



The Big Shift Framework

Join in to drive action, civic engagement, & public pressure that gets people talking, making change, making news, & voting... to move us toward a healthier country & away from far-right extremism.

We Can Energize the Majority To Change Our Trajectory

Shift the Country has the audacious, achievable idea that we can collectively change our country's trajectory. We need a big pivot – for the 2024 election, and so we can better handle our formidable future after the 2024 election.

Together we can catalyze widespread public pressure to move the US toward healthier democracy and away from far-right extremism. We can reach and energize Americans with action and civic engagement to get people talking, making change, making news, and voting. We do this by combining these *5 Things*:

- ▶ Thing 1: Building connection
- ▶ Thing 2: Doing more with community & coalitions
- ▶ Thing 3: Involving businesses through partnerships & pressure
- ▶ Thing 4: Championing vision, values, & moral courage
- ▶ Thing 5: Raising a ruckus, creating a buzz, driving the narrative, & sharing it all widely.

We can get government, institutions, infrastructure, and our economy to better serve all the people of this multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracy – so let's make that happen. We can demand and create more agile, adaptable, resilient, sustainable, inclusive, and equitable systems so we all have greater chances to survive, prosper, flourish, and thrive in this time of great challenges to the planet, to humanity, and to the US. Together we can grow a coalition of Democrats, independents, and others to leverage the power of the US majority. Together we can empower Americans to vote in overwhelming majorities to overcome structures that protect minority party power so that our democracy works better for the actual majority of us. Together we can be courageous and take creative action to shift the zeitgeist, the conscience, the character, and the reality of this country.

Get involved! Sign up via [Substack](#), [volunteer](#), join a [Zoom](#), join the [Facebook group](#), or [send money](#)!

This Is Designed To Spread Through Media & Social Networks

This shift is messy, synergistic, risky, systems-oriented, & human. The Shift the Country approach is set up to catalyze the spread of action, civic engagement, and public pressure through social networks and media networks both in-real-life (IRL) and online. We can expand permeation

and reach into social networks to influence, engage, and inspire voters through volunteering, stories, inspiration, caring, humanity, outrage, advocacy, supportive activities, and a thousand other things including just talking to people we know. The more people we reach, the more fuss we create, the more real-world impact we have... the more we'll inspire *more* engagement, *more* alliances, *more* voting, *more* coverage, and *deeper* change. Then we keep going. We amplify what's out there, we do more, we share more, we get more courageous, we reach more people, and we make more change.

When we flood all the zones with everything everywhere all at once – the overall volume will create public pressure. At least some of the things we collectively do and share will go viral through exponential spread and amplify the impact, influence, and reach even further. As we ramp up involvement and engagement, we are better able to make change at every level and make very real shift happen. Local or regional areas with heavy activity may be able to make faster or deeper kinds of change. Influencer involvement, news coverage, groups spending ad money on social media, and other amplifying factors can help amp things up even more. The potential for a phenomenon is huge. We can drive amazing stuff. Provoking large-scale action is risky and messy – but so is fascism, so is ignoring climate change, so is watching hate and ignorance spread, so is ignoring history and science, etc. We have options that we haven't yet tried for this fight. Let's take those options and go all out.

Get Involved However You Like

Sign up on Substack to get started!

Anyone can do this – on your own, with groups, or by working through this organization. Get started with the *Big Shift Guide* and the *Big Lists of Ideas* page – both have practical stuff for implementing this shift. Any US individual or group can use the ideas in these materials with appropriate citation and credit. Donations are welcome, as are invitations to speak about this approach. This "*Big Shift Framework*" document here is to help volunteers with the overall approach.

This big idea needs cash! Send funds through the website or through ActBlue. The scale, scope, impact, and reach here depend on people willing to invest in this very, very unique work. Contributions to this nonprofit fund day-to-day operations, technology, staff, and advertising capabilities to grow this in serious, aggressive ways to ramp up for the 2024 election season.

Join in directly on the fall 2023 ramp-up. Volunteer directly with Shift the Country, or join twice weekly volunteer Zoom meetings Tuesday evenings and Friday afternoons, or join the Community Rising Facebook group. It's all connection, community, and collaboration to grow this work using the *5 Thing* approach. Together we'll push to engage with other groups, to join and build coalitions, to do outreach to get more people engaged, and to keep growing more action and attention. Bring your brain and your persistence and help shape what this shift becomes in 2023 as we ramp up for 2024.

Other ways to grow this shift. Help grow this by actively talking about it; by recruiting others; by sharing posts; by engaging with the social media on Facebook, Substack, LinkedIn, and Post; or by connecting this nonprofit with coalitions/groups/influencers and/or big funders.



The Big Shift Framework

– PART 1 –

This Big Shift Framework

This "*Big Shift Framework*" document is to help volunteers understand the unique overall approach developed by Shift the Country for large-scale change. It's essentially a printable version of the whole www.shiftthecountry.com website for easier reading. The PDF is available on the website homepage for download. There is a separate *Big Shift Guide* (link here soon) and *Big Lists of Ideas* page (link here soon) with practical stuff for actually implementing this shift. Any US individual, group, coalition, or political entity can use the ideas in these materials with appropriate citation and credit. Donations are welcome, as are invitations to speak to help brief your organization on this approach.

Part 1 of this framework includes the basics for the *5 Thing* approach and the parameters of this initiative without getting into the deeper risks/reasons for the work. The *Big Shift Guide* (link coming soon) has specifics for how to actually do this stuff, in combination with the *Big List(s) of Ideas* (link coming soon).

Part 2 of this framework addresses the risk landscape, what's at stake, why we're doing this fight, and some of the backstory on this nonprofit.

Part 1 – The Basics

- **Intro (*above sections*)**
- **About Shift the Country: An Innovative Initiative For An Intense Era**
- **Urgency, Addressing Gaps, & Why We Need A New Effort**
- **The 5 Things We Can Do To Change Our Trajectory**
- **Thing 1: Building connection**
- **Thing 2: Doing more with community & coalitions**
- **Thing 3: Involving businesses through partnerships & pressure**
- **Thing 4: Championing vision, values, & moral courage**
- **Thing 5: Raising a ruckus, creating a buzz, driving the narrative, & sharing it all widely.**
- **Synergy Creates Momentum, Phenomena, & Viral Spread**
- **10 Critical Parts of Society That Need Attention**
- **Parameters: What This Shift Is & What It Isn't**
- **I Need More Info – What's Next?**

About Shift the Country: An Innovative Initiative For An Intense Era

“Light up the darkness.” – Bob Marley

In a time of unprecedented risk, we need ways to take unprecedented action.

We won't get different results doing the same things. Shift the Country is a rising nonprofit 501(c)(4) social welfare organization founded in 2022. This nonprofit's *5-Thing* approach gives us all big options for integrated, synergistic actions for large scale change that haven't been strategically combined before in the US. We can all use those options now to *do* the unprecedented.

This new nonprofit can do politics with incredible flexibility under established law – including evolving how we collectively expand permeation and reach. This flexible legal structure is why donations to this nonprofit are not tax-deductible. Shift the Country intends to leverage this flexibility to help transform politics, political organizing, the country itself, and our collective future.

Shift the Country has a unique approach that's designed to provoke unprecedented action.

This one-of-a-kind nonprofit was created to help Americans make change from within current crises – an unstable democracy, a fractured society, spreading far-right extremism, increasing disasters, and climate change. Anyone and any group can use this achievable *5 Thing* approach to help us collectively navigate unprecedented chaos, risk, instability, and catastrophe... and to drive change from within all of that. This innovative, unconventional *5 Thing* approach is a realistic, flexible, scalable, strategic operational and organizational approach that we can collectively implement to change our trajectory. The *5 Thing* approach:

- ▶ Thing 1: Build connection
- ▶ Thing 2: Do more with community & coalitions
- ▶ Thing 3: Involve businesses through partnerships & pressure
- ▶ Thing 4: Champion vision, values, & moral courage
- ▶ Thing 5: Raise a ruckus, create a buzz, drive the narrative, & share it all widely.

This idea is a moonshot & it's reachable.

This nonprofit's *5 Thing* approach is an idea, a plan, a strategy, and a set of options. It's reachable. Yes, it's idealistic. Perhaps it's even a moonshot.

*Yet the moonshot worked. The US made a plan,
we executed the plan, and we got to the moon.*

Shift the Country has been gearing up for this moment of unprecedented risk in the US and on the planet by preparing to help foment widespread change. This nonprofit has been getting ready not because of a crystal ball or a magical seer but because of risk analysis using the science, history,

politics, and sociology that have brought us to this moment. You don't need magic to figure out how to respond to this moment, either. You need a good plan – grounded in critical thinking, analysis, science, careful planning, and sheer dogged persistence. *The United States didn't get to the moon by hoping.* We got there with critical thinking, analysis, science, careful planning, and sheer dogged persistence. Plus of course the funding and capabilities of the entire US government ([help fund this shift here](#) – this nonprofit isn't yet funded for a moonshot).

Quick snapshot of this unique 5 Thing approach:

- ▶ We can reach & energize Americans with action & civic engagement to get people talking, making change, making news, & voting.
- ▶ Together we can catalyze widespread public pressure to move the US toward healthier democracy & away from far-right extremism.

Five ways this approach is set up to help us address the moment, the risks, & the politics:

- ▶ We can better leverage the power of the US majority.
 - *There has not recently been a huge, concerted effort to grow, strengthen, & leverage a majority coalition in the US – we can create that effort.*
 - *Together we can energize & grow a majority coalition of Democratic, independent, & other voters in the US anchored in shared values we can agree on for the country we intend to live in.*
 - *An active, well-coordinated, aggressive majority coalition with a shared agenda is the most effective, proven way historically for a country to counter a domestic authoritarian threat.*
 - *We can empower the people & groups who make up the coalition of the demographic majority to advocate for shared values, to do engagement, to get attention, to bring new pressure, & to drive the narrative at every level.*
- ▶ We can help the democracy work better for the majority.
 - *Together we can empower Americans to vote in overwhelming majorities to overcome structures that protect minority party power so that our democracy works better for the actual majority of us.*
- ▶ We can get government, institutions, infrastructure, & our economy to better serve all the people of this multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracy.
- ▶ We can demand & create more agile, adaptable, resilient, sustainable, inclusive, & equitable systems so we all have greater chances to survive, prosper, flourish, & thrive in this time of great challenges to the planet, to humanity, & to the US.
- ▶ We can empower courage & take creative action to shift the zeitgeist, the conscience, the character, & the reality of this country.
 - *This work can help catalyze large-scale mobilization & widespread pressure to help society make realistic big pivots to shift the long-term direction of the US.*

Eleven ways this unique work can help our politics & our society:

- ▶ Helps Americans re-weave the frayed & torn social fabric in a currently fractured, unstable society by encouraging connection, community, & coalition-building.

- ▶ Gets voters more engaged, invested, & energized in civic engagement, politics, & issues on an ongoing basis in everyday life.
- ▶ Helps people & groups drive structural change & transformation in US communities, regionally, in states, & nationally – even as the intensity increases in our fast-changing risk landscape.
 - *This approach can be a force multiplier for any group, team, or organization working to energize the majority coalition to act, to vote, to stabilize this democracy, & to transform it.*
- ▶ Increases connection & community so that people & groups can help each other through this time of intensity, acceleration, disruption, & transformation – with resilience, strength, solidarity, ideas, & problem-solving.
- ▶ Increases connection, community, & coalition-building (including re-weaving the social fabric) to collectively act to mitigate climate change damage at every level & to collectively respond to the increasing frequency & intensity of disasters at every level.
- ▶ Provides an effective, usable framework to counter & weaken the far-right authoritarian movement in the US.
 - *This includes bringing together & strengthening a coalition opposed to extremism, authoritarianism, political violence, & fascism.*
 - *This includes re-weaving the social fabric by strengthening connection, community, & coalitions.*
 - *This renewed connection & community can include a shift of energy, strength, & focus to the majority communities & coalitions & away from far-right extremist activities, actions, & agendas. This shift can help to diffuse, de-fuse, disarm, & de-escalate far-right extremist activity, threats, terrorism, & violence. The shift is likely to gain traction as it unfolds.*
 - *This includes ramping up business & economic pressure to push against far-right extremism.*
 - *This includes helping groups & individuals champion the values, vision, & civil society that the majority of Americans & US businesses want.*
 - *This includes raising a ruckus in advocacy of humans, rights, diversity, equity, inclusion, & freedom & against hate, intolerance, bigotry, violence, terrorism, threats, & tyranny.*
- ▶ Renews faith in democracy.
- ▶ Helps stabilize & hold US democracy.
- ▶ Helps stabilize & hold governments at every level in the US so that they better protect & serve all Americans in the face of intensifying pressures.
 - *Functioning democratic governments are critical to protecting a country's most vulnerable residents who are the most likely to be hurt, killed, or further oppressed in the case of war, revolution, fascism, authoritarianism, or governmental collapse.*
 - *Democratic governments protect vulnerable, underserved, & historically oppressed populations from those who might prefer to rule or to seize power using propaganda, wealth, threats, terrorism, violence, & weaponry.*
- ▶ Helps stabilize & hold US democracy & in turn helps to stabilize the international world order.
 - *A destabilized US would likely lead to cascading effects worldwide in terms of a decrease in the capacity of democratic governments to continue to exist & to be able to protect humans, to balance power, to mitigate planetary damage, to counter authoritarianism, & to collectively address worldwide problems & to respond to disasters.*
 - *A more stable world order can help countries collectively find ways forward during these times of instability, acceleration, intensity, disruption, & transformation.*

- ▶ Combines audacity with innovation & imagination to inspire & catalyze the action, moral courage, advocacy, media coverage, & change we wish to see in the world.
 - *This unique approach can help people be strong & speak up, to share their pain, to dream big, to listen, to stand in solidarity with each other, to advocate for humans & humanity, to have effective teams, to get connected, to get better at messaging, to drive the narrative, & to raise a ruckus like has never been raised before.*

This approach can help us transform politics, political organizing, the country, & our future.

This is the only known US political, organizing, and mobilizing approach set up to help catalyze political, structural, and societal action that can be simultaneously healing, stabilizing, transformative, and problem-solving wherever it's implemented – and even more so when done at scale.

The structural mechanisms in this Shift the Country approach are grounded in the social sciences, informed by systems science, and reflective of homeland security and big disaster experience that speaks to the current risk landscape. This is an unusual yet executable approach for navigating the accelerating era of disruption we're living in. It addresses the 2023-2024 US risk landscape as well as anticipated long-term risks beyond 2024. "Urgency and Why We Need A New Effort" speaks to the urgency of that risk landscape and the current era in the US, and "Where Did This Shift Come From?" has more on the anchors and foundations for this work.

Is this for you? Are you the target audience?

This initiative is for those who get that some big things are wrong in the US, that it could/should all be better handled than what we're collectively doing... and that we could all be "doing something" to deal with at least some of what's wrong.

This approach is a "something" you could try. This initiative can be a thousand million zillion "somethings" that thousands of people do. The more of us who are doing this shift – the bigger it will be. The more people who are engaged – the more change we make. It can be local, it can be national, and it can be worldwide. We won't know if we don't try. Every human in history has had choices given the circumstances they've faced. Not making choices is a choice. Not acting is an action. Our collective denial and inaction allows trouble (risk) to fester and intensify. Media and politicians enable denial and continued paralysis, deadlock, and inaction. Not everyone's in a position to act. Not everyone has good choices.

If you're in a position to do "something," this could be for you.

Decide. Jump in. Bring your people. Help them *decide*. Have them bring their people. Start doing the things. Get more people involved, raise more ruckus, get more people talking, get more coverage, reach out to influencers, and keep spreading it all around. That's how it goes. We decide, we get our people together, and we go for it. Join the Substack to get started. Join the Facebook group to join this volunteer community. Volunteer to help make this shift work. Sign up for a Zoom

call. Check out the *Big Shift Guide* (link coming soon) or *Big List of Ideas* (link soon). Pick a spot, and start with something.

*We're not powerless, but we've sort of collectively forgotten that.
Join us. Let's be powerful.*

There are big aspirations here. They're reachable. We *can* change the direction this country is headed in. We *can* drive action, civic engagement, and public pressure that gets people talking, making change, making news, and voting... and that moves us toward a healthier country and away from far-right extremism. The US *can* get closer to the dream of functioning as a truly democratic, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religion democracy.

Keep the faith – in this democracy, and in its people. We shall overcome. We're absolutely worth fighting for. The people who come after us are, too. We're going to transform the future.

Urgency, Gaps, & Why We Need A New Effort

This unique new nonprofit gets a lot of questions about why the US needs a new political initiative.

Shift the Country is working in gap areas that other political initiatives are not focused on. The political landscape and the risk landscape are both evolving fast; but political organizing for Democrats and allies has tended to follow established precedents and approaches. This is a time of unprecedented threats to US democracy; threats to the world order; and threats to the planet itself due to unmitigated climate change, finite resources, and the rise of autocracies. Shift the Country was created after analyzing the political and risk landscapes and considering what a new 501(c)(4) nonprofit could realistically do to help address some of this that other groups weren't already doing. [Backstory here.](#) Shift the Country's *5 Things* approach is the result – the *5 Things* address gap areas that other big political groups don't appear to be concentrating on.

