

# What are You Willing to Sacrifice for the Truth?

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So imagine this, your cell phone goes off early in the morning and it wakes you up from a deep sleep. You answer it and it's a friend and they're calling to tell you that they have been kidnapped. They're being held hostage by militant extremists seeking ransom. A single wrong step could condemn your friend and their fellow captives.

What would you do, and what could any of us do? Today we are welcoming Maria Ressa, obviously a friend of Annenberg which I hope continues in the coming years. She is a renowned journalist, author, and CEO of Rappler. Most notably she is the winner of the 20—maybe not most notably, among many accolades she is the winner of the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize. That question I just posed to you, that's one Maria can answer because she received that call. In her book "From Bin Laden to Facebook", she details that horrifying moment. She tells the story of 10 harrowing days that followed, the grassroots strategy that she and key contacts deployed to negotiate the safe release of hostages, and she somehow answered that question I posed to you when any wrong move could have ended in their death. So though I say she is renowned, a lot of other words also fit the bill. She's tough, incisive, tenacious, brilliant, and obviously she has a gift of courage that all of us can admire. She's also wanted, she is wanted for her work exposing corruption in the government of Rodrigo Duterte, the former president of the Philippines. There are several warrants for her arrest. Most extraordinary to me, in reading about her extraordinary courage and the incredible things that she's done, is that any of her brushes with peril would have been enough to stop most of us. Getting out in one piece would have been enough. But she has taken her experiences as well as her invaluable reporting and combined it with new methods of research and investigation in the face of the extraordinary challenges she's faced. In other words, she has innovated and changed the responses to the challenges she's faced. Merging insights from psychology, group dynamics, and sociology, she sheds new light on how extremists are made and how social networks indoctrinate and radicalize people; how the groups we're part of both online and in real time mold who we are and who we are becoming; and what all of that means for the future of pluralism and democracy, freedom of the press, and the abuse of political power.

She's gone from being CNN's Bureau Chief in Manila, to becoming their lead investigative reporter on terrorism, to heading the largest news organization in the Philippines, to founding Rappler to the country's top digital only news site. She's co-chair of the International Fund for Public Interest Media, part of the founding group of the real Facebook oversight board, and one of the experts named by UN Secretary General to the Internet Governance Forum Leadership Panel. She shouldn't have any spare time but in her spare time she is also the author of a new book out this month called "How to Stand Up to a Dictator", named as one of the hundred most influential women in the century by Time Magazine. Please join me in giving a warm Penn and Annenberg welcome to Maria Ressa. Oh my gosh. Well first of all, thank you for spending your Sunday with me, I mean, it is so wonderful to be here and that is like, thank you for reminding me why I don't have time. It's, I had uh 10 arrest warrants issued in less than two years and that was like my 2019. It was shortly after or right before I kept coming back to Annenberg. And I love this podium guys because it rises and it falls! You know, it's the only one that that's been there. Okay and Kathleen so, you know, the last time we talked about me coming back here was when, right before the lockdown began, we were in Camden together talking about, oh my god where's the world going and how is information, like, how has it been weaponized against us? How are we being manipulated? And some, and now we're here, so I'm really thrilled to be here and I don't want to waste more of the time so let me jump in, right, and please jump in because this is where anger goes for me I'm very angry about where I am but you know what you do the best thing to do is to smile and move forward and shape the world the way it should be.

There's no other way to do it because we are in this together. So here we go. For me it is about the battle for facts because the three sentences I've said repeatedly over and over and over since 2016. If you can't have facts you don't have truth, without truth you don't have trust, facts, truth, trust, I said this in this room as well. Without these three we have no shared reality, we cannot solve any problem together, and we cannot have democracy, right? So, start with that again and let me go through where we are. On June 15th, 2020, it was the very first case post-Covid lockdown that this court took in. I was convicted and then this was the headline of the New York Times and it's pretty good that it was the headline because up until that point starting in 2016 I kept talking about how this is, how our social media platforms, the ones that connect us, how the fact that news organizations are no longer the gatekeepers and the new gatekeepers, the social media, platforms abdicated responsibility. So this one shows you two things I think that you need to look at. The first is that this is not a free speech issue, right, there's a 70 million dollar lobby that tries to convince you, don't use the word misinformation, please use disinformation, disinformation is like the bullet that is used in information warfare. Right, so, and I'll talk about that more. And then here's the other part, right, how many of you guys know the term DDOS? DDOS is distributed denial of service. It is how like you send repeated calls on a website to bring it down, right, it brings it down, there's so many calls that the website crashes, right. What social media is doing, what information operations does, is it DDOSes our brains, right. So think about it like that, right, that is our information ecosystem.

