John Boccacino:

Hello, and welcome back to the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. I'm John Boccacino, senior internal communications specialist at Syracuse University.

Margaret Talev:

What I really, really cared about was focusing on the governance and the information piece of this, which is like, how is democracy working for people? What do people believe democracy is? And why are a segment of Americans so upset with the process as they believe that it's working, that they're willing to resort to violence or willing to believe conspiracy theories? What is that about? To me, that became the central question that I was interested in reporting on, and the chance to build an institute that would really be dedicated to that, that would look at what is the connection between news and government, between journalism and politics, between how people perceive the way their country is working and the news they're ingesting. What are the relationships between those two things? That's really what is at the crux of the new Institute for Democracy, Journalism and Citizenship.

John Boccacino:

Our guest on this episode of the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast is Margaret Talev, a decorated and accomplished national political journalist who is leading Syracuse University's new venture, The Institute for Democracy, Journalism and Citizenship. Talev serves as the Kramer director of the institute, which is a collaboration between the SI Newhouse School of Public Communications and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. Talev boasts an impressive journalistic resume, having covered American politics and the White House for 30 years. She was on the campaign trail for presidential elections in 2008, 2012, and 2016 as a White House correspondent for Bloomberg News and McClatchy Newspapers, and she's also worked for the Los Angeles Times, the Sacramento Bee and the Tampa Tribune. We are fortunate to have Talev leading the Institute for Democracy, Journalism and Citizenship here at Syracuse, and I'm pleased to welcome her onto the podcast. Margaret, how are you holding up these days?

Margaret Talev:

Hey, John. Thanks so much. It is great to be with you. I have had an amazing first year at Syracuse University, and I'm really, really excited for the formal opening of our institute headquarters later this spring. But the timing is noteworthy because it will be right in the middle of the 2024 election cycle. And what an election it is, right?

John Boccacino:

Recount for us and our podcast audience the first year, how things have gone in your first year leading the institute.

Margaret Talev:

The idea for the institute was something that was born several years ago by several leaders at Syracuse, including the deans of the New House and the Maxwell School, the provost, the chancellor. There's huge buy into this. For me, I came into the process when I heard about the idea for the institute, and they were embarking on a national search for a director. And at the time. I was the managing editor at Axios overseeing political coverage. Love Axios. I'm still working as a senior contributor with Axios. But having lived through January the sixth and having had a reporter trapped in the house chambers and a reporter trapped in the Senate chambers, and kind of coming to terms as a journalist with that moment where you see thousands of misguided Americans staging a protest based on misinformation that would later become violent, it just felt like a moment when journalism had failed these people, a lot of these people.

And as a reporter and as an editor, I have dedicated so much time and energy to thinking about how to help people understand what's going on, what's going on in the moment, what's going on big picture, what's kind of the nuance behind the scenes, and helping people get information. And this was a massive information fail, or at least a failure of true information to kind of offset bad information that people were getting.

And I really thought, do I want to manage coverage of another election cycle, looking ahead to 2024, where I'm going to get caught up in a lot of the churn of news, which is like what happened on the Hill, what happened on the White House, what's happening on the campaign trail when what I really, really cared about was focusing on the governance and the information piece of this, which is like, how is democracy working for people, what do people believe democracy is, and why are a segment of Americans so upset with the process as they believe that it's working, that they're willing to resort to violence or willing to believe conspiracy theories? What is that about? To me, that became the central question that I was interested in reporting on.

And the chance to build an institute that would really be dedicated to that, that would look at what is the connection between news and government, between journalism and politics, between how people perceive the way their country is working and the news they're ingesting, that they have access to or that they don't have access to, what are the relationships between those two things? That's really what is at the crux of the new Institute for Democracy, Journalism and Citizenship, and having the opportunity to build that and to help put the pieces of that puzzle together to educate students and to educate the public, and to bring journalists and policy makers and advocates, people in the business world into that space together was such an exciting opportunity. I'm so glad that I have had the opportunity to be part of this effort. So the first year was really a building year. We have been in a temporary location a few blocks away from the White House by the historic Mayflower Hotel. We are housed inside Newhouse's temporary classroom space a couple blocks away from the Maxwell schools DC based inside CSIS.

But all the while, we've been waiting for the new Syracuse and DC campus and the headquarters of the institute to have its grand opening, and we're really excited that that is now on track to happen sometime this spring. And when that happens, it will pull all of our operations together, and we will have a podcast, studio, TV and video studio, classroom space, and a great event space in which to have a lot of these conversations and engage the public, engage students and alumni, and engage some of the decision makers.

