



Dear Friend,

Thank you for hosting a Dinner for Democracy (DFD) or Coffee for Change (CFC). Democracy Forward has launched this effort **to create space and opportunity for people across the country to build community and engage in the work to protect and advance our democracy and the rights of people.**

Building community is not just essential for our work together, but for the very existence of a pro-democracy community. Community also creates the conditions for courage—courage to advocate for ourselves and for each other, courage not to give into attempts to divide us.

Thank you for being part of the work for people and democracy. If you have any questions, please contact us at [dinnerfordemocracy@democracyforward.org](mailto:dinnerfordemocracy@democracyforward.org).

### **What Should I Do Now?**

If you haven't already done so, set a date for your event and invite friends, neighbors, or coworkers to attend. You can gather for an in-person or virtual coffee or dinner. It can be something at your home, at a park, at a restaurant, or at your favorite meet up spot. You could consider meeting in a restaurant, a locally-owned small business or doing a potluck. You might think about whether to invite a speaker to come share credible information about a pressing social concern and how people can help – such as a local elected official, community, civic or religious leader.

Once your dinner or coffee is scheduled, **review the Digital Toolkit materials below.** They include a number of resources to help make your event a success, including conversation starters, discussion questions, and other useful information, including practical tips to answer the question: “What can I do to impact positive change?”

### **What Should I Do at My Gathering?**

If feasible, **start by showing your guests [this brief video](#)** of our CEO and President, Skye Perryman. Download or print the Conversation Starters and other resources in the Digital Toolkit to spark conversation. For example, you might print out the discussion questions, throw them in a hat, and ask each of your guests to draw one out. Have fun with it!

Conclude by asking that each person take at least one action that builds community or advances democracy. Examples include:

- Identifying a project in your local community where you can make a difference and discuss with the group how others could get involved. Check out our How to Get Involved document in the Digital Toolkit for more suggestions.

- Acknowledging whether you are motivated in this time to take action to affect change, or whether you need to focus on self-care and supporting your community, or whether you are interested in building new bridges. View the resources hub on our [website](#) for more information.
- Holding elected leaders accountable if they are not engaging constituents by hosting an empty chair town hall (don't forget to turn your camera on!) to raise your concerns within your community.
- Seeking out and reading credible information about a pressing issue affecting your community. Be sure to review the Pro-Democracy Reading List in the Digital Toolkit for recommendations.
- Learning more about the work that others are doing in this moment by signing up to receive our [e-newsletter](#) and the e-newsletter for [Democracy2025](#), a coalition of more than 500 organizations that we have brought together to ensure swift legal challenges and responses to harmful and anti-democratic actions, and share resources for the pro-democracy community.

**And be sure to amplify your participation!** Research tells us that seeing others speak out and being part of creating change can encourage more people to come forward. It is important to amplify the community you are creating and the courage you are building as part of your DFD or CFC.

- Post a photo or video of the gathering on social media and tag @DemocracyForward and #DinnersforDemocracy or #CoffeeforChange. Our Social Media Toolkit is available [HERE](#).
- Engage and build community with other hosts by following us on [Bluesky](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [TikTok](#),

Additional ideas are available on our [website](#).

### **What Should I Do After the Event?**

Dinners for Democracy and Coffee for Change are made to encourage you to gather frequently and build community. So, bring people together again! Don't let it end! Following the event, we encourage you to:

- Share the resources in the Digital Toolkit with participants.
- Tap one of your guests to host the next Dinner for Democracy or Coffee for Change.
- Continue gathering friends and visiting [democracyforward.org/dinners](https://democracyforward.org/dinners) as we develop new resources.
- Spread the word about the importance of gathering in community.
- Share information with your network about how to host their own Dinner for Democracy or Coffee for Change - [here's](#) a document that might be helpful.
- Purchase [merch](#) and wear your support.
- Make a [contribution](#) to support Democracy Forward's work.

**Stay connected. We need you and this community now more than ever.**

In Solidarity,

*The Democracy Forward Team*

# CONVERSATION STARTERS

The harmful and unlawful actions of the Trump administration and far-right policymakers, flood of news stories, and plans detailed by extremists in Project 2025 are designed to make us feel overwhelmed, angry, and disconnected.