And then the other thing that happens is if you're the target of attack the goal is not to make you believe anything, it is to pound you to silence and I will show you that as well. Okay, so the same thing happens in every country around the world, whether it's the United States or the Philippines, it's, you say a lie a million times, it becomes a fact. Bottom up, right, that's where social media comes in. And then in, in my case, the lie was journalist equals criminal. That was 2016. In 2017 it came top down from President Duterte himself. He said it in his State of the Nation address and then a week later we got our first subpoena, and then we had 14 investigations, cases filed, 10 arrest warrants in less than two years and so on and so on, right, it follows the cascading failures. This is the core problem. Data, and and please don't underestimate it, the change of scale of data, big data is the core of the manipulation of our emotions and the manipulation of our minds. And easy things it's that, you know, the change of scale changes everything. And this is stuff that you know we can do like statistical surveys, do they work, well we now have the capability of not just relying on statistical surveys. We could do n equals all right to actually do that, but you will get the patterns and trends right. So these are, this is core, you also see patterns much more clearly at the macro level you may not be able to prove causality as well but the whys become clearer, right, their correlations will be there. Okay keep that in mind, right, that's a big one. This is, I've used this slide in this same room, right, this is something I said in 2017. If you can make people believe lies are the facts then you can control them. On tyranny, this Yale historian who wrote on tyranny, he said this better, Tim Snyder said this better, he said if you want to rip the heart out of a democracy you go after facts. That's what modern authoritarians do.

Step one, you lie, all the time. Step two, you say it's your opponents and the journalists who lie, there's a reason why the journalists were attacked first. Step three everyone looks around and says, what is truth? There is no truth! That's really what they want you to do. And then the fourth, the resistance is over, it's impossible and the game is over. That's 2017. Let me show you the data of the attacks against journalists. So this is like something that was in my notes and, you know, just look at number four. "Bayaran" means corrupt and you can just look at the way it is, it has it turned into a line. It kind of solidified a little because there is always a grain of truth in great disinformation. There is corruption. Corruption is endemic in the Philippines. There are some journalists who are corrupt, right, but when you can see April 2016, that is leading up to our May 2016 elections that elected Duterte and then after he was elected the info ops turned bayaran or the charges of corruption against journalists into a straight line. Info ops continued after, right, and the government, President Duterte's government promised us that. He liked it so much that he said social media is so good and Facebook sent people to help Duterte with his, let's not go, we'll go back to Facebook. So here these two slides really I hope is what you'll pull out of tonight right they're new gatekeepers that was around 2014. Right around the same time that Russian disinformation kicked in in a little place called Crimea and where the meta-narrative of Nazism of you know that really Crimea was part of Russia, is dying to be part of Russia, and the kind of info ops that we saw. Also around the same time that the Russian military doctrine really highlighted disinformation as a military tool, right, I can

pull that out and then I'll remind you of what Yuri Andropov a former KGB chairman said a long time ago he said disinformation is like cocaine.

You take it once or twice you're okay, but if you take it all the time you become a changed person. I paraphrase he said you become a changed man, gender equality, you become a changed person, right. So that was the first step in 2014 not surprisingly was the same time that Marcos disinformation networks began trying to turn Marcos the name from a pariah to a hero he was a hero so began 2014. Right, the same meta-narrative in Crimea was resuscitated in 2022 when Putin decided to invade Ukraine itself, right. We can talk more about that. So the first was new gatekeepers, you know, we separated content from distribution, the distribution was ruled by our emotions, by keeping you scrolling, by the attention economy where, and this is a 2018 MIT study, lies spread faster than facts at least six times faster and that especially my generation, we were, my generation we were prone to spread it at least six times more, that number six kept coming up. And a tweet that's a lie, especially if laced with anger and hate, you are more prone to retweet it seventy percent of the time. I'll tweet that study, yes, I'm on Twitter. Yes. So I'll tweet that study. Lies spread faster than facts. Now you understand why I say like if lies spread faster and lies become facts, we don't have truth, so we don't have facts, we don't have trust. I'll throw one more thing that George Schultz said, in a hundred years, he died at 100 years old right, he was he said that the greatest lesson he learned in the diplomacy he did was that when you have trust in the room anything is possible. When you don't have trust nothing is possible. We don't have trust. Okay, I'm giving you such good news, next so what happens when information operations goes all the time you know how do we look at this think about it like a behavior modification system and I'll show you some of the data that shows this because in the end information operations changes how you feel because it weaponizes your fear, anger, hate, it changes the way you look at the world.

