



# *imagine* DEMOCRACY

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS Harry Wiland & Dale Bell

A democratic form of government,  
a democratic way of life,  
presupposes an education for  
personal responsibility that too  
often is neglected.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT





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I like to solve problems. I know it is a skill set, but it's also an obligation. I grew up with parents who believe that you don't simply complain: you try to find solutions and fix what's in front of you.

STACEY ABRAMS





# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* PROJECT

## INTRODUCTION

**The Imagine Democracy Project is led by young people – let’s call them The Democracy Corps – from around the country.**

**Home bases are Clark Atlanta University, one of our country’s first Historic Black Colleges, and Harvard University. University-based student interns will accompany locally recruited film crews. Their search for ways to repair our broken systems of governance begins in 1787 at our Constitutional Convention.**



# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* PROJECT

## INTRODUCTION

**Democracy in America continues to be diminished by voter suppression that aims to deny people of color full participation. As a nation, we are at a crossroads. It is time to right the wrongs that have impeded our country's progress to a 'more perfect union.'**

**For history to be more than just dates and locations, it needs to portray the real stories of our nation through its people. All creeds, ages, cultures, and genders will speak.**



# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* PROJECT

## INTRODUCTION

**These production teams will fan out across the country to profile urban, suburban and rural communities. We need to listen and record what our fellow citizens have to say.**

**We will ask the same set of questions in all of our chosen locations. What are Americans feeling, thinking, and reacting to?  
Is poverty and racism embedded in our DNA?  
Do we have a functioning democracy?**



# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* PROJECT

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- **Is our Constitution relevant to you? How?**
- **Do you know what the 3/5ths Compromise is?**
- **What do you know about slavery? How did you learn it?**
- **Is the country headed in the right direction?**
- **How would you teach American history to elementary and high school students?**
- **What do we have to do to make our country a more perfect union?**



# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* PROJECT

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, CONTINUED...

- **What did Lincoln mean when he said: ‘A house divided will not stand.’?**
- **Are we still a beacon of democracy to the rest of the world?**
- **What is the Electoral College and why is it so important?**
- **What’s wrong with minority rule?**
- **Why is the filibuster so anti-democratic?**
- **Is democratic change possible? How?**



# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* PROJECT

## TOPICS FOR EXPLORATION

**1- What circumstances led to the creation of the electoral college? How were past elections affected by it?**

**The electoral college was created by the founders in the Constitution, as a means of electing the president without permitting direct election by the people. Instead, "electors" were appointed by each state to represent the people. Like many innovations within the Constitution, it was quasi-democratic, giving the people some representation but not the direct power to elect presidents. There are currently 538 electors -- they represent the same number as the representatives and Senators of each state (and three for the District of Columbia).**

**Historically, the Electoral College gave a disproportional influence to small states (which are also favored in the Senate). In other ways, as well, the Electoral College reflected injustices in our early history -- specifically, the 3/5 clause that inflated the vote of Southern states with African-American populations.**



# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* PROJECT

## TOPICS FOR EXPLORATION

**2- What are the present circumstances and implications of the electoral college in recent elections? How can they be addressed?**

**In modern politics, the Electoral College favors sparsely-populated states over densely populated ones, and by extension, favors the Republican party over Democrats. In 2000, 2004 and 2016, it helped to elect a president with a minority of the popular vote.**

**That is a problem for many who feel that the Electoral College suppresses democracy. Solutions include eliminating the Electoral College altogether (unlikely to pass). Or bringing in a more proportional system of voting (in which losing candidates within a state receive electoral votes, unlike the current system, which is mostly winner-take all).**



# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* PROJECT

## TOPICS FOR EXPLORATION

**3- What needs to be accomplished in order to remove the Electoral College from the electoral process?**

**There are a variety of proposals to reform or remove the Electoral College. In 1969-70, a plan for a direct vote devised by Senator Birch Bayh (D-IN) and Rep. Emmanuel Celler (D-NY) made it through Congress where it was endorsed by President Nixon but failed to win passage by the necessary 38 state legislatures.**

