

The Goal of Contemporary Journalism

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In a conversation at The Atlantic Festival, Jeffrey Goldberg, *The Atlantic*'s editor in chief, spoke with Amna Nawaz, a co-anchor and co-managing editor of *PBS NewsHour*, and Joe Kahn, the executive editor of *The New York Times*, about the state of independent media.

In his second term, Donald Trump has escalated his confrontations with the press. *The New York Times* was personally sued by Trump for \$15 billion and, separately, the paper's journalists were recently served subpoenas for reporting on the Qatari jet gifted to the White House. (The Department of Justice subsequently withdrew these subpoenas.) Federal support for PBS was scrapped last year. And as self-styled journalists proliferate online, public trust in the media is at record lows. Evan Smith, the panel's moderator and *The Atlantic*'s managing director for events, referred to the guests as outliers for having weathered these attacks—"You've survived." Nawaz responded, "I wouldn't put it in the past tense. We are *surviving*."

With so many "content creators" and pundits now claiming to be journalists, Goldberg reflected on how the internet has changed the journalism industry. "There was this view for a while—in the last 20 years—that the democratization of media was an unadulterated good thing," he noted. Indeed, for decades, the media was "too stringent about who gets to talk." But with that shift, "standards were lowered. Standards for what counts as actual verified information."

Public distrust in the media, and the president's frequent attacks on reporters and their employers, have made the work of journalism more difficult. "I remember, back in 2017, boarding a plane with my then-4-year-old daughter, and the man ahead of us was wearing a T-shirt that said in block letters on the back: *Journalist. Tree. Rope. Some assembly required*," Nawaz said. To restore public faith, the panelists agreed that journalists need to be transparent about the work that they do. "The further that news and information travels away from the individual human-being journalists who do the work, the less trust there is," Kahn said. "Original reporting is still by far the most valuable thing." He later added: "Kind of objectively, I think we're killing it."

The following conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity.

Evan Smith: What is the job of journalism today? Jeff, we talked about this when you were on my PBS show a few months ago. Here's what you said: "The goal of any quality journalism operation these days is to put as much truth into the universe as possible." Say more about that, please.

Jeffrey Goldberg: I continue to agree with what I said to you on your show. I endorse my statement of six months ago. There's two levels of your question, "What do editors in chief do?," and mostly what we do is keep things moving. Tinker. Try to go deep on the problems that exist day to day. The last 11 years have helped us focus on core tasks. We thought most questions were settled: The First Amendment is the First Amendment; the freedom of the press is vitally important; the media plays an indispensable role in any democracy.

These things have come under pressure. That's bad for civilization, that they're under pressure and that these questions are unsettled. It's good for us in the sense that it helps clarify the purpose. So you wake up every morning with even more of a sense of mission than maybe you would in ordinary times. I am not saying that we are politicized. I always tell our staff this, and I'm borrowing from Marty Baron, the former editor of *The Washington Post*: We're not going to war. We're not part of the resistance. We're just going to work. And as long as you just remember that your job every day is to find out something that's

true, contextualize it, treat it fairly, and write it accurately, that's great. You finished the day by putting something out there. You hope that people are taking to it. You hope that it elevates the ideology of truth. But that's what you do. It's sad that these concepts are under pressure. I can only speak for myself, but it's great to wake up with that purpose.

Smith: Joe, I would agree with Jeff. This is an extraordinary moment. Truth isn't truth. Feelings are facts. Reality is subjective. Conspiracy theories and misinformation are running rampant. It is harder than ever to meet the Goldberg standard, isn't it?

Joe Kahn: It is. And the task for us is to do, as Jeffrey said, to wake up every day, to do original reporting. Ideally, bring new information to light on all the stories that matter every day, and to get it out there, increasingly in forms that people want to consume that information. And that mission is under stress, but it's more critical than ever. And it makes the job even more vital to American democracy than it ever was. And I would really emphasize the original reporting and new information. We're in an environment where people feel like they can get information in their feeds nonstop, 24 hours a day. It's buzzing at them on their phones. They're hearing it in their AirPods, but actual new original reporting that relies on expert reporters who are going to the scene of news, who are asking tough questions, is in short supply, and it's on us to find a way to get that to more people.

