

Solidarity Journalism Initiative Helps News Outlets Ethically Cover Underrepresented People

Democracy Fund Expands Grant Support for Training and Resources Around Solidarity Journalism

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- [Solidarity Journalism](#) has received increased attention and interest from news organizations across the country. Since protests for racial justice surged in June 2020, a national discussion has followed about the role of journalism, highlighted by debates about journalistic objectivity, neutrality, and moral commitments. Solidarity is at the forefront of this dialogue.



Led by [Anita Varma, Ph.D.](#), assistant director of Journalism & Media Ethics with the [Markkula Center for Applied Ethics](#) at Santa Clara University, and with support from the Democracy Fund, the Solidarity Journalism Initiative offers free resources, workshops, and individual consultation for journalists, journalism students, and educators. These materials and conversations aim to help journalists represent marginalized communities with an ethic of solidarity.



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Anita Varma, Ph.D.

“At its core, Solidarity Journalism aims to help journalists report stories more accurately,” Varma explained. “When members of marginalized communities have been systematically excluded from stories about their own lived conditions, substantive inclusion—beyond sob stories—becomes an act of solidarity that is both ethical and necessary for journalists to serve the public.”

Solidarity, as Varma defines it in her recent peer-reviewed Journalism Studies piece, is “a commitment to social justice that translates into action.”

“Looking around in 2020, it has never been clearer how important it is for journalism to be aligned with social justice,” said Don Heider, executive director of the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. “Solidarity techniques offer tangible practices for journalists to implement in their reporting both to expose injustice and to help people grasp that systemic change is still possible.”

Solidarity Journalism has become increasingly relevant due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing protests for racial justice, and growing public concern about how the economic downturn disproportionately affects marginalized communities, highlighted by the following:

- 2021 support from the Democracy Fund in the form of an expanded grant will allow Solidarity Journalism to grow and bolster its free training and publicly available web resources, including a dedicated site for journalists, journalism students and educators.
- Solidarity Journalism was featured on CNN.com, the Humanitarian News Research Network, News in Context podcast, Nieman Lab (April 2020-present)
- In June 2020, and in collaboration with Resolve Philly, the Solidarity Journalism Initiative offered free virtual workshops which journalists attended from a range of news organizations and journalism schools.
- Dr. Varma’s dissertation, *Solidarity in Action: A Case Study of Journalistic Humanizing Techniques in the San Francisco Homeless Project*, received the inaugural Penn State Davis Ethics Award in 2019. Her scholarly work has been published in *Journalism Studies*, *Journalism Practice*, and *Journalism*. She has forthcoming contributions to the *Routledge Companion to Media and Poverty* and *A Handbook of Global Media Ethics* (SpringerLink). Dr. Varma is available to provide commentary to members of the media on the expanding and valuable role of Solidarity Journalism.



Anita Varma, assistant director, Journalism & Media Ethics and Social Sector Ethics

About the Democracy Fund Grant

This grant was issued through the Rights and Dignity Working Group, a multi-organizational partnership of The Omidyar Group that is committed to addressing conditions and systems of hate through a values-based, collaborative approach.

Democracy Fund convenes and supports the working group, which is comprised of representatives from The Omidyar Group, Omidyar Network, Democracy Fund, Humanity United, Imaginable Futures, and Luminate.

Created by eBay founder and philanthropist Pierre Omidyar, Democracy Fund is a foundation helping to ensure that our political system can withstand new and unprecedented challenges, and deliver on its promise to the American people. Since 2011 Democracy Fund has invested more than \$125 million in support of a healthy, resilient and diverse democracy with particular focus on modernizing elections, ensuring effective governance, building a vibrant public square and just and inclusive society.

About the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics

Founded in 1986 with a seed grant and initial endowment from Linda and A.C. "Mike" Markkula Jr., the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics brings the traditions of ethical thinking to bear on real world problems. Beyond a full range of programs for the Santa Clara University community, the Center also serves professionals in fields from business to health care, from government to journalism, providing innovative approaches to problems from fake news to privacy protection. Through its website and international collaborations, the Center brings ethical decision-making resources to the wider world. For more information, see <https://www.scu.edu/ethics>.

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