**In the wake of the 2016 election, especially, calls for Electoral College reform have intensified, with voting experts calling attention to the various forms of injustice created by electoral vote allocations within states and nationally. A substantial number of young voters wish to simply to do away with the Electoral College in favor of a more direct vote.**



# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* SERIES

## SERIES INTRODUCTION

**The *Imagine Democracy* Series, initially for PBS, will consist of 5 hour-long episodes described below. They are enhanced by a project website, a companion book edited by Ted Widmer, an educational K-12 tool kit, streaming components, campus screenings, and a community-based series of televised town hall meetings.**

**The series point of view will be revealed through the lives of ‘extraordinary ordinary’ Americans. Interviews with experts and Board of Advisors will provide contextual detail.**



# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* PROJECT

## EPISODES

### Episode 1: 3/5ths of a Democracy – America’s Original Sin

The Constitutional Framers dealt a near-fatal blow to our democracy by counting slaves as 3/5ths of a human being. This so-called “compromise” allowed slave-holding states to increase their representation 60% by adding their enslaved population.

At the same time, the Framers approved the Electoral College, and in many other ways gave a permanent advantage to white slaveowners. The Electoral College, connected to the 3/5th Compromise, ensured that pro-slavery candidates and smaller, mostly rural states, even today, would have an unfair advantage running for the presidency and the Congress. 3/5ths of a Democracy is the pilot program in the *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* SERIES



# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* PROJECT

## EPISODES

### Episode 2: Truth To Power

Presidents have sought to override checks and balances from the beginning of American history, with mixed results. Particularly during wartime, Congress has generally complied with executive overreach, and even popular Presidents -- Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt -- participated in this trend away from a democracy of equal branches.

In recent years, the tendency has only intensified, as Presidents have engaged in constant partisan combat, between and within the branches of government. In other ways, as well the growth in secrecy and executive privilege -- the pattern of strong presidents has eroded the democratic checks and balances designed by the founders. In this episode we will consider the sources of this imbalance and where we can find ways to redress these dangerous abuses of power.



# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* PROJECT

## EPISODES

### Episode 3: The Media and Democracy

Presidents have struggled with an unruly and tabloid press since the time of George Washington, but the last 20 years have presented deeper difficulties that have torn at the fabric of democracy. Cable News, 24-7 broadcasting, and the rise of Fox News all introduced a new and heated rhetoric into political journalism, while the cancellation of the "Fairness Doctrine" in 1987 eliminated any pressure on broadcasters to present both sides of a story. Concurrently, the rise of the Internet eliminated classified advertising and their loss of paid traditional advertising doomed hundreds of local newspapers.

Led by Facebook and supported by big money, these forms of social media legitimized a kind of no-holds-barred form of one-sided communication that empowered candidates who played fast and loose with the truth. With vast media ownership concentrated in a few hands, and the Fairness Doctrine a relic of the past, profit-minded broadcasters and media conglomerates have grown comfortable doing a land-office business with unbridled political candidates tied to their funding sources and not to their constituency. We will investigate the so-called 4th Estate.



# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* PROJECT

## EPISODES

### Episode 4: Separate but Unequal

The concept of “the level playing field” of our “We The People” democracy invites everyone to participate. But the obstructions, first penned into our Constitution, then scattered deliberately and legally throughout our history by dominant “owners”, exclude vast majorities. Yes, people over 18 can vote, volunteer, watch or listen to televised debates, and read about their candidates. Yet wealth, connections, policy, and the running of well-funded and relentless campaigns 24/7 reduce participation from millions of Americans, especially the poor, the disenfranchised... rural or urban, and people of color.

The wealthy thrive, driving inequalities. To diagnose the legal and rampant abuses in our political landscape, our team goes to examine the unlevel playing field in Duluth, MN, to witness how, with community buy-in, equity can be created, enforced, and maximized nationally.