John Boccacino:

There's so much effort that goes into planning the launch of an institute, and then you actually get boots on the ground executing the mission. What have been the biggest differences of how you thought things were going to play out versus how they really have played out during the first year?

Margaret Talev:

I love it. It's a great question. And I think about... The best analogy I can think of is, have you ever painted a room in your house? The part that actually takes the longest is sort of the taping off, so really is the planning. So a huge amount of what we spent the first year doing is just having a lot of conversations, getting to know the faculty at Syracuse University to understand who are all the professors inside Newhouse and Maxwell, but also inside other schools, Falk, VPA, iSchool, business, law. Who are the other professors who are already working in the democracy and governance space or at the intersection of civic engagement and media literacy? Because that's a huge part of the programming that we're building, and we want to elevate the work that's already happening. We want to bring those great academic researchers who are already doing this work into the institute's community over time and be able to highlight their work.

So a lot of the first year was a getting to know you tour literally of going up to campus and saying, "Can we have lunch? Can we have coffee? Tell me about what you're doing." Also on the student front, the same thing, going into newsroom and government classrooms and talking to undergraduates and saying, "Are you interested in coming to dc? Why or why not? Are you interested in democracy issues? What interests you? If we were building a program from the ground up, what would you want it to look like? What would you want to do there? Would you be primarily interested in getting a great internship or are there classes that don't exist now that would be a dream class for you to take? Who are the kind of guest lecturers you'd be interested in? Who are the kind of guest speakers that you'd love to meet?"

So kind of hearing what other people's hopes and dreams for this could be engaging with alum, engaging with many of the advocacy groups or educational groups that are in this space, and talking to journalists and politicians in town, trying to get a good sense of what are the other institutes that are in the democracy space and how are they different from what we're envisioning? It's really understanding where is there an unmet need, and how can we have the most impactful role? And then starting to bring on some of the key staff. So in the first year, we have hired our research director for the institute and our senior researcher for the institute. Our research director is this incredible professor named Joanna Dunaway. She comes to us from Texas A&M, and she's a political scientist, and her expertise is on polarization. And Josh Dar, who comes to us from LSU and is a professor at the Newhouse School, is also in political communications.

And he and Dr. Dunaway have been academic research partners for many years, and one of his areas of expertise is local news and the impact of local news on polarization. So together, the core of our research operation, their focus really is, what is the connection between polarization and the news that you consume or don't consume? And having that awesome team on board is the core to building the rest of the institute around it. So that really involved doing the work behind the scenes to figure out what's the research we want to do, what's the programming that we want to do, and how do we want to bring teaching into the mix? And we have launched the Institute's first class in DC, and it is very creatively called Democracy, Journalism and Citizenship. So it's easy to remember the name of the class, but it's offered to any student who's in DC for the semester.

So my first cohort of this class was a combination of Maxwell and Newhouse students, and it is really a media literacy and civic engagement course. It is about... By the time you complete this class, which is a semester long and a full credit class, you are extremely conversant in things like trust trends across the last half century in America. What are the trust trends for how Americans view the Supreme Court, the military, the press TV, news, local news congress, the White House, healthcare, and so on and so forth? But you also learn about news consumption, who is watching what channels, who is reading what publications. How do they break along ideological lines, party lines, gender education region of the country? And how do those kind of patterns of who watches and reads what impact, how people look at policy?

Basically, in other words, it's sort of the data to why we are such a divided country that's so hard to message. And then the second half of the course is sort of a combination of ethics and intersectional areas about democracy. What are the intersections between sports and democracy or AI and democracy, for example? And then each of the students researches one kind of civics group that aims at bringing divided people together or at informing people in an era of disinformation. And then finally, the students are challenged to create their own concept for a media literacy or civic engagement group.

John Boccacino:

What was your kind of light bulb moment that you needed to switch gears? And how did this come to be, this idea of leading our institute?

Margaret Talev:

I just had an instinct that I would become frustrated because the job of managing coverage of an election cycle is really multifaceted. You don't get to decide what you want to focus on. The news dictates what you focus on. And so if you have got reporters on the trail with somewhere between four and 15 candidates, and again, you never know what the landscape is going to look like until you see what it looks like, but we knew it could be a crowded primary on the Republican side, and that the general election contest would sort of be very hot. And then the evolution of AI, how is that going to play in, the latest twist in campaign financing? How will foreign policy factor? Obviously, the economy's going to be an issue. These are the things, plus whatever is going on with Congress. Is the House of Representatives or the Senate going to flip control? All of these are elements you have to focus on when you're thinking about how to manage a news organization's coverage of a campaign.

