



# MILLENNIAL PUBLIC POLICY SYMPOSIUM

**NEW VOICES & IDEAS ON CARE, COMMUNITY,  
TECHNOLOGY & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

**APRIL 26, 2018  
NEW AMERICA • MAIN EVENT SPACE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

# New America

We are dedicated to renewing America by continuing the quest to realize our nation's highest ideals, honestly confronting the challenges caused by rapid technological and social change, and seizing the opportunities those changes create.

Since 1999, New America has nurtured a new generation of policy experts and public intellectuals. Today we are a community of innovative problem-solvers, combining our core expertise in researching, reporting and analysis with new areas of coding, data science, and human-centered design to experiment and innovate nationally and globally. We prize our intellectual and ideological independence and our diversity, seeking to do our best work and to reflect the America we are becoming.

## Millennials Initiative & Fellowship

The Millennials Initiative at New America examines the challenges facing this generation of young adults (born between 1980 and 2000) as they aspire to assemble the basic building blocks of success—getting an education, finding a job, managing finances, buying a home, raising a family, and engaging socially and politically in a community.

The Millennial Public Policy Fellowship at New America is designed to identify a diverse cohort of remarkable young adults capable of contributing to constructive public policy discourse and to support their professional development as future leaders, critical thinkers, and policy entrepreneurs. With support from Citi Foundation's Pathways to Progress initiative, the inaugural cohort of Millennial Fellows was selected in May 2017.

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**#MILLENNIALPUBLICPOLICY**

# Table of Contents

A Note from the Director	2
Schedule	4
Speakers	8
Millennial Public Policy Fellows 2017-18	16
Direct Message Blog Selected Pieces	22
Notes	43
Acknowledgments	45

# A Note from the Director

Welcome to the Millennial Public Policy Symposium: New Voices and Ideas on Care, Community, Technology, and Civic Engagement. Our aim for this symposium is to elevate some of the most consequential issues facing the rising generations by promoting cross-cutting conversations that advance policy solutions with the potential to make a difference in the lives of young adults.

This convening is designed to raise big questions and make the case for meaningful change by asking:

What are the collective responsibilities for care given changes in the economy, evolving gender roles, and expectations of families, employers, and educators?

How can we implement technological solutions in an era of big data that don't undermine individual rights or public goods?

How do we expand the policymaking table to include new voices and the underrepresented and foster political engagement necessary to make policy change happen?

These questions are poised at a time when new economic realities are complicating how young people assemble the traditional building blocks of success. The prevailing public policy framework is increasingly out-of-step with the experience of Millennials, creating a social and economic precariousness that is undermining the potential of an entire generation. This is a problem for us all. We know our economy can do better to share prosperity and our society can be more just, but we will need a new set of forward-looking policy ideas to meet the moment.

Since effective policy should align with prevailing attitudes, preferences, and behaviors, we need the engagement of Millennials to help drive this ideas-generation process. This was part of the thinking behind creating a Millennial Public Policy Fellowship at New America. Since their arrival in August 2017, our ten Millennial Fellows have been engaged in focused policy research. They are outstanding individually, and as a group. It has been my pleasure to work with them throughout this year and this program is the fruit of their seeding.

I'm extremely thankful to the Citi Foundation for their financial support of this fellowship program and their substantive engagement in promoting pathways to progress for a diverse set of opportunity youth. Their President Brandee McHale and her team are leaders in the field and truly committed to supporting a new generation of leaders.

In that spirit, this symposium is an opportunity to explore how the world and our society is changing and to think harder about how a policy response can create new pathways to progress for the rising generations. Thank you for your engagement.

Let's get on with the program.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Reid Cramer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Reid Cramer, PhD  
Director, Millennials Initiative  
New America

# Schedule

**10:00-10:30 AM**

## Welcome

**S. Melody Frierson**

Project Manager, Millennial Public Policy Fellowship, New America

**Tyra Mariani**

Executive Vice President, New America

**Julie Hodgson**

Program Officer, Citi Foundation

**Reid Cramer**

Director, Millennials Initiative, New America

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**10:30-11:30 AM**

## New Perspectives on Communities of Care

Consisting of a pair of short conversations facilitated by Millennial Fellows Myacah Sampson, Roselyn Miller, and Jenny Muñiz, this session will advance past justifying why inclusive care and education policies matter and toward implementing solutions that address the needs and aspirations of low-income communities of color. Speakers from New America's Family-Centered Social Policy program, Better Life Lab, and Education Policy teams will strategize best practices for how to reduce systemic barriers, build robust programs that encourage engagement, and lay the groundwork for equitable policy.

### *Part I*

**Myacah Sampson**

Millennial Fellow, Family-Centered Social Policy, New America

**Roselyn Miller**

Millennial Fellow, Better Life Lab, New America

**Alieza Durana**

Senior Policy Analyst, Better Life Lab, New America

### *Part II*

**Jenny Muñiz**

Millennial Fellow, Education Policy, New America

**Abigail Swisher**

Program Associate, Education Policy, New America

**Ernest Ezeugo**

Program Associate, Education Policy, New America

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**11:30-11:45 AM**

## Break

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**11:45-1:00 PM**

## **Promises & Perils of Technology & Big Data**

How can data and technology be used to strengthen policy? What are the benefits, risks and challenges associated with data and technology driven policymaking? This session seeks to answer these questions within the context of CVE (Countering Violent Extremism), healthcare, and the role of technologists in decision making processes by having Millennial Fellows Emma Coleman, Dillon Roseen, and Spandana Singh each facilitate distinct conversations with their field's leading experts.

### ***Introduction***

#### **Braxton Bridgers**

Millennial Fellow, Resource Security, New America

#### **Cecilia Muñoz**

Vice President, Public Interest Technology and Public Interests, New America

### ***Why We Need Technologists at the Policy Table***

#### **Emma Coleman**

Millennial Fellow, Public Interest Technology, New America

#### **Dipayan Ghosh**

Fellow, Public Interest Technology and Open Technology Institute, New America

### ***The Rise of Healthcare Data: Why We Should Be Both Excited and Concerned***

#### **Dillon Roseen**

Millennial Fellow, Cybersecurity Initiative, New America

#### **Sonia Sarkar**

Chief Policy and Engagement Officer, Baltimore City Health Department Fellow, Public Interest Technology, New America

#### **Robert Lord**

Co Founder and President, Protenus Fellow, Cybersecurity Initiative, New America

## **Promises & Perils of Technology & Big Data [cont.]**

### ***Countering Violent Extremism Online: How We Can Leverage Data, Transparency and Metrics to Build a Safer Internet***

**Spandana Singh**

Millennial Fellow, Open Technology Institute, New America

**Evanna Hu**

Partner and CEO, Omelas Fellow, International Security, New America

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**1:00-1:30 PM**

**Lunch**

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**1:30-2:30 PM**

### **Policy Engagement & Political Activism**

This panel discussion will focus on the political and historical context, myths and realities, and political possibilities surrounding youth activism. Featuring Millennial Fellows Christian Hosam and Aaron Noffke in conversation with Georgetown Professor and New America National Fellow Marcia Chatelain, and Split This Rock Youth Coordinator Joseph Green, this panel will address the contemporary challenges and unforeseen strengths of centering young people in political activism.

**Aaron Noffke**

Millennial Fellow, New America

**Christian Hosam**

Millennial Fellow, Political Reform, New America

**Dr. Marcia Chatelain**

Associate Professor, Georgetown University

Eric and Wendy Schmidt Fellow, New America

**Joseph Green**

Director of Youth Programs, Split this Rock

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**2:30-2:45 PM**

**Break**

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**2:45-4:00 PM**

**Expanding the Table:**

**Intergenerational Activism & Policy Change**

This interactive panel will highlight the work of youth activists around some of the most critical issues that affect both contemporary and future public policy. In particular, this panel will focus on these issues (immigration and gun control specifically) from often underreported perspectives and engage with the audience on how to practically build movements of change. NAKASEC community organizer Sumi Yi, University of Maryland American Studies PhD candidate Tatiana Benjamin, youth poet and activist Asha Gardner from Split This Rock will be in conversation with Better Life Lab's Millennial Fellow Roselyn Miller.

**Roselyn Miller**

Millennial Fellow, Better Life Lab,  
New America

**Sumi Yi**

Community Organizer, National Korean American Service & Education Consortium, Virginia [NAKASEC-VA]

**Tatiana Benjamin**

American Studies PhD Candidate,  
University of Maryland - College Park

**Asha Gardner**

Poet-Activist, Split This Rock

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**4:00-5:00 PM**

**Reception**

**Anne-Marie Slaughter**

President and CEO, New America

# Speakers



## **Tatiana Benjamin**

**American Studies PhD Candidate, University of Maryland - College Park**

Tatiana is a PhD candidate in American Studies. She received her M.A. in Afro-American Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles and a BA in History and Religion from Clark Atlanta University. Her research interests include West Indian American identity, transnationalism and the negotiation of blackness within the African Diaspora. Her current research interest is centered on West Indian deportees and their negation of space and place through a transnational framework.