**We, The People, can defy this through creating and strengthening community and building courage.**

Through Together for Democracy, and as we move beyond the first 100 days of the Trump-Vance administration, Democracy Forward has introduced Dinners for Democracy (DFD) and Coffee for Change (CFC) **to create space and opportunity for people across the country to build community and engage in the work to protect and advance our democracy and the rights of people.**

**Building community is not just essential for our work together, but for the very existence of a pro-democracy community.**

Community also creates the conditions for courage—courage to advocate for ourselves and for each other, courage not to give into attempts to divide us.

*To do that, we encourage you to use your Dinner for Democracy or Coffee for Change to:*



# CONVERSATION STARTERS

01.

## Reflect on how your lived experience impacts what you bring to this discussion:

- What brings you to this moment?
- Did your family discuss politics growing up? How so?
- What is a parent or family member's favorite funny story about your childhood?
- Have you had a political "awakening" moment?
- What is a courageous moment you have taken that you are proud of?

## Envision a world that matches your view of a positive future:

- What does the word "Democracy" mean to you?
- What gives you hope?
- What does a day-in-the-life living in a "perfect" world look like for you?
- If the government worked for you, what would be the first task you would assign it?

02.

03.

## Share your go-to opportunities for self-care, which is essential in these challenging times:

- What gives you joy?
- Is there a core belief or feeling that grounds you in moments of stress?
- How do you show up for yourself and your loved ones?
- What tools do you use to give yourself space while staying engaged in the world around you?

## Manifest the community you need to find courage:

- Who do you trust for news? How can you increase access to them?
- Is there a community you aspire to join? What is limiting you?
- What can you do to impact positive change in your local community?
- How does what is happening in your local community relate to our national community?
- What is one thing you think everyone can do to make a difference after tonight?

04.

# CONVERSATION STARTERS

## Act For Now and the Future

DFD and CFC are designed to meet you and your community where you are: whether you are motivated in this time to take action to affect change, or whether you need to focus on self-care and supporting your community, or whether you are interested in building new bridges. Your guests may be interested in taking direct action or it may be interested in providing support in this difficult time or it may be interested in building relationships with people who are different and think differently than you do. They could also wish to do all of these things!

- Your group may wish to identify a local, state, or national issue on which it wishes to affect change. DFD and CFCs can be an “action hub” that helps create space and community for this action – courage is contagious. Check out our “take action” resources to help utilize your DFD or CFC in this way.
- Your group may be comprised of people who are already acting in their own ways. Consider turning your DFD or CFC into a “support hub” to help you tap into community, encouragement, and self care. Check out our “support hub” resources to help utilize your DFD or CFC in this way.
- Your group may wish to build bridges with people who do not have your similar background or share your beliefs. DFD and CFCs can be a “connection hub” to facilitate reaching beyond your comfort zone and your community. Check out our “connection hub” resources to help utilize your DFD or CFC in this way.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED *ADVANCING DEMOCRACY IN YOUR COMMUNITY*

The harmful and unlawful actions of the Trump administration and far-right policymakers, flood of news stories, and plans detailed by extremists in Project 2025 are designed to make us feel overwhelmed, angry, and disconnected.

**We, The People, can defy this through creating and strengthening community and building courage.**

Building community is not just essential for our work together, but for the very existence of a pro-democracy community. Community also creates the conditions for courage—courage to advocate for ourselves and for each other, courage not to give into attempts to divide us. To help meet that need, Democracy Forward launched **Together for Democracy**.

Through Together for Democracy, and as we move beyond the first 100 days of the Trump-Vance administration, Democracy Forward has introduced Dinners for Democracy (DFD) and Coffee for Change (CFC) **to create space and opportunity for people across the country to build community and engage in the work to protect and advance our democracy and the rights of people.**

*Thank You For Joining Us In This Effort.*

As you build community, an important question is:

**“What can I do to impact positive change?”**

Not sure where to start? Here are a few suggestions:

## Act For Now and the Future

DFD and CFC are designed to meet you and your community where you are: whether you are motivated in this time to take action to affect change, or whether you need to focus on self-care and supporting your community, or whether you are interested in building new bridges. Your guests may be interested in taking direct action or it may be interested in providing support in this difficult time or it may be interested in building relationships with people who are different and think differently than you do. They could also wish to do all of these things!

