universe of information that you live in online.” Such bubbles are created by the individuals and groups that we seek out online, but also reinforced by social media algorithms that tend to show us stories and information similar to those we have liked in the past, creating an information feedback loop that distorts the range of viewpoints we see.

Recent journalistic efforts to break down those barriers and facilitate communication between opposing groups have shown that such dialogue can help to reduce tension and create common ground. Spaceship Media, a journalism organization founded in 2016 by Eve Pearlman and Jeremy Hay, has coined the term “[dialogue journalism](#)” to describe its method for facilitating conversations on hot-button issues such as

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immigration, gun control, and race in public education. The organization brings people with a range of views on these contentious issues into a physical or online space together, and then lays down clear guidelines to facilitate a respectful conversation: no name-calling, insults, or personal attacks; and always assume the best of the other people in the conversation.

“We’re not going to each side and quoting a partisan advocate and then playing them off each other,” Eve Pearlman said to the SBS D Forum. “We’re not amplifying conflict or tension in the pursuit of clicks or page views.” Instead, facilitators ask four questions to participants: “What do you want to know about the other side?” “What do you want the other side to know about you?” “What do you think of the other side?” and “What do you think the other side thinks about you?” The questions, according to Pearlman, are designed to start creating a relationship of trust that can help open people’s minds to others’ views. “Facts are not enough. Without relationships, without trust, without connection, none of the facts matter,” Pearlman said. “If we want to start engaging those issues and get to the point of changing minds, it’s not going to be by ostracizing people. It’s going to be by building relationships.”

During these politically difficult conversations, mediators then help augment the conversations with factual information to help correct misinformation in real-time and create a more productive dialogue. Spaceship Media has partnered with other news organizations to report on these conversations. Those have ranged from a series of articles in the Fresno Bee [exploring the divides from the north and south side of the city](#) to coverage in Time and Alabama’s AL.com based on [a national conversation in a closed Facebook group about guns](#).

In [testimonials from participants](#), Spaceship Media has seen an increase in willingness to talk with a person holding different views. It has also seen a change in general attitudes, with people thinking of others more positively after engaging in respectful conversation with them. Some participants have even stayed in touch and become friends, despite holding different views.

[Other news organizations](#) are making concerted efforts to foment conversations across the political spectrum. Abridge News, a startup out of the Harvard Innovation Lab, solicits op-eds of different viewpoints and arranges them on an ideological continuum, exposing readers to a range of positions on the issues and inviting civil comments. Another site, Kialo, encourages debate on issues by framing opposing “propositions” on different issues and inviting users to submit claims in support. The format allows users to see claims on both sides of an issue, exposing them to a full range of opinions.

Korea University’s Young Min has seen encouraging results in experiments she has conducted across ideological viewpoints on the popular Korean social media platform

KakaoTalk, which runs on an open chatroom format. In conversations about gender and abortion, colleagues in Min's lab analyzed attitudes after an unfettered discussion, and then intervened to facilitate a conversation, allowing each participant equal time to present their views. She found that afterward, participants were more satisfied with the moderated conversation, even if they didn't change their views. "If I am able to voice my opinion and know somebody else is listening to me, then that in itself is meaningful," Min said. "Even if my opinion is not accepted as the conclusion, I am willing to accept the consensus decision because I was able to voice my opinion. That is the starting point, I think."

# HUMANIZING CONFLICT

No conflict is more polarizing than war. For citizens whose countries are involved in military conflict, media coverage often dehumanizes those on the other side, turning them into a faceless “enemy.” For observers from the outside, meanwhile, it can be difficult to tell who to believe. Without any firsthand knowledge or personal experience of the conflict, observers can reflexively support one side based on stereotypes, or check out altogether and become numb in the face of suffering.



Photojournalist Karim Ben Khelifa created the virtual reality installation “The Enemy” to encourage audiences to see a conflict from two very different perspectives.