Smith: Amna, the stakes could not be higher in this extraordinary moment. Or, at least, that's what we all keep saying over and over. Informed communities strengthen democracy. Uninformed communities weaken democracy. It's a little grandiose-sounding. But speaking of truth, that is true. Those are the stakes.

Amna Nawaz: Information is power. That is a basic fact. And in a democracy, an informed electorate is what powers our democracy. That's also a basic fact. I couldn't agree more with everything that Joe and Jeff just said. I look at it as the advice I got from my very first boss in journalism. He told me that to be a good journalist is a lot like just being a good person in life: Most of it is showing up. You have to show up. And that means showing up on the ground. It means going to cover the stories that not everybody is covering. It means reporting from the front lines. It also means showing up when you're able to have access to someone in a position of power to hold them accountable. The way I think about my job every single day is: I'm not asking questions that I necessarily want the answers to. I'm asking questions on behalf of everyone out there who can't be in that room, who can't put questions to that person in power. The threats that we're up against now, they're not like anything we faced in recent times. I compare it to some of the stuff that I've seen covering other countries, other autocratic, anti-democratic leaders in other nations. The same hallmarks are happening here now. It's a worrying time for journalists, but the best we can do every day is show up and, as I like to say, just put something good out into the world every day.

[Paul Farhi: Trump's campaign to crush the media](#)

Smith: Jeff, the job of journalism, isn't it also to set an agenda of sorts to tee up the things for people that they should stop and pay attention to in their busy lives? The curatorial piece of this, the choices we make, that is also part of our job.

Goldberg: There was this view for a while, in the last 20 years, that the democratization of media was an unadulterated good thing. Obviously, the First Amendment allows anyone with a piece of paper and a pencil to become a journalist. That's great. And what happened was the barriers to entry lowered, obviously because of the internet, and everybody thought that was a good thing. But standards were lowered. Standards for what counts as actual verified information. It actually—believe it or not—takes training and practice and more practice and more practice to get it right as a reporter. You can't just jump into this on the deep end. We were having a very polite dinner party in the media probably until 20, 25 years ago. And then, somebody described to me, the barbarians put ladders up and came up and started squatting on the dining-room table. And this person, obviously an older journalist, thought this was a straight-up bad idea. We probably, as an institution, were too stringent about who gets to talk and who doesn't get to talk, or who doesn't have their voices amplified.

But now, it is a chaos of misinformation and bad motivation. I'm not saying we're perfect. God knows. Right? But we've got to go back to finding a balance, and we have to explain to people how we do what we do and why we do what we do. Show the work. We have succeeded on any day in which we find out something new that is true and tell that truth, despite the fact that other powerful people don't want us to tell it. I would just add something to what Joe said. We had Maggie Haberman here yesterday, and John Swan. And Maggie gets a certain amount of criticism, as any famous reporter gets, but something Joe said just kind of triggered this in me. It's like, *half* of the things we know about what the Trump administration does is because Maggie has told us. Seriously. I'll line up a million bloggers and Twitch streamers or whatever and put them against one Maggie. And I know that Maggie's delivered more right than they've ever delivered. They deliver attitude. But Maggie's got facts.

Kahn: Original reporting is still by far the most valuable thing. And it still breaks through—real knowledge and sources and doggedness on the beat and the ability to kind of cut through the spin. People ask, *What's going on with trust in the media?* What even is “the media”? The media is now thousands of influencers online. It's opinion journalists. It's self-appointed arbiters of information of all kinds. A tiny, tiny fraction of them actually do original reporting. And that's what matters more than anything else. And it does break through. Because it's verified information. It's factual. It matters. It's important. And people like Maggie have a track record of getting it right, cycle after cycle, story after story. It matters more than ever. And it does break through.