Certainly, how do you have integrity of elections if you don't have integrity of facts. Right, just tossing that in because that's the next slide. So how do we deal with this, right? We didn't even come up with a way to talk about it until 2019 when Shoshana Zuboff wrote the book on Surveillance Capitalism. It's the business model, because the attention economy wants to keep you scrolling, right, because you spread the lie faster and further. You know, you basically are now dealing with all of these related problems in our information ecosystem. What does that mean, that anti-trust, right. We look at this separately all these four things need to come together. Anti-trust, data privacy, user safety, and the least most important part is content moderation because it isn't a free speech issue. And I'm going to go over really, like, what happens right. So that we know why data, why I started with data. For everything that you have on your cell phone - is there anyone here who doesn't carry a cell phone? I love you! You know, you...we are yeah okay, we're gonna, we're gonna go back to what the solution is because I'm not gonna leave you with all the problems, right. So every app you have on your cell phone, let's just say you go and you post this on Facebook. When you take all, say you have a thousand posts on Facebook, what do they do? They come in with machine learning and build a model of you, you as the user. And that model knows you better than you know

yourself because it's made up of your private thoughts, it's made up of your actions, it's made up of your fears, and then that model is scooped up by AI and that is pulled up here, right. Change the word "model" to "clone", all right, say machine learning clones each of us in the virtual world and then because we're cloned by machine learning of the company our clones are pulled up by the companies owned by the companies.

Did you give them approval to own you? Hmm, no, you know, so they, data privacy. But here's the other part. This is used for micro-targeting. That is where the insidious manipulation comes in, right, your most vulnerable message, moment to a message, you know, let's say you wanted, you know, you're the kind of person who goes hiking right, and so there's, in advertising you're then micro targeted, right. That's not the way the old advertising used to work. We would all see the same ads and then we would move forward. Now this one you're micro targeted based on you. That's where the insidious manipulation begins. What happens when geopolitical politics comes into play? When inciting your fear, anger, and hate can lead to the January 6 Capitol Hill, right? Think again bottom up and then top down. I'll show you that later on. All right so that's one way. We have the phrase surveillance capitalism, it is the model. It isn't political, it's about changing the facts, it is about using your biology to manipulate you. It's a very simple thing. This has happened to all of us from before, propaganda has been around. The difference is scale, right, scale. All right, so this is my worst news, but maybe not because you know, the hopefully it's more. Social media has now become the tool for information warfare and we're seeing this globally. We saw this in the Philippines, and that thing I talked about with behavior modification, the impact is on three layers, right. I would love to see if Annenberg does like behavior economics because this is what news organizations are having to do now because the tech platforms have changed. What's the impact on you, right? The impact is first personal. It's psychological. It's an impact on the way you feel and the way you view the world, right.

E.O Wilson, who's a behavioral, he studies emergent behavior in ants, he did in Harvard. He said that the greatest crisis we face is our paleolithic emotions, our medieval institutions, and our god-like technology. Okay, so think, so there's you, the personal, the psychological, we know some folks, we know, I know this from studying terrorism that those who are radicalized online carry out attacks in the real world. Online violence is real world violence, right. So the next layer is groups, right, sociological. Groups have an impact on individuals. Groups actually behave differently than the individual parts, right, like this is something if you've looked at the study of like Solomon Ash and the conformity studies, they came out with, you know, kind of like if there are six of us in a room and the five ahead of you, this was an experiment, were told, the experiment was just to choose the shortest line so it's very easy. And it was kind of clear which was the shortest line, but then the five ahead of you were told to choose the longest line and it was like up to 75 percent choose the wrong line. So part of this is the force of the group. I started studying this because I was looking at terrorism, at how the ideology of terrorism spreads. I worked in Indonesia which has the world's largest Muslim population, right. Okay, so that's the sociological part, groups. Finally, the one that we haven't really talked about, emergent human behavior. If this is what connects us and it prioritizes, it wants you to be angry,

hateful, and it wants you to have an us against them, right. When that is what is prioritized what does emergent human behavior look like globally? Are we surprised that more people around the world live under autocrats than under democracies, that instances of violence have increased, that journalists have come under increased attack, okay let me not go because I could go forever in all of the things that are wrong.

Right, so let me bring it back to your elections. Oh my Lord. If we don't have integrity of facts how do we have integrity of elections? So let's go to this, right, so what we started looking at was the number of elections globally 2020 to 2023 2024. And we looked at just numbers and we began to see that we were, if you play basketball, in the last two minutes of this game of democracy. The last two minutes and we are losing, right and let me explain that. In 2022, the Philippines had our presidential elections in May this year. And information operations, we were emblematic of how our history was changed in front of our eyes, partly with information operations, partly with the changing of history books, right. We overwhelmingly elected Ferdinand Marcos Jr., 36 years after his father was kicked out in a people power revolt accused of stealing 10 billion dollars in 1986 dollars, right. That people power Revolt in '86 sparked all these kind of people power movements all around the world. I went on and covered all of this from Korea to Myanmar to Indonesia, the end of almost 32 years of Suharto, right and then Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel talked about Filipinos and people power and how that sparked them. Well here we go, if we follow the trend today of how the technology is manipulating us, we will elect more illiberal leaders democratically by 2024, and I'll point out that key elections, right, this year the Philippines, oh did I mention that Milan Kundera quote? The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting. In the Philippines our history changed and we did it willingly. I went to some neighborhoods, poor neighborhoods, you know, and asked so why are you voting for Marcos and what they said is because we're gonna get gold. Where'd you hear that? How'd you know that? YouTube! Let's not. Anyway, so that happened, then we have Kenyan elections which had an impact, was strangely connected to the United States because of religion, right.