After more than 15 years of reporting in war zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan, photojournalist Karim Ben Khelifa grew frustrated with this dynamic. As a journalist reporting on people in pain and crisis, he began thinking about why people let him take pictures of them in worst moments. He concluded that they did so in part because they hoped that his work would help them by exposing their suffering to the outside world and help to reduce or avoid future conflict. In his own experience, however, Khelifa wasn't so sure that was happening. He frequently saw readers throw



When journalism becomes an experience, my takeaway is that users start having a change in their perceptions.

Karim Ben Khelifa, creator of "The Enemy"

up their hands in confusion when reading a story about warring sides in a far-off country. Even those inclined toward sympathy experienced "compassion fatigue" and zoned out.

As he frequently crossed the frontlines to talk with combatants, however, Khelifa was often struck by the humanity of fighters on both sides, who often expressed similar hopes and dreams—and nightmares. He [began conceiving of a photography project](#) to help convey this humanity to readers, in hopes they might see beyond the conflict to understand the people underneath. He started asking the same six questions of all of the fighters he photographed: "Who are you?" "Who is your enemy?" "Have you ever killed your enemy?" "What is violence to you?" "What is peace to you?" "Where do you see yourself 20 years from now?" When it came to defining their enemy, obviously, those he interviewed had very different responses, but their answers to many of the other questions were similar.

Khelifa continued to examine these questions as a Nieman Fellow at Harvard in 2013 and a fellow at the MIT Open Documentary Lab from 2013 to 2015, where he was exposed to the new technologies of virtual and augmented reality. He saw in them a way to convert his photo project into a virtual reality installation, immersing the viewer in the experience of the combatants on both sides. The result was "[The Enemy](#)," a 300-square-meter installation for up to 20 viewers at a time, in which they could approach fighters on both sides of a conflict, including Israelis and Palestinians, warring sides in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and gang members in El Salvador.

In the physical experience of walking around the installation, making choices of whom to speak with first, and confronting individuals from conflict zones, Khelifa witnessed a level of engagement with their stories very different from traditional media. "When journalism becomes an experience, my takeaway is that users start having a change in their perceptions," he said. "Sometimes they start questioning the bias and stereotypes they have." That especially extended to watching the experiences of people in Israel when he brought the installation there, and watched people meet their "enemy" fact-to-face, some of them for the first time. "The enemy is always invisible," said Khelifa, "and he ceases to be the enemy when he becomes visible."

While virtual reality may not be the best medium for every story, the example illustrates how experimentation and new technology can help better engage audiences in stories involving polarization and conflict, taking a passive experience and making it active. But virtual reality isn't the only way to inject humanity into stories about violence. Many journalists in the US are experimenting with new ways to more compassionately report on gun violence in America, rather than just focusing on the immediate aftermath of a shooting.

“Most coverage of gun violence stops with a person who was killed with a gun—but actually if you think about it, that’s not the news,” said James Geary, deputy curator of Harvard’s Nieman Foundation for Journalism. “The news is the social circumstances that have been going on for decades to create a situation in which so many people are being murdered, by guns. And that has to do with economic inequality, lack of educational opportunities, institutional racism. There is a whole complex ecosystem behind a simple news event.”

In order to understand the impact of gun violence on children, Louisiana reporters Jonathan Bullington and Richard Webster rented office space in a community center in downtown New Orleans. There, they developed a relationship with a youth football team of 9- and 10-year-old boys, spending a month listening before they even started taking notes. In following the boys around and getting to know them for a year, the reporters were able to tell complex stories about childhood trauma and its effects over time. The project, “[The Children of Central City](#),” eventually included a series of newspaper stories in the New Orleans Times-Picayune and a documentary, [which led to](#) resolutions by the New Orleans City Council to change the way the city addresses childhood trauma; and a billboard campaign to educate the public on the issue.