Political organizing needs to innovate, to get bigger, to be louder, to be more strategic, & to be more empowering for Democratic party coalitions, allies, & voters. This innovative nonprofit intends to work in partnership with volunteers and with coalitions to function as catalysts, cheerleaders, coaches, enablers, and amplifiers to catalyze pressure, engagement, and coalition-building to help change our collective trajectory. Together we can engage and inspire overwhelmed, cynical, apathetic voters. Together we can drive the public narrative. Together we can drive a moral shift... and shifts in policy, funding, priorities, and values at every level in the US. In every community. In every school board. In every state. And across the country.

We have real problems to solve – we need political change so we can actually work on problems. In the US, we haven't been doing big, collective problem-solving for decades to deal with the risks we face in realistic ways. Risks include threats, vulnerabilities, and consequences.

Here's a look at the urgent, evolving risks we face...

- ▶ We're not working together to build or invest in a future where we can all better thrive & flourish.
- ▶ Children & adults are being gunned down in places that are supposed to be safe.
- ▶ We're refusing to invest in Americans, in American communities, & in American educational systems.
- ▶ The US is losing its place as a leader in innovation.
- ▶ Artificial intelligence (AI) is presenting new threats & promises at a time when Congress won't help us adapt to those potential transformations.
- ▶ Wealth gaps have widened. Plutocrats are increasing their power & reach.
- ▶ People have increasing contempt for others.
- ▶ Aggression, intolerance, hate, bullying, bigotry, misogyny, & blatant racism are all on the rise; often embraced or condoned by elected Republicans.
- ▶ Threats & real-world political violence are up. An insurgency & associated domestic violent extremism (DVE) is well-established & expanding.

- ▶ We've had a "big lie" about a presidential election, an insurrection, & an attempted coup d'état which the media often frames as "Trump's legal problems."
- ▶ The rule of law is increasingly tenuous.
- ▶ Our shared perception of reality is problematic; AI will worsen it.
- ▶ People are afraid, shocked, overwhelmed, & frozen; partly due to an active domestic authoritarian movement that creates fear, shock, & overwhelm to keep the public disengaged.
- ▶ Voting & citizen enfranchisement are under attack.
- ▶ Some government institutions at every level have been eroded, become corrupted, or become dysfunctional from actions taken by far-right extremists at every level; including election administration, courts, legislative bodies, law enforcement, public health, health systems, libraries, schools, colleges, & universities.
- ▶ Our national security has been persistently undermined & eroded by far-right politicians & far right media.
- ▶ There's widespread denial about what's at stake, & how bad it could get.

We have the collective power of the majority. Let's use that power. Let's actually go about leveraging it and making it way more influential. We can be super powerful together. We're more powerful together than billions of dollars and gigantic media empires. We have options, creativity, and very big brains. We *can* use all that to drive real change at every level. The American people *can* be an incredible force when we collectively decide that what's happening is not acceptable. We *can* shift the direction of this country to *what we actually* want for ourselves, for our family and friends, and for those who come after us. We *can* create a groundswell of connection, alliances, pressure, partnerships, courage, vision, activity, attention, media coverage, and viral spread online and in-real-life that can change our trajectory. Take a leap and join our list, or sign up to volunteer.

Who's going to drive our future? Far right Republican extremists – or the actual US majority? Are we going to keep going collectively backward... toward the far-right... toward autocracy? Or will we motivate, galvanize, and energize Americans to pull out of our collective trauma freeze, cynicism, and disengagement to actively determine the direction of our own future? In moments of acceleration, change, instability, and transformation it's easy for the population to give in to the loudest, most obnoxious, or most powerful voices telling us what they think is best, how we should act, who they think is the problem, or how we should change. Yet we could decide to drive changes ourselves in the midst of all this crisis. We could decide to drive the narrative. We could decide to grab the reins; to take the wheel; to turn the ship.

Who's countering the narrative of right-wing media & politicians where we live? *We can.* We can convince Americans that we can build a different future together; that people matter; that empathy and kindness matter; that it's good to help people who need it; that it's good to take care of humans; that we're all worth investing in; that we need good public schools; that our communities and science and small businesses are worth investing in; that everyone should have a more realistic and equitable chance to flourish; that we can expand rights and freedoms instead of taking them away; and that the US can be the world's first successful multi-ethnic, multi-racial superpower of a genuinely functional, thriving democracy made up of people from all over the world.

The *5 Things* We Can Do To Change Our Trajectory

There are five basic, key things in this approach to catalyze widespread public pressure, to shift the zeitgeist, and to change where we're headed. It's a new combination of organizing methods, science, sociology, synergy, and big vision with mechanisms to catalyze action, to bring pressure, to build momentum, to create traction, to drive attention, to foster change, to motivate, and to inspire.

In unprecedented times... we need unprecedented approaches. It's time to get super creative. Action doesn't have to be complicated. We don't all have to do *all* the things. We don't have to do anything by ourselves. We just need to do *some* of the things, leverage our social networks, work with other people and groups, be creative, take leaps, build synergy, and spread the momentum we create wherever we can. We get it done – with connection and teams and people and ideas.

The paragraphs below the lists show how these *5 Things* work together synergistically to make shift happen. People or groups can put these things together in creative ways to facilitate all kinds of stuff.

There's more on each of the *5 Things* in the following pages. *The 5 Things*:

- ▶ **THING 1: Connect With People.** Our connection with humans with and our humanity is at the heart of everything here — it's the most fundamental piece of creating a larger movement that drives change. It helps us expand our reach, to take action together, to advocate for our values and vision, to tell our stories, and to create content that resonates and moves through social networks in-real-life and online. It's partners, teams, relational organizing, neighbors, friends, family, colleagues, and anyone else we decide to work with to fight for a different direction for this country.
- ▶ **THING 2: Do More With Community & Coalitions.** We can build on and expand community and coalitions to leverage what we've already built to get this country to this point. We can take it all to new levels for larger efforts, a wider reach, and bigger effects. Alliances, partnerships, and communities are amplifiers. They also help us re-weave the frayed and torn social fabric. Community and coalitions bring strength, resilience, fellowship, solidarity, creativity, inspiration, and synergy to help us navigate an intensifying era; to help each other through it; and to make change as we go. We do bigger things online and in-real-life together. We can make waves, we can make news, we can drive the narrative, and we can drive transformation — at every level.
- ▶ **THING 3: Involve Businesses Through Partnerships & Pressure.** We can create and execute on a cooperative vision at any level to collectively partner with or pressure businesses that support or oppose (as appropriate) the values and vision we embrace. We can support or partner with businesses with responsible business practices and/or those that support democracy, diversity, equity, inclusion, rights, sustainability, public health, science, living wages, balanced CEO pay, etc. We can put pressure on businesses that have irresponsible, unsustainable, or dangerous business practices or that support intolerance, bigotry, insurrectionists, current Republicans, fascism, nationalism, and so on. There is tremendous,

untapped potential to leverage, harness, and organize in this zone; we can do it using all of the elements in this *5 Thing* framework.

- ▶ **THING 4: Empower Vision, Values, & Moral Courage.** We're learning collectively to fight with emotions, stories, vision, values, and what's right... and not just with data. People advocating with any kind of moral courage often go viral because we're craving it, and we need more of it. Shift the Country can help us catalyze and amplify all of that together to help make change happen.
- ▶ **THING 5: Drive the Narrative At Every Level, Create A Buzz in Local Chatter Networks, & Share It All Everywhere.** This organic approach uses synergy from these interwoven *5 Things* to catalyze activities (like events, parties, projects, speeches, art, conversations, music, writing, vigils, or volunteer action) that draw attention, create spectacle, or raise a ruckus... and then get media coverage, get “influencer” attention, or get people talking and sharing through in-real-life or online social networks. We can lean forward and get proactive, get creative, get courageous, and drive way more of the narrative and the corresponding public agenda together at every level. We can marshal the full force of public opinion to change our priorities and our trajectory.

All 5 Things work together synergistically to grow a movement. Some of the things on this list sound like the other parts of the approach in this framework. That's because there's a lot of overlap. We can create a phenomenon by intentionally taking all kinds of action, having waves of volunteering, telling stories in lots of places, speaking up with moral courage about our values and vision, creating related content that resonates big time, getting attention on everything we do, and spreading all of *that* widely through our social networks in real life and online. We put heart and humanity into everything we do. We add to it by creating alliances and partnerships to do it all with our other people, with other organizations, and with businesses. Together we put pressure on organizations, businesses, and voters to support democracy and to energize majority. We create a phenomenon with synergy and creativity; and by amplifying whatever we can in as many places and ways as possible. The section “Synergy Creates Momentum, Phenomena, & Viral Spread” has more; after the details on each of the *5 Things*.

This shift will be messy & organic. Our actions reverberate. One person taking some action can touch hundreds. Thousands of people acting touch millions. It's not rocket science. There's a method to the madness, and it's definitely going to be messy. But that's humanity – we're messy. We're also beautiful, amazing, shiny, brilliant, and powerful... and we're going to empower all of that to shift this country. Because we can. We create a phenomenon by creating a big, organic, fluid, expanding flurry of activity. An explosion of humans being amazing, brilliant, shiny, inspiring, touching, angry, hurt, scared, disempowered, disenchanted, and outraged. We create a phenomenon by fiercely and loudly advocating for democracy, for humans, for inclusion, for equality, for rights, and for freedom. For everything Americans before us fought for. For the future.

These 5 Things can help restore Americans' lost faith in our democracy & our country. There's cynicism, resentment, and disempowerment. This 5-part approach is intended to help counter cynicism, to restore faith in democracy, and to help people get each other motivated to shift the country at every level in very real ways. It can help us re-weave the social fabric through connection,

community, advocating for what's right, and showing and spreading moral courage. This approach can help us motivate people to become more civically active, to get fired up, to fight differently, to drive the public agenda, to make change locally, and to actually vote. The momentum, activity, energy, and progress we create together can inspire frustrated voters, and restore faith and functionality to a struggling democracy. We *can* create a more coordinated movement that helps people renew their faith in democracy, in humanity, and in a promising future we can actually build.

Demographics indicate that a loose majority coalition tends to support Democratic party principles & priorities. A multi-racial, multi-ethnic coalition makes up the overwhelming majority of voters – including Democrats, independents, former Republicans, and pro-democracy Republicans. It's a growing majority, and it's the direction of the future. That fact is a big part of why Republicans are holding tightly to the status quo; where pale men have most of the power. These *5 Things* can help empower, activate, and strengthen this loose majority; and transform it into a formidable force and phenomenon. We can get closer to the dream of what we could be... a truly multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracy; where we live lives with more equity and equality. Where we take care of humans, invest in communities, and value the greater good. Where we work together on huge challenges. Where we all have a better chance to thrive, prosper, and flourish.

Thing 1 – Connect With People



People are at the root of everything we do; the heart of our humanity. We need connection. We evolved as tribal beings. We need each other. We are in an increasingly intense time in this country. We can help each other through it. Connection is as simple as it is complicated; yet we can make intentional decisions about connecting with people. We can open ourselves up to new connections. We can expand connections; we can deepen relationships; we can invest in networking. We can look after our neighbors. We can check on friends and acquaintances. We build connection by being vulnerable, by sharing who we are and our stories, by being kind, by being respectful, and by listening. We grow connection by creating the space for it, by investing in it, and by allowing for it.

When we build connection, we also find solidarity, strength, resilience, and courage. We will need all of those things for this moment we're in. Connection helps us get grounded and anchored. Connection helps us make plans and take action. Connecting with humans is an art; we need to put some time into it. We need to work on it. Our social fabric is a frayed, torn, knotted mess. We can help to re-weave that social fabric by building and strengthening connection. We can build new connections and deepen existing ones even as some of our connections fall away as happens in times of great disruption. So many families, friendships, workplaces, and organizations have changed the last many years; that will continue. Making conscious decisions to strengthen other connections elsewhere can help us deal with those changes.

The heart of this shift is our humanity. Our stories and our advocacy for our shared humanity resonate and inspire. Things that “go viral” online through social media or in-real-life through social networks spread so far because there is something about that particular thing that's powerful. These things are powerful because they touch us in some way; or because people are hurt and that's not okay. Stories are powerful because they speak to the complexities of being human; to our choices; or to our challenges. To our struggles. To our pain. Stories and phenomena spread because we want to share that thing. So very often they are anchored in the most fundamental of things – our humanity. We need to center this more. We need to advocate and fight for our humanity; for what's at the heart of being human. Connection is a huge part of this. It is what resonates for us about any other person's story, or journey. We connect with other people or their stories because we share in their humanity.

The more we leverage our connections & networks, the further we reach. The first building block of any movement or phenomenon locally or nationally is for people to be connected – online, or in-real-life (IRL). We need it all. In organizing work, it's called “relational organizing.” We can touch voters that traditional political approaches don't touch when we follow a connection-based approach. It gives us greater permeation and reach into social networks online, and in both urban and rural communities. Communities can be national or regional organizations, or little tiny towns. Communities can be hobby groups, or historically under-served communities anywhere. Whatever activity, action, message, storytelling, sharing, volunteering, or other thing we're doing... the more we share it in-real-life with our connections through friends and family; online in our social networks; or through any group we're involved with – the more voters we can reach, inspire, and energize.

Thing 2 – Do More With Community & Coalitions



Building on and expanding community and coalitions leverages what we've worked on together get this country this far. It takes it all to new levels for larger efforts, a wider reach, and bigger effects. Alliances, partnerships, and communities are amplifiers. They also help us re-weave the frayed and torn social fabric. Community and coalitions bring strength, resilience, fellowship, solidarity, creativity, inspiration, and synergy to help us navigate an intensifying era; to help each other through it; and to make change and transformation as we go.

When we bring initiatives and community together, we build power. It brings excitement. It helps us all find focus, purpose, and ways forward. Teamwork and community help us leverage the assets of way bigger partnerships and alliances than we've ever had before. It helps us work at scale; it can also help us reach further into very localized social networks... and to build relationships and trust in places where we may not have had it before. Alliances are made up of folks who may not always agree; but who can find shared values, vision, goals, or missions to fight for and to work toward.

Doing more with community and coalitions helps us move ideas and information through our social networks, to get attention, to create a buzz, and to create phenomena. It can help us better coordinate ideas, action, cooperation, advocacy, impacts, media coverage, and outreach to more of our fellow Americans. It can help us solve problems and try out new ideas. We can bring groups and people together to do huge things, bring big pressure, raise a big fuss, and drive the narratives we need (this whole paragraph relates to *Thing 5*).

Anchoring to and expanding community and coalitions helps us build on what everyone before us has done to evolve this country. We can help the US get even closer to being a true democracy made of all the people of the world; a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religion superpower where we maintain our rights, uphold our freedoms, and have a more equitable chance to survive, thrive and flourish (this vision and these values relate to *Thing 4*).

Community- and coalition-building can help us find and grow deeper connections (*Thing 1*) to our own humanity, and to the humanity of others. It can help us get grounded in the midst of an intensifying era in an unstable democracy, and to help each other with adversity and tragedy. It helps us find the solidarity, strength, and moral courage to fight for what's right; to champion a different direction (*Thing 4*). It helps us make real, lasting transformation in communities everywhere in-real-life and online. That kind of shift is a key piece of this work.

We don't all have to share every single idea or value – we just need to share enough of a big-picture vision and mission to take bigger action together; and to collectively *energize the majority*.

Authoritarianism loses when an engaged, coordinated, active majority works to revitalize a shared agenda and social contract. In other words... we need to coordinate better, to do that at scale, and to find at least some things in common to advocate for. We need to uphold and fight for the US Constitution, the rule of law, and the institutions behind it all. The *"5 Things"* in this framework along

with the “10 Critical Parts of Society That Need Attention” are designed to help us do that. Failed government hurts marginalized and historically underserved people and communities the most. The US authoritarian movement wants government to fail; so the already-powerful can have more power.

We have so much to fight for. We are way more effective when we fight together.

Connection is behind it all. Connection (*Thing 1*) and humanity are at the heart of coalition- and community-building. It’s all about people. We need each other. We can do more with our relationships and with our personal social networks. We can do more with every single group, network, and initiative we’ve collectively built that’s gotten us this far. It can be a leap... but it can also be so incredibly powerful. We’re better together.

We start with who we know... or we meet new people. We open ourselves to new connections, we get vulnerable to build connection, and we deepen connections we already have. We show up. We bring authenticity, respect, deference, kindness, and listening. We bring courage. We bring support. We see people where they are; and we accept that we’re all in different places on our journey and in our capabilities. We need each other.

Community and coalitions are 100% about people. Both work better if we bring care, intention, and decency along with us as we work. Things in this country are going to keep intensifying; our connections, networks, community, and alliances can help us find our way through.

