

## ISOJ 2020: Day 3, Keynote Session

### *Gender, race and politics: How The 19<sup>th</sup> will seek equity in and beyond the newsroom*

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- **Keynote Speakers:** [Emily Ramshaw](#) & [Amanda Zamora](#), founders, The 19th
  - **Chair:** [Matt Thompson](#), editor-in-chief, *Reveal* from the Center for Investigative Reporting
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**Rosental Alves** Good morning, America. Well, I should change my trademark Hollywood-inspired salutation and say "good morning world," because we have had more than 4,000 people from all over the world tuning in for ISOJ online. So it's really a global conference, and I couldn't be happier than I am now. Thank you all for joining me today as we come together virtually.

Before we begin our keynote session, our fascinating keynote session today, I would like to do a few housekeeping reminders. The panels, keynote sessions, workshops will all be interpreted into Spanish. If you'd like to join in and watch in Spanish, click the interpretation globe in the meeting options down below on Zoom and select the Spanish-language channel. Please also note that we are live streaming on ISOJ, YouTube channel, Kight Center and ISOJ channels. You can find those links that ISOJ.org. So if you have any tech issues with Zoom and want to go back, go to YouTube please. If you are having any further tech issues, please contact our tech helpline via WhatsApp or text at 1-817-526-0179. Also, please remember to follow and use hashtag #ISOJ2020. Let's tweet about it people. Let's tweet about it. In ISOJ in Austin, we normally have a big screen there with the tweets rolling, and it's very exciting. So go to tweet and tweet about this and the other sessions, and be connected with us on social media.

I now want to take a moment to give an incredibly huge thank you to our sponsors. Thanks to Knight Foundation, Google News Initiative, Microsoft, Univision, JSK fellowships at Stanford, the Trust Project and the Moody College of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin for your contributions and support.

Now, I would like to introduce you and to welcome our keynote speaker is Emily Ramshaw and Amanda Zamora. We are so proud of them. You know, I have never seen a launch of a news startup in the United States that has been so successful even before launching. It's really incredible what you're going to be learning now about this incredible, fantastic project. But to chair and moderate this session, I'm calling Matt Thompson, editor in chief for Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting, who was a great keynote speaker for ISOJ last year. So Matt is with you now.

**Matt Thompson** Excellent. Hello, thank you so much, Rosental. Thank you to everyone watching and for joining us. I am delighted and honored to be joined by Emily Ramshaw and Amanda Zamora. Emily is the co-founder and CEO of the 19th, and Amanda is also the co-founder and the publisher of the 19th. Emily and Amanda previously worked together as the editor in chief and chief audience officer, respectively, of the Texas Tribune after a decorated career in various parts of the news industry. They have already assembled an amazing team, a veritable Marvel Cinematic Universe of journalists to

launch the 19th, which I think is a factor in the already sparkling launch that Rosental mentioned. So, Emily and Amanda, good morning. Hello.

**Emily Ramshaw** Morning. We're so happy to be with you. Thank you to Rosental for including us, as always. And Matt, we're super excited that you get to be our moderator.

**Matt Thompson** Likewise, super excited to moderate, so I'll dive right in. We're in the middle of some untold number of overlapping catastrophes here in the U.S. And what is it like? How does one launch a giant new news operation in the middle of all of this?

**Emily Ramshaw** Amanda, why don't you start?

**Amanda Zamora** Very carefully. Actually, there have been a lot of silver linings about launching in this moment in time. You know, the idea for the 19th, Emily can tell you a little bit more about how the genesis of the 19th, but we knew that there were a few things that were going to be really core to the 19th to sort of think differently about how we do journalism, politics and policy journalism, particularly.

One was that we were going to really focus on diversity inside and out from the way that we hired to the way that we think about the stories. We really wanted to think about telling nuanced stories about the lived experiences of women as an electorate instead of, you know, starting or focusing exclusively on the horse race or the politics of things. So diversity being really key. Being empathetic, and I think that has been a key ingredient internally, as we have really tried to empathize with each other. Startups are hard. They're even harder in these circumstances when you're building a team from scratch remotely, when mothers on our team have children who suddenly don't have school to go to daycare to attend. So empathy has already been a very valuable kind of ingredient, I think. And intentionality. I think really doing everything that we can to be very intentional about how we go about hiring, how we go about developing the journalism and developing the products, and trying to be as sane as we can about not biting off more than we can chew. That said, we, as Emily already mentioned, we're definitely in startup mode, and it's been a lot. Emily, what would you say?

**Emily Ramshaw** I mean, I would just say it was never in the cards to launch in a global pandemic. Those of you who know us know that we are actually relatively risk-averse people, even though we're super excited about this startup. And I think, look, we had a moment back in March where we stopped and sort of looked at each other and said in the height of COVID then, now it's even worse than it was then, but in the height of COVID then we stopped and said, "Should we just hold off? We've done all this hard work fundraising. We're starting to build a team. We're going to have to hire all these people by Zoom. Should we just wait a year?" And then within a couple of weeks it became abundantly clear that this moment was even more critical for women than we had imagined, and the disproportionate effects of this pandemic on women in virtually every arena other than mortality rates was too enormous for us to overlook.