## **Marcia Chatelain**

**Associate Professor, Georgetown University  
Wendy and Eric Schmidt Fellow, New America**

Marcia Chatelain is an Eric & Wendy Schmidt Fellow at New America. She will spend her fellowship year on a book that explores visions of economic and racial justice after 1968 and the fast food industry. An associate professor of history and African American studies at Georgetown University, she is the author of the book *South Side Girls: Growing up in the Great Migration* (Duke University Press, 2015). Chatelain has received funding from the Harry S. Truman Scholarship and the Ford Foundations, as well as several teaching awards. She received degrees in journalism and religious studies from the University of Missouri and holds an A.M. and Ph.D. in American civilization from Brown University.



## **Reid Cramer**

**Director, Millennials Initiative, New America**

Reid Cramer is director of the Millennials Initiative at New America, which strives to identify policy solutions for the challenges facing the rising cohort of young adults. The initiative includes a public policy fellowship and a program of in-depth policy research focused on supporting the development of a forward-looking policy agenda. Previously, Cramer was the director of the Asset Building program, which championed innovative

public policies designed to enable families in the United States and around the world to accumulate savings, access wealth-building financial services, develop financial capability, and build and protect productive assets across the life course. He served as co-director of New America's Next Social Contract initiative, an effort to examine the delivery of social policy for the 21st century. His recent work includes *The Assets Perspective: The Rise of Asset Building and its Impact on Social Policy* (Palgrave MacMillan) and *Millennials Rising: Next Generation Policies in the Wake of the Great Recession* (New America). Prior to joining New America, Cramer served as a policy and budget analyst at the Office of Management and Budget, where he helped coordinate policies on housing, savings, economic development, and program performance evaluation. He has a doctorate in public policy from the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, as well as a master's degree in city and regional planning from the Pratt Institute and a bachelor of arts degree from Wesleyan University.



## **Alieza Durana**

### **Senior Policy Analyst, Better Life Lab, New America**

Alieza Durana is a senior policy analyst in the Better Life Lab at New America, where she researches and writes about barriers to social and income equality, especially at the intersection of work, gender, and social policy. Before joining New America, Alieza's work spanned the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Promise Zones initiative, social services in the Washington metro area, and Fulbright research on social policy integration in the European Union. Alieza has a master's in public policy from the Hertie School of Governance (Germany) and a BA in international and area studies, Spanish and German from Washington University in St. Louis. Her writing has appeared in *Slate*, the *Atlantic*, and *Pacific Standard*, among other publications.



## **Ernest Ezeugo**

### **Program Associate, Education Policy program, New America**

Ernest Ezeugo is a program assistant with the Education Policy program at New America. He works on the higher education team, conducting research and analysis on

issues including predictive analytics, public opinion, and economic mobility. Prior to joining New America, Ezeugo worked in the Office of Educational Technology at the U.S. Department of Education, where he supported the office's efforts around promoting the use of openly-licensed educational resources in K-12 education.



## **S. Melody Frierson**

### **Project Manager, Millennial Public Policy Fellowship, New America**

S. Melody Frierson is project manager for New America's Millennial Public Policy Fellowship, which seeks to create opportunities for promising young adults to deepen their engagement with public policy and advance solutions to challenges facing their generation. Frierson designs programming for and manages the day-to-day operations of the Millennial Fellowship. Prior to joining New America, Frierson served as youth engagement coordinator at the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation in Oxford, Mississippi. Frierson holds a M.A. degree from UCLA in Afro-American studies, and B.A. degrees from the University of Mississippi in African American studies and psychology/gender studies.



## **Asha Gardner**

### **Poet-Activist, Split This Rock**

Asha Gardner is a rising lyricist/spoken word artist and jazz vocalist from Washington, DC. She has performed on stages with Alice Walker, Rachel Mckibbens, and Grammy nominated Carolyn Malachi. As a youth poet, Asha participated in many local and national competitions while serving as a member of Split This Rock's DC youth Slam Team. In 2013 she received the title of DC Youth Grand Slam Champion. Asha now serves as an active member in her community, using her skills in performance based art to promote social advocacy, truth, and understanding.



## **Dipayan Ghosh**

### **Fellow, Public Interest Technology and Open Technology Institute**

Dipayan Ghosh is a fellow across New America's Public Interest Technology initiative and the Open Technology Institute, where he focuses on advancing consumer-oriented public policy initiatives at the intersection of

privacy, security, and civil rights. He is the recent author of "Digital Deceit: The Technologies Behind Precision Propaganda on the Internet."



## **Joseph Green**

### **Director of Youth Programs, Split this Rock**

Joseph Green is Split This Rock's Director of Youth Programs. He is the co-founder and Program Director of poetryN.O.W., an after school creative writing program working with students throughout the DC metropolitan area. poetryN.O.W., in collaboration with Split This Rock, helped bring Louder Than a Bomb, a regional youth slam serving as a platform for young people to share their stories across boundaries, to the DMV. poetryN.O.W. also organizes the Hyperbole, the largest individual poetry slam for high-school students in the Mid-Atlantic region. 2015 marked Joseph's fifth return to the national team competition, this time as a representative of the DC Poetry Slam Team. He represented the Oneonta slam team in 2005 and 2006 as their Grand Slam Champion, Slam Richmond in 2009, and DC's Beltway Poetry Slam team in 2011. He also represented DC in 2011 at the Individual Poetry Slam, ranking 16th in the world. He has over ten years experience as a professional spoken word artist and writer.



## **Julie Hodgson**

### **Program Officer, Citi Foundation**

Julie Hodgson is a Program Officer at the Citi Foundation managing grant investments in the Financial Inclusion and Urban Transformation portfolios. Since joining the Citi Foundation in 2011, Julie has worked on a range of projects including supporting board meeting management and governance procedures, leading key volunteer engagement partnerships and coordinating the Foundation's investment across the U.S. Prior to joining Citi, Julie coordinated fundraising and volunteerism efforts for nonprofit organizations including the New York City Coalition Against Hunger and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Massachusetts Bay. Julie holds a Master of Public Administration and Nonprofit Management from the Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service at New York University.



## **Evanna Hu**

**Fellow, International Security, New America  
Partner and CEO, Omelas**

Evanna Hu is the CEO and Partner of Omelas, a cutting edge technology company that provides the real-time, online information environment pertaining to security and influence threats. By utilizing machine learning/ artificial intelligence and data analytics, it is also one of the first to offer an organic monitoring and evaluating tool to measure the effectiveness of non-lethal warfare, including countermessaging campaigns and information operations. With offices in New York City, Washington, DC, Chicago, and Dubai, UAE, Omelas is operational in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Evanna is also a subject matter expert in CVE/CT in both Salafi-jihadism and neo-Nazism and has worked at the intersection of governance, security, and technology in 25+ countries in Africa and the Middle East, including Kenya, Iraq, Gaza Strip, Syria, Tunisia, and Afghanistan. Prior to Omelas, she successfully founded two technology ventures, one based in Nairobi, Kenya and another in Amman, Jordan. To date, she has briefed 4 national heads of intelligence and has advised 8 Cabinet/Ministerial members on tech and security and spent 6+ years living in Africa and the Middle East. A graduate of the University of Chicago, Evanna sits on the following Boards of nonprofits: Re:Coded, an Erbil-based nonprofit that gives livelihoods to refugees by teaching them how to code through a comprehensive training program in Iraq and Turkey; Promote Leadership, which is founded by active officers and veterans to foster inclusive leadership within the U.S. Special Operations Forces community; and Project Ninevah Plains, which does reconstruction work in post-IS environments in the Ninevah Plains, Iraq. She has won numerous high-level accolades and recognition for her work.



## **Robert Lord**

**Co-Founder and President, Protenus  
Fellow, Cybersecurity Initiative, New America**

Robert Lord is a fellow in New America's Cybersecurity Initiative. Lord is the co-founder and president of Protenus, an analytics platform that leverages artificial intelligence to detect data breaches in healthcare. Protenus protects the nation's top healthcare systems, ensuring trust for tens of millions of patients, and was

named the 2016 International Association of Privacy Professionals' Privacy Innovator of the Year. Before co-founding Protenus, Lord was an MD candidate at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Robert received his A.B. in social studies, magna cum laude, from Harvard University.



## **Tyra Mariani**

### **Executive Vice President, New America**

Tyra Mariani is Executive Vice President of New America where she is responsible for strategy and day-to-day management of the organization. Previously, Mariani was co-founder and Managing Partner of Opportunity@Work, a civic enterprise based at New America, which aims to re-wire the U.S. labor market. Prior to New America, Mariani was appointed Chief of Staff to the U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education and Deputy Chief of Staff to the U.S. Secretary of Education under the Obama Administration. In these roles, Mariani helped shape policies and programs impacting education from early learning through college and career. She also led complex interagency and cross-departmental teams that took several Administration priorities from vision to strategy and implementation including the President's My Brother's Keeper initiative and RESPECT, an effort to elevate and transform the teaching profession. Mariani was recognized as a key problem-solving partner to the Department's senior leadership, helping them to overcome bureaucracy and accelerate their work and the agency's priorities. Prior to joining the Department of Education, Mariani launched entrepreneurial efforts to build human capital in the education sector as the founder of the Greater New Orleans Region of New Leaders. In this role, she developed and successfully executed a strategy to drive high academic gains in schools led by New Leaders principals in post-Katrina New Orleans. Mariani received a bachelor's degree summa cum laude in Business Administration from Howard University and a master's in business from Stanford University.