Find a partner or join a team. Community starts with at least two people. Get yourself a team. Find a person or a few people that you can work with for the next few weeks or months on some shared goal or zone or idea.

Commit to each other to make some kind of shift happen over time, and to stick with whatever you’re planning. You only need two people to get started... and a shared commitment to act. You go forward from there.

Create the space for community & connection. Create the space – and time! – for connecting with other humans, taking action, taking care of each other, and moving forward. It might look like a weekly meeting in a coffee shop. It might be a weekly livingroom gathering. Perhaps a monthly Saturday morning Zoom call.

Whatever it is – make the time, and make the space. Community happens when we bring people together. It doesn’t have to be complicated. Build time into every activity for connection, networking, and community-building. That can be in the form of longer breaks to facilitate conversations between participants; or scheduled networking time in the middle of an event. Intentionally create the space for people to make connections and to grow relationships.

Consider mechanisms that can facilitate and encourage connection for people to whom it does not come naturally. Consider strategies for inclusion of all participants at an event.

Anchor to community & work outward. Our community, connections, and coalitions can become places where we find grounding, anchoring, and strength in the midst of transformation, disruption, instability, and change.

There's a concept in wildland firefighting called "*anchor and flank*:" you find a safe area near the less active, back part of the wildfire that isn't going to burn... you fight the wildfire outward from there along its flanks... and you always maintain a connection to the safe anchor point that won't burn.

We all need places of strength and solidarity to work from that won't metaphorically burn. We can build communities and coalitions – or even very small teams – that become those places of strength and safety.

We can build a patchwork of these places of strength and grounding in communities and places everywhere... like piecing together a quilt. We can do it both online and in-real-life.

We get anchored, and we work outward from there. Teams and community help us do that.

Leverage community & coalitions to expand reach, impact, & narrative. Coalition-building and partnership help us leverage the assets, resources, skills, contact lists, reach, existing capabilities, etc. that each group or organization brings... and to do way more with all of that.

We can leverage and build on years (or decades) of experience, community, connections, institutional knowledge, and expertise. Join, anchor to, and work with any existing, established, hopefully well-funded organization for action, progress, advocacy, engagement, synergy, volunteer work, big ideas, big vision, new or existing projects, and major opportunities for transformation.

Two or more organizations working together on a big thing can get more media attention and have a bigger reach through their combined memberships than one group can working alone. Businesses supporting any initiative add reach and value. Individuals in any part of it have the connections of their own networks. For example, one group may be a specific type of nonprofit with legal allowances to fight politically in certain ways, where another group has legal restrictions. The groups can partner with each other to get more done together by putting complementary pieces together.

Communities & alliances can center and amplify the stories of the people in their memberships to help get attention, to drive the public narrative, to reach further into social networks, and to have greater impacts. They can create activities, have events, or undertake creative efforts that get attention in new ways to help drive the narrative (*Thing 5*). They can work on vision; they can advocate for shared values (*Thing 4*). They can support each other with moral courage (*Thing 4*). They can leverage their combined contacts to increase media coverage; to reach more people; to get more people involved; and to amplify and share stories and activities online and through in-real-life social networks.

Join, expand, strengthen, & bring together existing groups. We can be open to the unconventional and unexpected for the greater good. That might that groups form alliances with

other groups they might not normally work with... or groups with very different missions or values. It might mean joining group that you might have disagreements with in order to have certain impacts.

Alliances can work even with very different missions and values. Every group can specialize in its own mission while partnering with other organizations to make progress on shared concerns, values, visions, and goals such as stabilizing democracy and fighting for Americans' rights and freedoms.

We can grow alliances between organizations and groups of every kind and at every level; from the neighborhood to nationally. This is a bit repetitive; as it's an essential component of coalition-building – yet worth repeating. It's also worth including individuals and businesses, whenever possible (see *Thing 3*).

The section about “*10 Critical Parts Of Society*” is a good reference for areas where groups and initiatives exist that are doing some of the critical things we need in society. It can help people or groups get started figuring out areas where they might like to take action, work with existing initiatives, or bring large efforts together – from the local level to the national level.

There's no need to start from scratch. There are a zillion groups in the US already working on making big shift happen. Find an initiative, help it work, find what it needs to get stronger, or help find partnerships or alliances where that group can have larger impacts. For anyone joining in on an existing initiative... it will likely go a whole lot better if new people take time to learn what's already been done by that group over years or decades, to listen, to learn, and to respect what's already been put in place to have great impacts. It's likely there are a lot of long stories, struggles, and reasons why things are the way they are. That doesn't mean an initiative can't evolve – but like connecting with people... connecting with groups requires a certain amount of kindness, listening, respect, deference, acceptance, and meeting groups where they are.

Re-weave & strengthen the social fabric through community & coalitions. The social fabric of the US is frayed, torn, knotted, and ripped to pieces in many places. *Things we do together collectively in any way help re-weave that social fabric into new tapestries and stronger futures.*

The US social fabric has been weakened over decades by our refusal to collectively invest in US communities, by a widening wealth gap, through technology, through changing institutions such as union halls and community spaces, through a hyperactive culture war over decades, and heavily by Americans needing two incomes to make ends meet and not having the time to invest in community and civic activities – and by many other factors.

The Shift the Country coalition-building and community work to chart out a different path for this country can help change some of those factors. It can also help us strengthen weakened social fabric where we live and through our networks. The anchor-and-flank principle noted above also helps us re-weave the social fabric in a sort of metaphorical quilt of positive, human-oriented patches of action and engagement that help us make shift happen and chart a different path wherever we are.

Revitalize our faith in humans & democracy. We can generate hope and faith in democracy again by growing genuine community and connection... and also through increased and more visible engagement, activity, advocacy, and efforts to make change – at every level. People who see powerful and meaningful activities and advocacy in the real places where we live may start to shift their own perspectives about the country we’re building, the problems we need to be working on, and the direction we can go.

Building up activity, engagement, and attention takes intention, time, investment, and creating the space for it all. Doing so can help us revitalize faith in our fellow Americans, and in the democratic processes themselves. The more aggressively we go after all of this, the faster it will go... and the deeper and wider it will reach. There is tremendous potential.

We’re in a crisis of democracy; yet there are things we can be doing actively now in-real-life and online that can help us revitalize and reinvigorate this democracy... and to counter the threats to it from extremism, an authoritarian movement, and out-of-control plutocrats and oligarchs. This framework and approach is designed specifically to help; the whole combined overall approach helps us find and grow our faith in each other and in the democracy itself.

Build resilience. Resilience is about the capacity to “bounce back” in a crisis; after an unforeseen event. For example, if gunmen shoot out the substations in your county and your power goes out for days in the middle of winter. Or if there’s an active shooter where you live. Or there’s a protest against LGBTQ+ people. Or a synagogue is threatened. Or a hurricane hits.

We build resilience in a zillion ways, but at the heart of it too is connection. Resilience in many ways is about our ability to restore power, to get the supply chain moving again, or to have the resources to handle whatever disruption has just hit.

Resilience is also about solidarity, fellowship, support, networks, and people jumping in to help each other or to help the systems we need in society when things get rough.

There’s a saying about how the middle of a crisis is not the best time to exchange business cards – it’s true. Building community, connection, and coalitions over time helps us be ready when the unexpected happens.

In a time of insurgency, frequent active shooter incidents, and political violence... community resilience will be essential. We can build it. We will absolutely use it.

Thing 3 – Involve Businesses Through Partnerships & Pressure



We can create and execute on a cooperative vision at any level to collectively partner with or pressure businesses that support or oppose (as appropriate) the values and vision we embrace. We can support or partner with businesses with responsible business practices and/or those that support democracy, diversity, equity, inclusion, rights, sustainability, public health, science, living wages, balanced CEO pay, etc. We can put pressure on businesses that have irresponsible, unsustainable, or dangerous business practices or that support intolerance, bigotry, insurrectionists, current Republicans, fascism, nationalism, and so on. There is tremendous, untapped potential to leverage, harness, and organize in this zone; we can do it using all of the elements in this 5 *Thing* framework.

Getting businesses involved is different than any other partnership and pressure as it can go in any direction. Businesses can be consistent partners and advocates; sometimes-allies; or act completely counter to the greater good, individual humans, the country, the environment, or health and safety. We have tremendous opportunity and untapped potential to pressure or to partner with business.

The majority of the voters are anchored to the economy, and are the anchor of the economy. If we get organized enough, we can pressure the market – and potentially drive that market in some areas.

This Shift the Country effort overall is about leveraging the power of the majority of the people. That means the majority of consumers, too. That's a whole lot of buying power. That's a whole lot of pressure we can wield. *We can create a culture where supporting democracy is good for business.* We can create a culture where responsibility is good for business, too – for reproductive rights, climate change, wages, paid leave, CEO pay, public health, unionization, and other priorities.

There are tons of ways to influence businesses. Leveraging consumer power and doing pressure campaigns on businesses can be a tricky gambit – but sometimes it's also very simple. A person can tell, email, or call to advise a local business about why they are or are not recommending that business or doing further business there. Social media allows viral pressure on many big brands – and that has made a difference time and time again. Advertisers on certain shows and networks are obvious.... by the nature of their advertising. Election contributions to candidates are available online. Various groups track and post data on both election contributions and on advertisers. *Information is available to be acted upon. We can collectively find ways to harness and leverage that.*

Any person or group can partner with any businesses at any level to advocate for a stronger, more stable democracy where we collectively protect our rights and freedoms. We can do that with small businesses, local businesses, or any-sized business by adjusting strategies for how we partner.

We can shift the economy while we're shifting the country. We can work toward transforming business, infrastructure, and the economy. The US needs an inclusive, thriving business environment to help us grow and evolve a flourishing society where people have genuine opportunities to prosper in an array of ways. A healthy democracy helps to create a healthy economy. That is an important

message, and it is true around the world. Healthy democracies foster innovation, economic diversification, competitiveness, and resilience.

As we build alliances with businesses, we can have conversations with them or put pressure on them about their support of democracy... but also about their support on any issues from women's access to healthcare to sky-high CEO pay to employee pay to leave policies to climate to anything else. We can partner with or pressure businesses to become more responsible, and to help us be serious about collectively working on the huge challenges we face.

Americans need innovation and entrepreneurialism to help us solve some of the enormous challenges we face as a society – a thriving business environment is critical to that. We need innovation and entrepreneurialism to be competitive worldwide, yet the US intelligence community assesses that we no longer lead the world in innovation in most fields. The last few years demonstrate that energy production and consumption, supply chains, and domestic production are all critical to our country's strength and national security. We can collectively bring the pressure of the people to shift our economy to be more resilient and secure with shorter supply chains, more economic diversification, more small businesses, more domestic production of everything, increased sustainability, and energy and infrastructure transformation. There is enormous opportunity to partner with and to pressure businesses to help us shift this country. Will we leverage that potential? The possibilities are endless and incredible.

Check out these examples for shifting businesses. This collection shows a few shifts made by both large and small businesses in the last decade – brought about by pressure or to reach intended audiences; and related to advertising, location, branding, employment, wages, or products.

- ▶ Businesses have deliberately created advertising, products, or other content to demonstrate how they are embracing diversity, equity, or inclusion (DEI).
- ▶ Disney made the decision in 2022 to stand up to Florida's Governor DeSantis and the Florida Legislature in reference to LGBTQ voices, freedoms, protections, and rights after a push by Disney employees. Despite Disney's initial reaction in the other direction, it now appears to have joined the culture war on the side of the majority. Arguably, it was a safe bet as Disney has a decent cultural sense of the American majority, given that its content and products are heavily interwoven with American culture.
- ▶ Select major airlines decided not to carry persons from immigrant families separated at the southern US border for the US government during the Trump Administration.
- ▶ Many US brands made decisions following Colin Kaepernick's decision to take a knee.
- ▶ Businesses have been pressured to leave or not to move to certain states due to intolerant or hateful laws or other such measures in those states.
- ▶ Pressure on advertisers has sometimes led to TV or radio stations changing hosts, shows, or certain content or messaging.
- ▶ Both consumers and small businesses have made decisions and fought for their right to make decisions about public health, employee safety, and customer safety in light of COVID-19.

- ▶ Businesses in 2022 have made provisions to support their employees in various ways after the US Supreme Court overturned the established precedent of Roe v. Wade and removed the rights of women to access and receive health care.
- ▶ Businesses that have funded racist office-holders or candidates have stopped sending contributions as pressure has been applied, such as for former Iowa Congressman Steve King.
- ▶ Businesses demonstrating moments of flagrant intolerance documented in viral videos have paid a heavy price through negative reviews, revenue loss, brand damage, or business closure.
- ▶ Some businesses that contributed money to Republican office-holders or organizations that supported the 2021 insurrection stopped or limited contributions immediately following the insurrection, although many have re-started those contributions again as pressure and attention has diminished. This pressure could be re-applied, and significantly increased.

Thing 4 – Champion (or Empower) Vision, Values, & Moral Courage



We need Americans and American leaders to fight fiercely for what's important to the majority of us to help us keep this democracy, to fight for our rights and freedoms, and to restore the rights already lost. We need moral courage. *We need to fight for the heart and soul of this country and its future.*

This fight we face isn't about facts. It's about what we value, and our vision for what we can be. This fight is for democracy itself. This fight is for the dream of what this country has always aspired to be but has not yet become – a true multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracy where everyone has a better chance than we've had so far to thrive, flourish, and prosper. This fight is about our humanity: how we treat humans, how we take care of humans, and how we love humans. This fight is central to who we are as a people. It is our core and our strength and our foundation.

We can learn to better fight this fight with our vision & values forward & out front. We can learn to better fight this fight with moral courage. We can learn to get ourselves out of fights in the weeds with endless facts, data, and briefing books. We can learn to fight this fight by using our emotions, by telling our stories, by sharing our dreams, and by sharing our pain. We can learn to connect with other people through vulnerability. We can learn that true strength comes from vulnerability; from emotion; from being open to learning and growing and evolving. We can live that as we champion the country we want for ourselves, for our people, for our present, and for our future. We can show that it's okay to embrace and love people we don't always understand. We can show that it's okay to be uncomfortable and scared but to do what's right anyway. We can show that responsibility, duty, service, and obligation help us all live better lives together; that a rising tide lifts all boats. We can show that benevolence, compassion, teamwork, and the greater good take us further together than individualism takes us alone. We can show what synergy and cooperation look like when we decide to have big vision and solve big problems together.

The challenge is fear, change, & the evolving status quo. Many Americans are holding on for dear life to a status quo whose time has passed. They're uncomfortable; afraid of change and what it brings. Right-wing media and politicians have glommed onto that fear and uncomfortableness and are milking it for all it's worth. That's not helping us build a stronger nation. It's weakening and fragmenting it. Yet they fight with emotion and values. We could, too... but away from fear. We can fight by championing humanity, values, and the vision of the country we're bringing forth.

Shift the Country will help voters & leaders fight fiercely with values & vision. The majority of voters are fed up with leaders who aren't fighting fiercely. We can encourage, ask, cajole, push, nudge, demand, and beg them to improve. We can work with and educate our leaders to get better at fighting fiercely. We can lead, too. We can use the *5 Things* approach here to raise a ruckus and bring pressure when we need to see more action. The direction we're going in is not okay; we can learn to talk much more about that, and in all the ways. Like how it's not okay to take rights away from women. It's not okay for kids to be terrified of getting shot at school. It's not okay to legalize terrorizing people for who they love, or for their sexuality. And so on. We can and we will learn how to champion moral courage, and to fight more fiercely for our values and vision.

Thing 5 – Raise a Ruckus, Create A Buzz, Drive the Narrative, & Share It All Widely



This organic approach uses synergy from these interwoven 5 *Things* to catalyze activities (like events, parties, projects, speeches, art, conversations, music, writing, vigils, or volunteer action) that draw attention, create spectacle, or raise a ruckus... and then get media coverage, get “influencer” attention, or get people talking and sharing through in-real-life or online social networks. We can lean forward and get proactive, get creative, get courageous, and drive way more of the narrative and the corresponding public agenda together at every level. We can marshal the full force of public opinion to change our priorities and our trajectory.

It will be increasingly critical for the coalition of Democrats and pro-democracy allies to rapidly ramp up capacity to drive the narrative; especially as some of the most obnoxious and spectacle-creating far-right Republicans will use their capacity as majority in the US House to drive the narrative through the 2024 election. We have the potential to have a tremendous amount to influence media coverage and the narrative; by combining the pieces of this 5 Things approach.

Drive the narrative. When any kind of phenomenon spreads quickly throughout society, it often spreads through social networks both online, and in-real-life. It also spreads through media coverage: in the topics that get covered, how they get covered, how much time or space they get, and how long they stay in the news. The things that get regular, ongoing, or repeated media coverage have been demonstrated over time tie to the public’s agenda. What gets media coverage and response to coverage is “the narrative.” The narrative tends to reflect or drive the public’s shared agenda; which relates to policies and actions that get attention.