But for me, the democracy piece of it and the relationship between the news that's being produced and consumed by people and how that's impacting their views on democracy and on governance, that was the most interesting to me. And I think in a way, it always had been. When I first got into journalism, political journalism, I think covering democracy, whether it's working, how it's working, who it's working for, and the context of what is an alternative to it has always actually been a large part of what was motivating my passion for covering politics, but I'm not sure that I really knew that until January 6th it happened. And when that's what's happening, and you're not only watching it as a news consumer, but you're managing the coverage of it and the health and safety of two of your reporters are in question because they're trapped to the Capitol and they haven't been able to call you for an hour, that's when it really kind of came into focus that that's why I had always been drawn to covering politics.

And the aha moment was when I realized I don't think I can just go on and treat 2024 like it's every other year behind it because now this thing has happened that's changed what elections mean in our country, what the role of journalists may be in our country, or at least the approach to reaching audiences. For me, it was a recognition that what I wanted to do, what I really wanted to focus on was more specific than I could sort of pull off if I was managing a typical election cycle, but I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with that. It was kind of in the back of my mind, because remember, the January 6th attack was 2021, and it was more than a year later, maybe a year and a half later when I heard about Syracuse's plans to launch this institute. And when I heard about it, I thought, oh, that's what I want to do.

John Boccacino:

How did we get to this stage where you've got this distrust in the media, this distrust in elected officials? How did we get to this moment?

Margaret Talev:

There are a few factors that I would focus on. One is just the declining trust trends overall in the United States. Gallup has been measuring this since the 1970s, and if you take my class or if you just Google Gallup trust trends, you'll find some incredible data that if you run a chart on it, you'll see literally every institution in the United States, I think with the exception of labor unions decline and journalism is among those institutions. And they measure journalism kind of in two chunks. They measure TV news and they measure non TV news or print news, which is digital news now. I think TV news is a little bit lower. It's like 11% trust, and non TV news is like 16% trust. None of it's good. It's all bad, but trust has also declined precipitously in terms of elected officials. So trust in the American presidency has declined.

Trust in Congress nationally is like 6%. It's lower than journalism. It's very low. But what does that actually mean? When you put it around the question of Congress, we know what it means, which is people are much more likely to trust their own member of Congress, unless it's from the opposing party. And they don't like them. And I think the same tends to be true for journalism. There are party differences. Republicans are much more likely to say they distrust the media than Democrats are. Independents are somewhere in the middle but a little bit closer to Democrats. Why is that? Well, part of it is because distrusting the media has become a core part of the messaging of Republican politics over the

last several decades. But why do Republicans who say they distrust the media, distrust the media? Often, it's because the media they consume are telling them to distrust the media but the other media, not their media.

So again, this question of distrust in the media, even though there are differences by party, the sort of common differences that people trust their own sources of news and information. It's the other sources of news and information that they don't trust. People get information from somewhere. And for most people, that is from a news or news adjacent source. For some people, it's like social media and the internet and it's their social network, so it's Facebook or it's TikTok or something like that. In any case, a big part of what's going on is a declining overall trust in any institution, and that includes the media. There are also overall trends, global trends, but trends in America that I think have added sort of pressure, have added weight to this equation. And one is the changing economy that has really strained and shrunk the middle class and caused a bigger gap between the wealthiest Americans and the working class segment of the American population.

A really big cross section is the decline of local news, and that has to do with the business model. Obviously, as print gave way to digital, it became much harder for local news organizations to evolve and to sustain themselves. And so there is a big problem in the US with news deserts. Wherever you're from, if you're listening to this, if you look at a map of news deserts, you can pinpoint the town that you're from and see what are the prevalence of daily local news publications. As those news organizations locally have either just closed or have greatly declined, we have seen an increase in polarization, and that's what our two researchers, Joanna Dunaway and Josh have been so focused on is again, the connection between polarization and access to news. And as local news has declined, we've seen people become much more tribalized and much more divided. And people who are tribalized are easier to misinform and are easier to turn against one another, and are less likely to find a space in the middle.

