

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute

AT JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY



**FISCAL YEAR 2021
ANNUAL REPORT**





Rendering courtesy of Renzo Piano Building Workshop
and Architect of Record Ayers Saint Gross



A year of growth

The SNF Agora Institute has achieved significant success and growth over the past year, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our faculty more than doubled, and our fellows programs expanded, bringing us closer to fulfilling the founding vision of a robust community of scholars, practitioners, students, and other partners working together to understand and address the considerable threats to global democracy and discourse. And we used this period of virtual dialogue to bring the research and insights of the institute to a global audience.

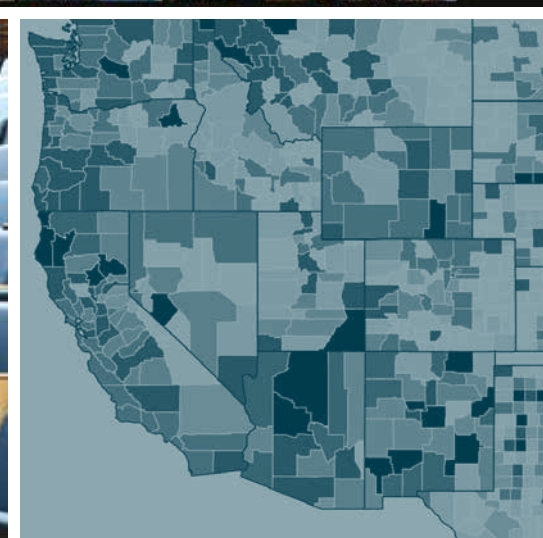
Under the leadership of inaugural director Hahrie Han, we began executing our strategic plan across our three core functions: **DISCOVERY** of new knowledge that helps us understand democratic decline and resilience; **DESIGN** of practical interventions that translate academic research into real-world solutions; and **DIALOGUE** that enables broad engagement, deliberation, and education and aims to strengthen citizens' capacity for productive discourse, participation, and leadership in democracy.

Our faculty and fellows had an impressive year of engagement with both scholarly and public audiences. We were also very excited to welcome five new SNF Agora endowed faculty members to the team, with appointments beginning July 1, 2021, along with the first cohort from our new application-based Visiting Fellows

program, who joined the institute for the 2021-2022 academic year. We also filled our Student Fellows program to capacity during the past year, and launched our Faculty Grants program.

We incubated several communities of practice, advanced a project that harnesses big data and computational data science tools to map the modern *agora*, and published case studies examining how civic and political actors navigated real-life challenges related to democracy and dialogue. We hosted dozens of virtual conversations, conferences, and trainings focused on the 2020 U.S. presidential election, free speech, racial justice, bridging geographic and ideological divides, and other topics. Though the pandemic meant that all of our events were online, the virtual format enabled us to reach viewers across the nation and around the world. From Vermont to Oregon, from Florida to Utah, from Argentina to Zimbabwe, and from Sweden to Uzbekistan, individuals were tuning in to learn more and become part of the SNF Agora community.

We continued to make progress on our new Renzo Piano-designed building, unveiling updated plans last winter, finalizing designs in the spring, and breaking ground in the summer. The building will provide exceptional spaces for the teaching, learning, and gathering that embody the open and inclusive spirit of SNF Agora.



With a strong community of dedicated scholars and practitioners, a growing body of translational work, and progress on a new building to house it, we are proud of how far we have come in such a short time, and excited to extend our impact in the years to come.

At the core of the SNF Agora Institute is a group of Johns Hopkins scholars who facilitate dynamic, multi-disciplinary inquiry into what makes democracy and deliberation work and why they fail, and to identify possible interventions for the future while encouraging a deep understanding of the past.

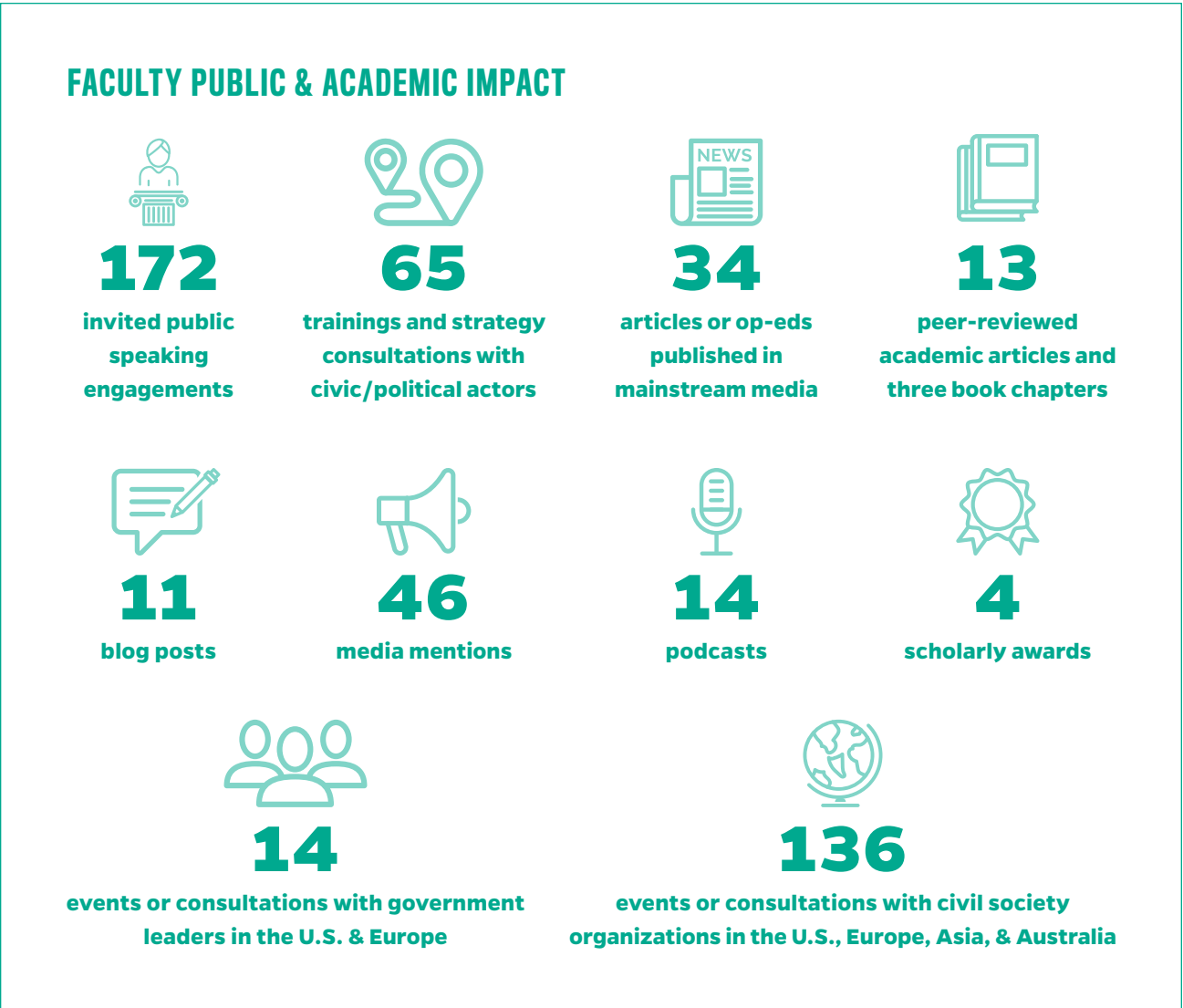
SNF Agora faculty had a prolific year of teaching, research, and publishing. The team also grew significantly, as the institute hired five new SNF Agora endowed faculty members.