It’s harder to get what you want when you don’t drive the public narrative. So far, we haven’t had a coordinated way to do this. This Shift the Country approach can help us drive that narrative better together – between hundreds or thousands of efforts, groups, and people.

This framework and its approach can help the majority of Americans get a much stronger voice in that narrative. The coverage and narrative are often dominated by extreme right-wing voices that represent a minority of people; but which get expansive media attention because humans are naturally drawn to the shocking, the outlandish, the extreme, and the bewildering.

The public narrative and the related public agenda are part of the goal behind all this phenomenon, kerfuffle, and ruckus. The majority of Americans’ priorities and needs are not getting served by government. We’re getting overlooked; partly because we haven’t been loud enough, because we haven’t demanded attention, and because the majority of people collectively have not yet been as interesting to the media the carnivalesque anti-democracy Republican behaviour out there. There are ways to get media attention without the cringey, often-dangerous, hateful, mind-blowing antics used by the MAGA crowd. Part of the Shift the Country work with our volunteers in online events is to help people find those things, get good at them, and teach others how to do it, too.

Create a buzz. Creating a buzz is about having some kind of activity, action, or information that gets attention in the community or from the media. The idea is to get people talking – whether in their social networks in-real-life or online. When we create a buzz, we’re giving people something to talk about... and they’re spreading the word themselves. We create a buzz with things that resonate, or have stickiness. It’s information or content that people feel compelled or inspired to share with the people or groups they know. That then spreads the permeation and reach of ideas, values, priorities, concerns, and action – including spreading a narrative.

We can change what gets coverage by creating events, activity, and stories that warrant coverage – for very different reasons, and with a very different temperament and tone. It ranges from editorials and letters to the editor for newspapers; to local radio and TV time; to creating small or large events of all kinds that make news and warrant reporter and camera time. There is an art to learning what gets coverage by which media and where, but it can be learned – and it can be leveraged. Anyone can learn how to get really good at it. We can fuse this with the power of moral courage in speaking up, and in advocating for the values and rights that the majority of Americans hold dear.

All of this is part of how we help the majority better use its voice and leverage its social networks, connections, communities, and activities with megaphones, microphones, cameras, TV towers, and satellites. We can also build relationships with media, reporters, anchors, producers, editors, and other key players to help make all of this shift happen, and to work better.

Spread it everywhere. We can leverage our social networks both in-real-life and online through connection (*Thing 1*) and community (*Thing 2*) to greatly expand our influence and reach. It can be wicked powerful – that’s New England speak for very awesomely powerful. This initiative is unique in that it’s asking us all to leverage the power of social networks more than we ever have in civic organizing. We’re going to work together to do that, to teach others how, and to spread that, too.

Many of us are very used to talking about **online social networks**; primarily via social media. We can do a tremendous amount of sharing, story-telling, content creation, advertising or boosting, and amplifying on social media through all kinds of methods, groups, communities, and so on. The approach spelled out throughout this framework includes heavy social media activity and influence. That can be anything from YouTube to Facebook to Post to TikTok to Instagram to Reddit to whatever the kids are doing these days. Which matters a ton, because the young people are super tech savvy and can make big shift happen fast when they put their minds to it. They also show that any of us can do that. **In-real-life social networks** seem overlooked and quaint these days... only they’re not at all insignificant. In-real-life social networks are a huge piece of where Americans get information and influence. They’re a huge opportunity for us to spread information and influence, and to get deeper permeation and reach. Especially in historically under-served communities; including in rural areas.

The power of the in-real-life social network is uniquely true in smaller, more tightly knit communities – whether through a hobby group, an activist alliance, a social club, a neighborhood association, extended family, or in any small town or mid-sized city. It’s the strength and influence of the people we interact with in our daily lives right where we live. It’s the informal conversations, the sharing of local news, and the passing along of developments, happenings, updates, and gossip. There is serious

opportunity for expanding influence, permeation, and reach when anyone creates some new activity, story, kerfuffle, buzz, or other fuss in the more tightly-knit American communities. The phenomena that we collectively create with this Shift the Country vision and work here can have tremendous power to spread by word-of-mouth in often-overlooked parts of the US; where communities have atrophied, and downtowns and old factories are covered in plywood and weeds. Resentment and cynicism have taken root. We can collectively change that, though. It's a brazen pitch to say that we can, but it's totally possible – using the *5 Things* in this framework.

Synergy Creates Momentum, Phenomena, & Viral Spread

We can create a movement with the synergy of combining the *5 Things* in this Shift the Country approach. We can collectively create a phenomenon by each of us doing at least a few things; by sharing what we do in our social networks online and in-real-life; by getting media coverage when we can; by inspiring other people to do things; and to share it all as much as possible.

The idea here is to have waves of people doing powerful stuff or courageous stuff or helpful stuff or otherwise neat stuff – and to have that stuff inspire other people to do stuff, too. To spread inspiration, action, moral courage, solidarity, and so on about things like fighting for what we need – like our rights, getting laws to protect our rights, etc. We might be looking after people in some way, and sharing that. We might have a cool story about some shift we tried locally that's working.

Basically we need all the people doing all the things, and sharing that as widely as possible.

This framework is meant to help us collectively leverage social networks, alliances, and organizations that already exist all over this country to help us take things to a whole new level with new activities, messages, causes, gatherings, conversation, stories, initiatives, problem-solving, ruckus, advocacy, and news coverage to reach people in all the places who have long since given up on any government in this country investing in them, or their community, or their future.

We create the phenomenon to make that shift happen. It's not any trickier than any other huge, big thing people have decided is worth going after. We get a bunch of people and groups doing a bunch of amazing, fierce, visionary, powerful things. We advocate for what's right; for what we need. We tell our stories. We get businesses involved in everything. We get coverage of everything. We have integrity and moral courage. We raise a ruckus about it all all over the place to everyone we know... both in real life and online.

How shift spreads: phenomena & “going viral.” Things spread or go viral because some critical mass of “influencers” share them – people who have a lot of connections or influence in-real-life or online. Something has “gone viral” when it reaches critical mass or a tipping point that covers all of these areas.

We can collectively create the conditions for that in any social networks anywhere; in little ways and big ways; in-real-life and online. It can happen in groups of friends in our livingrooms, to knitting groups, to professional networks, to national action groups, to what we buy, and to where we work.

It all matters. It all becomes part of the greater phenomenon. It's part of the power of provoking, leveraging, and commanding attention.

Any given thing has more chance to spread and become a phenomenon the more it resonates, when the values of it resonate, when the stakes are high, when it involves a combination of action or voices

both in-real-life and online, and when the sharing of it crosses more networks. That's what we're going to create.

Here's a starter list. We can all contribute by picking any random thing and getting going:

- We leverage everything we've got. We work on bigger and more expansive ways to make change at scale than what we've ever done before.
- Loud messages and fierce advocacy in all kinds of ways about what's important and valuable.
- Being brazen, brave, bold, and audacious.
- Cheerleading; for real; to anyone who needs it. We need solidarity and support.
- Pushing and cajoling leaders/candidates to speak up in more places about many more things.
- Pressuring businesses, and partnering with them where possible.
- Catalyzing and provoking civic action and widespread civic engagement in all kinds of things.
- Championing citizenship, the greater good, service, duty, and responsibility.
- Mass volunteering for any kind of good cause.
- Volunteering for anything; especially over an extended period.
- Events and gatherings of all sizes where we tell our stories. With media coverage.
- Protests and vigils. With media coverage.
- Media coverage for as many things as possible; plus creation of things that will get coverage.
- Leveraging social media, ramping up messaging, amplifying messaging, and making shift go viral online and in real-world social networks.
- Finding reasons to work with and bring together all kinds of people, groups, and efforts.
- Creating and expanding teams, partnerships, coalitions and alliances wherever possible and in the most unlikely of places.
- Growing connection and building community for resilience, synergy, strength, and support.
- Sharing and creating big vision, and doing active problem-solving together.
- Showing moral courage; fiercely advocating for things that need it; getting louder about what's right and also about what's not right and not okay; and providing solidarity.

Putting it all together. We help people believe that democracy can work – and then we go about making it work better. We do one thing at a time... and then we do more. We advocate for our democracy, rights, and freedoms. We take on cynicism, apathy, and disempowerment. We help people *believe* in the democracy, and *believe* we can keep it. We *decide* we'd like to keep it. Then we go about finding ways to do that. We get creative. We get people together. We try the unprecedented. We go all out. *We work to build a more perfect union, and to keep it.* We anchor to the dream and the big vision of what the US can be: a thriving, flourishing, fully functional, multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-cultural democracy. *We get voters fired up to vote for what we can do if the actual majority is able to govern without Republicans blocking progress, funding, and rights.* We get voters fired up to vote against Republicans who are actively undermining democracy, government, science, history, inclusiveness, and public health and pushing hate, intolerance, bigotry, voter suppression, and election lies. We show our strength and humanity by creating waves of moral courage and civic engagement where we fight for democracy and what's right; and do good things for humans. We raise a ruckus – fiercely, and with moral courage. We tell all the stories. We build all the coalitions. We get attention and coverage on it all.

10 Critical Parts of Society That Need Attention

You may not need this section to get started – it's a tool. It can help you figure out what's of interest to you, to find something that fits the unique things you bring, or to come up with ideas.

The society we depend on every day for everything we need needs help.

This society has damage from the culture war. The society has weakened as the social fabric has frayed. The systems of society have been disrupted from the pandemic and supply chain interruptions. They have atrophied from lack of investment. The wealth gap has increased. Trust and faith in institutions and fellow humans has decreased. Individualism has nudged out the common good. Society's institutions are eroded. Some of society's institutions are under heavy attack – especially schools, voting, and election systems. Some of the attacks on institutions threaten the underpinnings of the society itself; including democracy and the rule of law.

We want a thriving, flourishing, inclusive society where democracy holds, where we invest in communities, where everyone has a chance to find prosperity, and where government and institutions work well and serve the people. We can help make that happen by digging into these critical parts of society locally, regionally, statewide, or nationally to get them to work better, to change, to get more attention, or to get more funding. Through these structures and systems, there are short- and long-term ways to help get more involved in day-to-day life, to grow power, and to help make structural change that we all need to better deal with the challenges we face.

Here are the 10 structures, systems, functions, and institutions of society that are critical for action, attention, and focus in this moment:

- 1. Democracy, Elections, & Voting**
- 2. Public Safety, Homeland Security, Justice, & The Rule of Law**
- 3. Schools & Education**
- 4. Economic Resilience**
- 5. Investment & Innovation**
- 6. Energy, Climate, & Environment**
- 7. Infrastructure & Supply Chain Resilience**
- 8. Food Access, Availability, Systems, & Resilience**
- 9. Housing Access & Availability**
- 10. Health, Mental Health, & Public Health**

Each of these areas is fairly complicated in its own right – but we don't have to deal with the whole big picture. There are a million ideas, thousands of groups, many levels, and countless opportunities. There are boards, government agencies, nonprofits, coalitions, action groups, and campaigns working in every one of these 10 critical parts of society. Find one. Join one. Or: get a friend who wants to make shift happen, create a team, and go after something together. Or: get neighbors or friends together at your place or at a coffee shop or at a bar... and figure out what you all will do together.

Make plans. Meet often. Do stuff. Share it widely. Get all kinds of coverage.

There are a zillion ways to get involved in these 10 critical parts to society. A few random ideas:

- ▶ Want to honor Georgia now-former election workers Ruby Freeman and Shaye Moss, who testified in the January 6 hearings? Check out how to get involved in local election processes.
- ▶ Want to help protect voters and votes where you live? Check out groups that may already be working on this locally or nationally; such as Stacey Abrams' group Fair Fight. Or, see if other groups like your local Democrats are working to help counter voter suppression.
- ▶ Outraged that intolerance of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, or LGBTQ adults and children is on the rise, and increasingly legalized in states and communities? Find groups working locally on advocacy, safety, legal fights, security, or messaging to help advocate, to create safer communities, and to drive the narrative about all the reasons why this trend is not okay.
- ▶ Upset that pushes against so-called "critical race theory" (that isn't) have caused accurate history to be banned from classrooms? Upset that library books featuring multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, or LGBTQ kids are being pulled from school libraries? Wondering whether federal funds intended to make schools safer in a pandemic were used for other things? Get involved with or find ways to pressure the local school board.
- ▶ Want to make sure your community is not going to handle an active shooter the way it was handled in Uvalde, Texas? Find out what's in place locally from your school district, school board, police department, or fire department. Bring attention and coverage to any potential needs for change or funding. Spread messages about how it's not okay that we need to all be ready for active shooter tragedies because of such easy access to guns.
- ▶ Worried that you or your people could need to survive an active shooter incident? Learn the very easy basics for how to "stop the bleed" to do fast first-aid on site when possible to help keep people alive. It takes like 2 minutes to learn it.
- ▶ Consider taking that action further: help drive the narrative about the very real dangers of active shooters by getting qualified as a Stop the Bleed instructor; and teaching how to "stop the bleed" in any group, church, or workplace. It can spur discussion and draw attention to the problem, and also may well help someone save a life.
- ▶ Join a national or local group/network helping women to access healthcare.
- ▶ Help tell, share, and amplify the stories big time about what happens when women's rights are removed in the anticipated Supreme Court Roe v. Wade decision. Get a partner or join a team. Help create ways to get media coverage on the huge range of impacts of this decision.
- ▶ Energy is a national security issue; made more urgent by Russia's war on Ukraine. What's your community doing to find sustainable energy sources? How can you help advance that?
- ▶ Climate change is making disasters worse. Join the local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) or other local group to help your community be more resilient for when chaos hits. Take it further... find ways to drive the narrative about why disasters are getting worse, what that means where you live, and what we could do to make climate change less bad.
- ▶ Wondering what's at risk in rural health and mental health care – especially due to COVID-19? Talk to people, nonprofits, communities, and stakeholders tied to a rural hospital or clinic system to find out what's happening and needed; get local groups and Democrats to help.

Parameters: What This Shift Is & What It Isn't

Shift the Country is: A movement, an idea, and an approach. It will be messy, organic, fluid, fast-moving, and fast-evolving. We can collectively help shepherd the directions this shift goes in by laying out and agreeing to some parameters and intentions.

Shift the Country is about pressure, creating a phenomenon, and making transformation... and with that – growing the country we collectively want to see. You have to live it to give it.

In all action, the idea here is to raise a ruckus, drive the narrative, do some good for others, and energize the majority while we also champion moral courage, value humans, uphold the vision of what we want this country to be, demonstrate integrity, show decency, and show respect.

- ▶ There's a difference between being necessarily more aggressive, raising a fuss, changing the status quo – and making things overly awkward or getting unwanted negative attention because actions were inappropriate.
- ▶ There's a difference between needed aggressiveness – and being overly aggressive.
- ▶ There's being firm – and there's being mean.
- ▶ There's making people uncomfortable – and there's being rude and disrespectful.

Part of the goal in upholding and advancing civil society is that we collectively *want* society to be civil. Civility can also be used as an excuse for allowing injustice to perpetuate. We can find a balance, and we need to intentionally work to as we make shift happen. This is all a work in progress. Also, there is a longer section about “agreements” further down in this section.

Shift the Country is:

- ▶ Finding ways to energize the majority of voters to vote.
- ▶ Providing all kinds of opportunities for people to get voters registered, and fired up to vote.
- ▶ Evolving civic organizing in new ways to energize a majority coalition of voters in the US.
- ▶ Cheerleading and encouraging Americans, elected leaders, party leaders, coalition members, and basically anyone fighting for this democracy to work together to champion vision, values, and the greater good – and to have and speak with moral courage. Also nudging, pleading, and pushing for those things when needed, especially given the stakes. We need leaders to speak up and stand up, and we need new leaders to emerge.
- ▶ Strengthening the loose majority coalition in the US.
- ▶ Strengthening democracy and creating resilience in the US.
- ▶ Building and expanding connection, community, solidarity, support, strength, and alliances.
- ▶ Taking all of the work that's been done by millions over decades to new levels to create a phenomenon – with intention, strategy, coalition-building, collaboration, synergy, and amplification to foment a critical mass that mobilizes Americans to meet the moment.
- ▶ Generally supporting and backing the Democratic Party as the primary functional party in the US in a position to actively uphold this democracy.

- ▶ Generally supporting the Democratic Party platform as identified by the democratic process within the party itself and published on the party's website.
- ▶ Generally following “The Five Agreements” from author don Miguel Ruiz, which include these agreements: “be impeccable with your word; don't take anything personally; don't make assumptions; always do your best; and be skeptical, but learn to listen.”
- ▶ Encouraging and centering the greater good, the collective good, the common good, duty, sacrifice, citizenship, obligation, and service throughout activities and action.
- ▶ Committing to creativity, collaboration, teamwork, and problem-solving to take on the challenges we face locally, regionally, state-wide, or nationally.
- ▶ Encouraging decency, respect, and integrity in all of the actions we collectively undertake.
- ▶ Creating a space for listening, collaboration building, learning, growing and evolving.
- ▶ Creating a welcome, open, inclusive, diverse, tolerant space welcoming of all who are interested in building a majority coalition to help stabilize and hold this democracy together.
- ▶ Creating a space where we listen to, respect, and center people from historically under-served and under-heard communities in the work we are doing together.
- ▶ Considering diversity, equity, and inclusion in our work; and working to learn and grow and evolve as work together.
- ▶ Fostering community where we individually and collectively are willing to do the work, the reading, and the growing to be aware of our own biases and privilege where they exist and to learn and evolve forward from there.
- ▶ Helping Americans to re-weave the torn and frayed social fabric critical to a thriving, flourishing, inclusive society where everyone has a chance to find prosperity, and where our rights and freedoms are intact and protected.

