Communities Overcoming Extremism is a unique opportunity to unite people.

A diverse group of organizations—including those founded by Koch, Ford, and Soros—came together to walk alongside people in some of the communities most affected by extremism, to learn from them directly, discover new tools to address identity and political violence, and surface questions to inform ongoing exploration into what drives intolerance and how to cure it.

The sense of urgency behind these efforts can hardly be overstated. The tragedies of Charlottesville were one of the watershed events that brought us together. Over the past two years, there have been more acts of violence motivated by racial and religious bigotry.

This is a severe problem, and we're all motivated to do something. But the problem is complex, and *complex problems are best solved bottom up through social entrepreneurs, community leaders closest to the problem, and unlikely allies coming together.* There's no one-size-fits-all solution, instead, we need a framework that individuals can apply or tap into. Though far from exhaustive, such a framework would include axioms such as:

Invest in long-term efforts to equip local leaders with the knowledge to be successful. That includes supporting research, developing tools, sharing case studies, elevating stories of hope, and enhancing knowledge of the law.

Resist the temptation to take shortcuts like censorship and other top-down prescriptions that will ultimately cause more harm than good. Be wary of anyone who offers up a silver bullet.

- **Protect civil liberties.** They're all the more important in uncivil times and essential for protecting the vulnerable and marginalized.

- **Build capability and knowledge in local leaders** including educators, community leaders, and law enforcement.

- **Promote civics and empathy building** educational programs.

- **Elevate innovative models and stories of hope**, examples of everyday of people cooperating across divides and bringing people back from the brink of radicalization or xenophobia.

- **Encourage all levels of public officials and civic leaders** to emulate courageous collaboration and civil dialogue.

- **Call for research** into causes of intolerance.

- **Don't censor.** Censorship is a dangerous tool that both disrespects the dignity and rights of individuals. Even when the blunt instrument of censorship is aimed at those who hold extremist views, it simply pushes those views out of the public eye to further radicalize and gain strength in the shadows.

- **Don't impose top-down policies** such as federal "hate speech" legislation and federal security policies.

- **Don't prioritize short-term virtue signaling over long-term effectiveness.** Long-term effectiveness requires scientific inquiry to test what will be most effective.

This framework is rooted in the belief that respect for the dignity of every person is essential for social progress. That's why we're passionate about advancing the fundamental rights of every individual—including self-expression. These liberties must stand even when it is hardest—when that the views people express are ones we find repugnant.

Fortunately, history shows that free expression is perhaps the most powerful tools in confronting injustice. The forward-thinkers of the past who urged greater openness and inclusion were usually unpopular at first. But the elevation of their stories of injustice and perseverance, as well as the dialogue that ensued, changed people's minds, resulting in advances that made modern liberal democracies possible.

"Free expression remains a powerful tool in addressing the injustices of our time."

Drivers of political and identity-based violence are complex, and there are no easy answers. These challenges come through in the report, including sections addressing:

Content Moderation

Consider the challenges of moderating online communities. The issue of fostering free expression and combatting offensive content is one faced by many tech companies, media outlets, and other online platforms. However well intentioned, calls for government to intercede and rewrite important public policies, such as Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, risks chilling self-expression and discussion while failing to address how individuals radicalize online.

Federal Criminal Code

Calls for Congress to expand existing terrorism laws to apply to "domestic terrorism" risk unintended consequences of a sweeping approach to a complex challenge. Every state already has laws against the use of weapons to harm or make true threats of violence against others. Additionally, the U.S. criminal code has existing terrorism laws that are already applicable to extremist violence (See, e.g., 18 USC 2332, et seq.). Broadening these federal laws to designate specific organizations as "domestic terrorists" would criminalize any aid or support to those organizations and raise civil liberty concerns for individual citizens associated with such organizations. Instead, there's room to apply learnings from international conflict and political violence work to domestic extremism.

Community Policing

Conversations with local leaders confirm that law enforcement has a significant role to play in our communities by ensuring public safety and holding individuals accountable for violating the law. There are better ways to share knowledge between police and other public officials such as implementing best practices to foster trust and accountability between law enforcement and the communities they serve. These practices include building positive relationships with their community, respecting civil liberties, and avoiding tactics that encourage the use of excessive force against citizens. The most effective way to achieve public safety in local communities results from police and community members working collaboratively to maintain public safety.

Participants explored the challenges bulleted above during the summits hosted by Communities Overcoming Extremism, and they merit further exploration. But some with a more partisan mindset will approach this report, these ideas, and this partnership with derision rather than debate. They'll claim collaboration means compromising your principles. That's not the case. Uniting with anyone to do right isn't about compromise at all. It's about standing firmly on principle to make more progress than any of us could on our own.

The easy thing is to do is to refuse to pull up a seat at the table or to stand at a distance and virtue signal through censorship. The effective long-term solution is to create a space for dialogue and ideas. It's tempting to take the easy path that chills the speech we don't like—even objectively repugnant speech. But this has the opposite of its intended effect.

"We're going to enter a highly fractured time in 2020. It'll be all the more important that we lean into dialogue and away from empty partisan virtue signaling."

This polarized climate, exacerbating challenges around extremism, makes partnership among groups that many would view as unlikely allies all the more rare and special. The problems are complex and merit much further discussion. It's going to get harder to do so, but we invite all the members of this group and others to continue to explore what solutions will most effectively address these challenges.