SNF Agora Senior and Visiting Fellows are key to the vision of the SNF Agora Institute, allowing us to bring a variety of practitioners and scholars to campus and support their work to integrate research with practice. (Senior Fellows have multiyear appointments and contribute full time to the institute through teaching, scholarship, and public events; Visiting Fellows have shorter-term appointments and make commitments to specific projects, events, or teaching engagements.)

This year, the institute hosted three Senior Fellows and five Visiting Fellows. We also launched our first cohort-based Visiting Fellows program in the spring, which attracted applications from around the world and resulted in a diverse and dynamic group of 11 fellows who joined us for the 2021-2022 academic year.

“Policymakers, practitioners, community members, and researchers are often tackling the same public problems, yet not engaging directly with each other to share knowledge and collaborate. In my work I invite diverse thinkers like these to tell me about the kinds of opportunities for collaboration that they would like to have. Then I design and test new ways of successfully connecting them. SNF Agora is about looking at shortcomings in our democracy and imagining what’s possible, and that’s precisely the mindset I bring to my work.”

Adam Seth Levine, SNF Agora Institute Associate Professor of Health Policy and Management in the Bloomberg School of Public Health



AN INSPIRING YEAR LED BY INSPIRING PEOPLE

The SNF Agora Faculty, along with the 2020-2021 Senior Fellows and Visiting Fellows, produced a magnitude of work that contributed to conversations around the world. Director: **Hahrie Han** (1). Core faculty: **Henry Farrell** (2), **Martha S. Jones** (3), and **Adam Seth Levine** (4). Teaching faculty and Senior Fellows: **Anne Applebaum** (5), **Bryce Corrigan** (6), **Yascha Mounk** (7), and **Peter Pomerantsev** (8). Visiting Fellows: **Peter Levine** (9), **Grace Park** (10), **Ashley Quarcoo** (11), **Scott Shane** (12), and **Scott Warren** (13).



“SNF Agora is the place where we take the remarkable research we do in departments and learn how to make it speak to the world.”

Martha S. Jones, Society of Black Alumni Presidential Professor, Professor of History, and a Professor at SNF Agora Institute

WELCOMING OUR NEW FACULTY

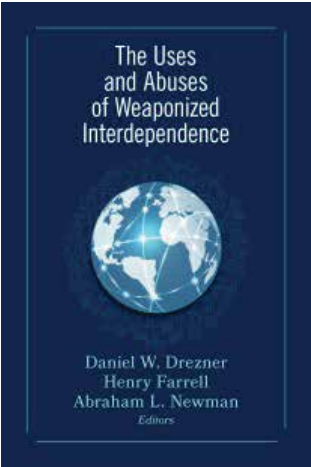
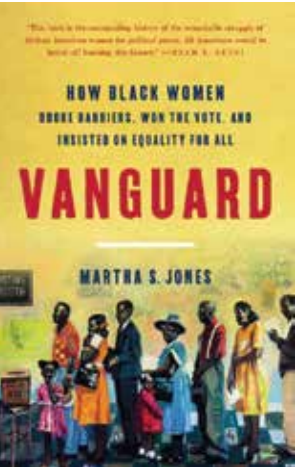
Five esteemed scholars have joined the SNF Agora Institute faculty. They come from a wide range of backgrounds including political science, sociology, and history and will greatly enrich the explorations, applications, and discussions of the SNF Agora Institute in the years to come. They include: **Consuelo Amat** (1), **Lilliana Mason** (2), **Andrew Perrin** (3), **Leah Wright Rigueur** (4), and **Dawn Teele** (5).



FACULTY AUTHORS

Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All was published by Martha S. Jones, Society of Black Alumni Presidential Professor, Professor of History, and a Professor at SNF Agora Institute, in September 2020. It was a *TIME Magazine* must-read book for 2020, won the 2020 *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for History, was a finalist for the Mark Lynton History Prize from the Columbia Journalism School, and was described by *The New York Times* as “an elegant and expansive history.”

The Uses and Abuses of Weaponized Interdependence was co-edited by Henry Farrell, SNF Agora Institute Professor of International Affairs at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), and was published in March 2021. Globalization has connected people all around the world and made us dependent on one other—but what if that’s not always a good thing? Farrell’s work explores this question and others through bringing together important leaders in the field of international relations to discuss aspects of “weaponized interdependence,” the concept that countries with more influence in globalized resources, such as information or financial networks, would use that position for their own benefit and to the detriment of other societies.



BUILDING PROGRESS

The vision for a new space to house our institute, foster the work of our faculty, and invite the community to engage with our efforts is poised to become a reality. Last December, we unveiled updated plans, which included adjustments aimed at maximizing the institute’s mission of building community and connection. Designed by the world-renowned architecture firm Renzo Piano Building Workshop, the building has been given a “twist”: the section that will be open to the community—which includes a glassy convening space and café—will now face both the campus and neighborhood, opening its front doors to all. The height of the building has also been lowered, ensuring the space will be easy to navigate and to facilitate proximity among building occupants to encourage collaboration and connection. With these final touches complete, construction is now under way.

“We are looking forward to providing an open and welcoming space that fosters the kinds of cross-cutting conversations and convenings that are at the very heart of SNF Agora’s mission—and that are fundamental to democracy itself.”

Hahrie Han, SNF Agora
Institute Director



SNF AGORA VISITING FELLOW SHINES A SPOTLIGHT ON WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

Can the U.S. military model the inclusive aspirations of American democracy if it bars women from full participation in its own ranks? Until 2017 women were excluded from infantry and armor positions, keeping elite female soldiers from protecting democracy around the world.

Grace Park, SNF Agora Visiting Fellow, spent a year interviewing women who were part of the first class of female infantry and armor officers, discussing and recording their challenges and victories. In a multimedia presentation in April, “Smashing the Glass Ceiling: Women and the U.S. Infantry and Armor,” Park shared the resulting research and analysis from these conversations, using this pivotal moment to examine the past and future of gender integration in the U.S. military. Park’s commitment to intellectual exploration, engagement with the community, and enrichment of dialogue and discussion is indicative of the efforts of all SNF Agora faculty and fellows.

Park’s work is informed by their own career in the military, where they served as a U.S. Army captain and toured overseas in Italy, Tunisia, and Djibouti. Using this personal experience, as well as their in-depth research, Park also moderated a compelling panel discussion in April, “Gender Integration and the Military,” and led a student-focused forum, “Closing the Civilian-Military

Divide,” in February that debunked common myths surrounding the U.S. military and offered students the chance to participate in a Q&A with military personnel.

“The percentage of Americans that interact with the military on a regular basis is so small, so it can be such a foreign concept depending on what circles you’re in. It’s great to have events like this because it helps bridge the civilian-military divide and educates people on a basic level about what life is like for the military and the kind of sacrifices military families make.”

Student participant in “Closing the Civilian-Military Divide,” as quoted in *The Johns Hopkins News-Letter*

SNF AGORA TOPIC: BRIDGING DIVIDES

Red vs. blue. Black vs. white. City vs. country. Military vs. civilian. Me vs. you. The space between us can sometimes seem insurmountable. But the chasm created by this bifurcated vision of the world can be bridged by key actions: listening, understanding, learning, and, above all, respecting what makes us different, what makes us the same, and the fact that we are all in this together.

- The SNF Agora Institute is leading the conversation about what these bridging actions look like through academic research, community events and education, and forums for discussion and debate.
- In a follow-up event to last year’s conference, “Faith, Race, and Politics: One Year Later” convened prominent evangelical leaders for a discussion about what evangelicals are doing and can do to confront divisiveness and racism within their ranks. The February event was co-hosted with UNDIVIDED, a faith-based program in Cincinnati that brings together diverse groups for honest, often difficult, discussions meant to help heal racial divides.
- The May “Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide” discussion brought together national leaders on the subject of this division, so clearly illustrated in U.S. voting maps. A lively dialogue showed how the two groups can come together across geographic, political, and racial divides to find common cause and mutual respect. The program was part of the Democratic Spaces series.