Shift the Country is not:

- ▶ *Shift the Country is absolutely not a space for violence; threats of violence; threats of war; vandalism; damage to property; or intolerance of any individuals or groups due to race, gender, sexuality, religion, spirituality, politics, abilities, wealth, or health.*
- ▶ This is not a space that hosts, facilitates, or encourages illegal activities. Some discussions may occur related to risk mitigation especially given the fast-evolving US legal landscape.
- ▶ This is not a place for further fraying of the US social fabric, or fragmentation of society.
- ▶ This is not a place to foment fragmentation within the coalition of the American majority.
- ▶ This is not a place to foment fragmentation within the Democratic Party; nor for internal party arguments, insults, or dismissiveness about people or alliances. We're working collectively to energize the majority; not to further fracture it. The use of any these or similar terms *as derogatory terms or as insults* is not okay in Shift the Country activities: far left, progressives, moderates, centrists, neoliberals, or corporate Democrats. There's a difference between being descriptive (for example, saying “I'm a moderate”) versus being insulting.
- ▶ This is not a space for setting the Democratic Party agenda, or for endless debates about policy nuances that don't matter until people are elected. This *is* a space for championing the values we collectively want to see as part of our future. For example, debates about red flag laws, bump stocks, or age limits on buying guns are policy nuances that aren't the focus here. Saying it's not okay to live in a society that embraces gun access over the safety of children in

schools and Americans in any public space *is* championing values and vision. *Side-note:* the Democratic Party already has a well-established democratic process for deciding its platform.

- ▶ This is not a place for any activity, support, or messaging running counter to or risking the principles of democracy. Shift the Country will not partner with or support efforts to fund or promote extremist Republican election-denier or insurrectionist candidates in primaries with the hope that voters will later choose the less extreme Democratic Party candidate in the general election. It's a Shift the Country thing to champion values, vision, and moral courage. You have to live it to give it: this organization is pro-democracy – period.
- ▶ This is not a space for any conversations or fomenting of civil war, for sedition, or for any action supporting or advocating for any break-up or breakdown of the US. Shift the Country fully supports the continuance of this constitutional democracy.
- ▶ This is not a place for contempt or disrespect of individuals anywhere on the political spectrum. Contempt and disrespect do not facilitate cooperation, a welcoming atmosphere, or productive conversation – all of which are needed in building a majority coalition.
- ▶ This is not a place for name-calling of individuals anywhere on the political spectrum. Factual names and references are okay (such as “The Former Guy”).
- ▶ This is not a place for intolerance, bigotry, racism, misogyny, othering, scapegoating, or other hateful behaviours. This *is* an alliance that encourages participants and volunteers to work on their own awareness of any privilege and bias that they carry; and to actively learn, evolve, and grow from there.
- ▶ This is not an organization based on traditional organizing approaches such as canvassing, phone banks, text banks, postcards, voter registration drives, and get-out-the-vote action. It is an organization that builds on and leverages those approaches as they fit this shift.
- ▶ This is not a place for rumor-mongering, disinformation, or propaganda. The use of facts; citable and reputable sources; and unbiased, not-loaded language is encouraged.

The Power of Intention & Agreements

Shift the Country encourages the use of intention, agreements, and parameters in any activities hosted, conducted, and facilitated by volunteers around the US making this shift happen.

Beginning any collaboration, meetings, or other group activities with clear intentions and agreement helps to create the space and set a tone for productive work, to keep things on track, to maintain the integrity and mission, and to head off diversions. Agreements help any group start from a good foundation. Agreements are helpful for conversation, connection, community, in-person group activities, gatherings, ongoing teamwork, and for fostering healthy online spaces such as Facebook or Discord Groups. Groups may find it useful to create or evolve their own unique agreements as it works for the group, or to adapt those that work elsewhere. All are welcome to borrow from our list above, with appropriate reference.

Shift the Country also follows the “five agreements” from author don Miguel Ruiz. These aren't a requirement for Shift the Country work – they're just useful. They're also familiar to many people, as the related books have been bestsellers. The five agreements from don Miguel Ruiz are: “be impeccable with your word; don't take anything personally; don't make assumptions; always do your

best; and be skeptical, but learn to listen.” For more on these agreements from the author, check out the links here for [The Four Agreements](#), or for [The Fifth Agreement](#).

On Inclusivity & Welcoming People

The Shift the Country work is designed to help engage and energize the majority of American voters. That’s the target audience. It’s HUGE. It’s not moderate. It’s not progressive. It’s the WHOLE majority – everyone who makes up the popular vote.

Shift the Country encourages people engaging with this work to be as welcoming and as inclusive as possible; to reflect the values of the Democratic Party as the “big tent” party. Shift the Country encourages anyone engaged with this shift to find good experts and resources on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) if deeper work is needed on the blind spots many Americans have about inherent biases, privilege, abilities, language, where they exist. We can learn, grow, and evolve. Shift the Country encourages the people who are making this shift happen to pay special attention to listening to, amplifying, and respecting voices that are historically under-served and under-heard. This includes many multi-racial, multi-ethnic, diverse voices from all kinds of places – including from big cities, small cities, and rural areas. Part of why Democratic side messaging sometimes doesn’t resonate with voters is because it’s missing the voices of real life from real places. We can shift that.

Demographics indicate that the majority of voters at this point tend to vote for Democrats, and so the Democratic Party is the anchor of this coalition. That tendency of the majority of voters to vote for Democrats appears to be what’s driving Republican efforts to suppress the vote. Given all of these factors, the Shift the Country work is anchored in the principles and ideas of the Democratic Party.

This work seeks to build a larger coalition that includes people who don’t typically vote, independent voters, ex-Republicans, and “never-Trumpers.” As such, this initiative seeks to be open to all of the alliances we’ll need to hold this democracy together. To that end, Shift the Country asks that people who are making this shift happen have an open mind and welcoming attitude to people who show up to join in activities no matter their party; because we’re collectively building alliances. The agreements and intention noted in the section above can help create the space to be welcoming and open. We need huge coalitions to hold this democracy together. We don’t have to agree on everything to agree that the values at the heart of democracy are worth fighting for. This work is not about “reaching across the aisle” to those who support the current Republican Party. This is about building a coalition that can help us collectively hold this democracy together. This work is not set up to de-radicalize people swimming in years of culture war programming and increasingly far-right content. This work *is* set up to energize disengaged majority coalition voters to vote for democracy.

Think Through Your Messages & Actions As We Create This Phenomenon

Speaking of agreements... through this work, we’re collectively putting a certain amount of trust and faith in each other to act thoughtfully and in good faith, and not to muck things up for the rest of us. This initiative is asking people to create content and take action that resonates, to share it widely, and to have at least some of it go viral. What actually does resonate and get enough visibility to go

viral in some way is a bit of science + luck – and that’s all a different story. No one can tell when a thing is going to go viral, and that’s the reason for this section. It’s worth being careful and intentional with content you post, share, and create... because you never know when something will take off and spread, or go viral. Especially if you’re really working at it.

*** Think through potentially viral content, actions, or messages you put out into the world. ***

Shift the Country totally encourages people to get cool stuff to go viral. Like big time. Content, messages, and action that go viral (or that could) are a key feature of this shift. It would just be super great if whatever does go viral contributes to (rather than detracting from) what we’re all working to build for our collective future – for the majority of voters. The hope here is that what we collectively generate energizes the majority of voters to vote. Any one of us can make a mistake or say a thing that goes viral that is *NOT* what we would all collectively prefer to be shared and pointed to as a reflection of us, collectively. So it’s helpful to exercise some caution to minimize that risk. Any one of us can also create an idea, message, or action that goes viral that could be used as a weapon *against* the shift we are trying to create if it’s unclear, confusing, in poor taste, or counterproductive. We – collectively – would probably prefer it if the people working in association with the Shift the Country work don’t do something like that... accidentally or on purpose.

The idea here is to energize the majority of voters – not to push them away. What we want is to shift the direction of this country and its government to one that better serves the majority of Americans. This initiative is seeking to foment and catalyze a phenomenon, and asking Americans everywhere to be a part of that. That’s a big leap. It’s brazen. It’s risky. Yet it has the potential for huge change.

Two examples of sub-optimal messaging: 1) The *#DefundThePolice* hashtag created by activists in 2020 (in reaction to the murder of George Floyd by police) was later used in attack ads by Republicans in the 2020 election. If you actually mean *#ReimagineThePolice*, or *#BetterFundCommunities*, or *#EndPoliceBias*, then say those things. If you need a briefing book to explain your hashtag, you’ve lost the message. 2) The *#AbolishICE* hashtag is also not fabulous. The US Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS’s) Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency has been deeply problematic; particularly under the Trump Administration. However, ICE has an office called Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) that goes after high value targets responsible for human trafficking and smuggling, child exploitation, terrorists, drug trafficking, violent criminals, and cartel members. These are government law enforcement functions the majority of voters likely want to keep, and which protect victims of violent crime – including women and children. It’s not a great look to be on record as being against a government office that hunts down such perpetrators of violence. It’s not the worst hashtag ever; but it’s not great messaging, and doesn’t likely support what the majority of voters would prefer.

There’s Risk To This Shift

People will need to make their own decisions about how to get or stay involved in civic action and politics in this moment. Figuring out the right thing to do in any tough moment isn’t easy. *Doing* what seems right can be even harder. Those decisions will vary for every single person. It will be up

to each of us to decide for ourselves about the risks we're willing to take. We'll also have to navigate when it's right to convince, persuade, or pressure others to act – and when to step back and respect decisions others have made about their risk. We can help each other with community, connection, solidarity, strength, courage, and moral courage for the leaps we'll take to fight for our rights and for this democracy. For example, we need people of integrity willing to administer elections in this high-risk environment; they need our support to keep at it and do the right things.

The biggest shared risk is that the US democracy itself is under attack, and could realistically fail in the next 2-4 years if we don't turn the tide ASAP. The stakes are incredible, and are discussed in the second half of this framework. The other major shared risk is that political violence is on the rise; both in person and online. Political violence – including even the threat of it – is intended to have a chilling effect. It's a form of terrorism; in which fear is used to keep people afraid, at home, cowed, and disempowered. Political violence comes in many forms, including online harassment; harassing people around their homes or work; threats; doxxing; threatening symbols and signage; mass shootings; and targeted shootings. The lists go on. Political violence helps people seize power. It has already been used to pressure officials overseeing voting and elections to step down; thus potentially allowing those with corrupt intentions to take over the institutions. Political violence was key to the 2021 violent insurrection and associated coup attempt. Political and media personalities can set mobs loose on individuals such as was shown in Georgia in the January 6 hearings. On the Fourth of July in 2022, parade officiants in Texas stepped down after a radio personality targeted them for harassment; and two police officers were targeted and shot at a Fourth of July fireworks event in Massachusetts. It's likely that more will be injured or killed from political violence in 2022. The line between political violence and hate crime is blurred given the toxic, dangerous, contemptuous, aggressive nature of the intensifying culture war being pushed by many Republican politicians and media outlets. Politicians have threatened their own colleagues with no repercussions. Hate crimes such as the massacre at a grocery store in Buffalo are hard to address collectively due to this intensification. Risks are high.

Shift the Country encourages anyone involved in civic action and politics to talk about risk openly with participants, family, and friends. Shift the Country encourages those doing civic and political action to work together to reduce and manage risk where possible; to work through potential scenarios; and to take action or make adjustments as risks emerge/evolve. We handle risk better when we're willing to see it; when we're a bit ready for it; and when we have worked through some of what could go wrong. There are ways to minimize and mitigate risk online and in-person, yet risk mitigation only goes so far. We build community, connection, and resilience to help navigate inevitable and tragic crises when those happen; and to help us keep an eye on what's at stake and what we're fighting for.

A note on mass shooter risk: It's hard to do anything in public these days without dealing with the very real risk of an active shooter. As you plan events and work with your teams, groups, or alliances; it's worth considering mass shooter risk, and walking through potential responses. Another preparation is to be ready to help Stop the Bleed. One of the things that happens in a mass shooting event is that people can bleed out before medical help reaches them. It's basic first aid that's easy to learn; if you happen to be in a mass shooting at some point and are in a position to help the training can help save a life. It sucks to have to address this, but this is where we're at in the US.

I Need More Info – What's Next?

For some people, the first half of this framework (up to here) may be enough to get going.

For more depth, background, & context, read Part 2 of this framework (the second half after this).

This shift grows when we work together – that's the goal here. We collectively create a phenomenon by sharing success stories, sharing ideas, doing brainstorming together, having workshops and webinars, building community, sharing content, and so on. We get serious about doing a lot, doing it fast, pulling more people in, and making a big ruckus about it. We collectively create momentum by giving voice to and sharing what's going on where we all are. The possibilities are endless.

Find out more:

- ▶ Check out the website at www.shiftthecountry.com.
- ▶ Sign up on [Eventbrite](#) for teamwork, brainstorming, big ideas, webinars, & workshops.
- ▶ There's a [Substack](#) newsletter blog thing we're using to send all announcements.
- ▶ Videos will be on [YouTube](#).
- ▶ More social media on [Post](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) (*tentative*), and [LinkedIn](#).
- ▶ [Email Shift the Country](#) to share your stories, actions, efforts, initiatives, videos, successes, challenges once we get going... if you're willing to pass them along for further sharing, or if you're willing to join in on a video interview or panel with this nonprofit.

Donate here! Shift the Country needs money to make this shift happen –

- ▶ **Website:** <https://www.shiftthecountry.com/donate>
- ▶ **ActBlue:** <https://secure.actblue.com/donate/shiftthecountrynow>
- ▶ **Patreon:** https://www.patreon.com/ShiftTheCountry?fan_landing=true
- ▶ **Substack:** Get a paid [Substack](#) subscription
- ▶ **Events:** Join & support events on [Eventbrite: Shift the Country](#)
- ▶ **Mail a check:** Payable to – Shift the Country, PO Box 1093, Ames, Iowa 50014



The Big Shift Framework

– PART 2 –

Part 1 of this framework includes the basics for the *5 Thing* approach and the parameters of this initiative without getting into the deeper risks/reasons for the work. The *Big Shift Guide* (link soon) has specifics for how to actually do this stuff, in combination with the *Big List(s) of Ideas* (link soon).

Part 2 of this framework (everything after this) addresses the risk landscape, what's at stake, why we're doing this fight, and some of the backstory on this nonprofit.

Part 2 – “What's At Stake, Why We Fight, & What This Shift Can Do”

► What Does This Shift Do?

- What This Shift Does – The Basics
- What This Shift Does – To Counter & Mitigate Big Risk

► Dysfunctional Democracy: What Happens If It Fails?

- The US Democracy Is At Risk (*short version*)
- The US Democracy Isn't Working For The Majority
- What Happens If US Democracy Fails?

► 5 Risks We Face: Why We Need This Shift

- Risk 1: The US Democracy Is At Risk (*longer version*)
- Risk 2: Not Understanding What's At Risk Is A Risk
- Risk 3: There's An Active Culture War & Increasing Instability
- Risk 4: Faith In Democracy & The Social Contract Is Diminishing
- Risk 5: Frayed Social Fabric Is Depleting Our Collective Response Capacity

► Where Did This Shift Come From?

- Seeds & Roots
- Addressing The Risk Landscape
- Opportunity To Evolve
- A New Kind Of Organizing
- Gaps & Opportunities
- Thought Leaders
- Key Publications
- Inception, Back Stories, & Iterations

► For Detractors & Skeptics

► What Does Funding Do & Who's Funding This Shift?

► About Shift the Country: An Innovative Initiative For An Intense Time

What Does This Shift Do?

This framework helps us grow and energize a coalition of the majority so that we can navigate instability, revitalize the democracy, & change our trajectory together.

Shift the Country is structured to help Americans chart a different path for our future than the direction we've been headed in since 2015; but also for decades as we've refused to invest in everyday people and communities in this country since the pushback to the civil rights era.

This *5 Things* approach can help us drive the narrative and galvanize voters to take the courageous actions we'll need to envision and build a different future; and to build the support to get there. It helps us energize and empower the majority of voters in this country to help us stabilize, hold onto, and better build and evolve this multi-cultural, multi-ethnic superpower of a democracy.