And Roe v Wade happened, right, before. And then we have, well the French election, Swedish, the Social Democrats fell last. But Italy, you have the rise of the far right, you have uh Bolsonaro in Brazil losing by one percent. But what did he do? He took the Trump stop the steal and that was, that meta-narrative was seeded and before the two days before he, and we're still watching Brazil closely, he lost by one percent. One percent because civil society came out, right, and we're watching that society. Why? Because the Amazon rainforests are there and our planet is dying, right. So okay then you! You're on Tuesday. I hope you vote. But where you go, okay so that's this year, next year Turkey, Nigeria, African nations. The year after that, the beginning of the Indian elections. The year after that, 2024, Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim population, right. The frontrunner in their presidential elections is Prabowo, the son-in-law of former president Suharto. It's like this kind of nostalgia for authoritarian rule. India, world's largest democracy, and then you. The United States, your presidential elections. If autocracy inc. wins and we democratically elect illiberal leaders to the point that there will be more illiberal leaders, what they do is they crumble the institutions of democracy in their countries and then

they come together. Anne Applebaum called it autocracy inc. Kleptocracy isn't in one nation alone, right, it's now global. And then what happens? Well, like, things like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, if you looked just in September, SCO Shanghai Cooperation Organization was created by China and Russia. It is about economics and technology, money and the ability to manipulate surveillance, right. Just in September Turkey, Myanmar, Iran joined African nations right. So why do I, in the Nobel Lecture I talked about how now in the last two minutes this geopolitical shift, oh my God I'm really depressing you, wait I gotta tell you the good stuff.

We can fight back. In the Nobel Lecture democracy information has been atomized. We're literally the batteries powering the the social media platforms, our data, right. So we're, think the Matrix, like our energy, our data is powering this right and then combine the Matrix with Truman Show where we're each performing, right. So step out of that. This is it. You have to turn from a user or a consumer to a citizen, right. We need to figure out what that is. And that's, in the Nobel Lecture I talked about a person-to-person defense of democracy and this is part of it. How do you build, rebuild trust? This is where we begin, right. In Rappler, this was a decade ago, we said it was technology, journalism, and community. Community is critical, right, news organizations don't pull that up enough but it is and I'll show you. So back in time, oh my gosh please tell me when I should shut up, because I will just go through some of the things we've lived through because I spent too much time on those big things and then I want to, let me get five minutes and I'll quickly go through this. This is 19 this is 2016. This was what got me attacked. I wrote two or three parts of the Weaponization of the Internet series. I took this apart in this, in this room and showed you every single thing, right. I think we were the first to look at how Facebook algorithms impact democracy. This is data-driven. I will tweet it again. But the the most critical part for me was that third one written by my colleague, one of our co-founders, "Fake accounts, manufactured reality on social media." We found 26 fake accounts, what was a sock puppet network, and then we manually counted how many others they could influence. It was 26 fake accounts could influence at least 3 million others. Very cheap, right.

Okay so what happened? I got attacked. 90 hate messages per hour and this was the network this attacked women journalists, women politicians, but this was the first wave, this was the network that attacked it. It was so organized that they were broken down by demographics and in the first wave it was about messaging, right. Thinking class, middle class, mass base, that was how organized they were. And then I woke up to things like this, right, this, you're not eating you're not drinking, don't eat or drink in the next two or three minutes. So everything about me was weaponized. You know my, I have dry skin but you see me here right my skin is not so bad as this, they make it look worse. But then they did this. It's called dehumanization, it's it's the the phrase was scrotum face, right, because if you're dehumanized it's very easy, I mean that sets the stage for violence. It's what happened to Daphne Corona Galicia in Malta, right, she was dehumanized in the same way and then, oh I was going to crack a joke but you can't crack a joke then, about a car bomb exploded right and her family is looking for justice but her sons came to me and said the same thing happened to our mom that is happening to you. I'm not alone! It is happening

to many journalists, most of them women. All right so let's keep going. I'm not giving you the good news yet. A Thousand Cuts was a film that was that came out in 2020. This is a Facebook page so you can see what they did again, but then scrotum face pops up all the time, right, so it is funny in a weird way unless you're me. But you know Nietzsche was right, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. So, you know, if you come under attack, embrace your fear. Whatever it is you're most afraid of, touch it and hold it and think it through, right. That's, I mean I learned that in school. So this is what we saw The Chilling this is going to be, the book itself is launched on, is being launched on Monday November 14th, so next Monday.