In many ways, we actually sped up our plans. We had a sort of weekly newsletter that was largely serving a marketing function and suddenly that was the news gathering tool. We started hiring and hiring. We started building this incredible team. And then in the midst of all of that, we entered into what I hope is really a modern day civil rights movement. And then thank God we had gotten off the ground because those stories were at the intersection of gender and racial justice were so important for us.

So it has not been what we planned. This has been really, really hard. It's been hard from the standpoint of fundraising, and corporate underwriting, and the business model that we had counted on. It's been hard to build products, build a website, manage design and each other over Slack and Zoom. You know, Amanda and I a few weeks ago finally got to start being in the same room together for the first time in a really long time, and I can tell you that was bliss. But this is totally uncharted waters, as Amanda said, there are a lot of silver linings. Happy to talk about those in a little bit, but this is a totally surreal thing to be building your life's work product amid this environment.

**Matt Thompson** Well, I want to come back to some of the ways that you are launching and some of what you put into your launch. But I want to start, so I'm eager enough to read more of your coverage that I want to satisfy myself for the moment by asking you more about how you are developing it, what your lens is? So first there are any number of territories to cover right now. It's an election year. Obviously COVID-19 and a pandemic is really just shaking the entire world, especially the U.S. and right now where you are and in Texas. There's any number of directions that you could turn. What are your principal coverage priorities as you start?

**Emily Ramshaw** I mean, I think for us, we are looking at everything through the lens of what we call the asterisk. If you've seen our logo, you know that when we were devising the name of the 19th, we knew we were really interested in this sort of naming concept around the 19th Amendment. But we also knew from day one that the 19th Amendment really only extended the vote to white women. It took another four decades for women of color to be extended some of those same rights. And as we all know, voter suppression is an enduring challenge and problem around the country. So we conceived of this idea of the asterisk as part of our logo, taking back the 19th Amendment for all women, giving all women the opportunity to see themselves reflected in the media that aims to get them more deeply engaged in our democracy.

And so as we conceive of storytelling, we think about and we actually use this in conversation all the time with our team. What's the asterisk in this story? So for us, it's not just a story if there are women involved in the story. It's not just a story because a woman is quoted because it features a woman. For us, we think about the asterisk as this idea of what's the disparity? What's the discrepancy? What's the way in which women are disproportionately affected by this, whether it's our economic structures and systems, whether it's our health care system, whether it's representative government? Our entry point for a story is the 19th asterisk, which is that gender lens. Amanda, do you want to add to that?

**Amanda Zamora** Yeah, no, I mean, I think that's pretty much it, and I think the other thing is just really being intentional. I think a lot of the mainstream coverage talks a lot about women. It's not that women are not represented in the news, but we're really trying to speak to and with women about how these policies affect them in their everyday lives. And so you're going to see, obviously, us covering the 2020 election and how women are running for office and getting to the ballot. But we're also going to be really trying to examine how they're affected by these issues. We've got, Errin, who when the pandemic hit and she became sort of locked in Philadelphia and not able to get around, came up with this incredible series called Portraits of a Pandemic that was really just trying to focus on women who are at the forefront of trying to deal with this pandemic in their own communities, whether it's in education, or health care, or any of these other ways. So, yeah, I think everything that Emily said and just really also that humanization of the lived experiences of many different women as they're affected by these issues.

**Matt Thompson** And that's Errin Haines, who's been already doing some coverage under the banner of the 19th at The Washington Post, and it's been tremendous to see. I'm curious. So maybe an odd question, but I was curious to look backwards almost for a second. I'm really interested in the question. How do you think, it's hard to project forward given how much uncertainty there is around everything, what do you see missing as the press covered 2016, four years ago? How do you think that coverage might have played differently, or what might you have done differently if the 19th existed then?

**Amanda Zamora** That's a very good question, I mean, the hallmark of the 2016 election, perhaps, is just how surprised, you know, the nation was by just how that campaign played out. And I think a lot of the headlines and coverage was just, you know, of shock and disbelief. And the reality is that there is something more fundamental at play here, and we're still seeing that play out on the trail now, I mean, even more so. You know, I think perhaps it would have been really getting on the ground. Instead of just focusing on, you know. We are not in the business of creating commodity news at the 19th. So, you know, a lot of the news that people are accustomed to seeing in their news feeds, in their Twitter feeds and the tweets and this and that, yes, it's relevant and important to try to understand and put that in context. And as much as it's really changing the dynamics of how campaigns are shaped and how people are persuaded or manipulated by mass media, but at the same time, like what's still fundamentally matters is how are women as voters coming to the election? What is motivating them to vote? What is motivating them to stay at home? How are they engaging or not engaging in the democratic process? And I think starting really from there is something that we're already focused on doing. And I just I wonder if we had existed and really approached a lot of the hyperbole and dramatic kind of coverage of the election, but from that ground-up level, how things might have been different. I don't know, Emily, what do you think?

