

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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Democracy Beyond Elections



# WHERE THE PEOPLE

## Who Say It Can't Be Done Take A Back Seat To The People Who Are Doing It

The Laura Flanders Show, on public television and radio, investigates the drivers of racism, sexism, and environmental destruction, and examines alternative systems and policies that could, and do, exist with a view to shifting the economy, culture, and political terrain.



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# MESSAGE FROM

## LAURA FLANDERS, HOST & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Building a more just, healthy, and sustainable world isn't just possible, it's urgently necessary, and efforts are happening, led by creative thinkers and doers in marginalized communities across the country. Existing models can inspire, but only if people get to know about them.



When journalist Maria Ressa received the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize, her message was very clear:

“Without facts, you can't have truth. Without truth, you can't

have trust. Without trust, we have no shared reality, no democracy, and it becomes impossible to deal with the existential problems of our times.” In the US, trust in the media is at an all-time low. Online media platforms have a market incentive to engage users with “low-value” content that keeps eyes glued to the screen — and not the sort of news reporting that benefits healthy societies. Runaway consolidation has resulted in wholesale layoffs in commercial

newsrooms around the country, and — to fill the gaps — the syndication of cheap content across vast, conglomerated, often very partisan networks.

In this sea of corporatized news and partisan opinion, The Laura Flanders Show stands out. Independent and non-partisan with a national reach, we report on the people, ideas, and models that working to create a better, more equitable society. By telling the stories of people in marginalized communities—particularly Black and brown, immigrant, and low-income communities—we bring public attention to critical narratives overlooked by commercial media.

### DEMOCRACY BEYOND ELECTIONS

While politicians at the federal level receive a high degree of media scrutiny, political actors in small towns frequently operate in relative obscurity. Yet, it is at the local level that militias begin to organize and communities are most subject to violent intimidation. It is also at the local level that grassroots initiatives arise to bend local institutions to subvert majority rule and disenfranchise people based on race or political affiliation. The Laura Flanders Show brings these stories to national attention, showing Americans both the roots of some of the biggest threats to our democracy and what actions local communities can take to combat them.