- The “Closing the Civilian-Military Divide” program in February invited students to engage with and ask questions of an active U.S. Army officer and a former U.S. Army captain. The program aimed to help expand understanding and debunk common misperceptions about the military, a group many civilians never interact with directly.
- Uniting for Action on the Maryland Economy, a 12-month initiative that started in July 2021, is a collaboration with the Urban Rural Action organization, and is using a similar paradigm to UNDIVIDED. Soliciting participants from across Maryland—city, country, liberal, conservative, of all races and creeds—the program will bring people together to first learn from each other and then harness their shared interest in Maryland’s future to implement projects that create a stronger state economy, in partnership with community organizations.



DEMOCRATIC SPACES:
ALL ARE WELCOME

Suzanne Nossel, CEO of PEN America and author of the book *Dare to Speak: Defending Free Speech for All*, kicked off our March “Dissent and Disagreement” event with a primer on what the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution does and does not cover in today’s conversations about free speech. SNF Agora’s Martha Jones; Mame-Fatou Niang, an associate professor of French and francophone studies at Carnegie Mellon University; and moderator Dahlia Lithwick, *Slate* senior editor and host of the podcast *Amicus*, joined Nossel for a discussion exploring the importance of fostering spaces for free speech as a means to advance democracy and defend against authoritarianism.

The event was part of Democratic Spaces, a series of discussions hosted by SNF Agora that considered how we can cultivate spaces—real and virtual—that enable robust participation in democracy. Other events were “Disability, Access, and Advocacy,” “Race and Reconciliation in a Diverse Democracy,” and “Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide.” All of the topics fit the goals

of the Democratic Spaces series: to demonstrate how all of us—no matter our identities, affiliations, beliefs, or creeds—play an important role as members in civil society and a healthy democracy.

“We need to think about what it’s going to take to create a society in which free speech can be realized by all people and for all ideas.”

Suzanne Nossel,
CEO of PEN American



Our faculty, fellows, and partners put ideas into action throughout the last year. SNF Agora incubated three communities of practice, which convene groups of practitioners and multi-disciplinary scholars to work together in sustained fashion to solve specific public problems. These communities of practice are focusing on global youth activism, Maryland’s economy, and our collective memory of racial history.

The institute also published several case studies on democracy, which were downloaded by teachers, community groups, trainers, and organizational leaders to access guidance on real-life strategic challenges. Topics include the relationship between Uruguayan party leaders and grassroots activists, a campaign for universal preschool in Ohio, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott as a classic example of a social movement’s success in the face of severe obstacles.

Through its labs, SNF Agora is conducting large-scale projects that bring research to the public, including Mapping the Modern Agora and Hard Histories at Hopkins. These initiatives seek to empower people to use scholarly tools—of computational social science and historical analysis, respectively—to build a more inclusive society. Through these activities, the SNF Agora Institute is turning research into ideas and resources that can support democratic resilience.

“My fellowship with the SNF Agora Institute deeply enriched my ongoing research on applying transitional justice approaches to the United States. Through the Race, Memory, and Democracy Project, I had the opportunity to convene workshops with others invested in the work of truth, redress, and reform in the United States. These sessions were tremendously useful in interrogating the role of truth-telling and public memory in American democracy, and also as a forum to connect stakeholders who may not have otherwise come together. I also enjoyed the openness displayed by SNF Agora faculty in collaboration and mutual learning.”

Ashley Quarcoo, SNF Agora Visiting Fellow, AY 20-21

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE & CASE STUDIES



3
communities of
practice launched



353
participants
engaged



36
countries
represented



12
U.S. states
involved



7
case studies
produced



228
case study files
downloaded

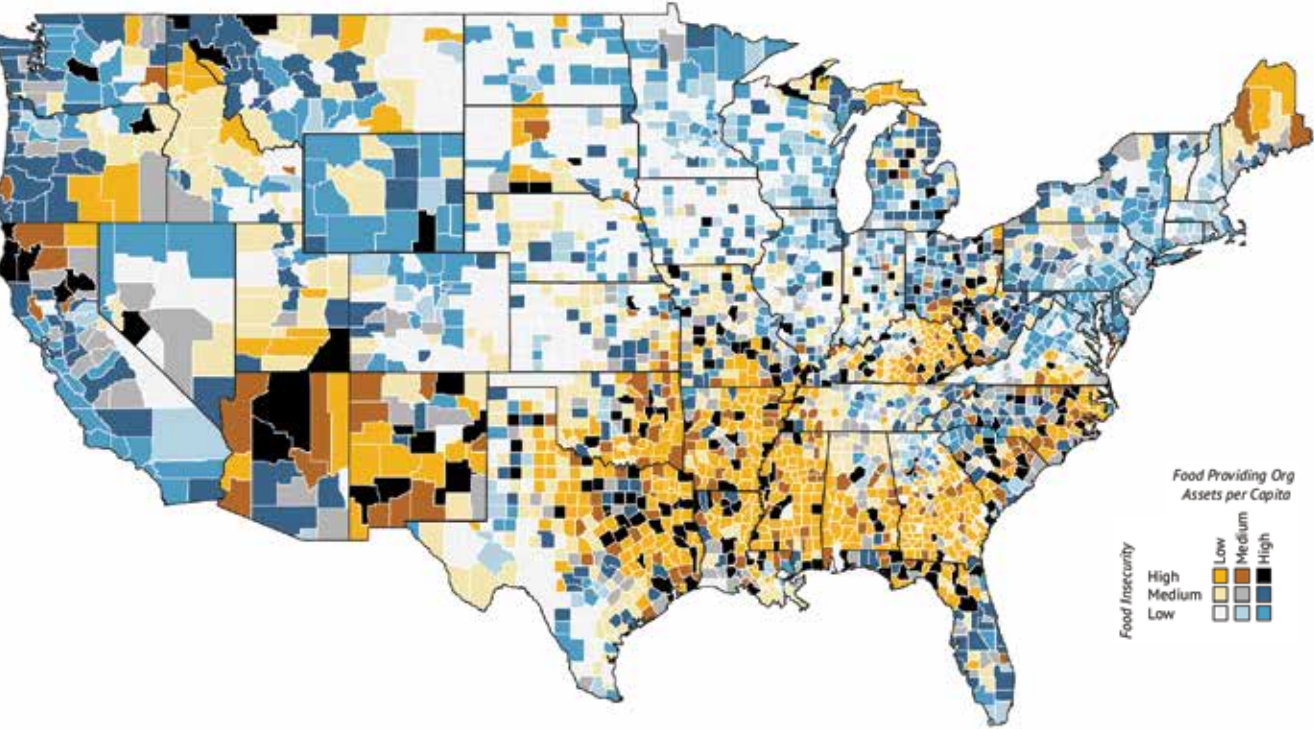
USING BIG DATA TO MAP OUR MODERN AGORA

The term “human genome” has joined the vernacular and increased public awareness about how mapping our underlying genomic system gives us greater ability to solve specific problems of human health and well-being. SNF Agora’s Mapping the Modern Agora project seeks to do the same for civic engagement and dialogue. By harnessing cutting-edge tools from computational social science, the project seeks to map the landscape of civic opportunity in the U.S. in order to show what and where civic opportunities exist. As it develops, the project will offer researchers and other users a holistic view of civic activity, enabling them to spot civic deserts and better direct resources to nurture the modern *agora*.