## **Cecilia Muñoz**

### **Vice President, Public Interest Technology and National Network, New America**

Cecilia Muñoz is Vice President, Public Interest Technology and Local Initiatives at New America. Prior to joining New America in 2017, she served on President Obama's senior staff, first as Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for three years, followed by five years as Director of the Domestic Policy Council. Prior to her work in government, she served for 20 years at the National Council of La Raza (now UNIDOS US), the nation's largest Hispanic policy and advocacy organization, where she was Senior Vice President for the Office of Research, Advocacy and Legislation. She received a MacArthur Fellowship in 2000 for her work on immigration and civil rights, and serves on the Boards of the Open Society and Kresge Foundations, as well as the nonprofit United to Protect Democracy. Muñoz, a Detroit native and the daughter of immigrants from Bolivia, is also a wife and mother of two grown daughters. She lives with her husband in Maryland.



## **Sonia Sarkar**

### **Fellow, Public Interest Technology, New America**

Sonia Sarkar is a Public Interest Technology Fellow at New America. She previously serves as chief policy and engagement officer for the Baltimore City Health Department and prior to that was special advisor and chief of staff at Health Leads, a national social enterprise that envisions a healthcare system that addresses all patients' basic resource needs as a standard part of quality care. Sarkar is a Truman Scholar, a World Economic Forum Young Global Shaper, a Harvard Medical School Center for Primary Care InciteHealth Fellow, and an AcademyHealth/Kresge Foundation Population Health Scholar. She holds B.A. degrees in public health and international studies from Johns Hopkins University and an MPH from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Sarkar is also a published poet, with work appearing in the American Journal of Nursing and the Bellevue Literary Review, among others.



## **Anne-Marie Slaughter**

### **President and CEO, New America**

Anne-Marie Slaughter is President & CEO of New America and the Bert G. Kerstetter '66 University Professor Emerita of Politics & International Affairs at Princeton University. From 2009-2011 she served as director of Policy Planning for the US State Department, the first woman to do so. Prior to government, Dr. Slaughter was Dean of Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public & International Affairs from 2002-2009 and the J. Sinclair Armstrong Professor of International, Foreign, & Comparative Law at Harvard Law School from 1994-2002. She has written or edited seven books including "The Chessboard and the Web: Strategies of Connection in a Networked World" and "Unfinished Business: Women Men Work Family", and is a frequent contributor to a number of publications including The Atlantic and Financial Times. In 2012 she published "Why Women Still Can't Have It All" in The Atlantic, which quickly became the most read article in The Atlantic's history and helped renew national debate on the continued obstacles to full gender equality.



## **Abigail Swisher**

### **Program Associate, Education Policy, New America**

Abigail Swisher is a program associate with the Education Policy program at New America. She is a member of the PreK-12 team, where her work focuses on college and career-ready policies, with specific attention to both assessment and the transition from high school to higher education. Prior to joining New America, Swisher taught elementary school science and engineering in Granville County, North Carolina.



## **Sumi Yi**

### **Community Organizer, National Korean American Service & Education Consortium [NAKASEC]**

Having recently graduated from Roanoke College with a B.A. in International Relations and a minor in American Politics, Sumi joins the NAKASEC team to help actively lead Asian-American communities as the Virginia Community Organizer. She previously interned as a Community Outreach Associate for Delegate Sam Rasoul (VA-11) where she realized her passion for grassroots organizing. Identifying as Korean-American, Sumi is excited to work with youth and local residents who support NAKASEC's vision.

# Millennial Public Policy Fellows 2017-2018

Selected from a competitive pool, New America's 2017-2018 Millennial Fellows contribute daily to the work of existing New America policy programs as well as explore innovative public policy solutions to generational issues through original research. In addition to bringing a deep and varied understanding of public policy, this inaugural class of ten Millennial Fellows represents a diverse range of socioeconomic, educational, and cultural backgrounds.



## **Braxton Bridgers**

### **Resource Security, New America**

A Fort Washington, Maryland native, Bridgers has a bachelor's degree in international affairs with a minor in law and public policy from Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. He is interested in both energy and climate adaptation policy.

### **Policy Research**

When a disaster strikes, emergency management officials rely on the status of electric infrastructure to make decisions as how best to protect citizens from harm. Data regarding electric infrastructure is a critical component of disaster response efforts, as it enhances the situational awareness of first responders. Unfortunately, the current data sharing landscape between electric utilities and emergency managers is lacking, as data provided to those responding to disasters is not tailored to the needs of their operations. Bridger's work investigates ways in which to strengthen data sharing practices of electric utilities during disasters.



## **Becky Chao**

### **Open Technology Institute, New America**

Chao is a native New Yorker who graduated from Duke University, where she studied public policy studies, linguistics, and economics. After college, she developed an interest in antitrust and international affairs as an honors paralegal in the Bureau of Competition at the Federal Trade Commission. An active community member, Chao works with Asian American, Native

Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander youth interested in public service opportunities by serving on the board of directors for the Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership.

### **Policy Research**

Antitrust is popular again, with some populist calls for a move toward a public interest standard in the merger review process. Chao's work explores how international jurisdictions have incorporated public interest factors into the merger review process as well as the Federal Communications Commission's application of its public interest test in the context of telecom mergers.



## **Emma Coleman**

### **Public Interest Technology, New America**

Coleman was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. She holds a BA from Stanford University in international relations and comparative studies in race and ethnicity, where her thesis, *Sentencing Pregnancy: a legal and humanistic analysis of options for incarcerated women*, was the recipient of multiple awards. In the past, she has worked for nonprofits, often in a storytelling capacity through her passion for photography and filmmaking. She is particularly interested in progressive criminal justice policy and sentencing reform, with a focus on underrepresented populations, including women and children.

### **Policy Research**

Coleman's work explores how community-based reentry service providers collect, track, and sustain their data. Because they play a critical role for formerly justice-involved people, these organizations require special considerations in the criminal justice process, and data management is a pivotal strength for their success.



## **Christian Hosam**

### **Political Reform, New America**

Born in the country of Trinidad and Tobago, Hosam has called Maryland his home for most of his life. He graduated with honors from Wesleyan University in 2015 with a bachelor's degree in African American studies and Government. While at Wesleyan, Hosam was a Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Fellow and a chair of the Edgar Beckham Awards Committee, an awards

ceremony dedicated to celebrating individuals on campus who were committed to social justice. After college, Hosam was the Coordinator for the Center for American Politics and Citizenship at the University of Maryland.

### **Policy Research**

Hosam's work focuses on the ways that the Voting Rights Act has been ineffective both at protecting access to the vote for communities of color over time. He outlines policy recommendations both for legislation and forms of litigation that would create higher levels of equitable influence for voters around the country.



## **Roselyn Miller**

### **Better Life Lab, New America**

Miller, a Long Beach, California, native with roots in the Bay Area, holds a bachelor of arts in anthropology from Stanford University. While at Stanford she studied urban structures and relationships between the public and private sector, particularly in relation to the U.S. government, philanthropy, and nonprofit work. With a wide breadth of policy interests, Miller is most passionate about social impact policy and poverty alleviation.

### **Policy Research**

The foster system was designed to remove youth from unstable family environments and place them temporarily in secure households in order to improve their lives, well-being, and chance of success. However, each year approximately 23,000 young adults age out of foster care, and shortly after leaving their support system young adults exiting disproportionately experience unequal outcomes such as homelessness, incarceration, substance abuse issues, and mental health problems. In order to fulfill the promise of an equal chance at success for foster youth and improve outcomes, Miller's work proposes that decision makers in this space look toward extending foster care to age 21 at the federal level, centering former foster youth in program design and evaluation, and researching new methods for streamlining access to services.



## **Jenny Muñiz**

### **Education Policy, New America**

A native of Compton, California, Muñiz has most recently spent time working as a bilingual teacher in San Antonio Public Schools as a Teach For America corps member. Because of her experience as a first-generation Mexican-American and a first-generation college graduate, Muñiz's policy interests center around urban education and English-learners. Before her work in the classroom, Muñiz graduated from Pomona College.

### **Policy Research**

As a member of the PreK-12 Education Policy team, Muñiz's work aims to capture promising policy and practices that yield more diverse and culturally responsive educators. Appropriately, she raises important questions about what constitutes teacher quality in each state, and whether state definitions of teacher quality reflect the skills, knowledge, and dispositions teachers need to effectively work with diverse groups of students, particularly students living in poverty, students of color, and English learners. To answer these questions, Muñiz has conducted a multi-state review of state teaching standards to analyze the extent to which these standards address the instruction of diverse learners.



## **Aaron Noffke**

### **Millennial Public Policy Fellow, New America**

Aaron was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and is a recent graduate from Occidental College, where he majored in philosophy, politics, and economics. Passionate about creating alternative methods of economic development, Noffke has worked as a student labor organizer and labor research analyst while at Occidental College.

### **Policy Research**

Beginning with the War on Poverty, Noffke's work traces the history of community action programs, and suggests a framework and principles for community action in the present.