Nawaz: Can I just add to that too? I think when we talk about the way the content moves these days, the fact that our original journalism is out there competing in the same messy and noisy landscape as millions of other content creators, you know, doing TikTok dances in their kitchens. But at the same time, I have this conversation with some very powerful podcasters recently who are not and would not identify themselves as journalists. They rely on our work. They use our original journalism to fuel their conversations and to have something that they can rely on to talk about to their hundreds of millions of followers. And so I think that's not necessarily a bad thing. There's an amplification to the work because it gets out in various forms.

Smith: But they're not the same thing.

Nawaz: They are not the same thing. And I think most of them would say that they are not journalists.

Smith: Joe, let me ask you, in the context of *The New York Times* specifically—because *The New York Times* is one of one,, as opposed to one of many,, as a news source for so many people around this country and around the world—d—do you think, as it relates to setting an agenda, you are meeting the moment? Are you making the right choices, and are you framing your journalism out to the world in a way that the agenda is being set the way it should be said?

Goldberg: Just say yes.

Kahn: Kind of objectively, I think we're killing it.

Smith: That may be the only quote from this panel.

Kahn: The big battle, in my view, is both to keep the best reporters on the most sensitive subjects at a time when they're absolutely, relentlessly under attack. Motivated and protected by the full force of our security personnel—physical and cybersecurity—and legal support when they're almost inevitably going to come under legal pressure for doing the kind of reporting that matters. And then also simultaneously finding a way to get it out there in people's feeds in a way that they want to consume it, and not waiting and relying for them to come to us. And we're doing both of those things at scale at the moment. We have a long way to go, but I'm really proud of the work that we've been able to do in this environment. And by the way, I think we're winning, honestly. We're under a lot of pressure,, and I mean, all of us,, wwe're past the point where people were worried about whether good--quality free press can stand up in this moment in America and still show its resolve, provide good original reporting, withstand the pressure. We're doing it. And that particular pillar of democracy is strong.

Smith: Well, certainly at the national level. We'll come to local in a little bit. I'm not sure that it's exactly the same in the middle of the country. I want to ask, though, Jeff, about the people on the receiving end of this. Our readers and our viewers in communities around the country, are they paying attention? Is this a conversation, back to the dinner--party idea, that only we're having? Or are they actually in the conversation as well about the importance of a free press and the state of journalism? Do they share the view that a free press is important? Do they get that the work we do matters? Do they even understand what that work is? That's a question I've got.

Goldberg: It's an interesting question because,, again, I would just echo what Joe said, *the media* is a useless term for the type of media we're talking about. Sometimes, we tend to believe that we do our work and the work is self-explanatory. And everybody has the same civic understanding of the importance of the press. The kind of Jeffersonian understanding: Better to have a free press than a government, even. It's not true. Can I tell you a very quick story?

Smith: Sure, please.

Goldberg: It's The Atlantic Festival. I can do it. I'm allowed. I paid for this microphone!

(Laughter.)

Smith: The name's on the building.

Goldberg: This is a really revelatory moment for me, and it changed my understanding of what we have to do to explain the importance of our work and how we do our work. So, in 2020, six years ago, I wrote a story about Donald Trump's attitude toward veterans and the military. The shorthand of it became "suckers" and "losers." That he had called WWI veterans buried in a cemetery that he didn't want to visit because it was raining: He said they're "suckers" and "losers." The story was based on my reporting from four anonymous sources. I cited four anonymous sources in the story. Subsequently, by the way, John Kelly, the former White House chief of staff, Marine general, came out and publicly validated it. So, I can say that, but at the time, it was an anonymously sourced story. The White House did what the White House does, right? This was right before the election in 2020. A lot of pressure, a lot of heat, a lot of attacks. I was speaking a couple of months after the story came out, to a group, and someone gets up, an intelligent person, and says something I don't understand: "Why would you publish a story based on information given to you by people you don't even know?" And I didn't understand the question, and I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "Well, you said you had four anonymous sources, but you don't even know who they are."

(Laughter.)