The project integrates big data on civil society organizations to map, at scale, the spaces that enable

democratic dialogue and engagement—from libraries and parks to churches and volunteer groups. These are the places that make up the modern *agora*—where citizens can come together to engage, discuss, and develop their skills as active members of democratic society. With such a comprehensive tool at their disposal, researchers and practitioners will be able to see where the civic spaces that cultivate the kind of deliberation, contestation, and struggle that make democracy work are clustered, and where the *agora* has emptied out.

Over the long term, the project aims to not only map the physical civic spaces, but also the digital ones, so that an even more comprehensive picture will emerge and serve as a tool for understanding and strengthening civic life.



By mapping demand (hunger) and supply (organizations that combat hunger), the Mapping the Modern Agora project can examine not only where food insecurity is highest but also where nonprofit assets to address it are lowest, and highlight where strategic investments in hunger relief should be prioritized.

SNF AGORA CASE STUDIES ON DEMOCRACY

Can a youth-led movement sustain its passion while also incorporating the expertise of professional political consultants? Can faith-based organizers garner enough support from diverse constituencies to win universal preschool in a racially divided city? When poor management leaves a high-profile conservative think tank in near ruins, should the board declare bankruptcy and try to regroup? What objectives, strategies, and demands should a nascent social movement choose as it confronts an entrenched system of racial inequity?

These are just some of the questions posed by SNF Agora’s new Case Studies on Democracy, which show how civic and political actors navigated real-life challenges. Developed by a mix of SNF Agora’s faculty, visiting fellows, and research team members, along with other

experts associated with the institute, the case studies are a free resource for practitioners, teachers, and organizational leaders working with civic and political groups, students, and trainees.

During the past year, SNF Agora published seven case studies, with several more in process, and growing our library will be a priority in the year to come. These case studies are intended to be used as teaching and training tools, by focusing on the difficult choices that leaders and groups make when navigating the complexities of democratic life. By exploring the basic question “What would we do?” after reading the cases, groups can deepen their skills, develop insights about how to approach strategic choices and dilemmas, and get to know each other better and work more effectively.

CASE STUDIES PRODUCED IN FY 2021

- *Vote16USA’s Campaign to Lower the Voting Age in San Francisco*
- *Building a Party with Activists: The Case of the Uruguayan FA*
- *The Center for Popular Democracy’s Education Justice Campaign*
- *The American Enterprise Institute’s Near-Death Experience*
- *The AMOS Project and the Campaign for Universal Preschool*
- *The Montgomery Bus Boycott*
- *The ISAIAH Trash Referendum*

“Teaching cases are valuable in courses and in community settings. The SNF Agora case studies fill a void. To the best of my knowledge, they are the only cases that show groups—or whole organizations—deliberating hard choices as they try to change the world. These cases are therefore uniquely useful for civic education (at all levels) and as prompts for group discussions.”

Peter Levine, SNF Agora
Visiting Fellow, AY 19-20

SNF AGORA TOPIC: MULTIRACIAL DEMOCRACY

The year 2020 was a year of reckoning, pain, and growth as images of brutality forced communities around the world to confront serious and persistent social injustice. In the U.S., this included, of course, the murder of George Floyd and hate crimes against Asian Americans, leading many Americans to formally acknowledge the reality of racism and the role it has played, and continues to play, in our democracy.

SNF Agora continued its efforts to elevate meaningful voices in this arena and to bring into conversation those seeking to strengthen democracy through addressing racism and embracing pluralism.

● SNF Agora faculty member Martha S. Jones is guiding this discussion both locally and nationally. Her **Hard Histories at Hopkins Project**, launched in fall 2020, has unearthed facts about the university founder and his connections to slavery, bringing about a university-wide effort to uncover the truth, reckon with it, and learn from it. Jones' course, **The Black World**, is a popular undergraduate class, leading students into an in-depth exploration of the experiences and reality of Black citizens of the world. And her book, *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All*, has won numerous awards and brings Jones' voice to a national audience.

● **The Race, Memory, and Democracy Project**, led by SNF Agora Visiting Fellow Ashley Quarcoo, is hosting a much-needed discussion about our country's collective memory. The project will create opportunities for community groups, scholars, and transitional justice practitioners to ask questions, exchange ideas, and explore alternative approaches to the ways in which public memory projects can acknowledge racial history.

● SNF Agora is working to create space for honest and active discussions about racism and its role in democracy. This included the October 2020 SNF Agora Conversation, **"Election 2020: Race, Polarization, and Life after the Election,"** the Democratic Spaces April event **"Race and Reconciliation in a Diverse Democracy,"** and the February **"Faith, Race, and Politics: One Year Later"** program. By bringing guest speakers, highlighting personal stories and experiences, and giving listeners the chance to engage with experts, these conversations are opening minds and hearts to the possibilities that have been blocked by silence and oppression.

A Hard Histories Book Talk in April featured a conversation between Hard Histories project director Martha S. Jones and JHU Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of English and History Lawrence Jackson. The discussion covered Jackson's scholarship on the life of Frederick Douglass in Baltimore, as well as issues of race and racism in Baltimore City, and ended with an audience Q&A.



TAKING A HARD—AND NECESSARY—LOOK AT OUR HISTORY

You can't change the future until you know your past—and not just the past that makes it into glossy press packets or easy-to-digest textbooks. The Hard Histories at Hopkins Project, led by Martha S. Jones, Society of Black Alumni Presidential Professor, Professor of History, and a Professor at the SNF Agora Institute, is aiming to bring into the light lesser known chapters of the history of Johns Hopkins University and Baltimore, particularly the role of racism and discrimination.

The project blends research, teaching, public engagement, and the creative arts to approach the topic, and involves students, faculty, academics, historians, and the public as active collaborators and contributors.

In Jones' lab, student-researchers delve into the archival record to uncover information that may not have been recorded, acknowledged, or publicized in other ways. Topics of exploration include the lives of enslaved people who lived on the Homewood property; post-Civil War segregation in Baltimore City; and the life of the acclaimed intellectual Kelly Miller, who was the first African American to attend Johns Hopkins. Through Hard Histories public events, including a book talk series, renowned scholars share their insights on topics including the lives of Black women in Maryland in the late 18th and early 19th centuries; the coastal slave

trade in the antebellum period; and Frederick Douglass' time in Baltimore.

As the work, discussion, and exploration of the Hard Histories Project continues, new insights and new ways to understand our history—and future—will emerge, promoting the kind of productive, if painful, dialogue at the heart of SNF Agora's mission.

"Understanding how they survived, it sheds a light into how we can really survive in this present moment. In those nuggets of how they survived and negotiated their lives, we can find some kind of inspiration."

Jessica Millward, featured speaker for the Hard Histories Book Talk series

Because debate, deliberation, and inclusion of diverse voices are hallmarks of democracy, they are also central aspects of the SNF Agora mission. Over the past year, the institute has been dedicated to serving as a public forum for broad dialogue, deliberation, and education.

The institute hosted a wide range of programs, including producing virtual conferences on the 19th amendment’s centennial and global youth activism, and participated in many others, including the Stavros Niarchos Foundation’s Nostos Festival. The institute also hosted a four-event series on Democratic Spaces; cross-ideological events around the 2020 election; Hard Histories Book Talks, which brought esteemed authors to share their insights; trainings for laypeople and students; and much more. These events, often created in partnership with organizations on and off campus, are truly collaborative, bringing together people who are committed to civic participation and leadership.