# ABOUT THE *IMAGINE DEMOCRACY* PROJECT

## EPISODES

### Episode 5: The Growing Threat of Minority Rule

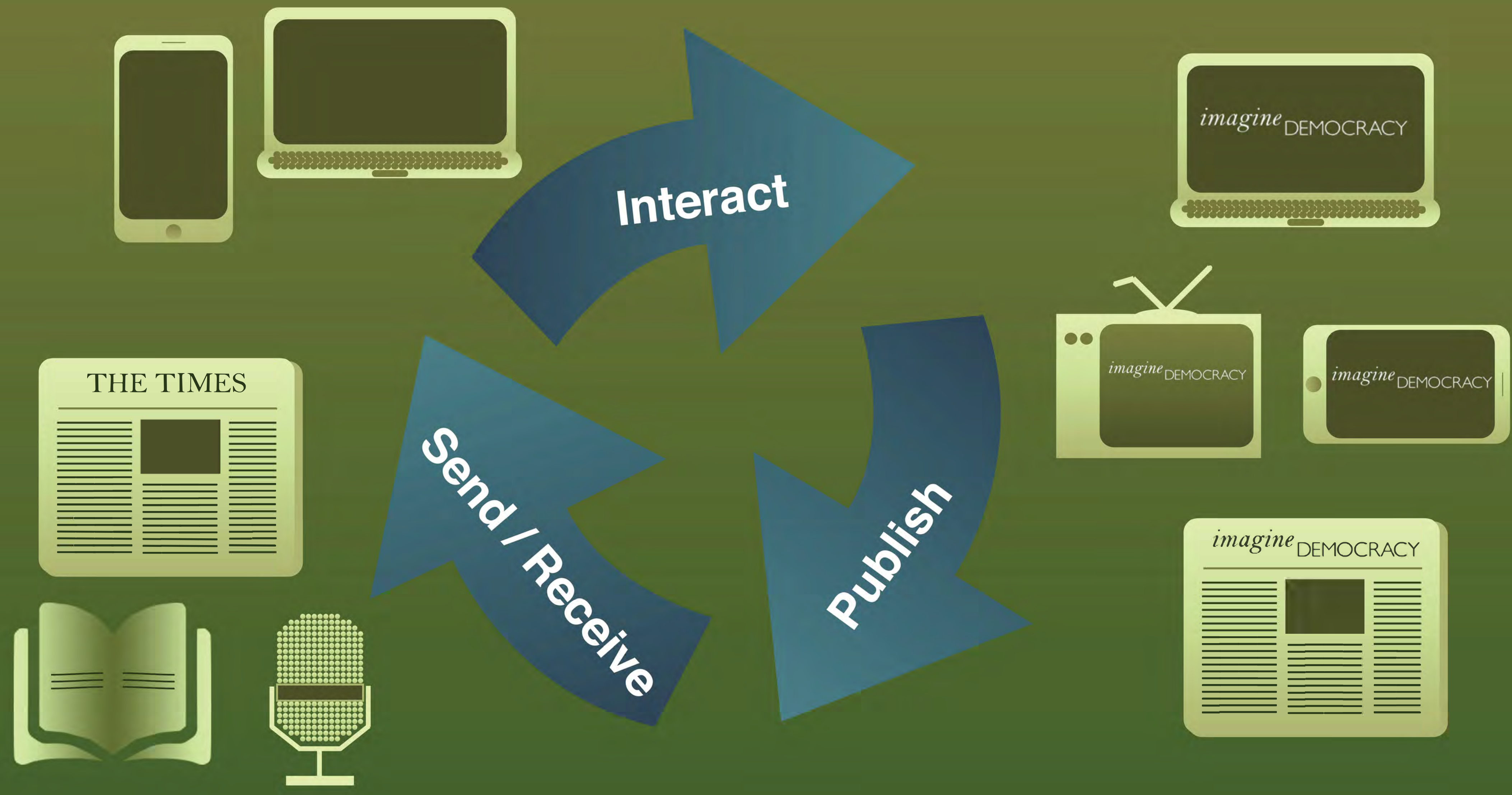
From our beginnings as a democracy, some people --- determined to restrict the flow of political power --- have tried to prevent other people from voting. Local officials and state legislatures have tried --- and continue to employ --- gerrymandering, literacy tests, ID checks, and other impediments of voter suppression, to restrict the elderly, the poor, and people of color, particularly Blacks. White majority local leaders in many state legislatures, ignoring the power of the tectonic demographic population shifts, continue to create new obstacles to universal civic engagement.