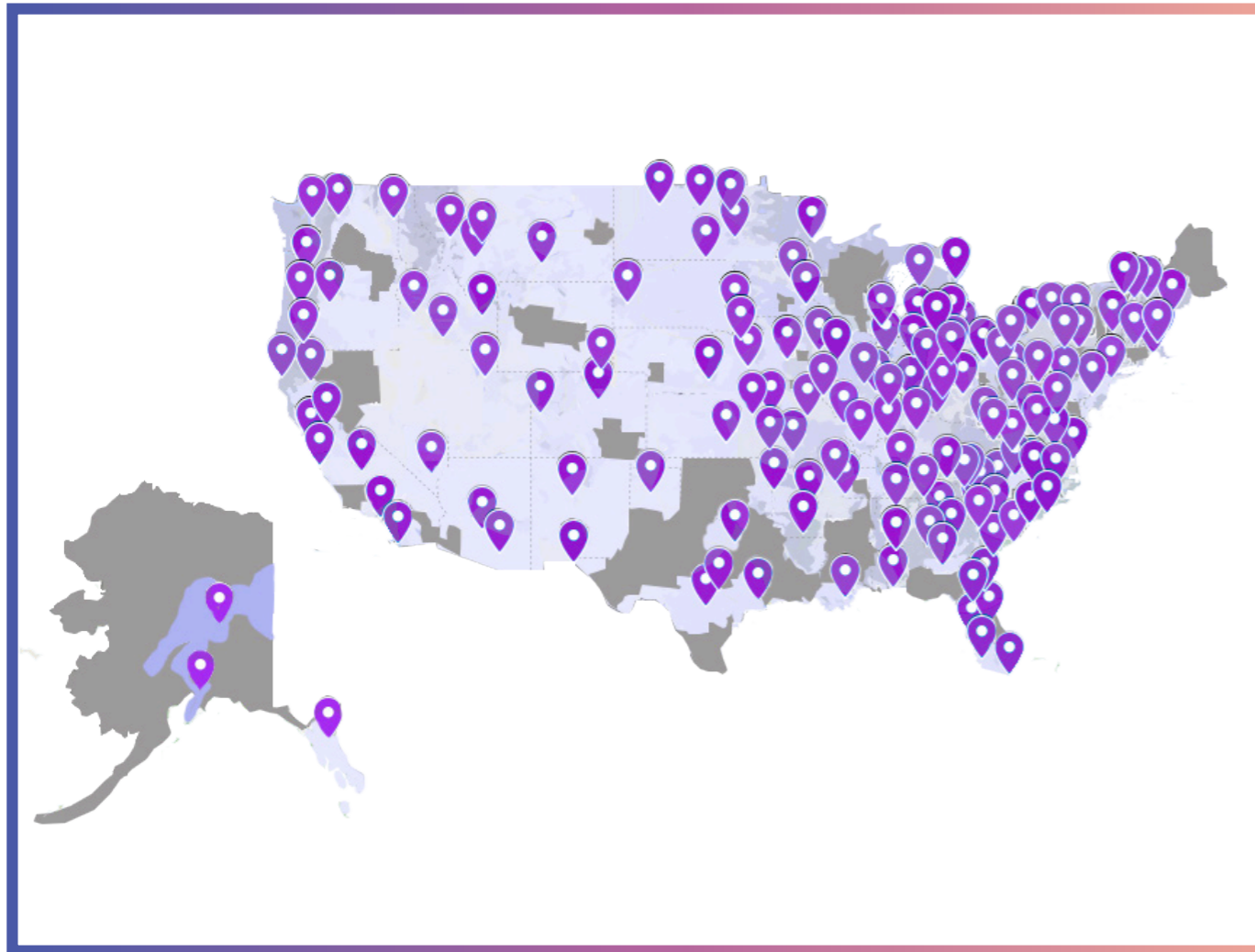
### BEYOND REPRESENTATION

Members of marginalized communities have always been at the forefront of social change, yet their stories go largely ignored by mainstream media. On The Laura Flanders Show, we go beyond representation and empower Black and brown, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, immigrants, and low-income people to tell their own stories. They drive the reporting and tell their stories the way they think they should be told.

For many, The Laura Flanders Show is the only place they can see people like them on a national news and public affairs show.



“No journalist I know has been more determined to open public debate to new people and ideas.”  
— Bill Moyers



## OVER 250 MILLION AMERICANS

The Laura Flanders Show is a pipeline from the margins to the mainstream. We take the people, movements, and models that could create a better, more just society and give them the national attention they deserve.

Distributed by American Public Television, The Laura Flanders Show airs every week on national public TV. Week after week, we play on nearly 300 PBS stations in all corners of the country, reaching over 250 million people. On over half of those stations, the show airs on 11:30am on Sunday morning—the prime spot for public affairs programs. In fact, we play right up against other major public affairs programs like *Face the Nation* and the hard-Right *Firing Line*.

The show is also available for free online on our YouTube channel as well as on PBS Passport. In addition, we produce an audio version of the show that airs on radio stations across the country as well as a podcast available on all major podcast platforms.

## THE PROBLEM

Democracy is under attack. Right wing extremists are doing their best to disenfranchise Black and Brown communities, a Right wing Supreme Court is rolling back rights and protections that might literally mean the difference between life and death for many, and Right wing politicians are doing their best to block any meaningful legislation to protect people and the planet.

We know that the majority of Americans are unhappy with the state of affairs, but many can't imagine any other way. All across the country, people want change, but they don't know how to achieve it. The answers are out there. Real, working models for a better, more just society already exist, but they need attention now. The clock is ticking, and we can't afford to wait.

## THE SOLUTION

The Right has long understood the importance of the media in swaying public opinion. People believe what they hear and see, and The Laura Flanders Show is putting critical narratives and models for change in front of a huge national audience. By airing on public TV, we reach Americans of all political stripes on the most trusted platform for news and public affairs for 19 years running.

Not only does The Laura Flanders Show help people see the roots of the problems we face as a nation, but we show people what steps they can take to fight back. We hear every week what a difference our reporting makes, and we understand that, now more than ever, The LF Show is desperately needed.

### Visibility

We're on every single week all year round, bringing messages of hope and change to hundreds of millions of Americans. In many of the biggest TV markets, we air on more than one channel, and many channels play the show multiple times per week.

### Reliability

Trust in the media is at an all-time low, but The Laura Flanders Show reaches Americans through PBS stations across the country — the nation's most trusted source of news and public affairs programming for 19 consecutive years.