In addition to our events, forums, and conferences, SNF Agora faculty and fellows contributed their ideas to mainstream publications, significantly expanding the institute’s reach. These publications included *The Washington Post*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *The Root*, *People*, *Think Global Health*, *The Baltimore Sun*, and *Foreign Affairs*. Our communication platforms (including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, as well as our e-newsletter and robust website) were a trusted resource for those seeking insight and interpretation relevant to democracy-related news of the day.

Our faculty members taught 17 academic courses, exploring polarization, disinformation, civic engagement, social entrepreneurship, data analysis for social sciences and public policy, and other topics. Our active Student Engagement Board had 17 members working to support the SNF Agora mission and provide a student perspective to our efforts.

In facilitating dialogue through multiple platforms, SNF Agora offers a robust, dynamic forum for the exploration of civic ideas and ideals and a model of what democracy-in-action looks like.

"We can disagree without being disagreeable, and we can work together with people who are very different than us without sacrificing our principles."

Quill Robinson, vice president of government affairs for the American Conservation Coalition, and a panelist in the "Young People and the 2020 Election" event

EVENTS & SOCIAL MEDIA

34 states + D.C.
where viewers watched our U.S. election coverage

65 countries where viewers tuned into our virtual programming

126 speakers hosted by SNF Agora

14,000+ attendees participated virtually

137,235 page views of website

49 SNF Agora events in FY 2021

2,053 followers on Twitter

5,288 e-newsletter subscribers

PROGRAMMING PARTNERS

The SNF Agora Institute joined forces with a number of partners throughout the year to create dynamic and exciting programming. Organizations from a wide variety of viewpoints, locations, and areas of expertise helped to host events, contribute to panels, and guide thinking; these included the National Constitution Center, Democracy Moves, UNDIVIDED, and the Social Science Research Council. Johns Hopkins University entities were also valuable contributors to SNF Agora efforts: the Johns Hopkins Disability Health Research Center, the Johns Hopkins India Institute, the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy, and the Center for the Law and the Public’s Health were all active partners in SNF Agora programs. In addition, a number of student groups were involved with SNF Agora, such as the Black Student Union, Female Leaders of Color, the Foreign Affairs Symposium, the Multicultural Leadership Council, and the Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Debate Council.

SAMPLING OF PUBLICATION VENUES

- American Journal of Public Health
- Journal of Experimental Political Science
- SAGE Journals
- Behavioral Public Policy
- Humanities and Social Sciences Communications
- The Washington Post
- People
- Think Global Health
- Foreign Policy
- The Root
- Stanford Social Innovation Review
- The Atlantic
- The Baltimore Sun
- Inside Higher Ed



The SNF Agora Institute hosted a number of events in partnership with other organizations and groups. This included “Calling In: A Conversation with Loretta J. Ross,” a spring 2021 event that was hosted in partnership with JHU student groups Female Leaders of Color and the Multicultural Leadership Council.

“An internet that promotes democratic values instead of destroying them—that makes conversation better instead of worse—lies within our grasp.”

SNF Agora Senior Fellows Anne Applebaum and Peter Pomerantsev, “How To Put Out Democracy’s Dumpster Fire,” published in the April 2021 issue of *The Atlantic*

FEATURED COURSE
DEMOCRACY BY THE NUMBERS

One of the most crucial questions in today’s social-political spheres is this: How is democracy doing around the world?

Bryce Corrigan, SNF Agora’s senior statistician and lecturer, explored this fundamental topic in his spring 2021 undergraduate course, Democracy by the Numbers. The class offered crucial lessons on how to conduct data-driven analysis and to examine evidence about the institutions and policies that bolster democracy. Students gained hands-on experience studying publicly available indicators of electoral and democratic quality in the U.S. and around the world—from the absence of fraud in the electoral process, to the guarantees of fundamental human rights for all, to a government’s accountability to the public.

By the time the class wrapped up, students had a deeper, evidence-based understanding of global democratic health, and they had new tools with which to ask their own questions about political systems. With the skills gained in Corrigan’s class, they can now look more critically at democracy both here and abroad, promoting the transparency and accountability that are key to preserving a free society.

ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021 COURSES

Fall 2020

- History Research Lab:
 - Histories of Women and the Vote
- Intermediate Data-Analysis for Social Science and Public Policy 1 and 2
- Science and Democracy
- Designing Problem-Solving Spaces for Democracy
- Russia, 2016 and the Future of Information Warfare
- Social Entrepreneurship, Policy, and Systems Change
- The Black World
- This is Not Propaganda

Spring 2021 Intersession

- Polarization and Democracy

“Science and Democracy is one of the best courses I’ve taken so far. Not only do you get to engage in thought-provoking discussions on the role of scientific expertise in our democracy, but you also get to put that knowledge into practice. This course has allowed me to explore my passion for science and politics in new and exciting ways. Because of this course, I’m a much better scientific communicator, which has opened more doors for me than I could’ve imagined.”

Sarah Hamimi, Class of 2022

Spring 2021

- Social Entrepreneurship, Policy, and Systems Change:
 - The Future of Democracy
- Democracy by the Numbers
- Democracy
- This is Not Propaganda
- Independent Study Course
- Disinformation
- Field Research on Civic Engagement



FEATURED DISCUSSION

HUMANITY AND AI: THE POSSIBILITY OF A MORAL MACHINE

What is the meaning of life?

This question was posed to artificial intelligence systems during the 45th SNF DIALOGUES event, held in collaboration with the SNF Agora Institute during the SNF Nostos Festival in August 2021. The AI systems responded in real time in front of the live and virtual audience and a lively discussion followed addressing the moral, social, and political questions related to AI and its current and future role in society. Panelists



included Stelios Virvidakis, professor of philosophy, department of history and philosophy of science, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and Ethan Zuckerman, associate professor of public policy, communication, and information at University of Massachusetts, Amherst. The discussion was moderated by journalist and SNF DIALOGUES Executive Director Anna-Kynthia Bousdoukou and SNF Agora Institute Director Hahrie Han.

"Morality is not just a matter of obedience and strict unyielding rules. That's what worries me: which moral system are we going to use to power a machine?"

Stelios Virvidakis, epistemology and ethics professor at NKUA

FEATURED EVENT

CALLING IN INSTEAD OF CANCELING

In recent years, "cancel culture" and "call-out culture" have been on the rise, eliciting strong reactions from supporters and detractors. In both social and professional spaces, people are seeking to hold others accountable for offensive words and actions. But when are "canceling" and "calling out" the most effective—or even right—ways to do that? What other approaches should be considered?

In spring 2021, the SNF Agora Institute convened a nuanced discussion of this topic with Loretta J. Ross, an activist, Smith College professor, and public intellectual who has argued against publicly shaming or silencing people as a way to seek accountability. During her talk, Ross advocated for an alternative—"calling in"—as a better way to advance social justice. She argued that open, and perhaps difficult, conversations may be key

to increased understanding, empathy, and justice. The event concluded with a robust Q&A session moderated by leaders from Female Leaders of Color and the Multicultural Leadership Council at JHU, student groups that co-hosted the event. The event was also co-sponsored by the Provost's Office and the Office of the Dean of Student Life, with promotional support provided by the Foreign Affairs Symposium.

Ross has said that a call-in is in fact a call-out "done with love and respect." Through this event, participants were able to learn about practical ways to have difficult conversations, educate others about the harm they may have caused, and help community members find avenues for connection.