Even civic engagement during these election cycles is a matter of pressing voters to vote, not educating as to WHY voting is key or even the particulars of each of the offices. This voter ignorance is part of why voters have the notion “government does not work”. In reality, government works ... just for those who make “government” work for them. Citizens must understand who has responsibility of what in order to correctly petition the government.

We will begin our discovery in Atlanta, a new demographic center of power.



# 21st CENTURY MEDIA TOOLS





# MEDIA MODEL







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The average U.S. age is 38 years old, yet the average age of Congress is 62 and those in the most powerful positions are 70-80+ years old. Meaning, Millennials are the largest generation, yet are not active in the democratic process regarding policy.

TAMMY GREER







# *imagine* DEMOCRACY

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Women are the majority  
(in existence and eligible voters),  
yet there are policies that are  
biased *against* women and,  
of course, women are participants  
in less than 1/3 of all levels  
of government.

TAMMY GREER





The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens.

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE

As the mind becomes more developed, more enlightened... institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times.

THOMAS JEFFERSON



# THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

special interests vs. the common good

voter suppression

gerrymandered districts

pundits vs. real news

ideology vs. negotiation

Democracy is wounded,  
**dysfunctional.**



**After the pandemic crisis ends, the democracy crisis must be tackled.**

Nobody wins when our constitutional system falters: **not the president**, who gains unilateral power but loses a governing partner; **not Congress**, which gets to blame the president but risks irrelevance; and certainly **not the American people**, who have to bear the resulting dysfunction.

**JACOB S. HACKER & OONA A. HATHAWAY**  
*Professors of political science and law at Yale*  
(From New York Times Op-Ed)



# How can we meet the challenge?

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*heal dialogue*

*reconnect educate*



**So can we...**

---

*yes*



**So can we...**

*imagine* DEMOCRACY



# THEORY OF CHANGE

## STRATEGIES

### Create interactive content:

- Make the political process more transparent and accountable
- Open the economy for all
- Greater global interdependence