My instinct was to laugh, too, but like, it's not his fault. And I said "No, no, they're not anonymous to me. I know them. I know them." Then I explained the methodology of the information gathering and how we use fact-checking and verified it. And at first I was like, "Oh, wow, that guy doesn't know much." And then I thought, "Wait, if people don't understand what I'm doing, that's on me as much as it is on them." And by the way, we're going to feel this more and more. This is already happening in Europe, where nefarious forces are arguing that what we would think of as probing sources—knocking on doors, calling people up repeatedly, trying to get them to talk to us—this is becoming redefined as harassment, not reporting in a democracy. So we're going to have to do a much better job of explaining sources and methods and the importance of it. I go back to this Maggie point. You're criticizing *The New York Times* for X, Y, and Z. But the only reason you know about X, Y, and Z is because of *The New York Times*.

Smith: Amna, you mentioned threats. I want to talk to the three of you about the threats in the world right now. They come from people in power and they take many forms. They're financial. They're legal. They're political. And, amazingly, they're physical. It's not lost on me that the three institutions represented on this stage are exhibits A, B, and C of the new normal. *The Atlantic* is the subject at the moment of a defamation suit by the FBI director. We stand by our reporting. We're vigorously defending against that suit. Earlier this year, subpoenas were delivered to the homes of *New York Times* reporters

after reporting on the new Qatari-gifted Air Force One. Subsequently, the Department of Justice “voluntarily” withdrew those subpoenas. Voluntarily in big, fluffy air quotes. PBS has been defunded, and yet you’re still standing here.

Nawaz: Yes, we are.

Smith: But I also need to say that you’re the outliers, in the sense that you’ve survived what I’ve just described. A lot of news organizations don’t have the resources or the stomach to stand up for themselves. They’re either folding in advance, anticipatory obedience, or after the fact. We live in capitulation nation as it relates to these threats. A lot of knee-bending going on, a lot of settlements being paid, a lot of favor being curried. Joe, when you look out at our industry, do you think we’re showing our best selves in response to some of these threats?

Nawaz: Can I just say, I’m speaking only on behalf of PBS: Yeah, I think we are. And here’s why. One of the reasons is, as you mentioned, we’ve been defunded. The president made it very clear from the get that he wanted to defund all public media. And we, as part of our mission, remain free for anyone to access all of our content any of the time. So nothing goes behind a paywall. You don’t subscribe to see our journalism. I’m not sure I share Joe’s optimism that we are winning, I will say, and you use the word you’ve survived, I wouldn’t put it in the past tense. We are *surviving*. But I think we are very much in it. And I don’t think we know how this ends up until we get through it, whatever that looks like. The only way out, to underscore the point you made, is through. And that’s what we have to do every day. It is the journalism that we do every day. It’s the 330 local member stations fighting for their own survival out there on the PBS network. But I am not as optimistic because I’ve seen what’s happened in other countries. We talk about threats and we say it kind of vaguely as if it’s become normal because it has. It is a feature, it is not a bug, of the current political climate.

And you go all the way back to a president who ran and called journalists “scum” and “enemies of the people.” I remember back in 2017, boarding a plane with my then-4-year-old daughter and the man ahead of us wearing a T-shirt that said in block letters on the back: *Journalist. Tree. Rope. Some assembly required.* And me praying that my 4-year-old would not start to sound out the words, as she was doing at the time. That is not normal and it has become normal, and we’re seeing it show up in polling with people increasingly saying things like, *Yeah, maybe the government should be able to say when journalists can’t report on something or should have to take a story down because it risks national security.* We are in a new normal for this nation.

Smith: Yeah. I mean, Joe, I’m going to take Amna’s words here seriously. It does not do justice to the severity or the significance of these threats to say they’re mere shots across the bow. This is a sea change.

Kahn: I agree with that. I think just the price of defending against these lawsuits that Trump is throwing around with his very large and essentially full-time legal staff, suing everybody who writes an article that puts him on the defensive in some way. We have a \$15 billion lawsuit from Trump. It’s a full-time activity for some of our legal staff, for outside legal counsel. These things cost millions of dollars to defend. *The New York Times* is in a pretty strong position, so we can defend them. But if you’re another type of organization and you don’t have those resources, then the threat of a lawsuit or the existence of a lawsuit is itself a deterrent.