**Emily Ramshaw** I mean, I was on maternity leave with my baby daughter during the 2016 election during, like, really the height of the 2016 election, in the lead up. And I remember honestly, that's the first time I'd even considered that there ought to be something like the 19th. And I remember all of the headlines were about electability and likability, which are two concepts for me that are exclusively reserved for women in that really outrageous way. And I try to think about, I mean, Amanda talked about covering the electorate. For us, we get to steer clear of the sort of outrage patrol headlines, and we get to focus deeply on nuance and the reality that women are not monolithic and that their views are complex. Amanda talked about empathy a couple of minutes ago. And I hate to use this word again, but empathy in coverage is exceedingly important to me, to us and to our team. Really understanding not just how women vote, but why they vote, the way they vote, what the circumstances are that are devising their set of lived experiences and beliefs. And I think having the ability to go deep on that. We've hired a founding team of reporters who are all over the country. They're not just in New York and D.C. They're in Orlando. They're in Des Moines. You know it's really exciting for us to be able to have reporters on the ground who get to cover women in parts of the country that are often treated, we know too well, sort of as flyover country.

**Emily Ramshaw** Within industry, both of you have been leaders in shaping how we think about audiences, not just the coverage itself, but also the publics that we're creating that we're reaching. And I'm curious, how are you thinking about and prioritizing those different segments of the public that you're hoping to reach and empower?

**Emily Ramshaw** To be clear, Amanda is the national expert on audience, not me. So take it away.

**Amanda Zamora** I mean, this is hard. I think this is one of the things I most appreciate about working in nonprofit news. First of all, I think this is another reason why, just coming back to why the 19th exists the way that it does. We did evaluate the model. We didn't necessarily assume we were going to do another nonprofit, even though that's totally in our DNA at this point. But we chose to be a nonprofit because we think that that affords us the time and the space to A invest in the kind of substantive journalism and steer clear of a lot of the commodity news that commercial newsrooms are forced to chase sometimes to scale and gather the advertising revenue that they need. And B to also be super intentional about the audience development strategy. So we do think about our audiences in two key segments. The core audience that we need to build, and those are women who are probably more likely to read the news, who are probably already civically engaged. They're voting. They're educated. They're sort of plugged in. We need those readers in order to be sustainable, to monetize, to gather the corporate sponsorship, to get a critical mass to our owned and operated platforms, and to convert members in a way that we can see that what we're doing is working.

If we do a good job of growing that core audience, that revenue allows us to extend beyond and to gather this big tent audience, and that's where we really go, where the journalism requires us to go so that we are talking to women of all backgrounds, whether it's geographically, ideologically, socioeconomically, figuring out what redistribution means for us, what partnerships mean for us, going into community with events and stories that are relevant to those communities. So that kind of audience development takes real effort and resourcing, and it doesn't happen without you deciding that it's going to happen. And so that's how we kind of think about our audiences on two tracks. Like how do we build a core that we can kind of build habits and relationships with people who are inclined to want to read the 19th day in and day out, and then how can we monetize that audience so that we can extend beyond and really go and meet a bigger audience where they are.

**Matt Thompson** Speaking of audiences, we have one watching right now, and I'm going to encourage everyone who's watching, if you've got questions, go ahead and start typing them into the chat. We're not going to have a sharp break between this discussion and the audience Q&A. I will try to DJ in some questions from the chat as our discussion rolls forward. So go ahead and start typing in your questions. I will now take moderator's prerogative to ask another one, though. What does a nonprofit business model, what does your business model look like? What are you hoping it will look like as the 19th develops?

**Emily Ramshaw** Yeah, I mean, I think the hope for us, honestly, is that we can take the best of the Texas Tribune's business model and try to scale it to a national organization. And so what that means is hopefully very similar in model. It's philanthropic support, individual philanthropic support. It's foundation support, sustaining support from philanthropic foundations. It's corporate underwriting. It is a robust membership model of the sort of viewers like you, not pay to play, but support us with \$19 a year or \$19 a month. And then the sort of fifth bucket is ideally live events.

And obviously I'd say the pandemic has put two of those revenue lines into sort of more questionable territory. Obviously the live events piece. We're doing a lot with virtual events and so far working pretty hard to monetize those with corporate underwriting. But I think corporate underwriting, like any nonprofit or any for-profit in this moment, the corporate sphere is a giant question mark right now as companies reel from the fallout of the

pandemic and try to think about and reevaluate their budgets. So we are really lucky that we doubled down on philanthropy in a big way in the very early days of our founding of the 19th. That's put us in a safe spot and probably a spot that's better than most to withstand what could be a couple of years of this pandemic environment. We're hoping that the corporate environment rebounds faster than that, but we are working our damndest to make sure that we're protecting our team for the long haul here.

**Matt Thompson** To turn to some of the questions that were getting. One of them is is just related. We've just asking if the 19th is going to be subscription based?

**Amanda Zamora** No, free to read and free to republish. That's actually really important to us. We feel like it's a public service. We want to make sure that everyone who is invested in and impacted by the stories that we tell is able to read them and share them widely. That said, membership is sort of our reader revenue stream. And we hope that we do such a good job at meeting the mission, expressing it with the journalism and the way that we interact with our audience, that people are inspired to support and help us do more of it with their donations. So, yes, we definitely encourage donations. We have a membership program, but we will never ask you to pay to read our journalism day in and day out.

**Matt Thompson** They also asked about intersectionality and how you're thinking of it as you as you craft the team and the mission of the 19th? And I would ask to reinforce that and broaden the question to, I would ask, it's been pretty fantastic to see, as a queer person, it's been pretty fantastic to see a real broadening in our understanding of gender, generally. And I'm curious how you're thinking about gender diversity as you build your lens to coverage, too?