And again, I don't think that doesn't mean... Finding a space in the middle doesn't mean saying you believe stuff that you don't believe or agreeing on stuff you don't agree on. It just means the default willingness to say, well, we have to compromise on stuff in order to live as a society, and there must be a set of facts that are true. Even if the way you analyze those facts is different, your analysis has to be based on the core group of facts. We just don't see that as much anymore. One of the real hopes in the programs to rebuild local news, and there is a ton of investment right now, philanthropic investment in industry investment going into trying to rebuild local news, but one of the real hopes is that in doing that, you can decrease polarization and disinformation by helping people find not just a common set of facts to coalesce around, but just sort of a town square aspect.

If all you're consuming is national news that is about politics and divisions in politics, you are going to feel more divided. If you are consuming news that is about the place where you live, and that is maybe not even about politics at all sometimes, that's about what's going on in schools or restaurant openings or development or volunteer opportunities, that those are areas to bond with people in whom you may have nothing in common politically, but you are bonded by something that's day-to-day more important, which is like coexistence. Can you live together? All of these have impacted the divisions in our society. So the 24/7 cable news aspect, the fact that there are at least three very different ways to consume cable news with different kind of audience targets and different information ecosystems, that people are more transient than they used to be, so they don't feel as rooted to a community.

Social media has revolutionized everything, economic pressures and demographic changes. So there are a lot of factors going on, but the bottom line is if you are in the news business, you want to be able to inform Americans about those changes and to say, "Hey, here are the things that are going on in society and this is information you can trust to help you digest that." And when things are as polarized as they've become, when many people are really resistant to agree on the set of facts on which you can have the conversation, and when trust is that degraded, it makes journalism difficult to do, and it does make democratic self-governance difficult because people have to agree on a set of ground rules in order for the experiments to keep working.

John Boccacino:

We all have a vested interest in where this country is going moving forward. We have a role to play, and a role that stems beyond just voting is incredibly important, voting in local elections, voting in national elections, not just voting for the presidential elections, but one of the key roles is learning about media literacy and learning how to discern where they're getting their information from. So what are some steps people can take to fulfill that role as a citizen in becoming more media literate?

Margaret Talev:

When we talk about these issues, it's not like Americans have deliberately decided to self-select into a certain tribe that includes a certain media consumption diet. People just... They're drawn to what they're drawn to. My friends and my family watch this channel or read this publication, and I generally agree with what they're talking about, so this is what I'm going to consume. And I talk to a lot of people who actually ask me what you asked me, which is like, how do I know what I can trust? How can I consume media? So one thing you can do is you can go on our institute website and get more information about how to consume news. And another thing that you can do, and this is really very simple, is diversify your media consumption. So if you like to get your news from TV, that's fine. Don't just get it from one channel.

If you like to get your news from print or digital, same thing. You may like the New York Times or you may like the Wall Street Journal, or you may like your local paper, but you should read more than one outlet. And if you have cable TV, I really recommend just taking a rainy Saturday or Sunday and spending an hour or two flipping between CNN, Fox and MSNBC. And it will help you to understand that if you just prefer one channel, you're probably getting a certain kind of news that's really different than news that your neighbors or your friends or your coworkers are getting. You have to know that in order to know how to communicate with people. It's information, information out. I think if you like consuming domestic news, you should go out of your way to consume international news once in a while also.

If you're like, I don't really understand business or stocks, go out of your way to read a financial publication, a Bloomberg, a Wall Street Journal, watch CNBC for a little while and just immerse yourself in the words and the data that's being discussed. Even if it feels like it's not accessible to you, it will become more accessible to you. Information and media and journalism are sort of concentric circles. They're not always the same thing. So you might be watching a show on a news network, but it might not be a news show. It might be an entertainment show with a lot of opinions. And some of those opinions may actually be based on non facts, on things that are factually untrue. Just because enjoying it doesn't make it true, and just because it's on a news channel doesn't make it news. So you need to be an informed consumer.

There are incredible resources out there dedicated precisely to helping people educate themselves about media literacy and about civic engagement. But I would say another thing to do is listen. Listen to people that you disagree with. Talk to people you disagree with. It's not about changing your mind or agreeing with someone that you really disagree with. It is about finding a way to peacefully coexist and seeing the merit and the value in people as human beings, even if you disagree with them about some kind of policy or who they voted for president last time. So I think becoming more engaged media consumers, being intentional about what you're consuming and understanding... Look, if you hear something crazy or read something crazy on social media, go to a mainstream news source and try to verify it. Has the Associated Press reported it has the New York Times or the Washington Post reported it?