## **Dillon Roseen**

### **Cybersecurity Initiative, New America**

Roseen, from Peachtree City, Georgia, was a Fulbright Scholar in Amsterdam where he conducted research on the intersection of law, politics, and international security. Previously, he graduated with highest honors from the Georgia Institute of Technology where he studied economics and international affairs and served as student body president. His interests include the international law and national security dimensions of cybersecurity policy.

### **Policy Research**

As the healthcare sector continues increasing its reliance on digital technologies and electronic health records, the attendant cyber security risks also increase. One in four Americans have had their medical records breached, according to Accenture, causing as many as 50% of those victims to pay high out-of-pocket costs associated with subsequent medical identity theft. Security researchers have successfully demonstrated their ability to wirelessly shut off a patient's pacemaker, potentially causing irreversible harm to the patient. In order to mitigate these and other issues caused by cyber insecurity in the healthcare sector, there needs to be a well-trained and well-equipped healthcare cybersecurity workforce. Roseen's work identifies specific challenges facing the healthcare cybersecurity workforce and presents solutions aimed at recruiting, retaining, and equipping a workforce ready to tackle 21st century healthcare issues.



## **Myacah Sampson**

### **Family-Centered Social Policy, New America**

Sampson is from Farmington, New Mexico. She holds a B.A. in public policy and ethnic studies from Brown University. She is interested in developing policy that centers the experiences of contemporary families.

### **Policy Research**

Sampson's work is a comparative analysis between how work requirements are defined and implemented in tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs versus nearby state programs. Tribal TANF programs differ from those of states in that they

can define work activities beyond the twelve federal activities outlined in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. Specifically, she examines how expanded definitions of work activities impact the work participation rates between state and tribal programs.



## **Spandana Singh**

### **Open Technology Institute, New America**

Singh is a recent graduate of the University of California, Berkeley. She completed a double major in international development and media studies, as well as a certificate program in technology entrepreneurship. Originally from India, Singh is interested in technology policy with a focus on cybersecurity and countering violent extremism.

### **Policy Research**

As governments, civil society and users place increased pressures on technology companies to counter violent extremism online, there needs to be more evaluation of these approaches to determine which are effective and why. However, currently the space lacks comprehensively agreed upon definitions and metrics for success, and there are also weak data sharing practices. Singh's work focuses on how CVE research frameworks can be broadened and strengthened through collaboration, the consideration of additional variables and increased data transparency.

# Direct Message Blog

## Selected Pieces

Created to elevate the voices and work of the Millennial Fellows, the Direct Message Blog has published more than 50 pieces since its launch in November 2017. Through the blog's monthly "Caffeinated Commentary" series, the fellows have been able to provide candid, personal, and to-the-point policy analysis and insights. The following pieces represent the work, policy perspective, and unique voice of each fellow.

### **Millennials and the Climate Change Dilemma**

**Braxton Bridgers | Jan. 18, 2018**

Millennials are often bogged down by the inaccurate perceptions of earlier generations. We've all heard it before: we're lazy, vain, entitled, hopeless dreamers, and all too weary of responsibility. And unlike our parents, we don't own a home or have plans of getting married before the age of 25. What's more, we eat too much avocado toast, engage in too many boozy brunches, and often justify our wasteful decisions; for instance, foregoing public transportation in favor of Uber.

While it may be true that some millennials indulge in these luxuries from time to time – I confess, one time I spent \$45 on an asian-fusion brunch for the bottomless mimosas, not the spicy tuna rolls – these behaviors should not solely define us. In fact, we are a generation of innovators and critical thinkers, tasked with solving complex problems earlier generations have not had to contend with. Central among these problems, is climate change.

Already the effects of climate change are being felt by communities across the globe. Researchers suggest rising ocean temperatures could have exacerbated recent severe weather events – a shift that may continue into future. Last year's hurricane season in the U.S. was particularly devastating – estimates suggest that hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Jose, and Maria caused almost \$200 billion in damages. What's more, Africa's Sahel Lake Chad Basin region is experiencing food insecurity due to a prolonged period of drought. And in the Middle East, insurgent groups are exploiting severe weather events to recruit populations in urgent need of resources.

What's even more alarming is the fact that we are likely to face more of these challenges in the coming years. A majority of scientists agree that

an increasingly warming climate could raise the global mean sea level by as much as six feet by the year 2100. The impact of this projected rise in sea level will have a disproportionate effect on small island nations. In the Southern Pacific Island region alone, low lying land masses could become uninhabitable within the next 40 years, displacing hundreds of thousands in the process. Some experts have predicted that long term increases in temperature in Sub Saharan Africa could raise conflict over critical resources, like food and water.

The climate related challenges that my generation will face are daunting, and will require immense effort and innovation to mitigate – and I believe that we are equipped to handle it. Indeed, we’re already doing so.

We are actively questioning traditional institutions and power structures that have failed to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. In doing so, we use innovative platforms to mobilize efforts at preserving a liveable climate for future generations. We also use our voices as consumers, choosing to purchase organic products with less of a carbon footprint than processed foods. And while vanity may get the best of some us at times (I mean, who doesn’t want to emulate the style of icons like Rihanna and Jeff Goldblum?), we are increasingly more inclined to purchase the latest fashion trends from environmentally-conscious brands. While there is still room for growth in the adoption of environmentally friendly practices amongst my generational cohort, all signs seem to suggest we are renewing the way we interact with our planet.

If you are willing to look past the misguided and unjust labels affixed to the millennial ethos, you’ll see a generation of innovators pushing themselves to rectify never before seen challenges.

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## **The Politics of Antitrust Enforcement**

**Becky Chao | Apr. 12, 2018**

When the news broke that the Department of Justice would be challenging the merger between AT&T and Time Warner Cable in November 2017, speculation that it was politically motivated soon followed. After all, the 45th president had been vocal about rejecting the deal during his campaign: “As an example of the power structure I’m fighting, AT&T is buying Time Warner and thus CNN, a deal we will not approve in my administration because it’s too much concentration of power in the hands of too few.” With his speculations that “pricing is going to go up” because of the deal, Trump’s campaign promise on its surface may seem like it was stemming from legitimate antitrust concerns. At the same time, however, President Trump has also singled out CNN, calling it “Fake News CNN” and “THE LEAST TRUSTED NAME IN NEWS” in his tweets, casting doubt onto the

objectivity of the antitrust case against AT&T and Time Warner. Though the premise of presidential influence in the merger review process is indeed dangerous in itself, it is important to not lose sight of the significance of the case in setting precedent in enforcement actions against vertical mergers and foreclosure theory generally (the Justice Department's theory of harm in part discusses AT&T's economic incentive to foreclose access to content or to raise costs for competitors).

Given the president's statements, nonetheless, AT&T tried to argue in court that the lawsuit represented "selective enforcement" arising from presidential interference in what should be the objective merger review process. The company relied on this argument to request detailed email and phone logs between the White House and the Department in pretrial proceedings. Judge Richard J. Leon, who is overseeing the trial, blocked the request, stating that "[d]efendants have fallen far short of establishing that this enforcement action was selective."

This isn't the first time that the question of whether antitrust law can be politicized has been raised in U.S. history. In 1971, President Richard M. Nixon considered threatening three major television networks—ABC, NBC, and CBS—with antitrust prosecution in an attempt to sway their negative media coverage of his presidency. White House recordings at the time captured the president discussing the possibility: "If the threat of screwing them is going to help us more with their programming than doing it, then keep the threat.... Our gain is more important than the economic gain. We don't give a goddam about the economic gain. Our game here is solely political."

The specter of presidential overreach is an extreme example of how politics may jeopardize the impartiality of antitrust law enforcement. Utilizing antitrust enforcement as a political tool is unquestionably a threat to rule of law. Even just the appearance of undue political influence is dangerous, as it both distracts us from and makes us doubt the antitrust merits of the case. Antitrust enforcement should be driven by sound theories and objective evidence, not by capricious politics. Yet, U.S. antitrust enforcement nonetheless operates within the constraints of larger political factors, including the appointment of antitrust officials.

With each new administration, the president has the opportunity to appoint new leadership overseeing the antitrust agencies, which has implications for antitrust enforcement. Though these officials operate independently of the president, they are appointed with the expectation that their ideologies are aligned with the president's. With the appointment of Makan Delrahim as the Assistant Attorney for the Antitrust Division at the Department of Justice and the nomination of Joseph Simons to chair the Federal Trade Commission, the Trump Administration seemed to signal an approach to antitrust enforcement that focuses on economics and disfavors

interventions—a marked departure from the Obama Administration, which had been rather active in enforcement actions during its second term. Indeed, Professor Steven C. Salop has found that elections have an impact on antitrust enforcement in terms of the types of cases challenged. The Justice Department under the George W. Bush Administration brought significantly fewer civil non-merger complaints than under the Clinton and Obama Administrations.