FEATURED CONFERENCE

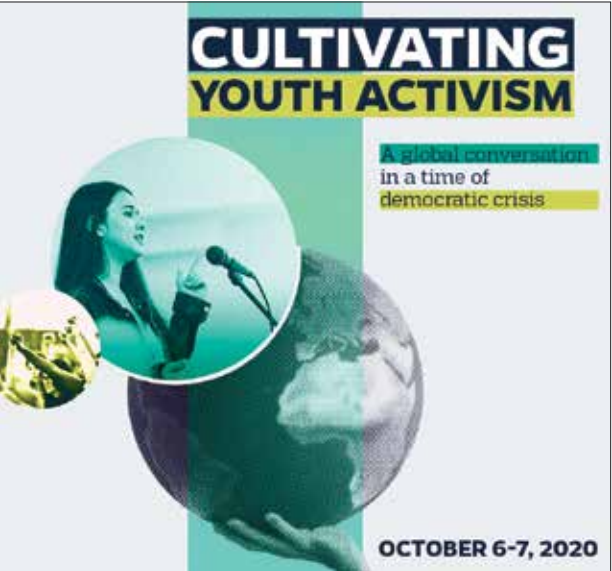
THE NEXT GENERATION OF ACTIVISTS ARE MOVING DEMOCRACY FORWARD

When Greta Thunberg began her campaign to raise awareness about climate change, she was dismissed many times—how could someone so young have anything valuable to say or do about such a big problem?

Plenty. While Thunberg focused on climate change, there are many other Gretas out there who are working on the problems facing modern democracy. They are from Paraguay, Thailand, South Sudan, and all over the world. And they are eager to have their voices heard and capable of enacting change.

Last October's virtual "Cultivating Youth Activism" conference, presented by the SNF Agora Institute with support from the Global Network for Youth Action, provided a forum for these young leaders. Panels, speakers, and workshops featured a number of compelling topics, including "The Imperative for Racial and Economic Justice," "Forming a Youth Activism Infrastructure," and "Leadership in Civil Resistance Movements: Four Key Roles that Activists Play." With panelists including professors, human rights

activists, and researchers, the conference focused on the dynamics of disparate movements for democratic change, while also shining a spotlight on shared global concerns in the field of civic engagement.



FEATURED PROGRAM

SEED GRANTS THAT HELP STUDENTS GROW

Johns Hopkins students and student groups have no shortage of energy and ideas. What they often lack, however, are sufficient resources to match. With this in mind, the SNF Agora Institute launched the Student Grant Program in fall 2020. The program is designed to support student projects that are complementary to the institute's mission and awards up to \$1,000 in grant funding to up to five student groups per semester who want to pursue research projects, unpaid internships, group projects, programming, or travel to academic events.

The grant program has so far done everything from help a student-run podcast gain access to recording software; fund the publication of a zine created to illustrate the findings of a student group's virtual conference; cover registration costs to enable students to participate in a Model United Nations Conference; and support the Black Student Union's February event, "Transformative Justice: How You Can Create Change on Campus."

"The year 2020 has really marked a turning point for our team as we more than doubled the amount of podcast episodes, expanded our team, and increased our marketing skills. We are so thankful for SNF Agora's grant and are excited to continue expanding our podcast's reach and collaborating with SNF Agora experts in the near future."

Amanda Yuen, Class of 2022, Hopkins Student Podcast on Foreign Affairs

SNF AGORA TOPIC: ELECTION 2020

It started with a pandemic and ended with an insurrection. The election cycle of 2020 was truly like no other, with democracy facing multiple challenges on multiple fronts. Through the whole tumultuous period, the SNF Agora Institute was there to inform, guide, and challenge.

● SNF Agora worked to communicate the central importance of voting in maintaining a strong democracy, partnering with the **Johns Hopkins New Student Orientation** and **HopkinsVotes**, both of which helped to educate students—many first-time voters—about their civic rights and responsibilities and exactly how to exercise them.

● The September 2020 “**SNF Agora Training: Presidential Debates Past and Present**,” led by Dana Wolfe, a former SNF Agora Visiting Fellow, helped voters understand how to effectively listen to, understand, and follow up on presidential debates.

● The “**SNF Agora Conversations: Election 2020**” program delivered a six-part webinar series for the Hopkins community and general public on key topics in the weeks leading up to the November election. Topics included threats to American democracy; media and manipulation; populism; young people and the 2020 election; and race, polarization, and life after the election.

● SNF Agora was nimble and responsive through the post-election uncertainty, hosting numerous events and discussions to help answer questions and provide expertise. These included an AMA-style discussion board, called **Ask Johns Hopkins Anything**, through which students could directly engage with SNF Agora faculty and fellows and other experts in the days following the vote. The institute also hosted a bipartisan panel discussion the following week, called “**Election 2020 and its Meaning for Our Democracy**,” inviting faculty, students, staff, and alumni to join a conversation with JHU experts through the **Hopkins@Home** program.

● A month after the election, SNF Agora and the Social Science Research Council co-sponsored an across-the-aisle discussion, “**The 2020 Election and Its Aftereffects: Results, Reflections, and Reimagining a Path Forward**.” The event brought scholarly and public thinkers from across the ideological spectrum to provide interpretations, reflections, and ideas for moving forward after the election. These discussions grew into a series of essays published in *The Washington Post’s Monkey Cage* blog, which reached a wide national audience and engaged in thoughtful civic discourse surrounding this election and its impact on the future of our democracy.



The December event “**The 2020 Election and Its Aftereffects: Results, Reflections, and Reimagining a Path Forward**” offered across-the-aisle analyses of the 2020 election.

AFTER THE 2020 ELECTION—MAKING SENSE OF THE CIRCUS

Running up to, and well beyond, the presidential election, truth and lies swirled, opinions grew heated, and it was hard to know who to listen to and what questions to even ask. In December 2020, in partnership with the Social Science Research Council, the SNF Agora Institute hosted an academic seminar regarding the 2020 U.S. presidential election and its aftermath, to help us make sense of it all. The event created space for a number of speakers from across the ideological spectrum—including scholars from the American Enterprise Institute, Brookings Institution, Hoover Institution, and New America—to examine Joe Biden’s victory and what the election means for democracy both domestically and abroad.

The Washington Post’s Monkey Cage blog provided a compelling follow-up to the event and a continued analysis of the aftereffects of the election. The blog, edited by SNF Agora faculty member Henry Farrell, published essays by several of the seminar scholars, including SNF Agora Institute Director Hahrie Han. Topics included how the Democratic Party is changing on the ground, the emerging power of the Black electoral block in states such as Georgia, and how the 2020 election’s high turnout wasn’t as good for American democracy as one might think.

A Year of Inspiring and Dynamic Speakers

Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, former U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Malta

Alan I. Abramowitz, Alben W. Barkley Professor of Political Science, Emory University

Mohamed Abubakr, human rights activist and peacemaker

Adetunji Adeniran, founder/president, Young Nigerians and Governance

Habon Ali, Opportunity for All Youth

Samar S. Ali, research professor of political science and law, Vanderbilt University; founding president and CEO, Millions of Conversations

Abdulrazaq Alkali, executive director, Organization for Community Civic Engagement

William B. Allen, political scientist

Robert J. Barbera, lecturer and director, Center for Financial Economics, Johns Hopkins University

Amir Bera, member of the U.S. House of Representatives (CA-07)

Gregg Beratan, disability rights advocate

Sheri Berman, professor of political science, Barnard College, Columbia University

Sarah Binder, professor of political science, George Washington University; senior fellow, Brookings Institution

David Brady, Davies Family Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution; Bowen H. and Janie Arthur McCoy Professor of Political Science, Stanford Graduate School of Business

Karen Brinson Bell, executive director, North Carolina Board of Elections

Fred Bronstein, dean, Peabody Institute

Joe Bubman, founder and executive director, Urban Rural Action

Thomas A. Burke, Jacob I. and Irene B. Fabrikant Professor and Chair in Health Risk and Society, Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

James Cesar, professor of politics, University of Virginia

Tamara Cofman Wittes, senior fellow, Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution

Brent J. Cohen, executive director, Generation Progress

Eliot A. Cohen, dean, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies

Nathan Connolly, Herbert Baxter Adams Associate Professor of History, Johns Hopkins University

Dee Davis, founder, Center for Rural Strategies

Francesca Desulme, outreach coordinator, Apathy is Boring

Larry Diamond, senior fellow, Hoover Institution and Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies

Lee Drutman, senior fellow, Political Reform Program, New America

Kristin Kobes Du Mez, professor of gender studies, Calvin University; author of *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*

Eric Edelman, Roger Hertog Distinguished Practitioner-in-Residence, Philip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

David Fakunle, adjunct assistant professor, University of Florida; associate faculty, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; chair of the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Jude Feranmi, founder, Raising New Voices Initiative; executive director, To Build a Nation

Morris P. Fiorina, Wendt Family Professor of Political Science, Stanford University; senior fellow, Hoover Institution



“It can be very hard to have productive conversations if we are working from completely different understandings of the past, which gives us completely different understandings of the present.”