These are mainstream news organizations who are dedicated to, and in those cases are what we'd call in the old days papers of record. They are dedicated to confirming major news even if it is not their own and publishing it in a way where people can validate the truthfulness of it. If you read something crazy and shocking, but only a certain kind of media outlet is reporting it and mainstream news media isn't, it

probably isn't true or at least hasn't been verified or validated yet. Don't spread stuff that's titillating to you if you don't know whether it's true or not. Then you'll be part of the misinformation network. I also just want to say this. Sometimes when we have these conversations about democracy, they seem very doom and gloom, like, oh my God, what's going to happen? But I think if you're a student of American history, you will see that since the founding of the United States, we have dealt with really challenging periods, periods of even civil war.

A lot of bad things have happened in the United States that we can look back on and say, "God, I'm so glad we're past that." And so I think even though we're going through a really challenging time now, to me, it's not gloom and doom and despair, but what we've learned from all these other really troubling times in American history is that people have to come together and envision a better future. This moment that we're in now full of division and disinformation and this sort of populism that can be really divisive and not that constructive, I don't give up hope on that, but I think there is a connection between the role that media has played and the position that we're in right now, and I think it's up to universities that are educating the next generation of media leaders, but also it's up to media consumers, and that means everyone. That means you to do a better job of informing yourself and not to be played so easily for political purposes and to decide to you, what does it mean to be an American?

And it's not like that democracy is some perfect thing to get back to. Democracy has worked unequally since the beginning of this country. For different groups of Americans. Democracy does not work very well for some people. It works much better for other people, and there have been winners and losers, and those have changed over time. So it's not to kind of revert to some imaginary time when democracy was perfect, but is to think of democracy and freedom of speech and your freedom to consume crappy news as well as good news. Those are all deeply held American rights, and they're tied to our democracy and our first amendment. How can you affect your democracy? We talked about voting a little bit. Voting is really important. I know that sounds really stupid.

You actually can make a difference by voting. And I think most Americans are sort of like, ah, what difference does it make? It doesn't really make that much of a difference. And you see low turnout even in presidential election years. And the truth is you can make a bigger difference in a battleground state or in a battleground district. But if you are a young American, your vote can have an outsized impact. If you're any American, your vote really does matter, but people also don't vote very tactically in most cases. You don't have to be registered to the party with which you feel the most affiliation. You can register for any party. I'm an independent voter. I'm not aligned with a political party because I'm a journalist, and I have had a longstanding policy not to vote in races that I'm covering, but if you want to make a difference in the place where you live, you can be tactical about how you vote.

You can reregister as a Democrat or as a Republican and vote in that primary and shape who the nominee is going to be. If your biggest issue is guns or reproductive rights or something else, taxes, you can vote on the basis of that. If that is the most important issue to you, then vote on the basis of that, not for who you think is going to win. And so I think people can be sort of more engaged consumers when it comes to voting, more engaged citizens, but part of that is on us to help people think through that stuff and convene those kinds of conversations. And that's part of what we're trying to do, both through the courses that we'll be involved in offering and through the conversations we're going to engage with the institute.

John Boccacino:

With the limited time remaining, I want to do a quick lightning round session. And these are really important topics. I feel bad putting them in the lightning round, but I want to get your opinion on them. How do you see the institute being able to promote civil discourse and nonpartisan research

Margaret Talev:

By doing it. We are already doing the research. In terms of the engagement, I think we want to be doing it in Washington, we want to be doing it in Syracuse, and we want to be doing it around the country, bringing people together to talk about complex topics and learn how to talk to each other.

John Boccacino:

When it comes to artificial intelligence, and you can take a little more time with this one if you want, exactly what kind of challenges does AI pose to our democracy?

Margaret Talev:

So with AI, the biggest threat we believe is disinformation because information can be produced and replicated and modified and expanded so quickly. If the information is bad to begin with, it facilitates the quicker spread of all of that. Also, fakery. Obviously, if you can use AI models to make an image or likeness or voice of someone seem real and have them be saying things that they never said or doing things that they never did. Then you can misinform people and you can also create kind of a new base of distrust where nobody believes anything because it's so easy to inject something false into the process. Those are the main threats. And on the flip side, a lot of the experts and innovators that I talked to say that only AI can save us from AI. And also that there are ways that AI can help. In the medical field, a lot of people believe that doctors working with AI can do much better diagnosis and curing over time than the same skill doctor working without AI. Put that into journalism.