Smith: It changes behavior.

Kahn: It does change it, and it does have an effect. So I acknowledge that. When I’m saying that I think we’re winning, I think if you still step back and look at the overall information environment in this country, it still is vigorous. It still wants to be free. There is a huge amount of debate unfolding in the public space. There’s still really good original reporting being done by quality journalists, both locally and nationally every day, and it is not going to be suppressed. That’s what I mean when we’re winning: It won’t be suppressed. That doesn’t mean that the cost of defending it doesn’t go up. But I’m really confident in the essential, kind of, American essence that this is a country that wants free speech, that’s going to protect free speech. And Donald Trump or any other president isn’t going to shut that down.

Smith: Amna, I want to come back to you because I'm personally obsessed with one aspect of these threats, in particular. Women journalists are a special target in this moment. I'm going to say their names. Rachel Scott of ABC the other day, Kristen Holmes of CNN, Catherine Lucey from Bloomberg, to whom the president said "Quiet, piggy." Kristen Welker threatened the other day with sanctions by the FCC for merely saying on the air that the president's endorsements had not gone super well. Maggie Haberman, always. All for doing their jobs. We seem to have almost legitimized or normalized that in our response, seems like. I can't understand why there's not more outrage in the press corps every time one of these women who asks a question of the president is treated the way she's treated, why everybody en masse doesn't walk out.

Nawaz: I take your point. I think I share your outrage and your concern. I will say, hats off to the women who are in that position every day, because I know the only thing they're thinking about in that moment is the next question. That's the only thing that they're thinking about, because they're pros and that's what they show up to do. So I don't even know that they want everybody to walk out. They would rather stay and continue to put tough questions to the president to be able to get answers on behalf of the people they serve. Again, it is a feature, not a bug. And that kind of misogyny, that kind of focus on women, we've seen much more aggressive stances against reporters of color, female reporters of color in particular, over the last 10-odd years. That is also a hallmark of autocratic and anti-democratic leaders around the world. There have been books and studies published on this, and it is becoming normalized, as you say. I mean, we can shout it out. We can point it out every time it happens. But because it happens so frequently and because there is so much else to cover, and there's so many other headlines that those reporters themselves under attack want to focus on, we move on.

Smith: I'm glad you brought up Marty Baron's famous line from the first administration. Something to the effect of, as you said, *Our job is not to go to war. Our job is to go to work.* That's the response to these threats from your perspective, whether it's the chair of the FCC or the president's social-media feed. We fight back with journalism, right?

Goldberg: But going back to this point you're making about who's doing well and who's not. The foundation of everything here is ownership that is stalwart. Marty Baron then was working for a Jeff Bezos who believed in the mission. That was then. Now is now. I mean, strangely, I'm the recipient of his moral incognizance, in the sense that we've hired close to 40 *Washington Post* journalists in the last year because they want to do journalism. But it all has to do with Sulzberger's understanding the purpose of their institution and willing to stand up for the institution. And if you don't mind me saying, it has to do with the owner of *The Atlantic*, who is stalwart about these things. And you've made the point. There's a lot of different institutions on the TV side, on the print side, that simply don't have strong, ethical, brave leaders. And I would say—I don't even know if she's here, but I'm saying it anyway. And I'm not blowing smoke at all; I really feel this—that we could not do anything if we didn't know that the ownership had our back. I would only say, the perfect example of this is when I got involved in that Signal mess last year.

Nawaz: Wait, what happened? Something happened?

(Laughter.)

Smith: Everybody, cancel your 10 o'clock.