**Amanda Zamora** I mean, one of the things is that first of all, it's a work in progress. And one of the benefits of also gathering a very diverse team is that you're going to learn about what intersectionality means, and how it impacts your coverage as you go. As these editorial conversations unfold, right now, a lot of them are happening in Slack. And you just have a really great dynamic where reporters are coming together, sharing stories, probing, weighing in, asking what the asterisk is. So I think that's the beauty of having the team that we've assembled one. And two is on the gender aspect of things. One of the things we did really early on was, you know, we started out thinking, are we covering women and the intersection of women, politics and policy? And we said, no, obviously it's a lot more intersectional and complex than that. So if we're making good on approaching our journalism in a nuanced way, that means that starting with gender, politics and policy is the first way to kind of signal that this is the direction that we're headed. So I think it's definitely a work in progress. Emily, what about you?

**Emily Ramshaw** I mean, everything you said is perfect. I mean, I think one of the things that's felt really liberating about taking this plunge in this moment is the ability for us to come out and say, "You know what, like there are things that we stand for and that's OK. We stand for human rights. We stand for gender equity, and we stand for racial justice. And our journalism will be evidence based, fact based and fair under all of these circumstances. But like there are guardrails for us." And I think that feels really exciting to be able to say out loud and to do in this moment. And I think that that has been really appealing to this newsroom of extraordinary journalists who have jumped aboard saying, like, "We believe in you, and we want to take this risk with you, because this is the kind of journalism we want to produce." So it's pretty thrilling.

**Matt Thompson** You've mentioned that one of the contextual details right now, one of the pieces of context that's really, I think shaping all of our newsrooms at the moment has been this reawakened, rekindled civil rights movement that we've been seeing. And how is that shaping the 19th? How is it shaping how you're thinking of your coverage, and how is it shaping the team itself?

**Emily Ramshaw** I mean, it's interesting because obviously this is front and center for us, as it is for a lot of newsrooms. And it's critical to our coverage lines right now. But we always were very intentional about intersectionality. And honestly, like from day one, from the evolution of that asterisk we knew the kind of newsroom that we wanted to build. I think this moment in history has just made our work feel even more critical. I mean, Errin Haines on our team, she wrote the first story nationally about Breonna Taylor. Breonna Taylor was not a household name at all in the moment that Errin wrote the story. And honestly, the family, Breonna Taylor's family reached out to Errin and said, you know, "We hear that you all at the 19th are thinking about race and gender. And we think that when Black men are killed by police, you know, they get stories written about them more frequently than Black women who are killed by police. And we want to sort of change the dynamic around that." Which was a fascinating gender lens through which to tell this really critical national story. That story we posted it on The Washington Post. It just went completely viral. Suddenly, Breonna Taylor's name was being lifted up at protests and around the country. So it's always been intentional for us. But I think in this moment, we are all learning a lot. I mean, I think Amanda and I both, I'll only speak for myself, like this has been an awakening for me personally, obviously. This is a work in progress, and we're so lucky to have a newsroom that we can learn from in this really pivotal moment in history.

**Amanda Zamora** Yeah, I think the one thing I would add to that is it's about the journalism and the way the journalism happens every day. I can tell you that our reporters are coming into this newsroom, virtual as it is, and there's already this like exhale sigh of relief that some of the assignments that they were accustomed to pitching in whatever their former context were, that maybe have been sidelined or where they would have gotten pushed back, where their ideas are being embraced and encouraged. And so I think that there's more of that. But also just the way that we operate. You know, I have thought a lot about my role, and it won't be a surprise maybe to some people here that I've spoken with this about. But just the idea that I am a Mexican-American, daughter of an immigrant, but present as white and just really doing my own reckoning with what that means in the news industry, I think for me, one of the big takeaways is that, you know, the industry can't be credible in calling out systemic racism externally if it's not also willing to examine how it operates as an industry. And that, you know, I'm also super committed to ensuring that, the work that we're doing here to elevate women of color, to create opportunities for them to advance in journalism and for them to tell the stories that they are able, and need, and want to tell is also super important. That we're creating opportunities for them to grow. That we're being equitable in our own hiring processes. Like all of those things really matter, too. And I just hope that there is more of that kind of conversation happening in newsrooms nationwide because those conversations are overdue.

**Matt Thompson** Can you talk a little bit about the the behind the scenes? How you're approaching building organizational policies and support infrastructures for your employees, and what sorts of things you are doing to make it possible to build a more equitable newsroom?

**Amanda Zamora** Yeah, I mean, a lot of it starts with communication. As a team, we're together every Monday on a Zoom. We have happy hours every Wednesday. It starts with

just building relationships as a team. It also begins with entertaining questions. When the George Floyd protests were erupting across the country, and we had members of our staff who were wanting to know how can we engage with these protests? What are the guardrails, whether you're in the newsroom, on the editorial side or more on the product and design side? And being willing to have those conversations and reexamine some of the policies that we come into the newsroom with is sort of the default and say maybe those don't need to be the default. It starts with when Errin Haines is like, why isn't Juneteenth a holiday? Not just sort of putting it aside as sort of an HR just because that's how we do it, and actually saying maybe Juneteenth should be a staff holiday? Emily and I had a conversation on the hiring stuff and decided actually it's really important for us to be more transparent about starting salaries for our positions and that that's something that we're going to do going forward.