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# ACTION HUB RESOURCES

## Engage Local Government Officials

- Attend public meetings and community forums. Stay informed and show policymakers that people in the community are paying attention.
- Meet with your city council and local school board members. Discuss local issues that matter to you and learn more about their current priorities.
- Apply to serve on a local commission. Local governing bodies often rely on commissions and committees to study issues and make policy recommendations. These positions are typically appointed by the city council or mayor.
- Thank your local elected officials. Reach out to your city council and school board members to thank them for their efforts. Navigating the current political climate as a local elected official can be tough.

## Your Local Issues

- Community-specific issues. What are the issues your community is facing? How can you affect change on those issues?
  - Organizations like Red Wine & Blue offer local suggestions and resources.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper. Elected officials pay attention to local papers. This is another way to make your voice heard.
- Attend local rallies and protests.

## Participate in Local Elections

- Volunteer on a local campaign. Local campaigns typically have small budgets, so volunteers are essential. Offer to block walk, distribute yard signs, or even host a small fundraising event. Everything helps.
- Become a poll worker. Poll workers are paid to staff polling places during early voting and on Election Day. They are essential to our democracy, and local jurisdictions are always in need of more.

# ACTION HUB RESOURCES

## **Are You An Attorney? Join the Rise Up Federal Worker Legal Defense Network**

Join the network of attorneys volunteering their time to help non-partisan federal workers who have been illegally fired. You'll receive training and have access to a library of resources to help workers understand their rights and legal options. Learn more at [www.workerslegaldefense.org](http://www.workerslegaldefense.org).

## **Stay Engaged and Informed**

- Engage and build community with other hosts by following us on Bluesky, Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, or TikTok.
- Sign up for our newsletter for more action opportunities.

# SUPPORT HUB RESOURCES

## Support Community Resources and Encourage Friends To Do the Same

- Use your local library. Supporting libraries is essential to fighting censorship. Check out books that have been challenged, use library resources, or even join your local library board. Check out our Pro-Democracy Reading List!
- Become a member of your local public radio station. Public radio stations air national NPR programs but are first and foremost local entities that support communities through journalism. In fact, in many areas, public radio stations are the only truly local news source.
- Support local nonprofit organizations. Organizations in communities across the country are facing an uncertain future. Make a financial contribution, volunteer your time, or even get a group of friends to buy lunch for an organization's staff one day.
- Join your neighborhood association. Work with fellow residents to address specific neighborhood issues, host events, and advocate for policies that improve the quality of life for everyone.
- Visibly demonstrate support and solidarity with targeted or underrepresented communities. Research shows that visible support for individuals who are targeted, marginalized by systems and structures, or otherwise viewed as the "other" in their community makes a tangible difference in the way in which communities engage with them.
- Use yard signs, flags, or bumper stickers to show your support for issues that are important to you.
- Remember to practice self-care and encourage others to do the same.



# CONNECTION HUB RESOURCES

## Connect with People Who Are Different From You, Learn Something New, and Broaden Your Perspective.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by the news of the day, that's because this chaos and confusion is the point, and follows a well-known authoritarian playbook that is aimed at making people feel alone, isolated, and defeated. This moment requires all of us to engage - democracy is not a spectator sport. That includes creating community with people who have different experiences from you.

- Learn something new from organizations like Resetting the Table or Braver Angels who provide practical tips and training opportunities on trust building and connecting with people from different perspectives.
- Engage with faith communities via regular worship or by supporting organizations affiliated with specific faith traditions. One Table, for example, uses Shabbat dinners and other Jewish rituals to build community. Catholics for Choice connects Catholic people who support reproductive freedom through advocacy and storytelling, and Interfaith Alliance, as the name suggests, welcomes people from all faith traditions to come together to counter religious extremism.
- Find a common ground with people who don't share all of your political beliefs, but who agree with you on certain things. For example, organizations like Together Women Rise, the Black Women's Health Imperative, and Moms Rising center issues that help women and families thrive.
- Research the connection between democracy and art. Investigate artists, watch Ted Talks, or visit museums that underscore the importance of freedom and democracy.