But this was launched by UNESCO in 2021 and what they did is they took the almost half a million attacks against me right but they also surveyed women journalists 73 percent experienced, 73 percent, and this was in 2019-2020, experienced online abuse. 25 percent received threats of physical violence, death threats, and then 20 percent of those had been attacked offline after they were attacked online, right. So again you go back. The reason why we are, the online violence, what we are pumping, this toxic sludge through our communications channel is seeping out offline in the real world. Why? We only live in one world. Physical, mental, virtual, it is the same world and the rule of law in the real world has been crippled by impunity in the virtual world, right, because right now I could have surveillance on this phone, oh yeah I do, yeah, so surveillance countries have impunity right now to do that. There are new technologies coming out that countries use. It's not illegal. Social media platforms are manipulating us insidiously. It's not illegal, right. But yet that impunity, sorry, countries, like, Information Warfare have targeted Americans, you know this. You have the data from 2016, right. We're all connected and that's happened with impunity. You even know who they are, yet that's happened with impunity. So those cascading failures are impunity moves, let me quickly go through, I'm, my gosh I'm out of time, I'm gonna end with two things, all right. So let's, this is what they found when they looked at the attacks against me. 60 percent of the online violence was supposed to tear down my credibility. I don't know, it got me the Nobel Prize. But many Filipinos believe I'm a criminal and I cannot defend myself. If you're the target of attack, you cannot defend yourself. That's a reality. 40 percent was meant to tear down my spirit, right. So forty percent, I could do nothing about it.

I'm sorry, oh my gosh, how much time do I have? Yeah, I keep going? Okay sorry I gotta show you this. I'm sure you've seen the Election Integrity partnership, this has stopped the steal, I gotta bring it home to you, right. So you can actually see the same thing, a timeline for election fraud, right. It was seeded August 2019, a year earlier on, RT RT not surprisingly, then picked up by Steve Bannon on YouTube August 2020. So it was seeded a year earlier, the same way that the attacks against me happened a year earlier. Then picked up by Fox, Tucker Carlson on September 15th, Q Anon drops it the normalization on October 7th and then comes top down from then President Trump, right. What happened? Silicon Valley since came home to roost on January 6, 2021. This is the anatomy of information operations that ends in violence. I would show you what happened after I won the Nobel Prize and I came home in December and realized that, oh my God I have all these new attacks on Twitter. So what we did is, we took a look at the, just

volume, we just mapped it right, and you can see that the day of the worst attacks was December 29th, that big peak. So what we did, we did two things. We looked at the creation dates of the Marcos, the accounts that were connected to the Marcos Junior. It mapped along with that. And then, just to be sure, we looked at pro-Marcos Marcos and anti-Marcos accounts and we looked at their creation dates. And you can see the gray is the anti-Marcos accounts that were active on Twitter. They, that's kind of a random creation date, and then you can see the spike in the red that was aligned with the information operations against me. This is why I don't take them that seriously and why I keep smiling. So we did this story and a few days later Twitter took them down. I don't know what'll happen now with Elon Musk, you tell me, right. Okay so let me, I'll skip these because this is how the meta narratives were seeded, I will just tweet the stories because there's tons.

Look at this, remember I told you from Pariah to Hero, look at that spike in 2020 that helped lead to the election of Ferdinand Marcos Jr., hero, hero, hero, hero. When you hear that multiple times it actually lets you believe it, right. So, how do you rebuild trust? This is what we did and I hope, we did, journalists, tech is important. We need to build that tech to fight tech. We need data in a different way and we need to move from being users and consumers to citizens. What does civic engagement look like in the age of exponential lies, right? So this was the Facts First PH pyramid. We only had it in operation really for three months before our elections. It was supposed to have started in October but the day we were supposed to start, a day earlier the Nobel committee announced the Nobel Peace Prize so we got derailed but I wouldn't give it back. But so we were late. I'm just saying maybe you could do this like, a year earlier, because it works. The data pipeline connecting a whole of society approach, right. It's a whole of society approach, four layers of a pyramid, 16 news organizations, hyper-local, so in the provinces, and national news groups the first time we all worked together. The second layer, so that creates fact checks, boring fact checks that never spread, right. What what did we do? We need help. We ran something that's like an influencer marketing campaign for democracy, for facts. That's the second layer. The mesh layer. Civil society, NGO, human rights groups, environmental groups, right, business finally came in, the church came in. And the goal there for our mesh layer, I got the word mesh from Don't Look Up, you know when the defense came up mesh by mesh. So they their instructions was to take those boring fact checks and spread it with emotion, but they couldn't use hate.