So it starts with building relationships with your team and creating safe, constructive spaces for them to come to you with their questions, with their concerns, and being able to entertain those in a meaningful way, so that they're actually seeing that their voice matters and that they're helping to shape what we're doing here. It's not just Emily and I go into a room somewhere and decide, and that's it. We really from the beginning, I mean, even when we were sort of in stealth mode, we would have retreats where we would pull women of color that we loved and admired from across the country to really test some of the assumptions that we were making and the ideas that we had about the 19th. And so that's just part of our DNA. And I think it's going to continue to be as we, again, shape and reshape these policies going forward.

You know, I'd just like to add to that. One thing that I'm learning a lot, and honestly, I'm learning it the best from Amanda is how, as a white newsroom leader of privilege, to put my defensiveness aside and my preconceived notions of how things ought to be or how they've always been. That's a really hard thing to do. And it's critically important to ensuring that you're listening to your team and evolving with your team. I mean, I think just one thing I'd add to that is giving women the opportunity to get ahead by providing the kind of salaries and benefits that they need to best do their job. So for us, from day one, paid leave policies have been really important, not just for six months of fully paid family leave for anybody on our team, but also four months of fully paid caregiver leave. So if you need to spend the last four months of your mom or dad's life with them or you're grappling with an illness due to I mean, look at COVID in this moment, that you have that flexibility without getting off the path. I think those are the kind of things that have been critical for us that we are hoping the rest of the industry takes notice and follow suit so that we can ensure that women stay on this sort of escalator to top newsroom leadership that I think too many women step off and too many women of color step off too early.

**Matt Thompson** Someone asked in the chat a really good related question, which is knowing that women suffer disproportionate attacks from the audience in the public and people that are being interviewed for stories, are you thinking about how you'll support them psychologically, and what are you doing to help your staff, being on the internet?

**Amanda Zamora** Yeah, we just wrapped. We had a two-day staff retreat. Two days of Zoom, nothing but Zoom. And they had fun, or at least they're telling me that. No, it was really good. So just taking a time out to talk through some of that stuff. We had a session on digital safety and harassment. It is something we are definitely trying to be proactive about. Helping our staff, first of all, recognize that, yes, we are more vulnerable just by virtue of the work that we are doing and the environment in which we are operating, and trying to figure out what are tools that we can put into place? We've got a Slack channel



called "SOS," so that when folks are really dealing with a flare up of harassment online that they have a place to go that they're not dealing with alone. Talking through what is a protocol or a checklist look like if someone's getting doxxed, trying to kind of reevaluate our security, digital security, providing tools for reporters so that they don't feel like they're having to pay for the stuff out of pocket. But figuring out what are the basics that we can provide for people and then obviously realizing that when stuff blows up, a lot of times you don't really know what you're dealing with, but just figuring out how to be present and making sure your team knows that they can count on you to send up a flare and say, "Hey, I need help with this."

**Matt Thompson** Yeah, I want to come to another question from the chat, which is, how are you thinking, this dovetails with the question I was hoping to ask as well, how are you thinking about state and local coverage, particularly coming into the election season? Emily, you mentioned the sort of regional presence of several of the staff already, but are you planning to focus or pair with local outlets in any way?

**Emily Ramshaw** So I think the first thing I'd say is we intentionally did hire a reporter who's covering state houses across the country. And so Barbara Rodriguez is her name. She's in Des Moines, and was at the Des Moines Register. A terrific reporter who is going to be covering sort of the through lines from state legislatures nationally in the ways in the laws that they're passing that disproportionately affect women. So there will be sort of a state-based focus, although not in necessarily individual states, unless we do sort of deeper dives there. I mean, I think our local and regional strategy right now is largely to find key examples in states and local municipalities that allow us to highlight and elevate stories that are sort of national themes. You can expect to see us doing in our first year a lot of partnering with other news organizations. Amanda mentioned our first local news partnership was with the Philadelphia Inquirer. It's an ongoing partnership with the Philadelphia Inquirer, and we didn't even really have a full staff yet. But I think you're going to imagine seeing more things like that. I think you'll see a pretty aggressive distribution and republishing strategy for us both nationally and locally over the next year. I think obviously our goal is to get into as many communities as possible by distribution and with our journalists scattered around the country. Amanda, anything to add there?

**Amanda Zamora** No, just that we also took a count last week, and we have, I think, reporters in nine different states. So, yes, we have the state houses reporter, but also just even collaborating across the team when there's an issue that we want to examine. We've got folks on the ground across the country and super excited to see that play out.

**Matt Thompson** We've had multiple questions in the chat about this question of how you think about the distinction between journalism and advocacy, or old school journalism, or conventional journalism and advocacy. And I'm curious, how do you think the 19th will hue to conventional journalistic lines? And where do you think that newsrooms have actually had bad practices in the past?