Just as importantly, the allocation of resources is another means through which ideology affects antitrust enforcement. Michael Kades, Director of Markets and Competition Policy at Washington Center for Equitable Growth, found that while the level of merger activity has increased by 56 percent between 2010 and 2016, funding to the Department of Justice Antitrust Division and the Federal Trade Commission has remained relatively the same, with just a 3.7 percent increase in nominal appropriations. As such, antitrust enforcers may lack the resources to pursue more vigorous enforcement. The lack of additional funding reflects the administration's priorities and is an uncompromising constraint on antitrust enforcement.

Presidential interference is no doubt an extreme example of how antitrust enforcement may be politicized and rule of law compromised. Other political factors, such as the appointment of political officials and budget allocations, may also affect the political ideologies underlying antitrust enforcement in less nefarious ways. Recognizing their associated constraints enables us to identify ways to move toward more effective antitrust enforcement.

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## **Restorative Justice for the #MeToo Movement?**

**Emma Coleman | Feb. 20, 2018**

The #MeToo movement has galvanized millions of women across the country to speak out about their experiences with sexual harassment, assault, and abuse. Tarana Burke, who coined the term in 2006 to help survivors realize that they aren't alone in their recovery, has been invited to speak on college campuses, attended the Golden Globes, and is writing a highly-anticipated memoir. The widespread attention #MeToo has garnered represents a huge shift in how we, as a society, talk about what we, especially but not solely as women, have had to deal with throughout our lives. #MeToo has, in other words, ostensibly done "what the law could not."

What it hasn't done, however, is provide common justice—or a measure of closure and reconciliation for the small, everyday moments that led so many women to participate in the movement in the first place. It may have led to repercussions for several high-profile offenders, but for the

average woman who typed “#MeToo” and hit enter on a Facebook status or a Tweet, justice was hardly found in the responses. At the same time, many women might not even know what, exactly, this sort of day-to-day justice would like, or from whom they would get it. How, for instance, do you get justice from a coworker who sent one too many uncomfortable emails, or from a date whom you haven’t spoken to since that person tried to take things too far? The notion of “justice,” in these situations, is thorny, and all too often it doesn’t seem like anything can really be done.

But maybe justice isn’t as elusive as it seems.

A friend of mine recently told me that an old hookup of hers texted her to apologize for his behavior three years ago. The #MeToo movement had led him to introspection, she explained, and he said that he remembered one particular night during which he might have pressured her into engaging in things she wasn’t comfortable doing. He wanted to apologize. As a result, he asked her if there was anything he could do to make amends, thereby opening a path for her to find her own sort of justice—if she wanted it.

What this man offered isn’t all that different from a movement within the criminal justice system: restorative justice. This process, which emphasizes accountability and making amends, seeks to avoid sentencing, instead focusing on bringing victims and offenders together to understand the magnitude of the harm done, the ways in which healing can be achieved, and potential concrete next steps for both parties to take so that they and their community can move forward. At its core, restorative justice attempts to meaningfully shift the balance of power by allowing survivors to define the terms of what justice and closure look like to them.

In the context of the #MeToo movement, there isn’t a formalized system for instituting restorative justice. But perhaps there doesn’t need to be one. Stories like the one above, of men taking actionable steps to make amends, can serve as an example for others to replicate in their own lives.

When the latest iteration of the #MeToo movement began to pick up viral momentum in October, there was an attendant, though far less popular, hashtag: #HowIWillChange. Via this parallel conversation, men pledged not to stand by idly in the future. But while an honorable notion—and at least in theory a good step for ensuring that people in positions of power hold one another accountable—the hashtag largely lacked the level of introspection that’s a key ingredient in effective restorative justice. Put another way, though it’s important to wrangle with how to do better in the future, it’s equally important to confront what can’t be changed but absolutely must be addressed: past actions that made others uncomfortable, or even hurt them.

This isn’t to suggest that restorative justice is the ultimate cure for

addressing sexual harassment and assault. Since the process can be so intensely personal, it arguably isn't the best model for providing public examples on which to build a more just future, like, say, by filing a lawsuit. It requires, at a base level, that offenders want to reflect on their own behavior and engage in reconciliation. That's a hard internal battle, and one that requires an elevated appreciation for sincere apologies, the sort of thinking society has yet to fully embrace. Restorative justice also forces survivors to confront their abusers directly in order to chart a course of appropriate justice; that can be a triggering and painful experience, and it shouldn't be done without immense support.

That said, restorative justice—cases like what happened to my friend—would help to bolster the movement and create actionable steps for moving forward. Indeed, society needs more people who are willing to reflect on their past behavior, realize when they might have done something wrong, and try to make amends where they can. The narratives of #MeToo aren't always cut-and-dry; they delve into the murky waters of gender, power, and how we, as individuals, can bring the broader social dynamics of honest reconciliation in line with the past. Restorative justice creates space for people to be unsure. It's a collaborative process, one that, while imperfect, allows people to start somewhere. To truly reach a more just future, it's key to recognize and address the wrongs of the past—something that people can begin to do one reflection, one amend, at a time.

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## **A Generational Take on the Politics of Precarity**

**Christian Hosam | Nov. 7, 2017**

Last year my life, for lack of a better term, exploded. My mother Cheryl was diagnosed with Stage 4 pancreatic cancer and passed away just four short and agonizing months later. As an only child to a single mother, we were incredibly close. Her passing devastated me, and as with any major tragedy, the repercussions were imperceptible at first glance and difficult to parse out even upon reflection. In particular, I struggled at work because I had a newfound anxiety over money. What would I do without my job? I had no other close family and was now in a position where if I lost my job, I would have no safety net. That this situation was borne out of such a massive tragedy made it seem personal as if it was mine and mine alone. And yet, over time as I shared my fears and frustration in consultation with my close friends, I saw a pattern emerge. While the events that shook the foundations of my world were personal and unique, I began to see how precariousness was increasingly pervasive among my peers.

Not only were my friends and I working jobs that seemed to lack a clear upward trajectory, many of us were in relationships that seemed

to have the same “we’ll see where this goes” mentality. Moreover, our understandings of politics also seemed to have an ambivalence that made us know that participating was important but couldn’t get us to see quite why. There was a deeply held dissatisfaction and a need to do something, even if all avenues for participating (e.g. voting, campaign donations), seemed frustrating and unproductive. In all avenues of our lives, there was (and there is) an ambivalence that’s seen as both normatively wrong but also ensnaring and maddeningly hard to get out of. In a workforce and a society marked by risk, resiliency becomes a different sort of challenge.

The seemingly disparate forms of precarity in the workforce and in intimate settings connect and contribute to the lack of self-efficacy that have led to decline not only in trust of American political institutions but also to a decline in engagement in these institutions. I fear that the high levels of economic, social, and intimate precarity that Millennials find ourselves in makes us less willing to participate in the formalized, easily understood ways that our generational predecessors did. This is so concerning to me because while the history of American intermediary institutions such as churches, unions, and political parties is fraught, they have also served as spaces for their members to develop a self-efficacy that propelled them forward to other, more potent forms of political participation and action.

While there is a surfeit of data and journalism on this generation, most of it is commissioned data from for-profit corporations designed to chart tastes and consumerist tendencies that somehow gets extrapolated to make huge claims about our politics and our personalities. There is much less in the way of rigorous social science, specifically political science research, that attempts to flesh out the relationship between the myriad forms of precarity found amongst Millennials and its impact on political participation.

Empirical data on Millennials, particularly work done by the Pew Research Center, shows that 50% of Millennials identify as independents, 36% see themselves as religious, and only 6% are either members of or are represented by unions. In spite of the normative benefits of these institutions, they are in decline as arbiters of personal political development. How then can we develop a civically engaged population that participates both in times of high stakes, high attention, federal elections and often higher stakes, but lower attention state and local elections? Moreover, how do you develop people’s propensity to participate in non-election related activities such as taking part in voter registration drives, writing letters to their constituents, or perhaps even running themselves? Put another way, what is the future of civil society?

While my formal entry into this line of thinking was so personal, the personal is, as it has always been, deeply political. The politics of precarity will shape this and subsequent generations. The work of understanding

Millennial politics and culture is therefore the work of understanding how the nature of risk has shifted in American politics during the last generation. There is a need to separate analyses of civic engagement, romantic and sexual politics, and financial security amongst young people from prevailing stereotypes of Millennials as apathetic, promiscuous, and fiscally irresponsible. Then the real work of understanding how to develop sustained political practices that lead to healthier and more fulfilling lives in both this generation and future generations can fully begin.

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## **Meritocracy, the American Dream, and Other Fairy Tales**

**Roselyn Miller | Nov. 2, 2017**

Heat on the pavement rises up in the dark, and with every step I take away from my workplace it meets me like a warm blanket, telling me it's time to sleep, wake up, and do it all again. Sweaty from the heat or the hard work, I slump into the bench and wait for the Caltrain. Predictably delayed, the train would be another hour. My exhaustion runs out of patience and calls an Uber.

Five minutes later, Frank pulls up in his Chevy listening to some country song about beer and backroads at a polite volume. My eyelids droop a bit and my head hurts, but one glance at my Uber rating... 4.78 shoot... and now I have to be polite or that score's going to plummet. So, I hop in, gently close the door, smile and ask him if he can queue up "Wagon Wheel."