And what we found out was inspiration spreads as fast as hate. Inspiration spreads as fast as hate, right. Third layer, research. The research groups, and this idea came from the Election Integrity Partnership of the United States. Every week that data pipeline that we had we released it to all the academic researchers. The biggest problem of researchers is we don't have data. We had the data. We shared it the same way we shared the fact checks, and every week on every Friday we would tell Filipinos who is the target of attacks, what are the meta narratives, and who is winning right. Who's winning, inevitably, always in every one of those it was the opposition leader, a woman Lenny Robredo the Vice President was always targeted and Marcos always won. What a trend. Anyway, so the last one is critical. Rule of law, right, accountability. The law firms and the legal groups. What

they did is they filed tactical and strategic litigation to protect the members of the three layers below them. At least 21 cases filed in three months. This is what it looks like when you break it down and I am really out of time so I'm just saying what we are, we need to act. This is the individual battle for integrity, the individual battle for, I mean, the privilege of being a citizen in a democracy, right. It's not one of those times, we're in a strange moment. I put most of this stuff together, this book is coming out. I was writing it from 5am to 11am for the last year and a half. I wrote 400 pages, it was shrunk to 200 so hopefully you read from cover to cover, that's what my editor said. Painful. But here's the thing and I'll leave it with this, right. It is your values. It is your individual battle because World War III today is, yes it is in Russia and Ukraine right, but the World War III is the individual battle for our minds and our emotions, and that directly links to the quality of our democracy. So thank you, thank you so much.

Thank you for your words. You ended by telling us that inspiration spreads as fast as hate and certainly you come to us with a lot of inspiration today. So maybe the question I want to ask you, and we'll have a little bit of time for Q&A and I'll probably try to take some questions from the folks online which is why this is on my lap. Sorry I talk too much. No no, perfect perfect. Maybe I'll start with just maybe a too obvious, straightforward question which is, you know, given the the context, the landscape that you lay out which includes a lot of really discouraging information, what is the advice you have for journalists, organizers trying to find some way. Maybe one is to think about it in the way you've laid it out here, this sort of four four part schema, but what's your advice to folks trying to find a way to have a positive impact given the weight of the sort of contemporary macro structural forces you laid out for us today. Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate. That's, you know, the final title in the book. You can take it off, it's too big. But the final title, the the final chapter in the book is "Why Fascism is Winning" and the subtitle, which is kind of my personal lesson, macro micro, right, that's what I did with every chapter, but the the subtitle is "Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate." No one can do this alone, right, and if your family is like mine, my American family, you're divided, right. I don't know if you've had these discussions in the, around your dinner table. We don't talk politics, but we must. And we got to remember the one thing that social media is stamping out of all of us, right, because the incentive structure is geared against empathy. It is geared against the goodness of human nature. That was the other reason I pulled up, you know, this t-shirt that we had in rappler from like 2013, in order to be the good you have to believe there is good in the world.

Be the good, right. So what social media has done, and I say this is, that you know, if you're, you have to make a tough decision, you know that old cartoon where you have a devil and an angel on your shoulder and the devil is telling you do it, do it, do it, do it, do it, and then the Angels say no, no, you could hurt someone. I'm thinking Mark Zuckerberg here, sorry. But you know what happened, what social media does, because of the incentive structure, the incentive structure that has actually degraded journalism has, it encourages the worst of journalism, the worst gets distributed. An investigative piece doesn't get the same distribution, a lie does, right. So, so what happened? Social media flicked the angel off your shoulder, actually first gagged and flicked, so no more angel and

then the devil grew and then is directly into your neurals, into your nervous system. Don't forget that word that is never quantified but it's hard for a journalist to say, love, right, empathy, love. Even our economic systems don't take into account everything we do that is free for our loved ones. And that's part of what we need to bring back. That's how we fight. Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate. Do not fall for us against them. We're seeing this all over the world, you know, Hungary for example, has in its state ideology, I hate, I mean it's like the Nazism all over again, right, white replacement theory, right. You're familiar with that right? That's not us. We've been through years of this. We cannot turn back the clock. So it will only feast on your fear. That's the only way that they can win. Thank you for that. We, we sort of jokingly celebrated someone who isn't on Twitter, isn't online, doesn't have a phone. So you are on Twitter, you've told us you're going to Tweet out some data, why is the option not to just opt out completely, is that something that is too short-sighted, like, what's the logic around even engaging social media and how does one do it effectively? Fantastic question.