This 5 Things approach helps us mitigate the risk of the democracy failing, while accounting for the 5 risks outlined in the "5 Risks We Face: Why We Need This Shift" section. It incorporates mechanisms to energize the majority of the population to fight for the democracy, and mechanisms to build and champion a vision and agenda that the majority can get on board with... both of which are key to countering an authoritarian threat; and to breaking, disarming, diffusing, and defusing the threats brought by demagogues, the culture war, and a well-funded radicalized right-wing media machine.

This shift right here is about leveraging the power of the people... which can be way more powerful than all of that. We have to catalyze that power... and we can.

What This Shift Does – In Our Society:

- ▶ Increases connection and community; in a time of crisis, isolation, torn-apart social fabric, changing relationships, unrest, fear, blatant hatred, and aggression.
- ▶ Builds solidarity and strength.
- ▶ Builds power by pushing us all to take our existing groups and social networks to new levels with alliances, partnerships, and teamwork.
- ▶ Re-weaves the social fabric with connection, community-building, civic action, shared vision, cooperation, and power-building.
- ▶ Increases the resilience and strength of communities and the country.
- ▶ Creates the space for collective problem-solving, imagination, and innovation for the complicated challenges we face.
- ▶ Champions truth, reality, science, history, and facts – even when they are uncomfortable.
- ▶ Empowers and expands our capacity for moral courage. Courage is contagious.
- ▶ Champions a common vision and values. Reinvigorates, renews, and updates a shared dream/vision of us, our shared values, and of our future and what is possible as a true, flourishing, stable, multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracy.
- ▶ Provides a framework that fits and leverages the unique interests, knowledge, skills, and expertise of Americans to find ways to act that resonate and can have real impacts. Gives

everyone ideas for contributing to holding this democracy together, shifting its direction, doing our duty, being active citizens, and building a better future.

- ▶ Encourages and facilitates structural transformation across the society; across its systems and structures; and for its future.
- ▶ Helps Democrats and the majority of Americans get better at messaging, framing, getting media coverage, telling the stories, leveraging the attention economy, driving the media narrative, and better driving the public agenda.
- ▶ *Shifts the direction of the country to one that better suits the majority of Americans; as a democracy is meant to do.*

What This Shift Does – To Counter & Mitigate Big Risk:

- ▶ Builds faith in humans, in our collective energy, in the social contract, and in democracy. Authoritarianism can more easily fester and spread when voters lose faith in the democracy and in the social contract and become more hopeless, cynical, and disengaged.
- ▶ Counters the shock, overwhelm, trauma freeze, and disengagement from a series of shocks and crises with connection, community, solidarity, and ways to engage and be welcoming. A growing authoritarian movement can better accumulate and seize power when the population is frozen and disengaged by shock and overwhelm.
- ▶ Creates the space for championing a solid opposition agenda to the threat of authoritarianism... including an agenda focused on rights and freedoms, a functional government, investing in Americans and American communities, and taking care of humans.
- ▶ Creates the space for belonging, community, and connection as an alternative to extremism and tribalism.
- ▶ Puts energy and focus on the greater good, a collective future, and the vision of what's possible. Takes energy away from intolerance, bias, extremism, and the culture war.
- ▶ Counters extremism by providing mechanisms for people, groups, and institutions to de-escalate, disarm, diffuse, and de-fuse extremism both metaphorically and literally.
- ▶ Provides a growing alternative to growing extremism by centering shared values and championing a common vision so that we can be serious about building a future, country, and communities where all have a more real chance to thrive and flourish – and where we work collectively to address the problems we face including supply chain challenges, outdated infrastructure, evolving technology, climate change, and real needs for food, energy, and water access for a growing population.
- ▶ Stabilizes government for the continued protection, safety, and security of Americans at every level of federalism (local, state, federal).
- ▶ Helps ensure the continuity and functionality of government in order to protect the country's most vulnerable populations; including historically under-served communities, and those most at risk to oppression and exploitation if government fails.
- ▶ Reinforces and shores up eroded institutions including in government.
- ▶ Mitigates the risk of devolution, corruption, failure, or collapse of government and/or democracy at every level of federalism. (For example, devolving/corrupted law enforcement and justice institutions such as recent threats to the Michigan governor by elected law enforcement, and the alarming Texas justice system / law enforcement response and cover-

up of the Uvalde school shooting. For another example, the corruption of election certification processes especially as part of the 2020 post-election coup attempt.)

- ▶ Contributes to maintaining the world order by stabilizing the superpower US government. American military capacity is key to checking international expansionism, aggression, war, and exploitation. This is illustrated by the current US choice to back Ukraine in Russia's war on Ukraine – which would have gone differently if Mr. Trump had remained in the presidency.
- ▶ Contributes to the US capacity to continue upholding and backing democracy and freedom worldwide, including through institutions such as NATO.
- ▶ Fosters an agenda and mind-set of innovation and investment in Americans and American communities in order to counter the US intelligence community's assessed decline in innovation and to increase US competitiveness worldwide.

Dysfunctional Democracy: What Happens If It Fails?

We Should Talk More About How US Democracy Is At Risk

Explaining what could happen if the US democracy fails and how it could fail are keys to helping voters understand what will be at stake in the 2024 election. Voters need to understand what they could lose.

In the 2022 election, democracy held... but just by a thread. Voters voted against key anti-democracy candidates in critical swing states for the 2024 election. That's excellent... yet the state of the US democracy remains tenuous.

Pro-hate, anti-democracy candidates still got *millions* of votes in 2022... and won a number of governor's races, won the majority in a ton of state legislature races, and won the majority in the US House of Representatives. A number of "MAGA," anti-democracy, "anti-woke," and similar candidates won races at every level – from school boards to the US Senate. The very-slight majority that Democrats managed to hold in the US Senate is likely to remain mostly overpowered by the minority-power-protection of the Senate Filibuster.

This situation keeps democracy at risk; although there is not yet much discussion about it. Republicans in the US House have been threatening to withhold appropriations approval for such critical national security institutions as the entire US Department of Defense over its vaccine requirement, and to withhold approval of other legislation by requiring keeping certain federal judges' family financial information secret. Both threats are huge – and this document is being written only a few weeks after 2022 election results are in. What else will House Republicans threaten? *Are they seriously willing to un-fund the military of the world's top superpower over culture-war vaccine hesitancy pushed by an ex-president and the far-right media empire?* What else will they obstruct and stymie? When far-right extremists and oligarchs are pushing for deconstruction of institutions and the entire administrative state in order to create the conditions for themselves to seek more power, there is real and fundamental danger.

Republicans in the US House will also have incredible power to drive the national narrative – making this Shift the Country work to help drive the narrative (*Thing 5*) even more critical. T

Republicans in the US House, in the US Supreme Court, and in state legislatures are working to actively undermine the institutions of elections as well, and actively suppressing votes. Elections and voting are at the critical core of democracy. If those institutions fall or are deeply corrupted.... democracy dies, and spreading corruption will help keep people in power.

The section below gets more into the incredible baked-in power of the minority party in at least some of the US's politics and government. Part of why so much is currently dysfunctional and unstable is that Republicans have been flexing and enabling minority power for decades, and pushing for more of it despite the fact that this country is supposed to be more of a democracy. The next sub-section

after that addresses *What Happens If US Democracy Fails?* The section after that covers *The Risks We Face* in 5 critical areas relevant to the work here to Shift the Country.

The US Democracy Isn't Working For The Majority

The minority party of Republicans continue to hold disproportionate power for what's supposed to be a democracy... due to the filibuster in the US Senate, the Electoral College, congressional race gerrymandering, and the corresponding appointees on the Supreme Court put there by presidents who lost the popular vote via the Electoral College.

Democracy is supposed to generally serve and represent the large majority of voters.

US voters have gotten cynical, frustrated, angry, and disengaged, partly because the majority of Americans aren't getting what they want out of our government.

People worked hard to elect a majority in 2020; that majority hasn't gotten much done. Voters don't see where they have power when what the majority wants gets blocked over and over... for years.

Americans aren't getting what they want because of how much power the minority Republican party has; even when Republicans don't win the popular vote. This is covered more in the risk sections below called *Risk 1: The US Democracy Is At Risk*; and *Risk 4: Faith In Democracy & The Social Contract Is Diminishing*.

Unfortunately, some of that minority power is by constitutional design. This democracy was structured to give extra power to wealthy rural men; to supposedly guard against the "whims" of a more urban majority. The Electoral College and the US Senate are both structures that heavily favor rural areas. The minority party lost the popular vote but won the presidency due to the Electoral College twice since 2000; leading to George W. Bush and Donald Trump becoming president. Those two presidents have installed enough far-right Supreme Court justices *to erase legal precedent and remove rights most Americans want and have had for decades*. The current Supreme Court composition solidifies the power of minority-party presidents who lost the popular vote for *decades*.

The US Senate gives huge power equally to every state, thus giving low-population states incredible power versus highly populated urban areas. An outdated Senate rule (i.e., not in the Constitution) called the "filibuster" was also designed to help protect rural, wealthy landowners. It doesn't allow much to pass the Senate without a *supermajority* of 60 votes; instead of a simple majority of 51. Even though the Democratic Party now technically has the Senate majority (50 votes + the VP tie-breaker); the filibuster plus two tricky Senators mean that Senate Democrats can't get much passed.

The Republican party has trouble winning the popular vote overall because they're in a shrinking demographic, and because they keep blocking the things most Americans want. The Democratic Party that represents the full, diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-racial make-up of this country keeps trying to get things done to help most Americans.

Our elected government has been ignoring what the majority of its people want for years:

- ▶ The majority of Americans don't want women to lose the *right* to control their own bodies.
- ▶ The majority of Americans want people to be able to have relationships and marriages with whoever they love.
- ▶ The majority of Americans don't want to risk massive debt every time they get sick.
- ▶ The majority of Americans want separation of church and state.
- ▶ The majority of Americans want the wealthy and corporations to pay more in taxes.
- ▶ The majority of Americans want a reality- and risk-based immigration system transformation.
- ▶ The majority of Americans don't want children to pay the price of super easy firearms access by having to hide under tables to stay alive when a gunman shows up at school.
- ▶ The majority of Americans want to be able to get groceries, to go to church, to go to a concert, or even go to a protest and not need to be on the lookout for a mass shooter.
- ▶ The majority of Americans shouldn't need to know how to stop hemorrhaging in the case of a mass shooter because the minority party blocks gun safety/responsibility progress.
- ▶ The majority of Americans want safety and health regulations and laws – and public health.
- ▶ The majority of Americans want government to help make the climate crisis less bad.
- ▶ The majority of Americans want the government to help us all have cleaner water and air.
- ▶ The majority of Americans want real, significant investment in communities, economic development, infrastructure, and education.
- ▶ The majority of Americans want kids to learn about diversity, history, and science so that we can learn from it, so that we can evolve, and so that we can be competitive in the world.
- ▶ The majority of Americans want the right to vote, voter protections, and functional elections.
- ▶ The majority of Americans want freedom and civil rights protections.

What Happens If US Democracy Fails?

It's a good bet that most Americans don't want to experience what the US would be like if the US democracy fails.

We might be more motivated to fight for what's at stake if we understood the risk better. We need to think and talk more seriously about what's at stake. This section can help.

One way a failure of democracy could happen is pretty close to what we're already somewhat used to: the minority party of Republicans cementing their outsized power, and continuing to block things the majority of Americans want. This includes removing rights; favoring moves that keep the wealthy and powerful wealthy and powerful; continuing to not invest in Americans or American communities; removing safety and health regulations; increasing vulnerabilities of the most vulnerable; and so on.

A second possibility is that both democracy and government fail or reconfigure. That could be massively worse than permanent minoritarian rule, and cause a cascade of effects that hurt the most vulnerable Americans – but also threaten vulnerable countries and people around the world that live behind the current superpower protection of the US and its alliances.

These bullet points show some of the possibilities if the US democracy fails in a big way:

- ▶ Americans who are the most marginalized, persecuted, vulnerable, and under-served by the US government would lose the most; and face the greatest consequences from a failure of democracy. Governments of democracies are meant to protect the safety and security of their citizens, but cannot do so if government fails. In the case of a US failure of democracy, the most vulnerable among us would likely become even more vulnerable as systems and protections fall away; and as exploitation and corruption would increase.
- ▶ All rights and freedoms protected by the US Constitution could be removed or degraded.
- ▶ Systems, structures, and institutions of society would likely be weakened, eroded, and corrupted. This could have huge negative impacts for millions of Americans. This framework lists 10 critical parts to society in Part 1 that give a sense for the stakes.
- ▶ The limited supply chain interruptions Americans have seen in the US in recent years from the pandemic, Russia's war on Ukraine, and the extended Suez Canal blockage would pale in comparison to the supply chain messes and cascading effects in a failure of the democracy.
- ▶ Regulations and protections for safety, health, workers, food, drinking water, waterways, air, critical infrastructure, medicine, land use, public lands, resource use, agricultural production, manufacturing, social media, and so on could be degraded or removed.
- ▶ Exploitation and corruption would likely increase.
- ▶ The wealth gap would increase; the wealthy would likely hold and increase power.
- ▶ The rule of law would likely be more contingent on the ruling power/party rather than on a shared social contract. Corruption would likely be rampant.
- ▶ Power would likely be accomplished through violence, fear, political violence, and corruption.
- ▶ Loyalty to the ruling powers would be rewarded; disloyalty could be prosecuted or punished. This would be likely for any individual, family, business, organization, or affiliation.
- ▶ Current limits to government power such as for illegal search and seizure, asset forfeiture, and eminent domain could become unlimited or unconstrained.
- ▶ The definitions and nature of safety, security, public safety, homeland security, and national security would likely change drastically.
- ▶ The current layout of federalism with the states and cities could shift, regionalize, or break up.
- ▶ Worldwide, the US has been the democracy that backs other democracies for decades. If the US democracy fails, the world order would be shaken up; countries and people that benefit from US protection, alliances, and security would become significantly more vulnerable.

5 Risks We Face: Why We Need This Shift

The American democracy, US culture, and the safety and stability of the US are all at risk for many reasons. Many Americans don't appear to understand those risks – or the urgency of them. Not understanding what's at risk is powerful and dangerous because it keeps people from fighting for things they don't know are at risk; or that they don't know they could be fighting for. We're better able to face, address, mitigate, and reduce risk if we can see it accurately for what it is. Denial is a powerful force: it masks the need for critical action in urgent moments such as this.

Explaining what's at risk will be an important part of motivating people to make shift happen.

What's at stake in this moment is nothing short of the security, stability, safety, and continued existence of constitutional US democracy; in the world's biggest superpower of a democracy.

The sections above in *Part 2* of this framework have a cursory look at the risk to the US democracy, with a longer discussion about what could happen if the US democracy fails. The sections below cover specific risks as they are most relevant to the work Shift the Country is catalyzing.

Why We Need This Shift – 5 Risks:

1. The US Democracy Is At Risk
2. Not Understanding What's At Risk Is A Risk
3. There's An Active Culture War & Increasing Instability
4. Faith Is Diminishing In Democracy & In The Social Contract
5. Frayed Social Fabric Is Depleting Our Collective Response Capacity

Related to these 5 risks – there's also a rise in gun violence, in political violence, in political threats, in instability, in dehumanizing language, in aggressiveness, in hate crime, in steps toward violence, and in a national security threat from domestic violent extremists (DVE). This list of additional risks are worth calling out as they relate to several of the 5 identified risk areas discussed below; increase the intensity of all that is going on in the US; and add context to the overall risk landscape.

The 5 risk sections below contain key aspects as they relate to the Shift the Country work. Each section is not exhaustive but is meant to provide context and background for why this shift is critical.

Risk 1: The US Democracy Is At Risk

This is an expansion on the *Dysfunctional Democracy* section. US democracy is under active attack, and at risk of failure. Key points:

- ▶ Republicans are in and running for positions at every level of government in order to be able to override future election results or to throw out ballots or otherwise negate the popular

(majority) vote in future elections. Future elections could be thrown into question.

Functional elections and voting where all votes are counted are the anchor to democracy.

