

BIG TECH'S INCREASING POWER

NETGAIN PARTNERSHIP



WE MUST WEAKEN BIG TECH TO STRENGTHEN OUR ECONOMY AND DEMOCRACY

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

The economic crisis caused by COVID-19 continues to strengthen big tech's hold over the economy and society. Already, small businesses and retail outlets across the country are in a free fall as the result of social distancing measures, leaving Amazon to gain an even larger share of the marketplace. Meanwhile, local restaurants struggling to stay in business are now turning to online ordering and delivery apps, like Grubhub, that price gouge and face little to no regulation. Journalism and news outlets also face increasing financial difficulties as ad dollars and subscriptions plummet, further diminishing revenues, and making them even more dependent upon Facebook, Google, and Apple to provide financial support for their content. And perhaps most dangerous in the long term, platform companies' decisions regarding election misinformation and incitements to violence on their platforms continue to reveal the deep-rooted power and control they have over the basic functioning of our democracy.

[More than 100,000 small businesses have closed permanently since the pandemic hit](#)

WHY IT MATTERS

The pandemic has helped big tech and digital platforms exploit and devour small businesses, further concentrating sectors of our struggling economy, stifling innovation, and threatening people's livelihoods. Black and Latinx small businesses are economic engines for entire communities, and the economic chaos the pandemic has wreaked has the potential to decimate them. In a time where the country needs strong investigative reporting to tell the truth about COVID-19 and the uprisings for racial justice, journalism is suffocating under big tech's power. Journalism's increasing reliance on major platforms for ad revenue has turned them into information gatekeepers, lining their pockets even as they promote the flow of harmful and too often hateful information. This steady flow of misinformation and disinformation is chipping away at the underpinnings of our democracy and eroding our basic political structure.

TOP INTERVENTIONS

COVID-19 has exposed big tech and digital platforms' control over almost every aspect of our lives and the inadequacy of our democratic system to combat them. Without federal regulation, corporate

giants like Amazon stand at the epicenter of commerce between producers and consumers – controlling the eb and flow of information, products, and services. This massive shift in power has made it near impossible for small businesses, especially small businesses of color, to survive in a post-COVID-19 world and flooded digital platforms, like Facebook, Google and Apple with hate speech and disinformation. Therefore, it has never been more important to protect the diversity of voices within our marketplace and fight against the growth and consolidation of monopoly power and information gatekeepers. Advocates in the public interest field are launching coalition-based campaigns to demand regulation and congressional oversight over big tech, and ultimately hold them to account. We must ensure that mechanisms for investigative reporting remain possible and free from the iron grip of big tech, and that small businesses – including those historically and deliberately sidelined from our economy in favor of massive corporations – have the opportunity to successfully navigate this challenging moment and continue to contribute to our thriving communities.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

To reign in the growing power and influence of big tech, advocates and public interest groups are fighting for corporate accountability, as well as long-term federal policy change to preserve not only our economy, but the foundation of our democracy.

Public Knowledge is [educating advocates and consumers about antitrust law](#) and its ability to hold companies accountable for anticompetitive behavior – an increasingly important regulatory legal tool in the time of monopolization. As Black small businesses continue to struggle following the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Institute for Local Self-Reliance** remains focused on [conducting research and educating allies](#) on best practices for fighting corporations who seek to take advantage of this moment and expand their dominance as corporate giants. Through online pressure, **Demand Progress** is actively combating corporate power, as well as the spread of hate speech and disinformation online, and advocating for the [break up of big platforms](#), including Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, to make the internet safer and more secure. And **Color Of Change** is continuing to

demand more from corporations, and most recently asked [Facebook advertisers](#) to pause their ad spending this summer in solidarity with Black Facebook users and advocate for changes to their content practices.

MORE INFORMATION

The [NetGain Partnership](#) is a philanthropic collaboration between the Ford Foundation, Knight Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Mozilla Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Omidyar Network and Wallace Global Fund that seeks to advance the public interest in the digital age. NetGain works hand-in-hand with the nation's leading philanthropic organizations to address our most pressing challenges at the intersection of technology and digital society. As COVID-19 rages on, NetGain is deeply concerned about the impact of the pandemic on technology and society, especially as the crisis exacerbates economic and social inequities across the world and challenges our democratic institutions. There is a significant need for funders and civil society organizations to access critical information to help them understand the current and future impacts of COVID-19 on society and the unique role that technology and the internet are playing as the crisis continues.

ABOUT NETGAIN

To learn more about NetGain's work or hear their latest briefing series on top technological challenges and harms that have emerged as a result of COVID-19 and actionable responses from civil society to address them, please visit:

<https://www.netgainpartnership.org/events/covid19/broadband-access-in-the-us>

For funders who are interested in the specific policy proposals outlined in this one-pager or have questions, please visit <https://mediademocracyfund.org/>

ABOUT MEDIA DEMOCRACY FUND

Media Democracy Fund (MDF) works at the crossroads of digital technology and social justice and is the leading convener between public interest grantees, funders and allies in the broadband fight, as well as the larger digital rights field.