### Change

We influence voters, policy makers, teachers, and students. We amplify the messages of social justice movements and lift up BIPOC leaders and practices. It makes a real difference. And, at the end of the day, there's no other platform out there like The LF Show.

"I watched the show and spent almost an hour talking the next day about how good it was. It was just the kind of show we need—showing real threats at the ground level with authentic local people doing thoughtful organizing. The tone and the respect were great and those you interviewed were extraordinary. You know how committed I am to rural organizing; these people showed what is possible. Thank you for taking it on!"

— Suzanne Pharr, organizer, writer, and political strategist





## RADIO AND PODCAST

The Laura Flanders Show is available on PRX to radio stations across the country. Over the last year, the show has been picked up by even more stations, including WNYE, which plays both the television and radio versions of The LF Show in the New York marketplace. Our podcast has also seen a 7% increase in downloads over the last year, and it continues to expand.

## GROWTH

Now in its third season on public TV, The Laura Flanders Show continues to expand its audience and reach new viewers and listeners. On TV alone, we boast an audience reach of 293,903,102 people on 305 channels across the country.

Outreach and engagement has played a big role in our audience growth. We reach out directly to station managers and communities to get the show on as many places as possible.

Over the last year, we have also seen our online audience grow significantly. From our newsletter subscribers to our YouTube channel and our social media accounts, our numbers continue to rise every week.

13% 

### AUDIENCE GROWTH ON YOUTUBE

Not only has our YouTube audience grown significantly, but our watch time is also up 33%. That means not only are more people watching, but they're watching for longer.

141% 

### SOCIAL MEDIA GROWTH

Over the last year, we increased our followers on social media by 141% more than the previous year. Our Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram pages continue to grow.

From Manhattan, New York to Manhattan, Kansas, we bring movements for social justice to a mainstream audience.

- We're on every week in all of the top 25 TV markets.
- We air in local communities as well as big cities.
- The show also airs in England, and is watched online across the world.
- We air every week of the year without exception.

### Common Carriage

The show airs every Sunday at 11:30 am on the WORLD channel, making it easy for viewers all over the country to tune in at the same time.

### Crosses the political divide

We air in red states and blue, reaching communities of all political stripes with models for creating a more vibrant, democratic society.







## ONGOING COLLABORATIONS

The Laura Flanders Show occupies a unique place of trust in the national media. The show is held in confidence by TV and radio programmers, audiences, and social movements alike. We, in turn, use our massive platform to uplift movement expertise and bring it to mainstream audiences.

We have committed to ongoing reporting collaborations with critical movement groups, including Blueprint North Carolina, URL Media, NDN Collective, and The Democracy Collaborative. These collaborations give us the chance to spotlight the important work being done by movements and organizers across the country and bring them to national attention.

One of the biggest obstacles to change is a lack of public awareness of just what's possible. These collaborations serve a crucial function in overcoming this issue by providing these organizations with a mainstream media platform. The work they do and the narratives we develop together go on to reach hundreds of millions of people.

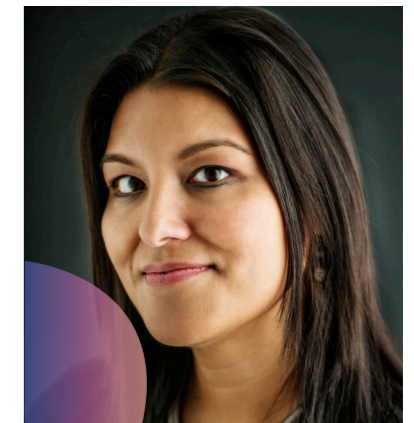
## URL MEDIA

Uplift, Respect, Love Media (URL) is a network of high-performing Black and Brown-owned media organizations created in 2021.



**SARA LOMAX-REESE**  
Co-Founder, URL Media

Sara Lomax-Reese is also the president and CEO of WURD Radio, the only African-American owned talk radio station in Pennsylvania.



**S. MITRA KALITA**  
Co-Founder, URL Media

S. Mitra Kalita is a journalist, media executive, and author. In 2020, she started Epicenter-NYC, a newsletter to help New Yorkers through the pandemic.



From *Meet the BIPOC Press*: "50 Years after Roe, is Reporting on Abortion Still too White?"