- ▶ Election deniers won primaries and some general elections in 2022. Some of the positions now occupied by election deniers oversee election results processing and certification.
- ▶ There is a related push to get Republicans to get jobs as election processors to influence vote counting and certification, to suppress votes on the day of the election, to intimidate voters, to challenge ballots, and to otherwise interfere with election processes and results.
- ▶ Elected Republicans continue to vote against certifying some election results based on no evidence whatsoever that results shouldn't be certified; despite court orders to do so; and with the raucous support of at least some voters.
- ▶ One of the major threats to democracy is use of "the big lie" to "justify" weakening voting and election institutions, and to "justify" shifting power and decision-making in election oversight to favour the political party in power at the time the results are counted.
- ▶ The Republican Party has pushed "the big lie" that the 2020 presidential election was stolen despite no admissible court evidence, available homeland security assessments declaring the election secure, and court rulings upholding the viability of election certifications.
- ▶ The majority of Republican voters believe "the big lie" that the election was stolen.
- ▶ There was an insurrection on the US Capitol in 2021 based on the "the big lie" that the election was "stolen;" with a related attempt to overturn the results of the 2020 election, interrupt the peaceful transfer of power, and pull off a coup d'état. Elected and appointed officials were involved; many remain in office as US legislators with no repercussions since from the US DOJ, US House, or US Senate.
- ▶ Voter suppression and election interference efforts are on the rise in many states from Republican legislators to deny the majority of voters access to vote or to have their vote counted. Efforts related to "the big lie" and the 2020 election specifically attempt to undermine the votes of Americans in more diverse, urban areas in swing states – again seeking to undermine and de-legitimize the rights of all Americans to representation.
- ▶ Election oversight officials have received death threats; there are likely to be continued threats of political violence and election-day violence as election day nears.
- ▶ Threats of political violence are on the rise, from: election oversight officials; US House January 6 Committee members; Republican Party campaign opponents; fellow legislators or colleagues in either party; ex-Republicans; "Republicans In Name Only (RINOs);" school board officials; public health officials; hospital personnel; and first responders.
- ▶ Americans are not living in a shared reality with the same sets of facts. Unfounded conspiracy theories, disinformation, and lies are widely distributed to further amp up voter engagement, to raise political contributions, and to inspire threats and political violence.
- ▶ Republican Party platforms in some states are adopting or legalizing anti-democratic stances, approaches, and laws.

One of the challenges to maintaining a strong democracy is that the US' Constitutional structure is not set up as a pure democracy; where the power of the people converts to power as a simple majority in the levers of power and in decision-making. This set-up makes it difficult for the majority of voters to have true power in government no matter what – but it's worse when one political party is attempting to solidify long-term minority party power.

- ▶ The US is already susceptible to minority party governance, as both the US Senate and the Electoral College give rural states with lower populations disproportionate power – designed specifically to counter the choices of the majority of the population in urban centers. This provision protected wealthy, rural, pale, slave-owning men and states when the US was founded, and continues to facilitate disproportionate minority party power from rural states with lower populations in a country that claims it's all about democracy.
- ▶ Five presidents total have won the Electoral College yet lost the popular vote – including George Bush in 2000, and Donald Trump in 2016. Three current US Supreme Court justices were appointed by two of those presidents; adding to long-term minority party power.
- ▶ The filibuster in the US Senate creates the rules-based requirement for a supermajority (60 votes) to pass most legislation in the Senate. The filibuster is a Senate-specific rule (not in the Constitution); whereas a simple majority would require only 50 votes plus one tie-breaker vote such as the Vice President (this is the current situation). This longstanding Senate that protects minority party rule contributes to the difficulty of any legislation passed in Congress, and to the public perception that even a supposed majority can't get anything done.
- ▶ If Democrats could elect 62 or more US Senators (62 to overrule hesitation from status quo Democrats Senators Manchin and Sinema), they might be able to get rid of the filibuster and make the Senate more democratic – while also actually passing more legislation, too.

Risk 2: Not Understanding What's At Risk Is A Risk

Americans may not be taking seriously the urgency of the risks to the US democracy.

That is a huge challenge; because people who don't understand that there is a risk have a hard time taking action to address that risk.

Humans normally have a hard time understanding risk. Few political leaders and media are making clear the urgency of the risk and what's at stake in ways that highlight what could happen if the democracy were to fall – or even if permanent minority rule were solidified.

There is a default toward normalizing chaos and risk.

This normalizing of crisis happened through the Trump Administration; including through the pandemic as over 1 million American COVID-19 deaths have not been treated accurately as generally preventable, or as having been recklessly caused.

Despite that normalizing of crisis, the 2020 election shows where perhaps there was enough risk perception of what another Trump Administration would bring that enough Americans voted that the popular vote drove the Electoral College vote and Trump was voted out of office. Arguably, living through four years of the Trump Administration helped with risk perception.

It's become increasingly difficult to explain what's at stake if the democracy ceases to function as a democracy. Increasing that risk perception nationwide will be critical to keeping the democracy.

Risk 3: There's An Active Culture War & Increasing Instability

Books and dissertations could be written on the culture war. Long story short: we're in one. It's a culture war that pushes back on anything that evolves, challenges, or changes the status quo. It features fear, a perception that there's not enough for everyone, scapegoating, "othering," intolerance, bias, bigotry, misogyny, resentment, and false information, outright lies, propaganda, disinformation, and conspiracy theories. Much is designed to pull in and hold the attention of radio, TV, podcast, and social media audiences; to do so it has become increasingly intense and extreme.

The culture war as a phenomenon and term started in the 1980s – a decade or so after the civil rights era required desegregation and further expansion of voting rights. It began largely on talk radio, and started to pull disparate groups into a loose alliance by leveraging anger and pushback and anything that could evolve Americans past the status quo where mostly pale men have most of the money and political power. Abortion became a unifying force; tropes amplifying bias and intolerance made it in as well.

Ironically, the culture war leverages resentment from austerity: five decades of a Republican push against any significant investment in American communities, infrastructure, or jobs; or the spending of any money that doesn't support "trickle-down" economics. "FOX News" and now several other TV stations, podcasts, radio shows, and social media channels create, amplify, and enflame the culture war narrative; with the direction in 2022 tending to come from FOX News.

Donald Trump leveraged decades of resentment, bias, and fear ginned up by years of "culture war" fomentation to solidify his "base" of voters that now motivate the entire Republican Party. Many state and federal legislators have now shifted to the far right politically. They are dead-set against compromise, bipartisanship, or anything that undermines or threatens to transform the status quo.

Culture war activity has inspired hostility and aggressiveness in everything from pushes against public health by Donald Trump that led to countless COVID-19 fatalities and illness.... to outrage about the teaching of any uncomfortable history... to pushes for school boards to ban or burn books containing nearly any reference to either diversity or to LGBTQ subjects. The culture war is now intertwined with "the big lie" pushed by Republicans that the 2020 election was not legitimate (it was). It is also tied with an increase in real-world aggressiveness and hostility. For example, culture war demonizing of LGBTQ people in 2022 is connected with potential violence that was prevented at an LGBTQ June PRIDE Month event in Idaho; when an entire militia group showing up a U-Haul van in tactical gear to cause intimidation or violent disruption.

The culture war includes a hyper-focus on the individual and individual freedom as the highest, best good; anchored in very old US mythology that celebrates "rugged individualism" and a cowboy mentality. This focus on the individual has been part of the incredible push against COVID-19 public health measures designed for protecting the greater good. The culture war contributes to social fragmentation; and to fraying of the social fabric. Devaluing of the collective makes it difficult to find compromise, create big vision together, or to do effective problem-solving.

The US Intelligence Community has stated that domestic violent extremism (DVE) is the most serious major national security threat. Some of that extremism is now associated with and driven by the Republican Party, and with the culture war. Some of these players and associations contributed to the January 6, 2021 insurrection and associated coup attempt, as is becoming clearer through the January 6 hearings.

Threats of political violence and imagery containing guns are becoming the norm for many Republicans in office or running for office. Many of these vile, hateful, or dangerous actions are not condemned by most in the Republican Party. Republicans in office or running for office with charges or allegations of assault against women or domestic violence are not condemned, either – but rather are often embraced and can win primaries and elections. Violence is also normalized in other ways, including many in the Republican Party who say that mass shootings by assault weapons such as the AR-15 are a necessary price to pay for the freedom to own a gun.

This widespread tension, aggression, and contempt contribute to a normalizing of violence. Some analysts suggest that domestic US instability and political violence could increase and set in for a decade or more. The current direction of the country in 2022 is not going in a way that seeks to collectively disarm, diffuse, defuse, or de-escalate this situation in any real or metaphorical way. Changing that is behind some of the Shift the Country structure and intention.

Risk 4: Faith Is Diminishing In Democracy & In The Social Contract

American voters have historically low levels of voter participation and civic engagement compared to healthier and actively flourishing democracies. Those democracies often have simpler and clearer simple majority and popular vote provisions, and less provisions to protect minority party power.

That structural protection of minority party power contributes to incredible cynicism, resentment, and disempowerment in the US. Democrats were promised fabulous things in the 2020 election after helping to elect President Biden and to get a US Senate majority – only Congress remains deadlocked because of the outdated filibuster rule (explained above), and because of two Democratic Party Senators who are essentially working to uphold the status quo that protects minority party power.

The Trump Administration; the January 6, 2021 insurrection and corresponding coup attempt; and other attacks on federal and state institutions have weakened public perceptions about the strength of government and its systems.

The fact that there was a coup attempt on the US government and there has been no legal or political accountability for most of the higher up and elected officials who were involved is extremely exasperating and maddening to the American public. Part of the social contract is the rule of law. If the rule of law only applies to the middle class but not the political class – does the rule of law matter? Support of the illegal insurrection and coup attempt by most of the remaining Republican Party also undermines the social contract, norms, ethics, values, democracy itself, and the rule of law.

Voters who have lost faith in democracy, the common good, shared society, and the social contract *have a hard time getting motivated to vote* for what they often perceive is more of the same even from Democrats; perhaps again not recognizing the risks from not voting – and therefore letting Republicans who don't support democracy win elections.

A loss of faith also comes from the government not functioning well or serving the majority of Americans. The US is not working collectively to problem-solve, address, or mitigate the threats and vulnerabilities identified by the US Intelligence Community including domestic violent extremism, climate change, decreased innovation, increasing competition for food and water, and the increasing number of failed nation-states.

The US government has not invested heavily in Americans, American communities, or infrastructure since the civil rights era – that's 50 years of accumulated resentment as communities have atrophied and the US has fallen behind in the world. The justice system, economic systems, zoning, and all kinds of other systems tend to favor the status quo and not to foster equity and inclusion.

Our focus as a country has not been on building a flourishing, functioning, equitable, inclusive democracy where everyone has more of a chance to thrive. It could be; but we haven't made that change – and it shows. People are not impressed.

When the social contract falters, it is easier for an authoritarian movement with capable demagogues to move in and get traction. "Strongmen" types present themselves as easy fixers – if we just give them more power. The US Republican Party is becoming more the party of authoritarianism. The national Republican Party has not updated its party platform since 2016; instead deliberately deferring to Trump's desires. US Senate Republican lead Mitch McConnell brazenly declared that he would explain the Republican Party agenda *after* the 2022 election. Texas Republicans adopted a 2022 party platform that specifically contradicts democratic principles, advocates for secession, and effectively prohibits cooperation with Democrats while legitimizing hate and intolerance.

A loss of faith in democracy, the social contract, and the corresponding devaluing of the greater good make it difficult to hold on to democracy because people feel disenfranchised, disenchanted, disempowered, cynical, and hopeless.

Persistent shocks from the Trump Administration, the COVID-19 pandemic, an insurrection, mass shootings, Russia's war on Ukraine, supply chain interruptions, threats of political violence, gas prices, and now inflation keep people in shock and overwhelmed. The overwhelm combined with the cynicism and disempowerment help aggressive authoritarian-wannabes move in on accumulating power... and that's the moment we're in.

Risk 5: Frayed Social Fabric Depletes Our Collective Response Capacity

It's difficult to respond collectively or in major alliances to the crises of democracy when the country has become fragmented; and when the social fabric has become frayed, stretched, torn, and cut. Collective response in the midst of high-stakes risk and tragedy is always difficult, but it's even harder when the society is not cohesive and well-functioning. It's difficult to do collective problem-solving or consensus building when contempt, aggressiveness, threats, and political violence are also on the rise. Contempt in the US was already beyond levels measured in Israel between Israelis and Palestinians prior to the 2016 election – it has since increased.

This is a list of factors and impacts relating to the frayed social fabric in the US:

- ▶ An erosion of common vision, values, morals, and ethics.
- ▶ There is not currently a great emphasis on working together for the greater good, the common good, or the collective.
- ▶ There is not currently a strong sense of what's at the heart and soul of America.
- ▶ There is not currently a center of gravity for a common vision of what Americans want this country to be, and of the values we cherish in common.
- ▶ Increased classless, rude, crass, and aggressive behaviours condoned or not condemned.
- ▶ Corruption and ethics violations in government with no repercussions.
- ▶ Increased empowerment of intolerance, bias, bigotry, and racism.
- ▶ Increased fear of neighbors and community members on any political side for various reasons.
- ▶ Widespread availability of firearms.
- ▶ Increased visible preponderance of firearms via expanded open-carry laws and a culture of intimidation.
- ▶ Increased displays of aggressiveness, intolerance, disrespect, hatred, and violence. For example, flags and bumper stickers declaring "F*** Biden," or another version of that, which is "Let's Go Brandon." For another example: hanging black flags, which indicate a willingness to commit violence against fellow Americans.
- ▶ Increased displays, memes, messages, and sharing of known racist or bigoted symbols.
- ▶ A rise in gun deaths and in active shooters, and a corresponding willingness by Republicans and the corresponding culture war to write off this violence as a necessary cost to gun rights.
- ▶ A perception that there is not enough, or that someone else got what you deserved.
- ▶ "Othering" of people deemed not valuable, not important, or less than human in some way; which leads to attempts to justify policy decisions or violence against targeted groups. This has also been an issue for COVID-19 virus spread mitigation and the common good.
- ▶ A hyper-focus on individualism as the highest best good, on rugged individualism, on individual freedoms, and on a sort of cowboy mentality.
- ▶ A focus on masculinity associated with certain perceptions of what toughness, strength, and ruggedness are; often associated with aggression, threats, or implications of violence.
- ▶ Widespread resentment, often leveraged by politicians seeking to scapegoat or place blame on the causes for it. In reality, Republicans have driven a successful effort not to invest significantly in American cities, communities, innovation, or infrastructure since we were all asked to share better in the civil rights area. 50 years of not investing in Americans has a toll.

- ▶ The height of the US' post World War II manufacturing capacity and flourishing is often revered as the height of success, but was possible primarily because of the decimation of manufacturing in war-torn countries and because other countries did not yet have manufacturing capacity. As the rest of the world's manufacturing capacity matured by the 1970s, the US has never collectively strategically retooled its economy or educational structure to be more competitive worldwide.
- ▶ Real wage decreases, a stagnant minimum wage, a vastly increased wealth gap, and astronomical CEO pay have all eroded the social fabric. Households with two parents used to be able to make it on one income and now often need two or more to survive. The wealth gap increased during the pandemic. Many big businesses also appear to be thriving during this time of inflation; even as many Americans struggle to keep up.
- ▶ Civic engagement, community activities, and volunteerism have decreased as people need to work more to make ends meet and have less time for activity outside the home.
- ▶ Union participation has decreased and along with it its community.
- ▶ Community fixtures like nonprofits and churches have decreased membership and activity.
- ▶ We're not working collectively on the big, complicated, "wicked" problems as a society.
- ▶ Corruption and widespread lies make it more difficult to trust each other and government.
- ▶ The US Intelligence Community has assessed that domestic violent extremism is a major threat to national security. It also heavily erodes the social fabric.
- ▶ Instability and political violence are on the rise; contributing to an increase in fear and a decrease in public activity and civic engagement.
- ▶ Threats of political violence are allowed, are increasing, and are not condemned on many TV and radio channels, on podcast, nor on social media. Advertisers on those platforms are also not regularly pressured not to support such content, and it continues and increases.
- ▶ Increased fear of political violence and election violence can suppress the vote.
- ▶ Fear of political threats and violence is contributing to the erosion and good functioning of government at every level. A poorly functioning government erodes trust; in a vicious spiral.
- ▶ The trauma and related effects from repeated, persistent shocks over several years through the Trump Administration, the pandemic, an insurrection, mass shootings, Russia's war on Ukraine, supply chain interruptions, threats of political violence, and now inflation have countless effects on the social fabric, trust, and cohesion of a society.

Where Did This Shift Come From?

Seeds & roots. Shift the Country is anchored in history; sociology; rural sociology; mass communication; economic development; civics; environmental science; systems science; catastrophe and big disaster management; resilience; homeland security; domestic US threat bulletins; the US Intelligence Community's Annual Threat Assessments; and the principles of democracy.

Shift the Country is an intentional fusion of threat mitigation, connection, community-building, resilience-building, organizing, wicked problem navigation, media theory, and methodology for making change put together in innovative ways to leverage the combined power of the people; fast-evolving technologies; complex media and social media; systems science; and the attention economy.

Addressing the risk landscape. Shift the Country grew out of increasing concern since 2015 that the US Republican Party and its leadership are pursuing and implementing anti-democratic measures; throwing out norms and rules of politics and civil society; forming alliances with domestic violent extremist groups; spreading ignorance, lies, and conspiracy theories; denying science; weakening or removing public health provisions designed to protect Americans; attempting to erase uncomfortable parts of history; escalating hostility and culture war fights; pressuring or regulating businesses to gain political support; threatening political violence; spreading and legalizing intolerance and bigotry; eroding US institutions and government; eroding civil society; suppressing votes; and eroding and complicating voting and election processes.