That wins big points with Frank, because now he sees us as kindred spirits joined by country music. He takes this gesture as a fast track to friendship and speaks for minutes or days like his words are my words. He assumes that I too drink a glass of milk at dinner every night with my family and moved out to the 'burbs after retiring from a cushy tech job because the city was too loud. He says Silicon Valley is a great place for "people like us, you know... hard-working Americans."

What does that even mean to an old white man and a biracial brown girl? I wonder if he ever faced the same issues I worry about in Silicon Valley, before he retired while he worked in Tech. Like did men constantly talk over him or flirt with him at networking events instead of listening to his business pitches? I wonder if he was ever rent burdened or looking for cheap dental care, or if he ever had to turn down a promotion to take time off for his kids. I don't feel like asking, so I let him go on.

"So, do you go to high school around here?" Frank swung right then drove up the street at exactly the speed limit.

"Uh, I work here... for the city kind of." That's what I said, but what I meant

was, “Is it socially appropriate for me to put in headphones and surf Facebook yet?” I swear if this Frank guy hits me with the what-do-you---

“What do you do?” He asked innocently enough but the question hit me over the head, because after a 12 hour day of working, planning, networking, and delivering the same speech over and over again I could not and would not explain myself to another stranger. So I water down the elevator pitch and lob it over.

“I work on education, health, and engagement programs for the local Spanish speaking immigrant and long-term resident community,” my lips mumbled through as I braced myself for his opinion. Everyone has an opinion on this kind of thing.

“That’s important work. It’s just such a shame how little Mexican women care about their kid’s health and education. What we should be doing is getting them to learn English before letting them spend all our taxes on tacos and tickets to Disneyland.” The funny thing is, well-intentioned Frank wasn’t the only person who has ever said this to me.

First of all, tacos are delicious.

But that aside, I am constantly affronted with rhetorical battering rams of how people of color just need to work harder, adjust their priorities, and stop complaining. If only they did this they’d be well off, a simple fast-food panacea. But, even if we overhauled all of our social and economic policies to be inclusive and supportive of low-income people of color today, there would still be hundreds of years of systemic oppression to counteract.

That’s why social policy, gender equality, and economic and racial justice matters: because meritocracy is a total lie. So many people casually use the American Dream™ as an excuse to justify their privilege and delegitimize the struggles of vulnerable yet resilient populations.

If the water is free in America for everyone, then it’d be so easy to tend and grow a money tree, simple. But in reality, success or even survival here is definitely about climbing your family’s tree. Some people get ladders and others get rope, and it’s not always up to you whether you reach the top or hang. But honestly, how am I going to explain structural inequity in the next five minutes to an Uber driver that thinks Disneyland accepts SNAP benefits.

Also, it’s not like I was planning on jumping out of the car Michelle-Rodriguez-from-Fast-and-the-Furious style, but part of me had already punched through the window and ran halfway down the street screaming, “Aqui estamos y no nos vamos!” blasting my snowflake sensitivities into the air like a blizzard. Unproductive.

So I sat. And I listened. And I nodded. And I heard him. Still biased, but not dangerous.

And then I responded ranted.

“First of all, tacos are delicious.” I’m never not going to speak my truth. “Second of all, why do women of color always have to prove to others they care about their lives and their families?”

“And, I don’t have an answer for a lot of these things, but I do have a lot of questions. Like, how can a mother participate in her kid’s education when all the assignments and meetings are in a foreign tongue? What if she spends half her day underpaid and the other half unpaid--doing work at home or for other’s homes, constantly worrying about feeding her kid? Or what if a dad can’t be involved because he’s working two jobs under the table, and the rent keeps unreasonably going up? What if the kid has no parents and is just trying to survive on their own, holding on to the hope that education might help them establish wealth and security? How come when a white family is poor or uneducated, it’s always someone else’s fault: America, the economy, immigrants taking jobs, but when any minority family is poor it’s because they don’t care? Maybe if--”

Frank interrupted, “Nah, I don’t care if you’re brown, white, or blue, if you can’t take care of yourself you don’t deserve help.”

So naturally, the only outcome of this conversation is my ever-sinking Uber rating. My phone is dead, the child lock is on, and we are still four miles from my house.

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## **What Dreamers can Teach us about Civic Education**

**Jenny Muñiz | Jan. 30, 2018**

Heeding a Tweet-invitation from the youth-led organization United We Dream, I headed down to Capitol Hill to join a DACA rally on the eve of this month’s government shutdown. When I arrived at the Hart Senate Office Building, the atmosphere was arresting. The building’s atriums and balconies were brimming with orange-clad Dreamers and their allies. They raised their fists and laid bare demands through chants and banners: “What do we want?” “Clean Dream Act!” “When do we want it?” “NOW!” Through all this, the symbolic butterfly wings clinging to their backs rustled in the wind of the chants. It was undeniable: for the few hours that they occupied the building, the spirit of democracy was palpable.

Certainly, I thought, lawmakers would draft legislative protections for these

young undocumented immigrants. Of course, they would bar them from deportations and protect their ability to work legally—protections they stand to lose [and often have already lost] due to the President’s decision last September to strip DACA, or the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, program. Even the lawmakers sitting in their offices, unsure of what to do, would be forced to listen and truly hear the stories of these young people. And while I chanted, I thought surely, they would appreciate and recognize the ways in which these young people have emerged of as exemplars of civic duty, strengthening our democracy through civic participation.

Unfortunately, my certainty was misguided. Despite 87 percent of the country supporting basic rights for Dreamers and their continuous and laudable efforts on Capitol Hill and across the country, lawmakers failed to craft a legislative fix following the government shutdown. Now, their fate hinges on congressional action by next week’s February 8 deadline. In the meantime, 122 DACA recipients lose their protected status every day and by the program’s final deadline of March 15th, that number will total 22,000.

In the midst of this, Dreamers will continue to defend their rights, but it is time for us to join them—and educators can be amongst their most powerful allies. Part of strengthening the DACA movement and other civil right movements—now and in the future—rests on educators’ commitment to exemplary civic education. Without this, the sad reality involves a generation that doesn’t understand civic participation, where young Dreamers are the exception, not the norm.

In fact, by most relevant measures, our country’s civic health is waning. Our voter turnout lags behind other developed nations; the majority of adults exhibit an alarming dearth of basic civic knowledge; we have lost faith in the effectiveness of contacting our representatives; and even young people are experiencing difficulties identifying misinformation on the internet. But perhaps the most alarming sign of our deteriorating civic health is our growing inability to engage in informed debate. The lack of political participation paired with little civic knowledge is calling into question the viability of our experiment in self-governance.

This should come as no surprise, considering schools have largely abandoned their civic mission. Gone are the days when high school students had to take three courses in civics and government. Instead, the time public schools spend on civic lessons has been replaced by an emphasis on teaching [and testing] “core subjects”. And when educators do undertake the task of teaching civics, their curriculum can be vastly insufficient. Civic lessons too often end with knowledge building, due to a prioritization of rote memorization over exercises that build active civic participation muscles.

But this system doesn’t work because our democracy requires us to have

the ability and willingness to participate in it. Take the actions of Dreamers, for example. Though their plight has only recently come to national attention, Dreamers have been working for years to secure a path toward citizenship for themselves and their families. They have shouldered a heavy load, burdening themselves with our collective civic responsibility by petitioning, canvassing, testifying, joining advocacy groups, and forging coalitions. Dreamers have shown themselves to be engaged and active members of society, capable of taking effective action. And notably, many of these activities have been spearheaded by the youngest and most vulnerable among us.

In fact, the most active participants in our democracy are currently those who are forced into participation by personal circumstances. Dreamers are standing up for Dreamers. Black Lives Matter activists are standing up for black men and women murdered by police. Women are standing up for women. But we need to come together and participate for each other, and that has to start at school.

Our public schools should seek to ensure that every child is developing the capacities requisite for civic participation. And we can only accomplish a more highly democratic and participatory system by re-committing to civics teaching that goes beyond instilling bits of knowledge and engenders two more fundamental things: skills and dispositions. All students should learn foundational democratic skills, including the abilities to analyze important information, develop informed positions on contemporary issues, and discuss those positions productively, even with those who disagree.

Equally important, a quality civic education should empower students to exercise their right to vote, to contact their representatives, and to protest when they feel strongly enough. Beyond these basic skills, a quality civic education will give students a sense of efficacy and civic duty, ensuring they have the disposition to utilize their civic skills. Through this, our students can realize our democratic ideals of social justice, unity, equality, and diversity.

We have an opportunity here to ensure a generation of people willing and able to engage in our much-cherished practice of democracy. But to do so, we need to undertake two difficult steps. First, we need to acknowledge the value of our most civically engaged—the Dreamers—by ensuring that 700,000 DACA recipients and 3.6 million of other undocumented immigrants brought here as children are fully accepted. Second, we need to implement quality civic education for American youth, so that they might share the Dreamers' tremendous aptitude for self-government. Doing so just might save our democracy.

## Intervening in the Economy for Gun Reform

Aaron Noffke | Mar. 15, 2018

Donald Trump has been in office for just north of a year now, and a broad left-wing coalition has yet to emerge. That's not altogether surprising, given the lack of a political infrastructure that could really foster that sort of activity. On top of that, there is no clear indication that the Democratic Party is ready to take part in mobilizing for a social democratic agenda. Still, it's prudent to take stock of emerging progressive forces - such as the groundswell of youth-led pushes for gun reform - and investigate how we might stitch together their different causes.