Together with URL Media, we developed a new monthly series called *Meet the BIPOC Press*. Going beyond inclusion to actually sharing power, for these episodes we hand the reins over completely to our colleagues at URL. Sara Lomax-Reese and S. Mitra Kalita cohost and produce. In many places around the US, *Meet the BIPOC Press* airs at exactly the same times as *Meet the Press* on Sunday mornings.





## BLUEPRINT NORTH CAROLINA

We've been working with BlueprintNC—a network of nonprofit organizations dedicated to advancing equity and social justice in North Carolina—to produce a series of reports on defending democracy. Our first episode came out last year to much acclaim. Called “Community Safety in a Time of Insurrection,” it looked at the proliferation of for-profit military training centers in North Carolina and their ties to the events of January 6th. In addition to empowering local communities to take concrete action, this report brought national attention to a growing threat and illustrated what local communities can do to fight back.

Our second report, “The Forgotten Coup, January 6th, and the Small Town Americans on the Frontlines of Democracy,” premiered this July. In this episode, we look at the parallels between that coup and the events in DC and visit the rural county of Columbus in the south west of North Carolina where a self-described former Oath Keeper acquired a massive arsenal of decommissioned military hardware in 2018 soon after taking office after a contested election. Laura also meets the residents and leaders from across the state who are clear that the future of multi-racial democracy in America is being decided in out-of-the way towns like theirs.



“In the 6 months since the premiere of episode “Community Safety in a Time of Insurrection,” there has been big momentum building in Hoffman NC! The Laura Flanders episode powerfully lifted the voices of people from Rushing Road, and so much more is possible now in every corner of our state. After an initial packed-church community screening of the show, residents called a Community Safety Town Hall to review the options available to them to stop the many harms to the community’s health and safety caused by the paramilitary training center owned by \$30 million Oak Grove Technology.

“In this small, predominantly Black rural town of less than 800 residents, there is a movement building. Door-by-door, and one neighbor to another, they have organized to form the Concerned Citizens of Hoffman-Marston, collected 100 petitions demanding change, and delivered them to their County Commission, and through legal review exposed that Oak Grove Technology has operated since 2014 on an illegal permit. Even as they continue to courageously push for accountability from local officials to stop the bombing in their backyards, the game has already changed. The safest community is an organized community.”

— Serena Sebring, Executive Director of BlueprintNC



# THE DEMOCRACY COLLABORATIVE

Together with The Democracy Collaborative, we've undertaken a series of reports that highlight new, more equitable economic models. From democratizing finance to community wealth building, we're committed to bringing real, working models for a more democratic economy to a mainstream audience.



From "Community Wealth Building: An Economic Reset"

The Democracy Collaborative is a "think-and-do tank for the democratic economy." Together, with TDC's research and body of work and The Laura Flanders Show's reporting and massive mainstream platform, we're showing Americans that a real democratic economy is possible. In fact, it's not as far off as many think.

Our democratic economy reporting has brought ideas like participatory budgeting, community wealth building, worker co-operatives, and collective real estate ownership to a national audience. Not only do we present these ideas in a way that makes them engaging and easy to understand, but we show people how they too can get involved.



From "Collective Real Estate: Land Without Landlords?"



# SEASON 3 NOTABLE GUESTS



**IMARA JONES**

Journalist, intersectional news producer, and creator of TransLash Media.



**IBRAM X. KENDI**

Author, professor, anti-racism activist, and MacArthur "Genius" fellow. Director for anti-racist research at Boston University.



**NADIA JOHNSON**

Communities in School coordinator, Mount View High School in Welch, West Virginia.



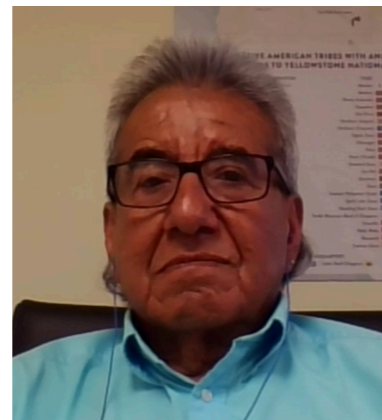
**LA'TASHA D. MAYES**

Democratic nominee for Pennsylvania House of Representatives; Founder & Former CEO, New Voices for Reproductive Justice.