# THEORY OF CHANGE

OUTPUT: Phase One

**THE 3/5ths DOCUMENTARY**  
Stand-Alone Documentary  
Pilot For Series  
PBS & Streaming

**INTERACTIVE PLATFORM**  
Promotional  
Mobile Application  
User-Generated Content





# THEORY OF CHANGE

OUTPUT: Full Scope



THE 3/5ths  
DOCUMENTARY



ONLINE  
PLATFORM



BOOK  
CURRICULA

**A transformative approach**



# THEORY OF CHANGE

## OUTCOMES

**Encourage diversity  
of opinion**

**Greater civil discourse**

**Increased voter participation**

**More informed electorate**

**Rising engagement index**





# THEORY OF CHANGE

## IMPACT

**How do we measure success?**

Increased Voter Turnout

Institutional Reform

Increased Civic Engagement



# THE CITIZENS WE SERVE

## OUR AUDIENCE

*built-in* **concerned citizens of all ages**

*target* **younger generation**



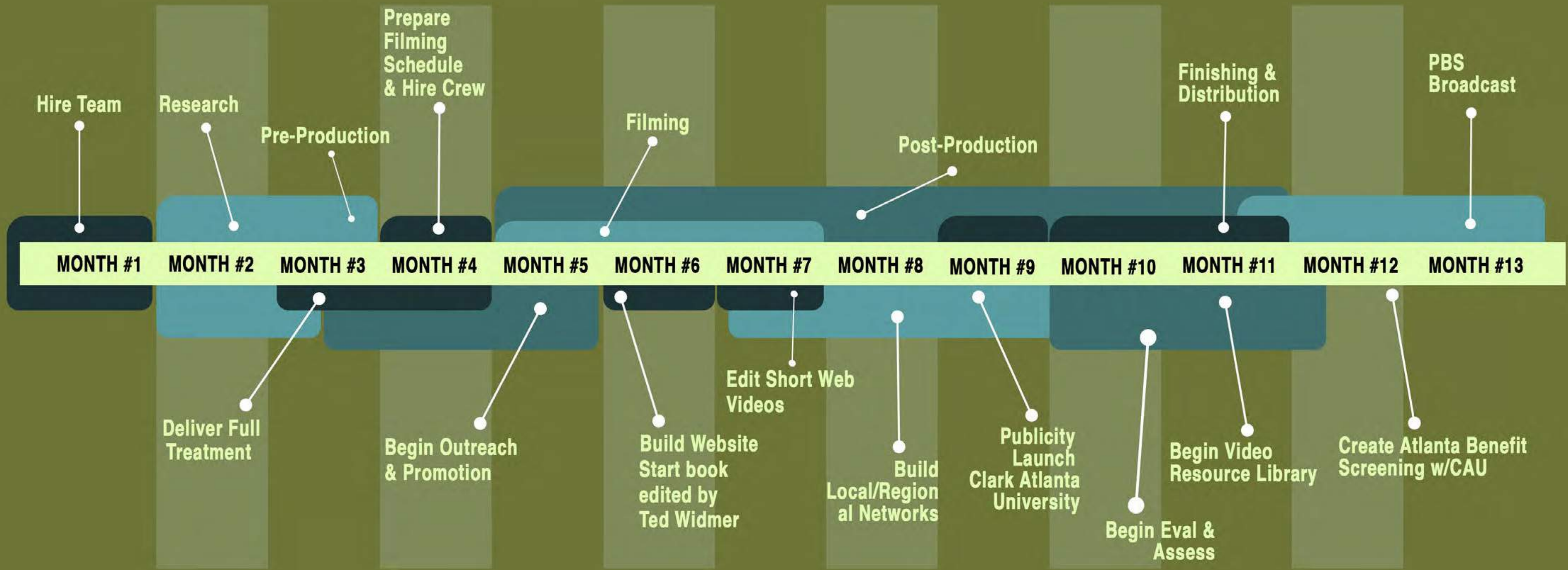