If you can use AI sort of in a similar way to how the advent of databases or laptops or data software helped us transform journalism and do much more data-driven work much faster, you can see a role where AI could help a lot. There is some hope that AI could help rebuild local news. The challenge and the responsibility is to keep humans connected to the decision-making process. Humans working in good faith who are able to use AI technology to do a better job at their job could be transformative. But when you're kind of turning any of the decision making and validation over to the robots, or when people of good faith are allowing people of bad faith to lean into the space too much when it comes to AI, I think that's where the danger lies.

So the bottom line is whether you are a great AI enthusiast or a great AI resistor, doesn't really matter. It's already happening. It's not like it's coming. It's here. It's already here. And so we all have to accept that central reality, and I think make part of our literacy and engagement work in terms of helping people quickly understand what's already possible and their role in creating guardrails for it.

John Boccacino:

Last question for you, for our audience who does not know this fact, Margaret is the child of an immigrant who actually fled communist Bulgaria, and now you are fighting for American democracy. How surreal has this arc been for you?

Margaret Talev:

Yeah, my father and his little brother fled Bulgaria in the early 1960s and never saw their father again. My grandmother eventually was able to get a visa and come live with us. And so I grew up speaking a broken Bulgarian and loving my Bulgarian roots and culture, but also being very mindful of what they left behind and why they left it behind. The communism, the autocratic life under a dictator was always a part of our dinner table conversations growing up and why my parents, my mom was American born, but why my mom and my dad really valued democracy and really valued journalism. And it's funny you say I'm fighting for democracy. I think really what I'm fighting for is our ability to preserve our freedoms. And to me, journalism is one of the greatest tools of those freedoms, and it's also one of the greatest empowerers of those freedoms.

What independent journalism is about is getting access to information, whether it's the information the government wants you to know or not, whether it's popular or not, whether it's something you wanted to know or something you wish you didn't know. If it's true and it impacts you, it's really important for you to be able to know it and trust it. And the whole idea of democracy is our ability to govern ourselves as a diverse group of people with different wants and needs, but to do it peacefully, without war, without fighting, without violence, without seizure, to essentially forge an ongoing compromise that's constantly changing by taking a view of all the available information at the time and saying, these are the facts that us 300 and some million people in this country have to live with. Here's how the economy's changing. Here's how society's changing. Here's how technology is changing. Here's how the earth is changing.

How do we modify our behavior so that we can peacefully coexist and all find the space within that coexistence to lead the kind of lives that we hope to lead or to make a world that's better for our children, to be able to go on as a people and as a human race? I don't really see myself as a democracy fighter. I see myself as a champion for free speech and independent journalism and the right to true and accurate information. And I think that in the world today, and certainly in our country today, democratic self-governance has been the best model for getting to that. It probably needs to be reformed, like all things need to change over time, but it needs to be reformed in a peaceful and fact-based way in which the news ecosystem is based on accuracy and is helpful to that process.

And I think that requires all of us to engage and to be engaged in this. I hope that's what the institute will be a big part of building. And for anyone who's listening to this, I hope you'll be part of it. Come to Washington for a semester. Come to Washington for a month or a weekend. If you're in Syracuse, reach out anyway. Let's get engaged in what we can do together. This is a university-wide effort. And for students, faculty, and alum all to be involved in it, that's the dream. And we spend a lot of time talking about voting. It's not just about voting. Sports and democracy, food and democracy, music and democracy, anything you're interested in is both impacted by democracy and is an area in which our society's challenges are playing out. And so you don't really have to be into politics to join this conversation. Whatever you're into, I guarantee is connected both to democracy and to news and journalism in some way.

This is kind of a project that seems like it's about one thing, but it's really about everything, and we want as many people involved as possible. So reach out. I'd love to get to know you and have you be part of this. And thank you for spending an hour with me and letting me talk way too much. It's been really-

John Boccacino:

Yeah, no, it's been a really thought provoking conversation we've been blessed to have on Margaret Talev, the director of the Institute for Democracy, Journalism and Citizenship. For more information, we'll link out to this on our podcast episode. You can visit idjc.syracuse.edu. Margaret, thank you for the time. Best of luck with all your ventures, and keep fighting the good fight.

Margaret Talev:

Thank you, John.

John Boccacino:

Thanks for checking out the latest installment of the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. My name is John Boccacino, signing off for the Cuse Conversations Podcast.