Goldberg: When I got involved in that situation, it was very, very fraught. I mean, our lawyers had lawyers, and those lawyers had lawyers. Right now our general counsel is having a sharp intake of breath because he never knows what I'm going to say about this. But the very brief version of that—and I think Joe has probably experienced this and Amna has experienced this with PBS management—eventually the information reaches the ownership level. And *Here's the situation*, and *This is what we want to do*. And the word from on high was, *If it's true and it's important, publish it*. And that sounds like basic journalism ownership. But not these days. And so that is the crucial difference. I'm very, very happy to have all these colleagues from my former newspaper *The Washington Post* join *The Atlantic*. I'm not happy about what happened at *The Washington Post*. We need strong newspapers in America, and you only have strong

newspapers if you have strong leadership and ownership.

Kahn: Right. Can I add one thing to that?

Smith: You may, of course.

Kahn: *The Atlantic* I know is celebrating its 169th year. *The New York Times* yesterday celebrated its 175th. So we're ahead of you by a little bit.

Goldberg: But we're gonna catch up. We're right on your tail.

(*Laughter.*)

Kahn: We both have, in our mission statement, the word *independence*. Independent for 169 years, independent for 175 years. It's another word that we use a lot, *independent*. And I'm not sure that everybody always appreciates what independence actually means. We know what it means to be independent of political partisan views. And we profess ourselves as journalists not to be partisans. And that's true. But it also means independence of ownership, honestly. And the independence of ownership is increasingly important in this moment. And PBS experienced that because you receive money from the government and now you don't. And that's a pressure point. If you're owned by a giant corporation that has a lot of other interests that are also regulated by the government, and they can manipulate or pull those levers, that is also not true independence. True independence is financial stability and independent ownership that does not have too many other interests that are at the discretion of the government to interfere with. And protecting independent journalism really does mean protecting those independent owners and supporting those independent owners.

Nawaz: To that point, can I just say—to underscore your point about the fact that we as journalists can't do our jobs without backers who want us to do the journalism, and underscoring your point that people want good journalism—the way that PBS viewers, *viewers like you*, stepped up.

Goldberg: We're one minute from handing out tote bags, by the way.

Nawaz: I'm available outside, if you need help navigating to the website. But it does underscore both those points because people wanted to see good journalism. When our funding got cut, people did step up there. That is heartening.

Goldberg: By the way, just to add, I'm sure most of you are *New York Times* subscribers, the day the Sulzbergers buy rocket ships is the day you should start worrying, right?

Smith: Right.

Goldberg: That's a bad sign.

Smith: Joe, you mentioned trust earlier, and you talked about how hard it is in an environment in which “the media” is not what we always thought of as “the media.” But I want to push on this a little bit because I do look at the Gallup surveys every year of the American public's trust in media. Two years ago, the annual survey showed that 31 percent of the public had a “great deal” of trust or a “fair amount” of trust in the media. This was a historic low. This was in 2024. And I thought, *Well, we're in the basement. No place to go but up.* They do the survey in 2025; turns out there's another basement. Now we're down to 28 percent. This is the new historic low in trust in the media. By the way, in case you're wondering, the high was 72 percent, in 1976, 50 years ago. “No trust at all” in this last survey was 34 percent, a third of the country. And for those of us who live in red states, I do, that are run by Republican leaders—in case you're wondering, they did it by party—Republicans as a party, 8 percent have a “great deal” of trust in the media. How did we get here? It's not just the confusion between traditional journalism and people on TikTok. How did we get here?

[Jessica Yellin: The awkward adolescence of a media revolution](#)

Kahn: We live in a deeply polarized and partisan moment with a very confusing landscape that is called media. But there are some elements that are real and they're challenges for us. You mentioned the Gallup survey. There's also been a lot of Reuters work on this, and we've looked at those numbers really closely. And it's very interesting that the further that news and information travels away from the individual human-being journalists who do the work, the less trust there is. So that most trust is still to the credible, hardworking, independent, real reporters on the beat, doing the job, knocking on doors, getting information and relaying that information, ideally in conversational terms, directly to the people who are consuming it. The more you move away from it toward platforms, toward social media, and at the low end of the spectrum, filtered through artificial intelligence, the less trust there is in the quality of that information. That's all called media. But for us, what we're trying to do to address this is to make more transparent the work that individual journalists are doing on the ground, putting their own expertise out there, making themselves vulnerable to get the information and then conveying that to the users of that as best as possible. Because it's human beings; it's a value that human beings bring to help explain and unearth new information that I think can help us.