Kristin Kobes Du Mez, professor of gender studies, Calvin University

Edward Foley, Ebersold Chair in Constitutional Law, The Ohio State University

David French, senior editor, *The Dispatch*

Musa al-Gharbi, Paul F. Lazarsfeld Fellow in Sociology, Columbia University

Mutaal Girshab, director, Regional Centre for Training and Development of Civil Society

Sheldon Greenberg, professor of management, Division of Public Safety Leadership, Johns Hopkins School of Education

Sara E. Gross, chief of the Affirmative Litigation Division, Baltimore City Department of Law

Raj Gupta, chair, Johns Hopkins India Institute Advisory Board

Nina Hall, assistant professor of international relations, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies Europe

Ellen Haring, senior fellow, Women in International Security

Astead W. Hernandon, *New York Times* national political reporter

Frida Romay Hidalgo, lawyer, National Autonomous University of Mexico

Alcinda Honwana, Centennial Professor and strategic director, Firoz Lalji Centre for Africa, London School of Economics and Political Science

Michelle Howard, retired admiral of the U.S. Navy

Caroline Hubbard, senior gender adviser and deputy director for Gender, Women and Democracy, National Democratic Institute

Lawrence Jackson, Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of English and History, Johns Hopkins University

Pramila Jayapal, member of the U.S. House of Representatives (WA-07)

Theodore R. Johnson, senior fellow and director of the fellows program, Brennan Center for Justice

Sara Just, executive producer, *PBS NewsHour*; senior vice president, WETA

Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, director, Circle

Charles Kessler, Dengler-Dykema Distinguished Professor of Government, Claremont McKenna College

Priti Krishtel, health justice lawyer; co-founder, I-MAK

David Riveros Garcia, executive director, Reaccion; board member, World Youth Movement for Democracy

Mawa George Lazarous, co-founder and executive director, Community Empowerment for Rehabilitation and Development



“The vast majority of Americans across the political spectrum ... really, really want the nation to get back to some sense of civility, of normalcy, of being able to engage with one another without it being based in hatred and the rhetoric that makes enemies out of your fellow citizens.”

Theodore Johnson, senior fellow and director of the fellows program, Brennan Center for Justice

Frances Lee, professor of politics and public affairs, associate chair in the Department of Politics, Princeton University

Neil Lewis, Jr., behavioral scientist and assistant professor, Cornell University; assistant professor of communication research in medicine, Weill Cornell Medical College

Yuval Levin, director of social, cultural, and constitutional studies, Beth and Ravenel Curry Chair in Public Policy; editor in chief of national affairs, American Enterprise Institute

Steven Levitsky, David Rockefeller Professor of Latin American studies and professor of government, Harvard University

Robert C. Lieberman, Krieger-Eisenhower Professor of Political Science, Johns Hopkins University

Brooke Lierman, Maryland state delegate

Dahlia Lithwick, senior editor and host of the *Amicus* podcast, *Slate*

Sarah Longwell, president and CEO, Longwell Partners

Lilliana Mason, associate professor of government and politics, University of Maryland, College Park; author of *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*

Sebastian Mazzuca, assistant professor of political science, Johns Hopkins University



“The story needs to be told about how women were willing to step forward to put principle over politics and really push the common good over politics.”

Barbara Mikulski, former U.S. senator; professor of public policy, Johns Hopkins University

Christiana McFarland, research director, National League of Cities

Wolfgang Merkel, professor emeritus and director of the Research Unit on Democracy and Democratization, Berlin Social Science Center

Hardy Merriman, president and CEO, International Center on Non-Violent Conflict

Suzanne Mettler, John L. Senior Professor of American Institutions in the Government Department, Cornell University

Barbara Mikulski, former U.S. senator; professor of public policy, Johns Hopkins University

Jessica Millward, professor in the Department of History and core faculty member of African American Studies, UC Irvine; author of *Finding Charity's Folk: Enslaved and Free Black women in Maryland*

Chuck Mingo, founder, UNDIVIDED; teaching pastor, Crossroads Church

Constance Morella, former U.S. congresswoman; ambassador to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development

Stephen L. Morgan, Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Sociology, Johns Hopkins University

Ereshnee Naidu-Silverman, senior director, Global Transitional Justice Initiative, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

C. Thi Nguyen, professor of philosophy, University of Utah

Mame-Fatou Niang, associate professor of French and francophone studies, Carnegie Mellon University

Pippa Norris, Paul F. McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics and CES Faculty Associate, Harvard University

Suzanne Nossel, CEO of PEN America; author of *Dare to Speak: Defending Free Speech for All*

Robert Percival, Robert F. Stanton Professor of Law and director of the Environmental Law Program, University of Maryland School of Law

Tony C. Perry, assistant professor, Carter G. Woodson Institute for African American and African Studies, University of Virginia

Angelique Pifer, Army strategic intelligence officer; professor of military science, Johns Hopkins University; Army Reserve Officer Training Corps, Blue Jay Battalion

Roni Porat, senior lecturer in the Political Science and International Relations Departments, Hebrew University

Andrew Pulrang, disability-focused freelance writer and online activist

Ashley Quarcoo, senior fellow, Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Reshma Ramachandran, health services researcher; family physician; National Clinician Scholars Program fellow, Yale School of Medicine

Deepak Raj, chairman, New Jersey State Investment Council; founder and managing director, Raj Associates

Rashawn Ray, David M. Rubenstein Fellow in Governance Studies, Brookings Institution; professor of sociology and executive director of the Lab for Applied Social Science Research, University of Maryland, College Park

Douglas Rivers, senior fellow, Hoover Institution; political science professor, Stanford University; president and CEO, YouGov/Polimetrix

Quill Robinson, vice president of government affairs, American Conservation Coalition

Noliwe Rooks, W.E.B Du Bois Professor, Cornell University

Jeffrey Rosen, president and CEO, National Constitution Center

Nancy Rosenblum, Senator Joseph Clark Professor of Ethics in Politics and Government emerita, Harvard University

Loretta J. Ross, associate professor in the Program for the Study of Women and Gender, Smith College; author of the forthcoming book, *Calling In the Calling Out Culture*

Reihan Salam, president, Manhattan Institute

Amir Sapkota, professor, Maryland Institute for Applied Environmental Health, University of Maryland School of Public Health

Ilya Shapiro, vice president, Cato Institute; director, Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies

Mary Elise Sarotte, Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis Distinguished Professor of Historical Studies, Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs, School of Advanced International Studies

Griffen Saul, founder, We Are Able

Daniel Schlozman, Joseph and Bertha Bernstein Associate Professor of Political Science, Johns Hopkins University