Other journalists have looked for stories around a shooting, taking the time to interview survivors in violence-prone neighborhoods, or looking for solutions in resources to help family members of a shooting victim. “Where the criticism of negativity bias is justified is when journalists stop at the headline of ‘Person Dead by Gun Violence,’” Geary said. “To really explore that issue and explain the news, we need to explore all the issues that led up to that moment.”

# REPAIRING SOCIAL MEDIA



Ethan Zuckerman, director of MIT's Center for Civic Media, is experimenting with ways to build social media platforms that are better for democracy and optimized for public interest.

**S**ocial media has undoubtedly brought many benefits to society. It has provided a productive way to disseminate news, keep in touch with friends and family, and find solidarity with those sharing our interests. It has also offered a powerful new tool for organizing people-powered protest movements from the Arab Spring to the recent uprising in Hong Kong. By amplifying citizen voices, it provides an unprecedented ability for people to participate in civic discourse in a decentralized fashion—without asking permission from traditional media gatekeepers.

At the same time, the precipitous rise of social media has caused many worries and concerns—that it may be addictive or antisocial, or that it may be eroding traditional journalism by siphoning off ad revenue. By far the biggest concern, however, has been the ability by actors to distort or manipulate information, amplifying disagreements and exacerbating polarization. The most notorious case of disinformation was the active campaign by bad actors such as the Russian Internet Research Agency, which sought to sway the last US presidential election by exacerbating tensions within society. But outside of such intentionally spread disinformation, users routinely spread misinformation in the form of inaccurate and biased stories.

A [study by MIT professors in 2018](#) found that lies literally spread faster than truth

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on social media—disseminating 6 times more quickly, and reaching up to 100 times more people. Contrary to popular opinion, they found that the bulk of that spread was not from automated bots, but humans, who were 70 percent more likely to share false stories than true ones. They speculated that difference could be explained by the “novelty” of false news that makes it more irresistible to share.

Interestingly, people seem well aware of these trends. [A 2018 Pew survey](#) found that about 68 percent of adults get news from social media. Of those, 57 percent say they expect the news they find on social media to be “largely inaccurate”—with Republicans particularly expressing that viewpoint. In addition to trolls and bad actors intentionally trying to spread harassment and disinformation, much of the distortion on social media is baked into the system, according to MIT Center for Civic Media Director Ethan Zuckerman. Algorithms that amplify extreme views and advertisers that use users’ data to sell products or push political views can distort what users see and exacerbate already existing tensions.

While anyone can now produce information easily and cheaply and disseminate it on the web, there is no guarantee that anyone will see it. The new gatekeepers are Google and other search engines and Facebook and other social networks, which control what we see and when. The algorithms they use to determine that are opaque at best. On Facebook, what users see is controlled at least in part by commercial and political advertisers who pay money to get in front of eyeballs. Users seem aware of these limitations as well. In [a 2019 Pew survey](#), 62 percent of Americans said they thought social media companies have too much control over the mix of news they see; 55 percent thought that made the news worse.

And yet, said Zuckerman, we take for granted that social media has to be organized in the way it has. “The wrong question to ask is whether social media is bad for democracy,” Zuckerman said. “The right question is to ask how would we build social media that was good for democracy. We assume social networks have to work the way they do right now, and that’s just not true.” He uses the analogy of radio, which in the early 20th century went from a novelty to the dominant form of communication within a decade. And yet, there was no one model for how radio was operated. In the United States, hundreds of radio stations sprang up overnight. In the Soviet Union, one state-owned radio station dominated the airwaves. The United Kingdom, meanwhile, produced an independent national broadcaster, the BBC, which was run in the spirit of public service.

With the internet, however, US companies such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are dominant though some countries have their own social networks, such as KakaoTalk in Korea and WeChat in China. Government censorship is rampant in

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Ethan Zuckerman, MIT  
Center for Civic Media

China, but, in general, internet companies operate with little regulation. Few major internet companies or nonprofits—with notable exceptions being Wikipedia and Firefox—keep the public interest foremost.