**ANDREA JAMES**

Executive Director: National Council for Incarcerated & Formerly Incarcerated Women & Girls



**WES MARTELL**

Eastern Shoshone/Northern Arapaho; Senior Wind River Conservation Associate, Greater Yellowstone Coalition-Ft. Washakie Office.



**SHARI DAVIS**

Co-Executive Director, Participatory Budgeting Project.



**SHERYL LEE RALPH**

Actress and activist.



**SHAUN GLAZE**

Research Director, Black Brilliance Research Project.



**REP. JAMIE RASKIN**

Congressman (D-MD), and member of the Jan 6th House Select Committee.



**LINDA VILLAROSA**

Author, *Under the Skin: The Hidden Toll of Racism on American Lives & On the Health of Our Nation*.



**VALERIE GRUSSING**

Executive Director, National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers.



**RANDI WEINGARTEN**

President of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO.



**JOYCE M. ABBOTT**

Educator and Abbott Elementary namesake.



**DEBORAH MAXWELL**

President, NAACP North Carolina.



# CHALLENGES

As we continue to grow and expand our coverage and our audience, we continue to meet new challenges. During the last year, we made changes to our organizational structure, which allowed us to adapt to these challenges and work more efficiently.



In early 2022, we lost our creative director and our communications director. Rather than replace these positions, we decided to take a new approach. We reallocated resources that had previously gone to producing online content and put them towards expanding and diversifying our field reporting. As a result, we down-sized our communications department and decided to hire a field reporter/producer.

In addition, we hired a new development director with ample experience, and we're currently in the process of hiring an executive assistant. This will enable Laura and other staff members to focus more of their time and energy on research, writing, and reporting that make The Laura Flanders Show so popular and successful.



## INFLATION

Across the board, inflation has raised the cost of doing business. As prices go up, we're forced to pay more for the same goods and services. While we expect a certain amount of inflation, the levels we have seen this year have been particularly challenging.



## EQUIPMENT COSTS

Maintaining a high production quality is critical to any media organization, and we're no exception. This year, we invested in lighting and sound solutions to increase the quality of our program. We also had to invest in additional digital storage.



## SALARY BUMPS

In order to find and retain talented staff, we need to keep salaries competitive for the nonprofit world. These increases allowed us to attract a more talented pool of candidates for the positions we needed to fill this year and will help us reduce staff turnover.

As always, fundraising continues to be one of our primary challenges. This year, we've taken serious steps to expand our budget by a quarter.

### ■ Increased funding from NoVo

NoVo Foundation, our largest funder has pledged a 4-year grant of \$350,000 / year. This 40% increase and commitment well into the future provides us with crucial stability.

### ■ New funding from NYWF

This year, the New York Women's Foundation agreed to fund us for the first time. They pledged \$100,000 / year for the next two years.

### ■ Underwriting from Just Impact

Just Impact has given us \$75,000 / year for two years to underwrite reporting on BIPOC-owned and led community safety initiatives that show alternatives to incarceration.

### ■ New development initiatives

In addition to hiring a new director of development, we're beginning to organize live and online fundraising events. We're also creating a highly visible advisory board to assist in our development efforts.