Bruce Schneier, fellow and lecturer, Harvard Kennedy School

Sangita Shresthova, director of research, Civic Paths Group

Kelly Siegel-Stechler, research fellow, Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy and SNF Agora Visiting Fellow

Janjira Sombatpoonsiri, researcher, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University; associate, German Institute for Global and Area Studies

Ed Stetzer, professor and dean, Wheaton College; executive director, Wheaton College Billy Graham Center

Daniel Stid, director, U.S. Democracy Program, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Bonnielin Swenor, founder and director, Johns Hopkins Disability Health Research Center

Jessica K. Taft, professor of Latin American and Latino studies, University of California, Santa Cruz

Steven Teles, professor of political science, Johns Hopkins University

William G. Thomas III, author of *A Question of Freedom: The Families Who Challenged Slavery from the Nation's Founding to the Civil War*

Paula Thornhill, acting director, Strategic Studies Program, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

Fanita Tolson, vice dean for faculty and academic affairs and professor of law, University of South California Gould School of Law

Michael Vaughan, postdoctoral research assistant, Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society

Raj Vinnakota, president, Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation

Raffi Joe Wartanian, founder, Letters for Peace

Derrick Wang, composer-librettist

Vesla Weaver, Bloomberg Distinguished Associate Professor of Political Science and Sociology, Johns Hopkins University

Kimberly Wehle, professor of law, John and Frances Angelos Law Center, University of Baltimore; author of *What You Need to Know About Voting—And Why*

Ronald Weich, dean and professor of law, University of Baltimore

Laura Wexler, co-founder and co-producer, Stoop Storytelling Series

George Will, Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist

Jennie K. Williams, co-editor, Trans-Atlantic and Intra-American Slave Trade Database; postdoctoral research scholar, University of California, Santa Cruz

Dana Wolfe, media consultant and documentarian; founding executive producer, Intelligence Squared U.S. debate series

Alice Wong, disabled activist, media maker, and consultant; founder and director of the Disability Visibility Project; editor of *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century*

Deborah Yashar, professor of politics and international affairs, Princeton University

Daniel Ziblatt, Harvard political scientist; co-author of *How Democracies Die*



“What are resources available for people [with disabilities] to run [for office]? That is also part of the work ahead. To say, if we really want political representation by us and for us, how do we support people not only at the local level but also running for anything? That’s also a challenge and a call to action for disability communities everywhere.”

Alice Wong, founder and director of the Disability Visibility Project

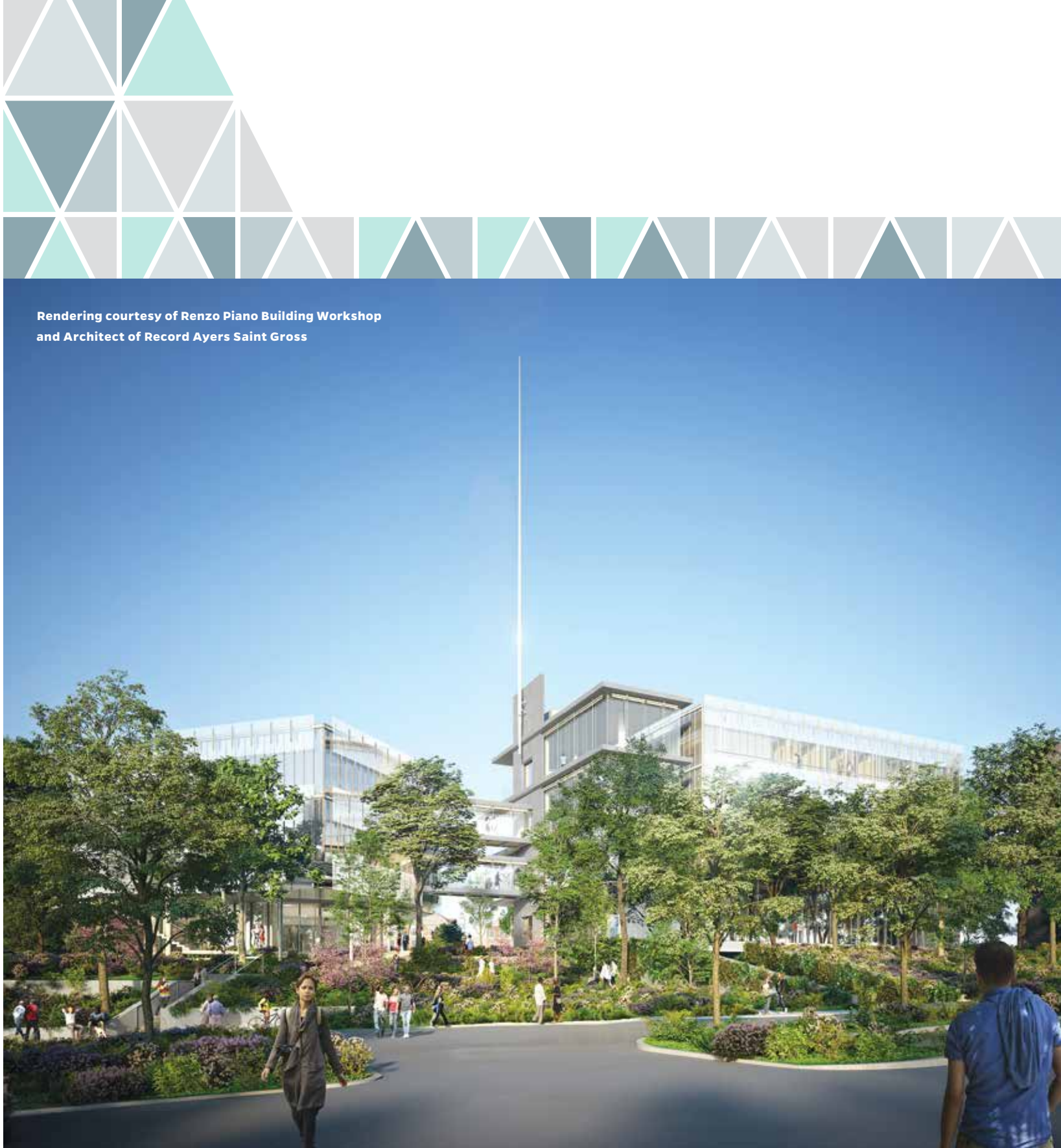
Carrying the mission forward

Over the past year, SNF Agora met our goals of building our core faculty and designing and formally launching several of our signature programs—the annual application-based Visiting Fellows program, the faculty grants program, the case studies series, and the first communities of practice. Now that we have achieved a critical mass of faculty and fellows, and put processes in place to execute our programs, we are turning our attention to continuing to build the institute’s intellectual presence among faculty, undergraduates, and graduate students; cultivating our organizational community; growing our public profile; and laying the foundation for long-term, sustainable operations of the institute.

A key priority for this coming year will be working with our faculty to develop plans for investing in civic education through undergraduate and graduate programs. We will also launch our SNF Agora Faculty Affiliates Program; expand the SNF Agora faculty labs to better understand how we can most effectively achieve public impact; and build our case studies library to be a resource for civic groups, teachers and students, organizers, and others. And we will continue our outreach into diverse publics across the U.S. and the world with our events, programming, and partnerships.

All of the work we’ve done and will do supports our founding vision of realizing the promise of the ancient *agora* in modern times. The events of the past few years have demonstrated that creating spaces that foster discourse, that invite diverse voices into the conversation, and that allow and encourage respectful disagreement, are more important than ever.

We are proud of all we’ve accomplished this past year, and energized by the urgent need to carry our mission forward.



SNFAGORA.JHU.EDU



JOHNS HOPKINS
STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION
SNF AGORA INSTITUTE