# PRODUCTION PLAN

## TIMELINE

### THE 3 / 5'ths DOCUMENTARY





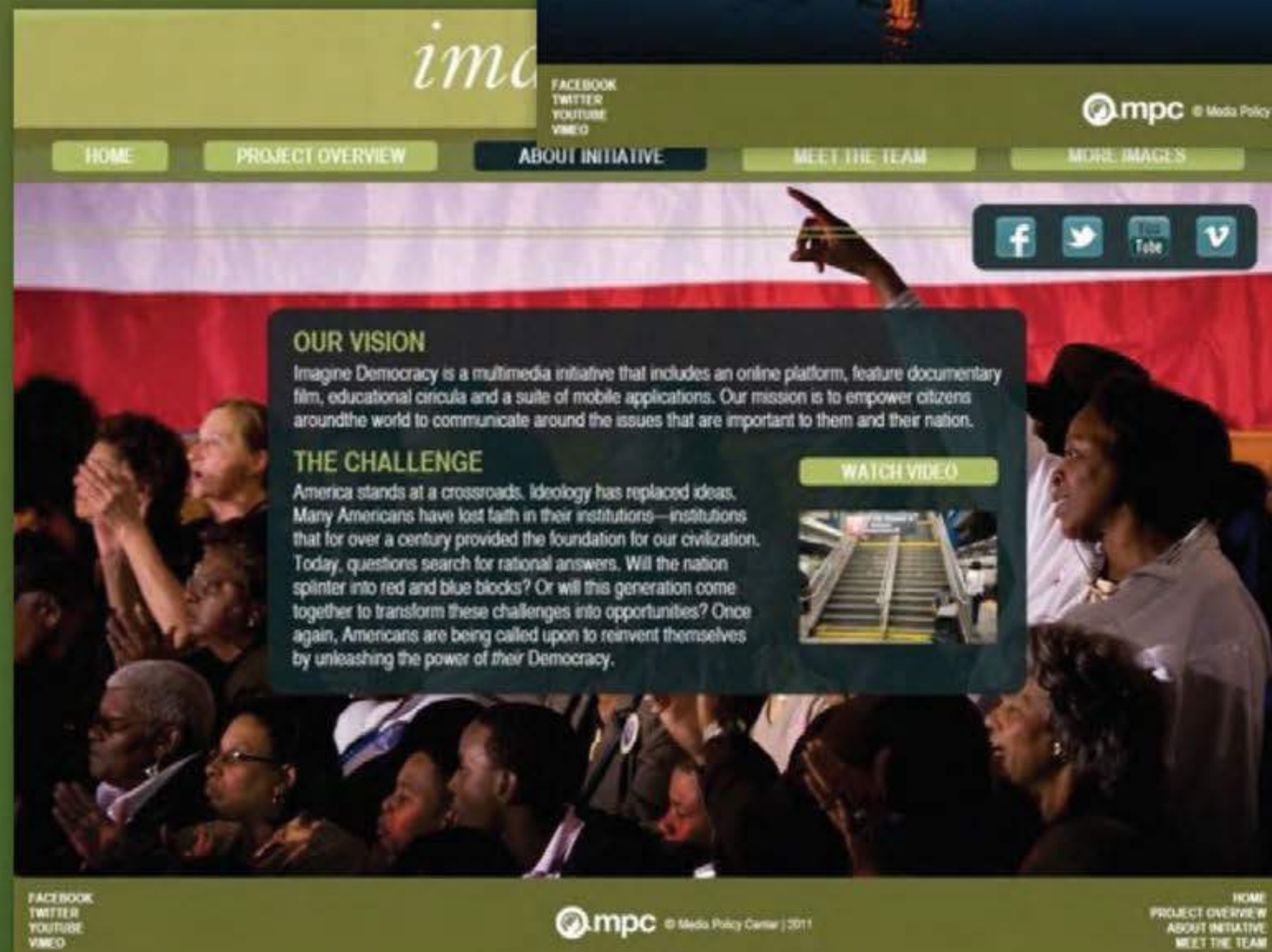
# PROGRESS

## TEASER WEBSITE



## OTHER

- Books + Educational Content
- Video Resource Library
- University Conferences





# PRODUCTION PLAN

## BUDGET

### FILM PRODUCTION

<b>3/5THS FILM</b>	<b>\$750,000</b>
<b>OUTREACH</b>	<b>\$185,000</b>
<b>VIDEO LIBRARY</b>	<b>\$195,000</b>
<b>MARKETING</b>	<b>\$125,000</b>
<b>PUBLISHING</b>	<b>\$55,000</b>
<b>TOWN HALLS</b>	<b>\$185,000</b>
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,495,000</b>
<b>IMAGINE DEMOCRACY Build Out</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,945,000</b>
<b>CONTINGENCY</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>



# BOARD OF ADVISORS



**Dr. Daina Ramey Berry is Professor of History at The University of Texas at Austin and the History Department Chair (the first person of color to take this role).**