I mean I wouldn't have understood the way the information ecosystem works. It's a blessing to be the target of attacks. You get that, it really is, because only the target of attacks sees the way it really works, right, and how quickly it changes. I run the business of Rappler. I also run our tech. We build tech. So all of these things, oh yeah I'm a journalist, I forgot that part, but There's no journalist and no news organization that can opt out of the main distribution system in our virtual world, right. That is, and what did they do? They replaced our system of laws, rule of law, with their own imperfect system that rewards surveillance capitalism that actually in some ways violates the law, right. So how do we get to understand it if we opt out? That's the first step. The second is, Rappler is one of two Filipino fact-checking partners for Facebook. We are part of their system, we fact check, and then when we find the lie I look at the networks that continue to spread those lies. They're recidivist networks. I've learned a lot from studying terrorism and terrorist networks right, ironically, oh no it's not ironically that's the wrong word, what used to be extremist behavior, or, that leads to terrorism is now moved into politics, right, like this is dangerous. We've, again, been here before. I've, we do not want to be here again with the kind of technology that that acts like gods without knowing what is happening, so we cannot opt out. I guess I'm I'm saying both for the business of Rappler, I can't, both as a researcher I can't, and third that's my first Bellwether. What happens on social media doesn't stay on social media, right. I can normally see when like the Philippine government is pushing something that may be bad. It comes out on social media first, that's the test case. You know the movie Inception? How they went into the dream world to change the real world? That's what social media is.

Brave New World, soma, the drug, it's mildly addictive, right. Social media, we should be studying more the impact of this at scale, right, understood through those three levels, personal, psychological, Frances Haugen released more than 10,000 internal documents of Facebook, you know the impact on you, right. And then the sociological impact and the emergent human behavior. Meaning I can't get off it, because it's, and here's the hard part, they will be part of the solution. They must. I'm gonna continue to monitor any questions that come in here. If it's okay, I might just take a couple of questions from the

audience before we go so I'm going to go to Joe Turow first, and I'm going to give you the microphone, Joe. Thank you, thank you for the talk, I really appreciate it, and for your work but I have a question that's interesting about the book. Harper Collins is owned by Rupert Murdoch. I know. So did that ever come up in terms of the dynamics? The irony of that is is far too zesty to just leave alone. No, no, no, I know but you know I have a wonderful editor in Harper Collins and yeah we did talk about that, but you know, I go much more to like the law that was created in Australia uh that essentially gives, I know, yes, yes. So you know like the the law that was in Australia which is kind of moving to the West is driven by big companies that want to pull it, right, and of course anyway, so I don't have a really good answer for you, yes I know, but my personal experience with them has been well yeah he cut 50 percent of what I wrote but it was, they were good cuts. I mean really the key part of the book that I tried to do is that these are now these times matter, right. Please don't turn away because, and this I said like in 2016, 2017, I've said it in this room, when we look, when Rappler looks back a decade from now I'm gonna know that I have done everything I could.

You want to say the same things and you know where America goes the world will go, so you know, kick in. Hi, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us today. I have a few questions, I was thinking about them for weeks. Yeah, just one. Okay so my question is given what happened to the journalist Jamal Khashoggi who died pursuing the truth and given the fact that many of the things that you report on revolve around pursuing the truth that doesn't want to be heard, how far are you willing to go to pursue the truth in your own reporting and why? She goes right to the point doesn't she? I think that question doesn't happen, you don't really think about it if you have conviction, right, like I, when I came under attack I was, you know, 50 something and I had helped write four standards and ethics manuals for different news organizations both in the US and in the Philippines, in Indonesia, and I knew right from wrong, I had, I knew, I was very certain in the whys and so I did, I made the decisions even if they weren't good business decisions. By the way good values mean good business, right, that is also something we learned. So in this one I will carry it through right because I don't have any other choice. This is also something I wrote in the book. There's sci-fi fans, so you know like my idols are Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock combined that's what I want to be. But like, there's this great quote, like most people, it's from Ursula Le Guin and I'm gonna paraphrase it because she uses the Mage, the magician, right, a man but, I'm going to paraphrase it so it's like, it's, it, because it spoke to me you know, we think, you know, we think that the older you get the more power you get, that the more pathways you can take in your life, but really what happens is as you grow and as you get to know yourself and define yourself by these small choices you have made along the way like your values, narrower and narrower the path goes until you can only move in the only direction you can.

That's the way I feel, you know, I can't do anything else but what I am doing now and you know everyone says yes but you could go to jail, yeah, but how I fight this battle will help determine that or it could be violent, you know, to people, journalists have been killed, so and then I just think, well yeah, I could step off the curb and get hit by a car. It's, the, it's not even courage, it's your conviction, your beliefs. This is it guys. Let me give you one question

from online. It says thank you for, it's one of, one of our Ph.D. students, thank you for this excellent talk and for all of your important work. I'm wondering if you can talk a little about the signs of cooperation you see among actors using these tactics in different geographic and cultural contexts? Is it just that bad faith actors are imitating one another's playbook or have you found more concrete connections in how troll collectives are being trained or possibly even compensated? Thank you so much for that question and a little bit of all, right. Like so think about it like this, we just recently found Filipino and Indian operators in Kenya's information ecosystem and it was actually connected to how religion was being used to manipulate politics, right. So there is a whole new cottage industry that is tapping this because think about the world that we're, we've created with social media, right, like it's popularity, that's what you're after, that's, those are the signals to the algorithms for distribution but it is also mob rule, right. It can turn, the popularity can turn into mob rule like this, so, so keep your kids off for like, you know, I actually think at some point we should consider, if we don't allow alcohol until you're 18, right, why would you allow, right, I guess this is why I've spent the last two years looking at legislation, solution, education, long term, medium term legislation because if we regulate drug industries and the, and the air, and you know, like if we regulate industries why are we not regulating the industry that that controls our minds, that can insidiously manipulate us? There are building codes that helped create this place.