Smith: So that's how we got here, and that's also where we go from here.

Kahn: I think.

Goldberg: Don't forget, there are active campaigns being run against the idea of independent journalism.

Smith: 100 percent percent.

Goldberg: This is what I meant before. Just because we're not interested in that war doesn't mean that war isn't happening. And so people like Steve Bannon, and people on the left too, for that matter, it's in their interest to undermine through lying the nature of what we do. And we again sit here and say the work speaks for itself, but the work doesn't. But we also have to speak up. We have to almost lobby for ourselves and say, *Look, there are people whose interest it is to undermine the idea that there's some kind of fair truth out there.*

Smith: Let's accept that there has been an intentional effort, call it the last 10 years, to undermine faith and confidence in a lot of institutions that hold people in power accountable. The media is just one. The plan is working as intended. But isn't it also true that we own some of this as an industry? The call's coming from inside the house? We've done some of this to ourselves.

Nawaz: I think, to some of the points that have been made earlier, I think we've taken for granted the idea that people would just trust the information that we put out there because they always had. There was an idea that these are credible legacy institutions.

Smith: Right.

Nawaz: To your point, back in 1976, the trust was high and we thought that would just continue. The 1976 media landscape was a universe away from where we are today. I mean, I wasn't even born. Sorry, Jeff.

(Laughter.)

Goldberg: I actually didn't hear what she said. I don't know what she's apologizing for. I'll just accept your apology.

Smith: Turn on your hearing aid.

Nawaz: I will say, when you ask people about the media, I think there's sort of a generalized—yes, there's merchants of misinformation, people who attack the media as mistrustful and are agenda-driven. And so they automatically say, *Yes, we don't trust the media the same way we don't trust Congress or we don't trust the Supreme Court.* All institutions are under that same skepticism. When you ask people

individually, do you trust *The New York Times*? Do you trust *The Atlantic*?

Smith: Well, PBS always indexes at the top of that list.

Nawaz: We are second among most trusted brands right now, second only to the Weather Channel. Shoutout to the Weather Channel. And I think the same thing is true at the local level. To Joe's point, people trust the people in their own community. They trust their local journalist, people they know, and we have to work harder on building those connections.

Smith: So we have a minute left. Let's solve the local journalism problem in one minute.

Goldberg: But by the way, the solution to the national problem is at the local level. Which is to say that if there's one problem that I would identify as our own fault, it's hiring journalists who are trained at the same 50 colleges, and they have the same set of assumptions about the world. And, you know, *The Harvard Crimson* is great, but not everybody should come from the *Harvard Crimson* to our newsrooms. And there are a certain set of liberal assumptions that come in more than conservative assumptions. And to solve the problem, you recruit journalists and train journalists in places where people think slightly differently. It doesn't mean that you can bring in people who can be fair and balanced, to borrow a slogan, into your newsrooms who just come from different backgrounds and have a different set of baseline assumptions. We'd be better off.

Kahn: From *The Daily Pennsylvanian*.

Goldberg: Yeah, no, no, the working-class *Daily Pennsylvanian*. And you solve that problem—we're really on the back foot on that—by having robust journalism presences in red states, in communities where we don't draw journalists from: veterans, evangelical Christians, so on. And we have to do a better job of diversifying in all kinds of ways, the people who come in. Because they bring in their own experiences and they question implicit assumptions that people make. I'm not saying that there's a liberal bias in the stories you read day to day. I think that there are—if you're not careful about it, and I know that Joe tries to be careful about it, I try to be careful about it—just unspoken assumptions that people make about the way the world is organized. And that's not great. That's not the main problem. The main problem is that there's a war against us, and that war is against the idea of truth. But these are things that we have to think about.

Smith: So we end where we began. I would love to have more time to talk to you all, but we have a full day ahead of us. Please give a big hand to Amna Nawaz, Joe Kahn, and Jeffrey Goldberg.