**Emily Ramshaw** I mean, I guess I can start and say, you know, I'm sort of a purist. I think Amanda and I were both probably raised in newsrooms that would sort of hue more to the sort of straight down the middle standpoint. And I think journalism should let the facts and evidence speak for itself, and let readers make up their own minds. You know, there's a reason that we aren't launching the 19th with an op-ed page or with an editorial page. I think the goal for us is to tell extraordinary stories, give readers the tools and information they need to make their own decisions, and go from there. So you know, I don't love the term "advocacy journalism." I think if journalism is doing its job, it should be exposing great

truths that readers need to consume in order to be the most engaged versions of themselves in our democracy. So I don't know. That's sort of where I come down on advocacy. But as I said before, I think there's a way to do that and also stand for facts, and evidence, and science, and stand for basic human rights. You know, you don't need both sidesism when something is just patently false.

**Matt Thompson** There have been, I would say at this moment amidst this re-ascended civil rights movement, I think that there have been a number of questions in newsrooms about what activity can journalists comfortably partake in? Is it OK to post Black Lives Matter in a Twitter bio? What's the line between covering a protest, observing one and participating one? How are you thinking about these policies as far as your work gets under way?

**Amanda Zamora** We've been talking a lot about this, and at the end of the day, we still have come back to some pretty standard policies as it pertains to our journalists in that we don't ever want to blur the lines where the public can't tell if we're participating in the story, if we are the story, or if we're reporting on the story. So I think that is where we start. But at the same time, I think we acknowledge that, you know, our stand for equality and human rights, we are not going to equivocate on that. And going and observing, you know, the Black Lives Matter protests on your front door and handing water to people in the heat in need, like we're not going to discourage anyone from exercising basic humanity.

But, I mean, apart from that, I think we're trying to also be nimble here and say, Here are the basic guardrails. And if you have a question, please come talk to us, whether it's a tweet that you're sending or something that's happening in your backyard." And also, I mean, we were just talking about this the other day, too, on a call like in terms of volunteering, we expect that the members of our staff are going to be involved and engaged in their communities, and we don't want to be discouraging them from participating or exercising, being engaged civically. I think we with that said, we still maintain the basic standards of we don't want to raise any appearances of conflict with our journalism. We are a nonpartisan newsroom at the end of the day. In order to do a good job at maintaining that credibility and letting the facts speak for themselves, we need to make sure that we're preserving that journalistic integrity. And that includes avoiding the appearances of conflicts.

**Matt Thompson** One of our participants from India asks the question, where are you getting your data or stories from? And I guess I'll point that question at are there particular places where you are looking for either genuine sources of data or sources that don't appear often enough in the rest of the media's coverage that you are looking to amplify in their role and in your coverage?

**Emily Ramshaw** I mean, I think the short answer to that is all over the place. There's a wealth of data, and actually there are really terrific organizations, many of them in university settings, where there are enormous collections of data, looking at the role of women in American politics, looking at the role of women in our economy. I mean, we've been in close contact with the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, which has done a ton of work in this arena. I was on the phone a couple of days ago with some researchers at the University of Houston. I mean, there are outlets for this incredible data collection all over the country, and I think we want to be partnering with them and want to be finding ways to more deeply publicize that data. So if you've got it, send it our way.

**Matt Thompson** So a commenter from Texas mentions an article that as an Atlanta alum, I am surprised and somewhat delighted to see this story still coming up, why women still can't have it all? Anne-Marie Slaughter. She mentions that scene, a couple of other female writers and influencers emphasizing that having it all is a myth, trying to persuade that motherhood is a challenge for having a career, and asks for your stand on that question.

**Emily Ramshaw** I mean, look, I can only speak from my experience, am I trying to have it all? Yeah, sure. Am I succeeding? Of course not. I mean, I think, you know, I've told this story about like there have been days where I've been on the phone with big potential prospective donors to the 19th, and I'm literally like stiff arming my daughter to keep her off of the screen. Most days I feel like I'm not doing anything well. But I think, you know, we're trying, Amanda and I and our team, we are trying to create an environment where women feel like they can have it all by virtue of the fact that we give them the flexibility and the benefits they need to do it. And I think part of, look, this is nothing against men. We've got at least one incredible guy on our team. But I think the real beauty of having a newsroom that is filled with so many women, if you were a fly on the wall for our Slack conversations, it's like, you know, people are comfortable talking about their efforts to get pregnant, and what they're enduring. And people are confident about talking about the division of labor with their partners in their household and bouncing ideas off of each other. And we're super comfortable saying, "You know what, my day right now because of COVID and daycare, my day has to end at 4:30 or 5 so I can get my daughter. But expect that I'm back online at 8 p.m., sending some some different notes along or Slack messages along." It's a newsroom that is filled with empathy and understanding. And I think what women on our team are telling us over and over again is, "I never would have been able to speak this freely in my last newsroom." And that is I mean, somebody sent me a Slack message yesterday about menopause, and it was like, I can never imagine in a million years having a conversation on work time about how you're feeling about menopause. It's a gift.

**Amanda Zamora** Yeah. The other thing, just to sort of I want to underline here. I'm not a mom. I'm a dog mom. I have no tiny humans who depend on on me. I'm like super tía, and that's fine. I'll just leave it at that. But I do think this it doesn't necessarily have to be a binary. You can either work or not work to have a family. What I think we've also seen and not just us, but if you look at other workplaces that were super rigid or insistent on a certain way of operating, is the pandemic has made clear you can be remote, you can be flexible in your work hours and, you know, creating just the flexibility that your teams need in order to be able to accommodate their real life.