Why are we not having building codes for the tech that, that infuses what we believe in the world? And the short term, because, you know, the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act in the EU is the first one to really look at algorithms of distribution. They finally moved away from content and that doesn't kick in until spring 2023. In the short term it's only us, you know, so to the question of let's do it this way, right, I just came from Taiwan last week where Anne Applebaum was the first day and she talked about autocracy inc, kleptocracies, there is a reason why corruption travels globally, right, it is, it's kleptocracy inc, autocracy inc, and then the next day I talked about the online behavior modification, the information Warfare. There's a dictator's playbook in the physical world and one of the tools is to weaken you mentally. I mean, yes, Russia has really like kind of subpar weapons in the Ukraine right now but they really succeeded in using identity politics in turning America against itself, in weakening America to the point that, it's like the chaos of politics, sorry I didn't mean to, you know, I won't step in because you have elections, but I'm just saying that I feel like we are so lost in, you know, if there's a polluted river, here's the factory polluting the river. Stop the pollution. Instead what we're doing is, like, we're down here in an eddy debating over whether the rocks underneath should be changed or not. I mean, it's very very far from the problem. Let's go, do Pareto Principle, hit the 20 percent that will yield eighty percent of the returns.

So we'll probably do one more question here and maybe one more question online. Thank you, oh you want to hold it, oh thank you so much! I'll take it, thank you so much for coming here and speaking with us. There was a Pew Research study that came out, I think like last week, that one in four U.S adults under the age of 30 are now getting their news from TikTok and so I just wanted to hear if you had started looking into TikTok and what have you found is similar or different in that landscape with disinformation and otherwise.

Thank you it's similar and worse. So the court documents that have been report, documents that had, documents that were redact, that redaction was taken out, showed the TikTok, the American company behind TikTok ByteDance, was actually one of Facebook's top advertisers from 2014 to 2018 which is when Facebook was leaking like a sieve, right, the Cambridge Analytica scandal happened in 2018. And you know for the record, like, the country that had the most number of compromised accounts was America but the country that had the second most number of compromised accounts was the Philippines because we are where they test these tactics of manipulation and if they worked. Then they, this is the Cambridge Analytica of whistleblower's word, Chris Wiley he said they poured it over to you, so we were only the guinea pigs, you were the target. Sorry, TikTok is, so if you think of Facebook like a mallet on your emotion and brains, think of TikTok like a surgical probe. Yeah I'll leave it at that. We're partners with TikTok too. From online. Someone wants to know in what ways has Rappler developed a security or safety culture protocol as a result of some of the ongoing abuse that you've been describing. Is there a different way you all are approaching that issue? yYeah I think, you know, and the US was kind of ahead of this, the, Michelle Ferriols at another university was trying to do something that would push back, it's just not been effective, this is exponential.

So what we did in 2016 was, Rappler is young. We're about a 100, 110, we've, we fluctuate, right, but our median age is 23 years old. 23. And we're 63 percent women, not by design, you know, we keep looking for the men so please come. You know, but what we did in, in 2016 when all the attacks came, I was targeted and I was targeted by the government, but our reporter covering Duterte, President Duterte then, she was 26 years old or 25 years old when the attacks first began. It was her first time covering a presidential election and she was pounded, right, like ridiculed, very, very like things, that I didn't realize what a toll, like, because she is a climber, you know, so she like just kept going and then it wasn't only until January 2020 when a Thousand Cuts, this film about Rappler on PBS, on Frontline, came out in Sundance where we went, were there, and we were talking in front of a room full of people and she just started crying. And I, what did we do, let me answer quickly because I know we're out of time. We created among ourselves in Rappler, first we offered counseling for every person who wanted it, needed it. We did group discussions about how we were going to do and then collectively we decided how to fight back which is if you're attacked today you don't respond, the rest of us will respond for you, right, and then we did investigative journalism, which by the way doesn't spread as fast as the lies, right, you know, and but we tried. And the Philippines would be very different today if we never did that investigative journalism work into information operations in 2016. Well I want to say, you know we could honestly listen to you all night, you know as a storyteller who's trying to get us to see ways to what I hope is going to be a more just future I just want to thank you for.

Your courage and your wisdom and on behalf of the entire school just say keep doing what you're doing and do know you know in all these different ways one of the things that I think gets me most excited about the work going on here at Annenberg is that it's working in service to that same goal so thank you for being a leader on it.



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