**Tammy R. Greer, Ph.D. currently serves as Assistant Professor of Political Science in the Department of Political Science at Clark Atlanta University with specific focus areas in American Government (including state and local government), Urban Politics, Comparative Politics, and International Politics.**



**Professor Martha S. Jones is the Society of Black Alumni Presidential Professor, Professor of History at The Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Jones is a legal and cultural historian whose work examines how Black Americans have shaped the story of American democracy.**



**Professor Alexander Keyssar, Princeton University has specialized in the exploration of historical problems that have contemporary policy implications. His book, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (2000), was named the best book in U.S. history by the American Historical Association.**



# BOARD OF ADVISORS



**Kevin M. Kruse, Professor of History, Princeton University studies the political, social, and urban/suburban history of 20th-century America. Focused on conflicts over race, rights, and religion, he has particular interests in segregation and the civil rights movement, the rise of religious nationalism and the making of modern conservatism.**



**Franita Tolson, USC Gould School of Law, Law Professor. Professor Franita Tolson is Vice Dean for Faculty and Academic Affairs.**



**Professor Ted Widmer is a historian, writer, librarian, and musician who served as a speechwriter in the Clinton White House. He is developing a new Humanities Lab at Macaulay Graduate School at CUNY. His latest book, *Lincoln on the Verge: Thirteen Days to Washington*, is a NYT best-seller. Dr. Widmer has agreed to contribute to and edit the companion book to the series.**



**Lynn Wallace, Business Affairs and Legal Counsel, IMAGINE DEMOCRACY, for MPC. Formerly, Nat Geo, BET, WonderWorks, and WQED/Pittsburgh.**



# ABOUT MEDIA POLICY CENTER

The Media Policy Center, celebrating its 20th anniversary. MPC's award-winning television and new media productions empower audiences to build and improve their communities.

MPC provides the online support and outreach tools to foster change. From health care and environmental sustainability to social justice and education, MPC leverages media for affirmative social justice issues at local and national levels.

MPC is a 501(C)(3) not-for-profit organization founded in 2003 by Producers/Directors Harry Wiland and Dale Bell, whose individual projects have won an Academy Award (*Woodstock*), five Emmys, a Peabody, two Christophers, four BAFTAs, and two Cine Golden Eagles, among numerous other accolades. Harry Wiland and Dale Bell are celebrating their 22nd anniversary as a creative media partnership.



# ABOUT MEDIA POLICY CENTER

MPC strives to inform, challenge, and ultimately engage a responsive citizenry and to encourage full and meaningful engagement across the political, social, and economic spectrum. It:

- Functions as a non-profit production center;
- Explores issues of healthcare, education, social justice, community, civic engagement, public policy and the environment;
- Serves as home to Public Television specials and educational outreach projects;
- Creates and produces innovative, multi-platform media and educational curriculum and localized, televised Town Hall Meetings;
- Sponsors and hosts national and international seminars, conferences and forums for social change;
- Informs, challenges, and ultimately **ENGAGES** a responsive citizenry.



# DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

## **Theatrical, Broadcast, On-Demand Streaming, and On-Campus Teach-ins**

The feature length documentary will be designed to screen theatrically, on college and high school campuses, in K-12 classrooms, community centers, and 24/7 on-demand viewings. Its goal is to promote dialogue and via campus and community teach-ins and academic conferences.

- 1) PBS Broadcast**
- 2) Online, on-demand streaming**
- 3) On-campus and community screenings**
- 4) Project website and newsletter**
- 5) Video Resource Library**
- 6) Grassroots and Youth Journalist Uploads**
- 7) Professional Development Programs**
- 8) Curriculum and classroom study guides**
- 9) Localized and Televised Town Hall Meetings**

**In 2006, Harry Wiland and Dale Bell were elected to the Ashoka Fellowship of 3,500 global social entrepreneurs, as the only business partnership and the only media professionals.**



**We must...**

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*come together as  
one nation towards  
a more perfect union*