# VISION FOR THE FUTURE

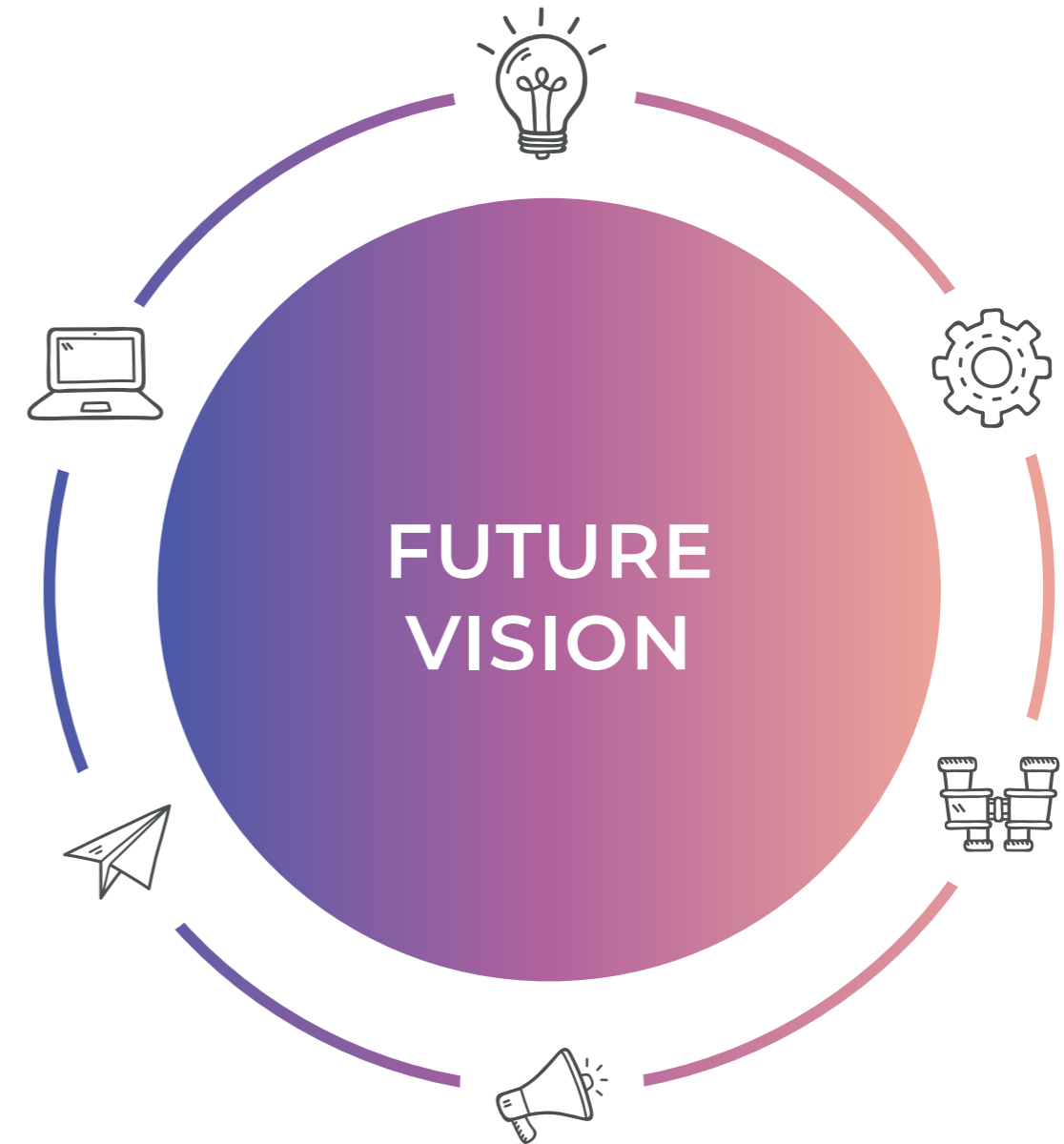
The Laura Flanders Show is an invaluable platform for movements and progressive policies. Having a platform like this that reaches hundreds of millions of Americans is absolutely critical as we come up on the 2024 elections. The future of our democracy is at stake, and if we don't invest in media, we won't stand a chance.



We're already planning ahead for seasons 4 and 5 on national public TV. We're looking at new ways to collaborate with movement groups and diversify our reporting. Most of all, we're looking to increase our engagement with our audience and move them to action.

A key part of our vision for the future is to increase our budget by 25%. For over a decade, we've been making an incredible show on a shoe-string budget. But in order to maximize our impact, we need to expand our financial resources.

At the end of the day, it's not enough to invest in narratives. We need a platform where they can be seen and heard by millions of Americans. We need a platform like The Laura Flanders Show.



## ENGAGEMENT

We plan to direct more resources to engage more with movements and our audiences to promote democracy.

## MORE REPORTERS

We're looking to work with, and feature on air, diverse reporters from the movements and communities we report on.

## NEW COLLABORATIONS

We're planning new collaborations with organizations like Zebras Unite and Open Collective.

## MORE CO-HOSTS

More co-hosts means a greater diversity of experience and perspectives. This is more important now than ever.

## FUNDRAISING EVENTS

This summer, we began planning the first of what we hope will be many in-person fundraising events.

## FLANDERS AND FRIENDS

We're increasingly working to transition to a model with more recurring co-hosts and field reporters. We call it Flanders and Friends.





The Laura Flanders Show is produced by Curious Communications, Inc, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.





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