And it's been incredible to watch how efficient, effective we have been and not just at getting the work done and the to dos checked off, but also still making space to really connect. And like I mean, we met as a team for the last two days of last week. And I've never met some of these women in person, and I feel so connected. So that has also been like going back to the silver linings. One of the really magical parts about this period in time is kind of calling B.S. on the idea that you have to have a certain operational structure in order to be efficient and for people to get their work done. That's clearly not true.

**Matt Thompson** Yeah, we have a few questions that I would characterize this way. I've seen a couple of other folks post this in the chat. But I guess to frame this question. So someone asks, why are many women leaders being bashed by other leaders who cannot accept them in male dominated environments as they speak out about unfairness? I guess the gloss I'd put on that question is, obviously, we still live in a context where misogyny can be pretty rampant and where patriarchy is still kind of a baseline presence of everything. And how are you thinking about actual anti-women discrimination, misogyny

and the patriarchy as you craft the organization? How have they factored into, have they been obstacles at all, or have they been things that you've confronted as you've been building the 19th? And how are you thinking about challenging them as you lead the 19th?

**Emily Ramshaw** I mean, I think I would start by saying that all of these things are storylines that we intend to cover. Like these are deeply important issues to be grappling with and will do it through our journalism. I mean, from the standpoint of launching the 19th, look, I just have to be honest like this was a moment and from the standpoint of building this venture and fundraising for this venture, overwhelmingly, we have felt enormous support from our male allies and mentors, from the people who we've grown up with in the different journalism organizations we were in. I think we feel beyond lucky in that regard. Like the worst thing probably that has happened. I mean, there have been people. There are Twitter trolls, who will basically come after you and say, "This doesn't need to exist. You all are part of the problem." But I also think there have been a couple of instances. I've told this story before, but there was at least one incident where I was fundraising. I went to meet a man to talk about potential support for the 19th. And he said to me, "I'd be more likely to support you if you uncross your arms and you smiled more because it makes me feel like you're mad at men." Which, you know, I was just enthusiastic. The fact that I'm even trying to defend myself right now is part of the problem. Right. And so I'd say there have been some instances like that where I have been stunned and sat back and said, "Oh, my God, this is still a problem. And if this is a problem for me, imagine what this problem is like." I also know that there are donors that could give twice or three times what they give, or foundations that could give twice or three times what they give. And I've seen them give twice or three times what they gave me to organizations that are led by men. And it makes you stop and just wonder, am I not aggressive enough as a woman in this sphere to be asking for double or triple, or are they not giving it to us because we're women running this organization? You can play those games in your head. There's probably some truth there. There's probably some lack of truth there. But I think we're just sort of powering through this to try to build the best possible organization we can.

**Amanda Zamora** I would add to that a couple of things. One is that I think Emily being the eternal optimist and like just when she sets her mind on something, there's no stopping her. So I think it is worth appreciating the moments of doubt, particularly in stealth mode, where we were really questioning whether we could succeed because maybe other people were raising questions that made us second guess ourselves. It was a choice to kind of override that fear and doubt. And I think that that was potentially an imposition that I'm glad that we overcame. And two, is that I don't think that you can look at this issue again without looking at race. I think, to be honest, like Emily's ability to succeed in doing this has a lot to do with the fact that she is white and well connected. And like that shouldn't go without saying that we have the privilege of being able to speak up, and barrel through, and overcome, and not take no for an answer because we are white. And when a lot of our peers, women of color, aren't afforded the same leeway. And I think that's B.S. I just think that we need to acknowledge that for what it is.

And then the second thing I would say too is on the editing side, I don't want to speak out of turn. Andrea, our editor in chief, and Abby Johnston, our deputy editor, have been assembling this team of journalists. And I do think that that's one thing that has already come up in the edit process of just journalists coming to these two editors and, you know, recognizing the difference in editing with them versus maybe with some of their male colleagues in other organizations. Like it is making a difference already, I think.

**Matt Thompson** Let me ask a big, broad question to you both. How are you defining success? What will success look like a year from now? Five years from now?

**Emily Ramshaw** You're talking to Amanda, who is the queen of KPI's.

**Amanda Zamora** Yeah, I mean, I want us to be a household name. We already are well, on our way. I mean, the fact that people who I know are not plugged into politics and journalism nerd Twitter know that the 19th exists and are excited to learn more about it. We want to be a household name breaking the kind of news that puts us on par with all of the other major national political news organizations in the country. So journalistically, I want us to have that gravitas. And then, yeah, I want to have a critical mass in terms of our audience of people who are coming to consume our journalism on a day-to-day basis, that we've got the membership program that reflects that we're hopefully doing a good job along those lines of delivering the kind of news and experiences that they expect from us, and that they believe in and agree that we're executing in line with our mission. So I would say those are a few of the markers that I kind of see in the three and five year range. And I'm hoping and pretty optimistic that we'll get there even sooner.

**Emily Ramshaw** The only thing I would add to that is I want to build a newsroom culture that is the gold standard for the industry, and I hope we're well on our way to doing that.