Shift the Country was created in part to help counter and mitigate some of these behaviours, activities, trends, threats, and risks in imaginative and strategic ways that account for the societal-level challenges that they bring. Shift the Country was also created to mitigate and address aspects of the five risks described above in the section called “The Risks We Face: Why We Need This Shift.”

Opportunity to evolve. Shift the Country was established in light of the combination of unprecedented anti-democratic behaviours by minority Republican Party leadership to help majority party (Democratic Party) supporters anywhere help the Democratic Party evolve; and to help transform their political, organizing, and messaging processes where possible.

Democratic Party messaging is often described as “bringing soup spoons to a knife fight;” or: “bringing a briefing book to a gun fight.” Americans are looking for fierce leadership in the midst of huge, overwhelming problems. Shift the Country provides a framework of things anyone can use to help Democrats and the majority coalition lean forward; catalyze innovative action and organizing; build and leverage power; and better inspire and empower the voices of the people.

Republicans – initially guided by Donald Trump – have thrown out the political rules-and-norms books and leveraged fear, resentment, scapegoating, bias, intolerance, and the culture war to whip up their voters into what is now a frenzied, hyper-activated, super-loyal “base” of followers willing to go to great lengths to support their cause. This has included putting their own and others’ lives at risk through the culture war push against COVID-19 virus spread mitigation and vaccinations... yet they

persist. Countering the formidable nature of this now-widespread Republican activism takes something extraordinary; a coalition of Democrats and allies *can* create a phenomenon to address it.

A new kind of organizing. Shift the Country combines the *5 Things* in our approach with *distributed organizing, relational organizing, and digital/virtual organizing...* and evolves the fusion of it all into something new – a synchrony of effort.

This is all designed to catalyze widespread volunteering and action; to build connection, community, solidarity, and trust; to renew faith in democracy; to garner attention; to shift the narrative; and to get deeper permeation and reach – especially to people and communities that traditional organizing doesn't always touch.

The unique, innovative Shift the Country approach leverages, activates, and strengthens online and in-real-life social networks as a key underpinning of the work. We do it by increasing connection and strengthening our social networks (*Thing 1*); growing and doing more with community and coalitions (*Thing 2*); partnering with or pressuring businesses (*Thing 3*); championing vision, values, and moral courage (*Thing 4*); focusing on more and different messaging; and bringing together methods and ideas to get media coverage, to spread the word, and to drive the narrative (*Thing 5*).

The Shift the Country *5 Things* organizing approach is high-risk. *Anytime you catalyze the masses of humanity for anything, unpredictability is involved.* This initiative is seeking to catalyze masses of humans who are fired up about fighting for the greater good, motivated to hold on to democracy, and driven to build a future where government serves the actual majority.

The idea and the hope is to get people fired up to fight for what resonates in people's hearts – humanity, the greater good, what we need, what we want, and the collective vision of what we can be. That's organic, messy, fluid, fast-moving, and capable of taking on a life of its own. *Catalyzing a mass of humanity can be explosive and brilliant in amazing and productive ways that can help the majority of Americans.* Will it be? We won't know unless we try.

Gaps & opportunities. *We don't get different results doing the same things.* It's essential to energize as many majority voters as possible between now and 2024 – Democrats, independents, and ex-Republicans. Voter suppression efforts by Republicans in many locations underscore the need to out-organize to reach, inspire, motivate, and mobilize voters in new and different ways.

Shift the Country was developed in part by assessing gaps in widely used organizing approaches that don't always include strategies to reach, persuade, engage, or energize inactive voters, independent voters, rural voters, and/or voters in historically under-served and under-heard communities. The Shift the Country approach expands outward from traditional organizing approaches such as protests, postcards, phone/text banks, canvassing, voter registration, and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) work.

This *5 Things* approach provides strategy and tactics to out-organize and out-mobilize to get a majority coalition of voters voting; and to facilitate other change, too. This shift right here incorporates innovation and evolution while also accounting for the frayed social fabric, destabilizing

democracy, and decaying social contract. It reflects the fast-changing threat environment, and the fast-changing political landscape. It's an unprecedented approach for an unprecedented time.

The *5 Things* approach can help Democrats and their allies *fight fiercely for the heart and soul of this country*, go big, and go all out – especially to help candidates win elections in places considered “always Republican.” It’s worth the fight, and it’s time. This approach can help Democrats organize in innovative ways to energize voters in historically under-served communities, voters in rural communities, independent voters, or ex-Republican voters. This approach can help Democratic Party and pro-democracy coalition organizations and campaigns to recruit, engage with, or persuade new voters... or voters who haven’t typically voted for Democrats. Shift the Country seeks to help evolve organizing, messaging, and campaign approaches – while also energizing existing Democratic Party voters, encouraging and cajoling leaders to lean forward, countering cynicism, renewing faith in democracy, and re-weaving the social fabric.

Thought leaders. The core *5 Things* in the Shift the Country approach come from analysis and deep thinking about how we can navigate instability, revitalize the democracy, and change our trajectory. The *5 Things* approach in this work incorporates and operationalizes ideas and research from an array of sources. That said, at its heart the Shift the Country work is most deeply anchored in and reflective of the thinking and research of a few key individuals listed below. These thinkers are noted in case people reading this would like to understand more about the structural, societal, systemic, and historic aspects of this work:

- ▶ Katherine J. Cramer is a political science professor at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Her website notes that her “most recent book, *The Politics of Resentment* (2016), is widely considered one of the authoritative works on understanding the rural-urban divide in the United States and its role in contemporary politics.”
- ▶ Anand Giridharadas is author of The Ink and a writer, journalist, speaker, and MSNBC political analyst. Media interviews with him on his new book *The Persuaders: Winning Hearts and Minds in a Divided Age* indicate a very close alignment to the Shift the Country approach.
- ▶ George Lakoff is a linguist; co-author of Frame Lab; and Professor Emeritus at University of California, Berkeley with extensive work on political language, messaging, values, and framing.
- ▶ Heather McGhee is the author of the book *The Sum of Us*, an educator, a coalition-builder, and a cross-movement leader who “designs and promotes solutions to inequality in America.”
- ▶ Timothy Snyder is a Yale University historian and author of *On Tyranny*, which lists “20 lessons from the 20th century.” That book and numerous interviews in reference to the rise of authoritarianism in the US heavily inform the Shift the Country motivation and structure.

Key publications. The entire list of literature influencing this initiative is quite lengthy. Here are a few of the core publications that anchor the Shift the Country approach:

- ▶ Arendt, H. (1948). *The origins of totalitarianism*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.
- ▶ Gilding, P. (2011). *The great disruption: Why the climate crisis will bring on the end of shopping and the birth of a new world*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Press.

- ▶ Gladwell, M. (2002, January). *The tipping point: How little things can make a big difference*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company. (Original work published 2000, March).
- ▶ Granovetter, M.S. (1973, May). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/202051>
- ▶ Granovetter, M.S. (1978, May). Threshold models of collective behavior. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 83(6), 1420-1443. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2778111>
- ▶ Snyder, Timothy. (2015). *Black earth: The Holocaust as history and warning*. New York, NY: Tim Duggan Books.
- ▶ Snyder, Timothy. (2017). *On tyranny: Twenty lessons from the twentieth century*. New York, NY: Tim Duggan Books.
- ▶ Tisch, J. M. (2010). *Citizen you: Doing your part to change the world*. NY: Crown Publishers.
- ▶ Winston, A. S. (2014). *The big pivot: Radically practical strategies for a hotter, scarcer, and more open world*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Inception, back stories, & iterations. *In unprecedented times, we need to do unprecedented things.* The 7 ways this unique nonprofit can help us all deal with risks facing us such as authoritarianism, extremism, and a threadbare social fabric are listed in the “About” section below.

The risk landscape is changing, the culture is changing, technology is changing, and demographics are changing – yet there are as-yet-unaddressed possibilities and gap areas for civic organizing and for expanding influence and reach. The unique work that is now the Shift the Country approach and implementation plan was put together to identify gaps; and to build potential organizing and influence approaches that other groups don’t appear to be addressing (implementation plans will be posted to Substack). The work was assembled with a design intention to help empower a growing coalition of Democrats, independent voters, and ex-Republicans to increase engagement and influence especially in Republican-leaning areas.

We – Americans – shouldn’t just be writing off entire sections of the country as “unwinnable.” So *how do we go about actually winning?* That’s the work here.

The spectre of an authoritarian movement in the US became pronounced in 2017 after Donald Trump was inaugurated. The initial exploration of the work that has now become the Shift the Country approach began just after the 2018 election; with that authoritarian threat and the 2018 election results in mind. The 2018 election underlined and highlighted that Democrats and the Democratic Party’s agenda and values were not reaching or resonating with many suburban, exurban, and rural voters in often Republican-leaning areas. This persists in 2022; although the culture war has now significantly intensified... and the 2022 election results reflect that. The goal with the methodology was to identify practical, realistic, flexible, scalable ways to build an operational organizing approach that could help a coalition of the majority reach and persuade voters especially in Republican-trending areas that traditional organizing doesn’t tend to reach... by getting voters engaged and interested in their own communities, in our shared future, in what’s at stake in our elections, and in the value of voting for democracy and for the Democratic party’s agenda and values.

Some of those stakes and the increasingly urgent risk landscape for US democracy are covered in the sections called “5 Risks We Face: Why We Need This Shift;” and “Dysfunctional Democracy: What Happens If It Fails?” Big picture risk takes on climate change, systems, instability, disruption, transformation, and increasing disaster/catastrophe intensity are on a legacy back story page: <https://counterfear.com/shift-the-country/back-stories/>.

Since its December 2018 inception, this Shift the Country work has iterated repeatedly through attempts to implement it in the real world. The initial literature review, thought work, and gap analysis has since been distilled into the core methodology now summarized in the *5 Things*. An early iteration called the *Proposal to Shift the Country* (141-pages) was first pitched April 24, 2019 to a major political organization (the DNC). The original proposal was then pitched to several presidential campaigns operating in Iowa for the presidential caucus. An attempt to launch this work as a Super PAC followed; from August, 2019 to March, 2020. A second formal organizational attempt was initiated but not completed in 2020 as a 501(c)(4) nonprofit.

In March, 2022 – Shift the Country was fully incorporated by a board in its current organizational structure as a 501(c)(4) nonprofit. The Substack and new website at www.shiftthecountry.com launched in June/July 2022; with the post-election website and “*Big Shift Framework*” updates completed December 9, 2022. The “About” section includes seven ways this highly unique nonprofit can help the US as we establish, grow, and expand the work and its reach.

For Detractors & Skeptics

Not everyone is going to believe in this shift – in creating a phenomenon; and all that goes with it. That's okay. This may not be the right path for everyone. The thing is: we need all the things. There are enough things that need to get done up in this country that people can find a path that best resonates for them.

Some will be more comfortable with more traditional action such as protests, canvassing, phone banks, text banks, postcards, voter registration drives, and get-out-the-vote action. Go for it. We need all of the things we're already doing. We should keep all of that up; it's helped us to get this far. *We need to go even farther, though, because you can't expect different results doing the same things.*

We're collectively charting new territory. This shift right here is set up to help us all get greater permeation and reach to help us energize way more voters than ever before. To do that, Shift the Country is planning to foment a phenomenon. It's based in part on helping content, action, and messages go viral; among other things. There are people who don't think certain kinds of content are likely to go viral: stuff like positive stories, big vision, big fights for what's right, big moral courage, touching stories of humanity, and so on.

The word for this is "cynicism," and it's okay. It's common, too – and it's one of the biggest challenges out there when working to energize voters. The Shift the Country initiative is not afflicted with cynicism, but understands that it's pervasive in the US. In fact, one of the risk sub-sections (#4) further up gets into cynicism, in how "Faith In Democracy & The Social Contract Is Diminishing."

While it's true that negative, angry content goes viral and spreads super easily (aided by social media algorithms)... there are countless examples of fiercely positive and deeply human stories going viral and spreading fast, too. Shift the Country is betting that stories about humanity; moral courage; advocacy; amazing action; big challenges people are facing; big vision; problem-solving successes; injustices; and other inspiration and reflections of reality will resonate. The bet is that at least some of the people will want to share a lot of the stories around. The more we can collectively act, create, share, and amplify – the more we can get coverage, increase the buzz around what's happening, and drive the narrative. Here are examples of positive-leaning viral activity that resonates:

- ▶ The video "We Will Not Let Hate Win" by Michigan State Senator Mallory McMorrow is an example of moral courage that went viral in the spring of 2022.
- ▶ These kinds of moral courage videos are already on the rise. They spread like wildfire, because they resonate, and because people are craving this fierce advocacy for what's right – and for calling out what's not. There are also a zillion viral stories about humans being awesome, or standing up for other humans in some way.
- ▶ There are channels, pages, and social media accounts that focus solely on our humanity – like "Humans of New York." That phenomenon began as a way to photograph and then to tell short stories of random New Yorkers... and it morphed into something with a major social media presence on several platforms, its own website, and its own books.

What Does Funding Do & Who's Funding This Shift?

You're funding this – and people like you.

Any person or organization can contribute. Donations are not tax-deductible.

Shift the Country funding comes from donations from individuals and businesses. There's no big, mysterious, secret, dark-money funder behind this nonprofit. Your contributions help us help Americans counter the growing authoritarian threat to democracy; and to chart out and create a different trajectory.

Help fund this shift!

- ▶ **Website:** <https://www.shiftthecountry.com/donate>
- ▶ **ActBlue:** <https://secure.actblue.com/donate/shiftthecountrynow>
- ▶ **Patreon:** https://www.patreon.com/ShiftTheCountry?fan_landing=true
- ▶ **Substack:** Get a paid [Substack](#) subscription
- ▶ **Events:** Join & support events on [Eventbrite: Shift the Country](#)
- ▶ **Mail a check:** Payable to – Shift the Country, PO Box 1093, Ames, Iowa 50014

This nonprofit's impact will grow as far & wide as funding & volunteers push it to go.

Contributions support Shift the Country's very unique work navigating instability, revitalizing the democracy, & changing our country's trajectory. Shift the Country is not aware of any other initiative that's catalyzing this kind of strategic, integrated, synergistic, big-picture effort designed to drive engagement, to create activity, to create new pressure, to raise a ruckus, to get attention, to drive the narrative, and to otherwise create phenomena. *Volunteers are as critical as funding.* It all goes together – that's how we do unprecedented things as this country's situation evolves and intensifies.

This work is unique – help make it huge. Funding and [volunteers](#) are also both critical as Shift the Country is likely the only nonprofit doing its kind of work with a strategic, achievable, highly unique operational approach designed specifically to help counter a far-right authoritarian movement... while also including measures to help change the long-term direction of the US. There's not likely another organization in the US created so intentionally to help Americans organize and mobilize in such holistic, integrated, synergistic ways to address the broad 2023-2024 US risk landscape. This rare effort needs your support if you are at all able to help.

What does funding do?

- ▶ Funding helps Shift the Country create, produce, host, and promote online calls, workshops, videos, guides, graphics, Substack posts, and other tools to help get this shift going.
- ▶ Funding is critical for the operational technology to run the nonprofit including website hosting, Zoom hosting, audio/visual equipment, news access, and other technology.

- ▶ Funding ASAP in early 2023 is intended provide Shift the Country with at least one full-time-equivalent director to administer and operate the nonprofit; with contractors for bookkeeping, legal services, technology, audio-visual work, and other additional capabilities as the budget allows. Staff positions may be created once sustainable funding is established.
- ▶ Funding helps with advertising, "boosting," and marketing for the events and ideas that can help reach more people to engage people, catalyze action, grow a phenomenon, to build coalitions, and to grow this movement. Ads and boosting can help us spread stories, memes, and videos of activity on social media; and foster more phenomena with our methodology to "go viral" to help reach even more people. Funding can help get more permeation and reach into more places and communities online and in-real-life; to drive more of the narrative everywhere; and to have greater impacts on changing our collective trajectory.
- ▶ Funding helps create and facilitate an online community in coordination with volunteers to help with solidarity, teamwork, synergy, and sharing of content, ideas, and success.
- ▶ Funding will help start and produce a podcast.
- ▶ Funding can help with design and set-up for an online store for further fundraising, branding, and spreading of the word through merchandise and in coordination with volunteers.
- ▶ Funding can help Shift the Country host, co-host, and support real-world coalition and partnership events in communities in target areas especially in previously-known-as-red-states. Funding can help with logistics, food, beverages, transportation, permits, and event space fees for holding community conversations, vision-building, advocacy, protests, vigils, celebrations, festivals, get-togethers, and other local real-world events.

The quiet behind the scenes. This shift launched on a threadbare shoestring of a budget; with startup funding from personal savings, with sheer force of will, with perseverance, and with an unwavering faith in democracy and in the American people. Board members are everyday people with everyday jobs who believe in this shift. Intrepid contributors, board members, and other volunteers have helped the founder with the grounding, solidarity, lifelines, caffeine, and strength it's taken to keep this dream alive and kicking... even through much hardship and difficulty. This country is worth it. We're worth it. The people who come after us are worth it, too.

Thank you.



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