But as policy proposals under the banner of gun reform are brought forward, progressives must remain committed to a structural analysis of guns in the economy. Without doing so, policy outcomes may not only impede reducing gun violence, but also function to buttress an explanatory logic that blames certain populations for the problem itself.

If you rewind to the civil rights movement of the 1960s, you'll notice an important cautionary lesson: policy solutions that forsake the need to substantively regulate the economy implicitly rubber-stamp the moment's economic arrangements.

Consider Judith Stein's *Running Steel, Running America* which traces the historical development of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Her work, broadly, demonstrates how collaborative decisions within movement-building to push inequality out of conversations on the economy shape both the policies advocated for and the explains why the issue exists. Title VII, which established the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission in a move to forbid employment discrimination, was negotiated through political means deemed necessary to pass a federal civil rights package. In consequence, what resulted was the Fair Employment Commission, a watered-down version of the commission. Additionally, workers had to file cases under a rubric of individual prejudice. As the structure of the economy changed in the following years, this rubric proved to be ill-equipped to address the fundamental employment concerns of Black workers.

And that's a shame, because a more robust fair employment law was on the table: Senator Humphrey's S. 1937 bill. The bill not only recognized structural changes taking place in the American economy—automation in the North, mechanization in the South—but it also grappled with the fact that labor policies would ultimately perpetuate old inequalities without robust intervention. Instead of relying on individual complaints and remedying them through litigation, S. 1937 had the power, on administrative review, to deploy federal job-training programs and other micro-economic

government interventions within industries. As Stein writes: “S. 1937 sent an intellectual message that Black unemployment was not simply a problem of human relations, where morality and democracy demanded the abolition of actions based upon prejudice, but was a function of the changing labor market.”

Yet support for the bill became less of a priority as mobilization for a national civil rights law reached its climax. Despite an overwhelming presence of demonstrators offering support for a minimum wage and voicing economic concerns at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, attempts to insert economic issues into the civil rights agenda undercut the perceived need to create greater public support for a civil rights bill.

Empowered through the courts to take on the issue of employment discrimination, Title VII ultimately failed to articulate Black employment as an issue integral to the changing nature of the labor market. As Stein states, Title VII “could not produce jobs, only distribute them.” The lives of Black workers and others also marginalized within the American labor market system needed an employment discrimination bill that could alter basic components of the American economy. As the 20th century wore on, the changing economic structure would disproportionately impact Black workers. Today, Black-white wage gaps are larger than they were in 1979.

In the years since Title VII, the omission of a structural-economic analysis of Black unemployment continued to work against the struggle for racial equality. Mainstream political discourse increasingly relied upon racist explanations for racial disparities. These explanations hinged on a framing of Black culture, tradition, and family structure as fundamentally dysfunctional and pathological. Additionally, without an explanation of racial disparities that directly implicated the U.S. economy, broad swatches of the liberal establishment easily and tacitly accepted this logic, with welfare reform arriving through the office of a democratic president.

This isn't to suggest, of course, that civil rights groups intended for any of these consequences to unfold. Rather, the lack of a structural analysis of unemployment impaired both their effectiveness and analytical approaches.

The historical analysis Stein provides in *Running Steel*, *Running America* acts as an aid for understanding the mutually constituted and historically contextual relationship between race and class in the United States. Stein's analysis also offers an important lesson for our current gun control push: Market failure must be included in gun control conversations because guns are allowed to be bought and sold to civilians on the private market. A policy intervention that uses the lesson provided by Stein prioritizes disarmament by implementing gun buyback programs and tightly

regulating the production of firearms, in addition to investing in harm reduction for violent crimes.

Few of those who advocate for “gun safety” take this stance. Rather, standard initiatives include background checks and, more recently, access to school mental health resources. These initiatives locate the problem within a certain class or race of people, where violence is an implied group quality. And similar to the idea of arming teachers, these policies take shootings for granted while narrowing the problem to high-profile shootings, a small fraction of total firearm deaths. They fit alongside a formula to punish, police, and surveil those who are deemed predisposed for shootings, and look to hold them personally responsible. The dynamics of race, gender, class, and law enforcement dictate who gets labeled a “shooter.” In effect, these policies work in tandem with broader inequalities already at play in society.

These piecemeal reforms may alter the process of gun-ownership, but their effectiveness for reducing gun violence pales in comparison to intervening in the production and distribution of firearms themselves. Similar to how Black employment has been framed and fought over, failing to recognize the need to alter current economic arrangements opens the door to causal explanations that only deepen inequality.

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## **Crap, I Forgot to Go Incognito!**

**Dillon Roseen | Jan. 23, 2018**

What if Google posted your search history online? All of it, I mean—even the stuff you looked at years ago (or perhaps yesterday) in Incognito Mode.

If that question doesn't send a shiver down your spine, my guess is you're probably not a Millennial. And to those Millennials who think that Incognito Mode truly protects your data by fully anonymizing your online browsing, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but—that isn't really the case. And I'll tell you why that's more concerning than you might think.

For people of a certain age who had regular access to the Internet growing up, our formative years were largely shaped by online activities. All those burning middle-school questions were just a short Yahoo! Answers post away from being cleared up. Now, in our 20s and 30s, we're mostly comfortable “doing life” online—whether that means paying bills via Venmo, sharing our locations on Google Maps, or, yes, even sending nudes over Snapchat. Every click and every search reveals a little more about us, as NPR's Hidden Brain podcast describes, until an unadulterated “map of our collective hopes, fears, and desires” emerges.

How do we make sense of this? Our willingness to share such private information over virtual platforms has a lot to do with our willingness to trust that institutions will protect our data. A Gallup report found that 80 percent of Millennials have “some” or “a lot” of trust in businesses to keep their personal information secure. Compared to other generations, Millennials are much more trusting of institutions across every industry, both off and online, to safeguard their personal data.

More than that, though, Millennials are also more likely to use integrated applications on their devices, and often lack the understanding of just how invasive these apps can be. As Lisa Gutermuth describes for Slate, “many apps engage in irresponsible practices” like over-collecting user information, sharing and selling data without your permission, and poorly securing data, leaving you vulnerable to attack. That our entire lives have been documented, shared, tagged, and stored online is a reality that most Millennials accept, even with the awareness of the attendant security risks.

In a paradoxical way, then, Millennials are both the most cyber-secure generation—and the most cyber-insecure one. While we generally have better security habits online, such as choosing stronger passwords and avoiding Nigerian Prince phishing emails, we’re also more willing to give up our private information in return for a service. As cyber threats become more pervasive and harder to thwart—like the recently disclosed Spectre and Meltdown vulnerabilities—even the most security-conscious digital natives will have trouble protecting their information. By placing nearly every aspect of our lives in the cloud, Millennials have the most to lose following a cyber attack.

Imagine, for a moment, everything your online profile reveals about you, and what would happen if that information suddenly became public. Beyond the exposure of financial information and medical data stored on your laptop or cell phone, maybe you download the occasional pirated movie. Or maybe you spend more time on the clock searching for other jobs than completing the work your boss assigned. If you do research to find a nearby abortion clinic or STI testing facility, would you want your family to know? If you’re in an abusive relationship, what would happen if your partner found out about the one-way plane ticket you just purchased to get out of town? What if you’re a closeted, housing-insecure LGBTQ youth seeking online support and your intolerant family finds out?

Clearly, some things we do online are best kept private.

What do we do about this? There are already some well-established steps individuals can take to protect themselves against these nightmarish scenarios: choosing long and strong passwords (while, surprise, minimizing the number of times you change it), setting up two-factor authentication for emails, and using encrypted browsers like Tor or browsing through a

Virtual Private Network (VPN). I've heard too many friends say, "I could never run for office because of this text or that selfie," a statement made under the assumption that little can be done to ensure our personal data is protected. But, as Gregory Michaelidis forcefully describes, users should begin thinking of themselves as the first line of defense against cyber attacks, rather than waiting for a magic blend of technology and policy to "fix" cybersecurity.

One reason waiting is dangerous: Though the federal government often seems to engage with cybersecurity problem-solving, progress thus far has been surface-level and painfully slow. As of Jan. 2, The Intercept reported that only four of the 14 cybersecurity reports requested by the White House have been completed on time, and none have been made publicly available for critique or verification. These reports should, first, be completed, and second (to the extent possible), be shared with civil society leaders to strengthen their overall findings. Other weaknesses are apparent in the private sector approach to cybersecurity, as illustrated by Uber's alleged cover-up of a data breach and Deloitte's failure to require two-factor authentication leading to the disclosure of sensitive client information.

Companies like Equifax repeatedly suffer massive data breaches but somehow come out ahead in the end—as Senator Elizabeth Warren uncovered, the company is making "millions of dollars off its own screw up." As former Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Richard Cordray notes, "it doesn't work to deregulate around cybersecurity. Nobody in the public is going to accept that. We have to have more accountability, not less, over the safety ... and privacy of our information." Smart regulations ought to be enacted that both encourage robust cybersecurity measures and hold repeat offenders, like Equifax, accountable. More research needs to be done to understand the full lifecycle of harm following data breaches, especially since Millennials will be around longer and face prolonged threats beyond the standard two-year identity theft protection offered after a breach.