The question remains, what would social media optimized for public interest look like? Instead of creating echo chambers and polarization, could it maximize diversity, introduce users to people with alternative viewpoints, or create healthy space for discussion? In other words, could digital media be organized not in the service of profit, but in the service of citizens and democracy? Zuckerman has been experimenting with one response to that question: a social media aggregator called Gobo Social that combines a user's social media feeds into a single stream and gives them more control over the posts that they see.

Currently, the website offers controls to choose posts based on categories including political ideology, gender, rudeness, seriousness, and obscurity. So a user could choose to see perspectives they usually miss, or choose to only see posts by women, or even to hide all news about the 2020 election. “Why should we accept a world in which these big platform companies have full control over what we see?” Zuckerman asked. “They are not optimizing for us as citizens in a democracy.”

One of the more interesting findings that has come out of the research is the fact that despite using some of the best available algorithms to control content, Gobo's algorithms are still inexact. That, however, only highlights how inexact algorithms at Facebook, Twitter, and other networks are. “Perfection isn't the goal,” Zuckerman said. “Helping us understand the imperfection of these systems is part of the goal.” At this point, however, there is no substitute for human intelligence in helping to assign value to social media feeds. One example of that is Reddit, a site in which individual users control what predominates the site by voting up or down posts that they feel best fit (or don't fit) group standards in a particular community.

In South Korea, an effort called the New Trust Project has attempted to provide some standards to assign journalistic values to individual posts, including diversity, balance, factual importance, originality, and readability. “This algorithm allowed users to choose the journalistic values that they prefer to consider,” said Sujin Choi, Professor at KyungHee University, an advisory member on the project. In the US, Eli Pariser and Talia Straub have pursued a similar effort called Civic Signals to come up with metrics to quantify what represents a civil conversation on social media—considering different points of view and getting together to solve problems.

To expand such efforts, Zuckerman has proposed a 2 percent tax on “surveillance advertising” that uses individuals' personal data to track and advertise to them online, and dedicate it instead for research on social media and construction of a pro-civic



social network. In the meantime, media organizations have been experimenting with using features within already existing social media platforms, for example, [Facebook Groups](#), which enable them to speak directly to readers in a dedicated forum, rather than relying on Facebook's algorithm to put its content in front of readers.

The Boston Globe Spotlight Team, for example, created its own Facebook Group around an investigative report on race in the city, allowing readers to communicate with one another in a moderated forum across lines of race and class. The Texas Tribune has started its own Facebook Group, This is Your Texas, to allow citizens to discuss policy reform in the state. The Economist created Open Future, a forum for conversations about liberal values and policies and the role of free markets in the global economy. In each of these examples, the sites have set strict standards for respectful language on their sites and relied on moderators to keep conversations civil.

# A PATH FORWARD

**T**he degree of conflict in our society—both in the US and around the world—can make political polarization seem inevitable and unstoppable. As the media struggles with limited resources and competition from new technologies, it's hard not to see the news media as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. As these examples from across the media spectrum show, however, journalists around the world are experimenting with new forms in order to help reduce and redirect conflict into more productive channels.

By restoring trust in media, focusing on solutions rather than problems, creating dialogue between opposing groups, emphasizing the humanity in situations of conflict, and repairing social media to give control back to those who use it, journalists can help to make the media environment more democratic, more civil, and less confrontational. While conflict in society can never fully be avoided, an effective news media can help to create a forum in which opposing sides can learn about each other's views, and participate in civil dialogue that reduces partisan rancor and charts a productive path forward on issues.

## WATCH

Video of "The Beginning of Change" at SDF2019:

- James Geary, "[Communication and Community](#)"
- Karim Ben Khelifa, "[A Journalist's Venture into New Media](#)"
- Ethan Zuckerman, "[Can We Make Social Media Good for Society?](#)"
- Eve Pearlman, "[Flipping the News Cycle](#)"
- Min Young, "[Towards Connection, Communication, and Trust](#)"
- [Panel Discussion](#)

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