**Matt Thompson** What is the role, I'm going to ask a question from a commenter, and maybe I'll point this at you first, Amanda, what is the role that engagement reporting is playing in your work?

**Amanda Zamora** I mean, I started working in audience. I think it's already been a decade, which is ridiculous and makes me feel old. But I think it's very important to have an audience strategy that prioritizes listening to your audience. Well, first of all, being intentional about who you want your audience to be and going for beyond just sort of big numbers and page views, but really thinking about, "OK, I want a diverse audience of women. Geographically diverse. Racially diverse." Actually naming the audience that you're going for and then creating the time and space to be proactive about going and finding that audience and not expecting them to come to you. Hopefully you're doing a good job of having the journalism that is relevant to those communities. And once you do, being willing to spend the time and energy, the boots on the internet ground, so to speak, to go out and to find those readers where they are and ask them, "What stories do they have to tell? What questions do they have about this reporting?" To not assume that we know everything. I think just a big dose of humility and some good old fashioned time and energy to spend the effort to go out and meet these readers where they are. So, yes, that's an important part of our audience strategy, and it will be reflected in the reporting in the community building that you start to see on the site as we get up and running.

**Matt Thompson** We've had a few questions about what type of donor base you're striving for. Are you going to focus your efforts at the outset at big donors? Are you hoping for a big small-dollar donor base as well? I'm guessing I know the answer to this question.

**Emily Ramshaw** I mean, I think the takeaway on this, obviously, we want a ton of small-dollar donors, right? Like we want the member community to be super robust and to have a ton of people who are bought into our mission. And that is a huge priority. In the first 24 hours after our soft launch in January, we raised something like close to \$100,000 in those small-dollar gifts, like \$19 gifts. These were from people, from women primarily, around the

country. And we are hoping for a similar bump around our full launch, which you'll get to see before too long here.

But I think from the development strategy, we want a diverse subset of major donors. We want folks who can give anywhere from a thousand dollars to a million dollars. Obviously, it's impossible to get off the ground without at least a small number of those high-dollar donors. But from my standpoint, from my priority, I mean, I'm spending most of my days talking to people who are giving anywhere from \$5,000 to \$100,000.

**Matt Thompson** So last question. We got one minute left. And I just want to know, for those of us who are really eager to see the 19th launch and to start to see the coverage, give us a teaser. What should we be most excited for? What are you most excited to deliver to the public?

**Emily Ramshaw** I mean, the first is we have announced the 19th represents, which is our inaugural launch summit, our inaugural summit, women's summit only launching one time, thank God. So that's August 10 through 14. You can register online for it. It is going to be amazing. We have speaking sign ups from everyone, from Kamala Harris to Stacey Abrams, Elise Stefanik, Melinda Gates, Hillary Clinton, Meryl Streep, Zoe Saldana. I mean, the entire New York Philharmonic Orchestra is performing via Zoom. The work of three young Black women composers. The Go-Go's are getting back together, the first all woman band to top the Billboard charts. I mean, the lineup is sick, and so you absolutely have to attend. And it's free. So do that. And also you're going to see us launch here pretty darn soon. So stay tuned.

**Amanda Zamora** Yeah, the URL for that is [summit.19thnews.org](https://summit.19thnews.org).

**Matt Thompson** Amazing. Well, Amanda, Emily, thank you so much for joining us this morning. Thanks to all of you who joined us from all around the world. Thank you to Rosental, and Mallary, and Suzy, and Grace, and the rest of the crew at ISOJ for facilitating a wonderful session. I'm so honored and glad to be with you this morning, and so looking forward to your launch. Congratulations and good luck.

**Emily Ramshaw** Thank you. Thanks, Matt, so much for moderating.

**Amanda Zamora** So grateful to be here. We love you, ISOJ.

**Rosental Alves** Oh, my God. Thank you so much. This was really amazing. You know, wow. What an incredible conversation. The 19th is a fantastic project, and I will be at this summit. You know, you bet. And this session made me feel emotional for many reasons. I now invite you to watch last year's superb keynote by Matt Thompson. You can find that at [ISOJ.org](https://ISOJ.org), as I think that somehow it relates to what we have just heard. But I am particularly emotional to see Emily and Amanda, as a Texas Tribune proud board member since its foundation. I worked for a decade with Emily there and seen her flying to the heights this way. It is pretty amazing and emotional for me. I also worked with Amanda at the Texas Tribune too, but it is even more emotional in her case because she was my student at the UT School of Journalism. And as an undergrad, Amanda attended the first ISOJ in 1999. So brilliant careers. Talked to my heart. Wow. So thank you, Emily, Amanda and Matt for joining us on our third day of ISOJ.

I want to encourage you all to review our program and look at the great lineups ahead of us. If you haven't already done so, go register at Eventbrite. Next, we are going to have a

workshop there you can't miss. This is about TikTok. How journalists can find the stories and find misinformation on TikTok. Then it's followed by an amazing panel that is led by the editorial page editor of The New York Times. It has the top editors of two of the most important Latin American newspapers and great journalists from Poland and Hungary. And it's about how presidents are weaponizing social media against journalists. And the last panel of the day will be led by my esteemed colleague and partner here at the Knight Center, Mallery Tenore, about solutions journalism, which is really going up in these days. So please join us. And thank you. Thank you very much. I love you all.