For Millennials, these events will be a regular occurrence in our cyber-insecure future, and it's at least partly our responsibility to do something about it. So, while this article is a principled stand in favor of online privacy, it's also a call to Millennials to demand more from the businesses we interface with, again and again, and the government we trust to secure our freedom and liberty—and a call to demand more of each other by taking simple, well-established steps to protect ourselves.

## Dismantling the Digital Poorhouse

Myacah Sampson | Feb. 13, 2018

Eight years ago I stood in the checkout line of a Walmart in rural New Mexico with my mother. As she swiped her scratched debit card for the third time, a white woman behind us sneered.

“Indian freeloaders. Did her welfare run out?”

The woman had assumed that my mother was using an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card—the debit card on which welfare recipients receive cash assistance, or SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps). Introduced in the 1990s, when credit and debit card use picked up, lawmakers hoped that the EBT card would help recipients of food stamps avoid the derision and outright refusal of service they often faced in grocery stores over attempts to purchase groceries with easily identifiable coupons. As well intentioned as it was, the introduction of this new technology didn’t end the racialized stigma frequently associated with welfare use. Who would’ve thought?

Virginia Eubanks, probably. Her new book, *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*, is the culmination of years of work examining the ways in which the digital age has shaped social control of the poor. Through three case studies—an automated eligibility system for public assistance in Indiana, an algorithmically coordinated housing entry system in Los Angeles’ Skid Row, and a child abuse prediction system in Pennsylvania—Eubanks, who’s also a New America National Fellow, demonstrates how introducing new technologies to social assistance programs can disrupt the lives of the poor. Or, put another way, Eubanks investigates how this technology can disconnect the poor from vital social services and undermine their right to self-determination at unprecedented scales and speeds.

To take just one of these case studies, Indiana’s electronic system for public assistance, designed by IBM, often lost its citizens information, a mistake its algorithm blamed on recipients themselves. Eubanks highlights in her book the story of Omega Young, a Medicaid recipient who was ordered to recertify her eligibility in 2008—the same time she was undergoing cancer treatment. Though she notified a call center to let the state know that she’d be missing a recertification appointment for chemotherapy, this information never reached the electronic system. She was flagged for her “failure to cooperate” and was, in turn, cut off from food stamps, healthcare, and transportation to her appointments.

For a year Young simultaneously battled cancer and the appeals process, not winning back her benefits until March 2, 2009; she’d died the previous day. Indiana had essentially made all of its welfare recipients beholden to

one giant digital caseworker—one that wasn't only incompetent, but also incapable of being self-critical and empathetic.

"I think it's important to say I don't think there's anything inherent in this technology that, for lack of a better word, makes it another boot on the neck of the poor. There's nothing specific about automation that does that," Eubanks said at a recent event hosted by New America's Family-Centered Social Policy program, an event centered around the same theme as her book. She was joined by Cheri Honkala, a welfare rights organizing veteran and National Organizer of The Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign; Rose Afriyie, executive director of mRelief, a web- and text-based platform for families to find out if they qualify for public support; and Mariella Saba, organizer and researcher with the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition and Our Data Bodies project.

"Any time we're talking about data collection, we have to recognize the power dynamic that exists [between] who is managing what system of a human need—whether that human need is housing or food," said Saba, nodding to how algorithms and human caseworkers alike have the power to make life-altering and life-ending decisions about recipients' lives. "In Los Angeles I see a lot of empty buildings that could be used for immediate housing when there's people freezing in the streets. I lift up the name of Barbara [Brown]," a 60-year-old woman who died of exposure on a Skid Row sidewalk in early January. Saba's deeper point was that, before we're ready to introduce automated processes into public assistance, we must interrogate whether this power dynamic—often premised on false narratives of scarce resources and the criminality of the poor—is one we want to replicate.

Yet at the same time, while society works toward a more generous public assistance system, people still need access to the current one to make ends meet. Indeed, one of the major barriers to assistance is the sheer difficulty of finding out how to apply.

So how to extinguish this access gap? Often, people who qualify for social assistance programs "have heard stories about how difficult it is to access services they're entitled to and have just completely decided that it's not worth the trouble," Afriyie said. That's why her organization, mRelief, works to eliminate that trouble by allowing people to determine their eligibility anonymously and without stigma by leveraging technology. Prospective applicants can answer 10 questions via text message or an online form and receive a simple "yes" or "no" as to whether they qualify for assistance, and how to apply.

Honkala, a longtime welfare rights organizer, also weighed in on ways the digital age could move the needle on welfare rights. She explained that incorporating technology into social assistance programs hasn't truly

grappled with an underlying assumption: that the poor are to be policed and punished.

“Through this entire journey, there has been an effort to have our voices heard. And through all of these years we’ve had to take on the battle of being dehumanized—dehumanized and tracked,” Honkala said.

Over nearly three decades, she’s sought to organize demonstrations that have not only rejected demonizing poor people, but also wasted no time in meeting their basic human needs. In the winter of 1994, for instance, the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, recognizing that the local Philadelphia government planned to do nothing about overflowing shelters and vacant homes, broke into and took over HUD housing for homeless families to occupy. We often like to describe technology as facilitating innovation, as being “disruptive,” but actions like that of the KWRU demonstrate that disruption can be as low-tech and lifesaving as breaking a lock.

Try as we might, the conditions that allowed my mother and me to be harassed for being poor and brown in public can’t be automated out of American society. Technology can only map itself over prevailing social conditions. Until we’re ready to address the historically embedded reasons the poor are all too often met with disdain and blame, the dystopia will code itself.

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## **I Couldn't Spot a Fake News Story, Can You?**

**Spandana Singh | Jan. 23, 2018**

A few weeks ago, a friend of mine sent me a screenshot of a supposed book excerpt describing what has now been recognized as a satirical description of Donald Trump’s obsession with the Gorilla Channel. Even though the piece seemed a bit off, a bit exaggerated, and a bit implausible, we both believed it. Partly because there was some small part of us—no matter how small—that wanted to and partly because we were raised in a time when trust in media institutions was strong—and the norm.

As millennials, we have been witness to and part of a pivotal turning point in the media landscape. During the earlier stages of our lives, the news media were considered among the strongest arbiters of truth. In a heated debate, grounding your argument on information from a news article was a sure way to legitimize your case. After all, it was expected that the information from major news outlets had been thoroughly investigated, verified and approved for public consumption and comprehension. But with the rise of the internet, which enabled any user to produce their own content, we suddenly faced a transformed information landscape where the boundaries between truth and opinion were blurred, sometimes even intentionally.

At first, we still relied on print news to verify the conspiracy theories being

shared on clunkily designed and Comic Sans-laden “news” blogs. However, news organizations were gradually dethroned as primary content creators; the shift was accompanied by a wave of print newspaper closures as news outlets moved to online-only. Additionally, trust in mass media fell drastically, largely due to political polarization. According to a 2016 Gallup poll, only 32% of Americans had “a great deal or fair amount of trust” in the media. As a result of these fundamental shifts, the Millennial Generation lost valuable fact-checking and reliable news sources. This may not have mattered as much when the stakes went only as high as knowing “J. Lo’s 10 Secrets for Success” or the apparent truth behind “Brangelina’s Latest Spat.” But as disinformation campaigns have grown more complex and dangerous, threatening everything from the foundations of our democracies (see the United States, EU nations and Malaysia as examples) to sparking caste and religion-based violence, it is vital that we equip ourselves to spot and defend against fake news.

As millennial users who are well-educated and media- and tech-savvy, we may not want to prioritize this issue because we don’t think it needs to be prioritized. We, like many of our counterparts, preach the third person effect. We claim that we are immune to the effects of fake news via mass media influence and believe other, less-astute and less-educated users are instead the ones liable to be tricked by fake news. As the educated elite, we know fake news is out there and we can engage in a 20-minute rant on its latest ills on society. For this we pat ourselves on the back and subsequently fall into a state of narcotizing dysfunction, not realizing that we are just as at-risk as any internet user.

Given the scope and depth of the global disinformation crisis, solving it is not an easy feat. It will require an effective and long-term collaboration between technology companies, government institutions, and media organizations. These initiatives should focus on investing more in digital and media literacy programs embedded in all segments of society including schools, workplaces, and on media platforms themselves. However, the onus for solving this problem should not fall entirely on external, top-down operating groups. As millennials we are regular and influential producers and consumers of digital content, and should therefore share the responsibility for educating ourselves and others on how to identify and combat fake news online.

According to a recent Ipsos Public Affairs study, American adults were fooled by fake news headlines approximately 75% of the time. So the next time someone sends you a screenshot or an article that you think is a little bit suspicious, make sure it is from somewhere reputable before you share it on Snapchat, Facebook, or Twitter. Yesterday, it was falsified content about a world leaders’ obsession with the Gorilla Channel. Tomorrow, it could be something far worse. I couldn’t distinguish fake news at first glance. Can you?

# Notes

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