## Never underestimate the power we all have—We, The People.

## The State of the Union Is up to Us

SKYE L. PERRYMAN, JD • March 4, 2025



President Donald Trump's address to Congress will cap off a month of chaos and confusion that has left Americans wondering if our democracy can hold. His administration is, by its own terms, "flooding the zone," imposing tariffs that raise costs, weaponizing federal funding and threatening essential services, dismantling civil rights, gutting programs focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, decimating consumer protections, weakening the federal oversight that checks corruption, undermining public health initiatives, abandoning America's role as a global leader, and intimidating and threatening public servants. The list goes on.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, that's not a coincidence.

Over the past month, in large cities and small towns, in red states and blue states, among older Americans and younger ones, the American people have felt what the Trump-Musk agenda is trying to achieve. People have woken up each morning to anxiety and confusion, wondering if Meals on Wheels will be able to deliver services, if child care centers will be open, if our public health authorities will be able to provide information regarding bird flu, if Elon Musk and a band of 19-year-olds will have access to their most personal data, and, after last Friday, if our nation will support our strongest global allies or align with a leader who invades his sovereign neighbors.

All of this chaos and confusion is the point. The "shock and awe" approach that the Trump-Vance administration is pursuing

follows from a well-known playbook that is aimed at making people feel alone, isolated, and defeated. It's an attempt at an autocratic power grab to make it appear as if the die has already been cast—that there is nothing that can be done to build a different future except to comply and be silent.

What I know about this country is that we don't like power grabs and we don't like kings—and we certainly don't like being silent. What I also know is that we, the people, stopped this power grab eight years ago, and we can again.

It will be hard work against long odds, but nothing that we can't do together.

First, we must exploit the Trump administration's extreme overreach—an overreach that is offensive to the vast majority of Americans—conservative, liberals, and independents. During the 2024 election, President Trump and his allies disavowed extreme agendas like Project 2025 because they are so unpopular with all Americans. Now, he is abusing the trust the public put in him and is installing the architects of this extremism within the government. People who may not agree on everything, but all reject extremism and adoption of the Project 2025 playbook will come at a political cost.

Second, we must use the checks and balances that exist. That starts with the courts. Here's a statistic I think should get more attention—court cases against Trump's first administration were successful 78 percent of the time. Already, we are seeing the courts again provide important checks.

Since inauguration, more than 85 lawsuits have been filed against Trump administration executive orders and actions and judges of all stripes have ruled against the administration. At Democracy Forward alone, we have filed more than 25 legal actions since Jan. 20 on behalf of courageous people and communities, securing major protections for the American people ranging from blocking immigration enforcement in houses of worship; overturning the freeze on essential services and federal funds across the nation, stopping the enforcement of executive orders that try to penalize people for adopting diversity, inclusion, and accessibility measures, and halting the termination of civil servants.

In the coming weeks and months, there will be more cases filed. Lawyers at my organization and so many others will work day and night to ensure that unlawful and harmful action is met with swift respons-

es. And, while Trump and Musk may suggest they don't intend to follow court orders—those suggestions are garnering pushback from even Republicans.

Third, we must resist isolation and intimidation. Extremists and anti-democratic actors want us to feel alone and isolated, and so building community is not just essential for our work together, but for the very existence of a pro-democracy community. Community also creates the conditions for courage—courage to stand up for ourselves and for each other, courage to not give into attempts to divide us.

And finally, we must never underestimate the power we all have—we, the people. The late Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, who spoke truth to power in the halls of Congress during the Watergate hearings, used to say, "The stakes are too high for government to be a spectator sport." Those words ring so true today.

Our very present and futures are at stake, and we cannot stand idly by or be pushed into thinking that we can't turn the tide. Hard work and long odds are what Americans before us have done and that is what we will do again. As President Trump delivers his remarks to Congress, we must remember that the state of the union is on us. All of us.



Skye L. Perryman is president and CEO of Democracy Forward, a nonpartisan, national legal organization that promotes democracy and progress through litigation, regulatory engagement, policy education, and research.

The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.

# Pro-Democracy Reading List

	<b>On Tyranny</b> by Timothy Snyder
	<b>Democracy in America</b> by Alexis de Toqueville
	<b>Bad Law</b> by Elie Mystal
	<b>Formidable</b> by Dr. Elisabeth Griffith
	<b>Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead</b> by Brené Brown
	<b>Democracy May Not Exist, But We'll Miss It When It's Gone</b> by Astra Taylor
	<b>Democracy or Else: How to Save America in 10 Easy Steps</b> by Jon Favreau, Jon Lovett, Tommy Vietor, and Josh Halloway
	<b>Hope in the Dark</b> by Rebecca Solnit
	<b>The Originalism Trap</b> by Madiba Dennie
	<b>Reading the Constitution: Why I Chose Pragmatism not Textualism</b> by Stephen Breyer
	<b>Staying Alive: Real Poems for Unreal Times</b> by Neil Astley
	<b>We Can Do Hard Things</b> by Glennon Doyle, Abby Womabach, and Amanda Doyle
	<b>Who is Government</b> by Michael Lewis
	<b>On Liberty</b> by John Stewart Mill
<b>For Kids!</b>	<b>A is for Activist</b> by Innosanto Nagara
<b>For Kids!</b>	<b>Democracy!</b> by Philip Bunting
<b>For Kids!</b>	<b>Democracy for Dinosaurs (And Kids!)</b> by Laurie Kransy Brown
<b>For Kids!</b>	<b>Grace for President</b> by Kelly DiPucchio
<b>For Kids!</b>	<b>Grace Goes to Washington</b> by Kelly DiPucchio
<b>For Kids!</b>	<b>The President of the Jungle</b> by André Rodrigues, Larissa Ribeiro, Paula Desgualdo and Pedro Markun



## Social Media Toolkit

Thank you for hosting a Dinner for Democracy or Coffee for Change! At a time when we are inundated with news stories on the harmful and unlawful actions of the Trump administration, many are left to feel overwhelmed, angry, and disconnected. Building community – online and in person – is *essential* to continue the pro-democracy work. Community creates the conditions for courage and we refuse to allow this administration to divide us.

Below is guidance for helping spread the word on social media about your event and building a pro-democracy community. If you have any questions, visit [dinnerfordemocracy.org/dinners](https://dinnerfordemocracy.org/dinners) or reach out to [DinnerforDemocracy@democracyforward.org](mailto:DinnerforDemocracy@democracyforward.org).

### Posting Guidance:

- **Photos or Videos:** Share photos and/or videos from your dinner to demonstrate the power of community in this movement.
  - Share photos of your meal and tablescape.
  - Film a “get ready with me” video as you get ready to host your dinner.
  - Post photos of guests around the table and share insights from your conversation.
  - Take a selfie video of you and your guests talking about what democracy means to you, and why you are hosting a dinner.
- **Tags:** We’d love to join you at the table, so don’t forget to tag us!
  - [Instagram](#)
  - [BlueSky](#)
  - [Twitter/X](#)
  - [Facebook](#)
  - [Linkedin](#)
  - [TikTok](#)
- **Hashtags:** For posts on TikTok, Twitter/X, and Instagram, you can use the following hashtags.
  - #DinnerForDemocracy
  - #CoffeeForChange

### Sample Social Posts: Post-Event

Democracy at our dinner table tonight! We gathered with friends and neighbors to share what democracy means to us and how we can build a stronger, more dynamic future together.

Host your own #DinnerForDemocracy with @DemocracyForward! We saved you a seat: [democracyforward.org/dinners](https://democracyforward.org/dinners)

Democracy is built in community. We listened, we challenged each other, and more importantly, we left ready to fight for a future that works for ALL of us.

Keep the momentum going by hosting your own #DinnersForDemocracy with @DemocracyForward → [democracyforward.org/dinners](https://democracyforward.org/dinners)

Grateful for everyone who came together for #DinnersforDemocracy. The heartfelt conversations reminded me how powerful community can be.

Let's keep showing up for each other and our democracy – one dinner, one conversation at a time. Follow @DemocracyForward to get involved.

## Graphics



[\[LINK TO DOWNLOAD\]](#)



[\[LINK TO DOWNLOAD\]](#)

### More Ways to Support Our Work:

- Shop our merch to wear your support: [STORE](#)
- Make a contribution to power our fight: [DONATE](#)
- Sign up to receive emails about our work: [SIGN UP](#)