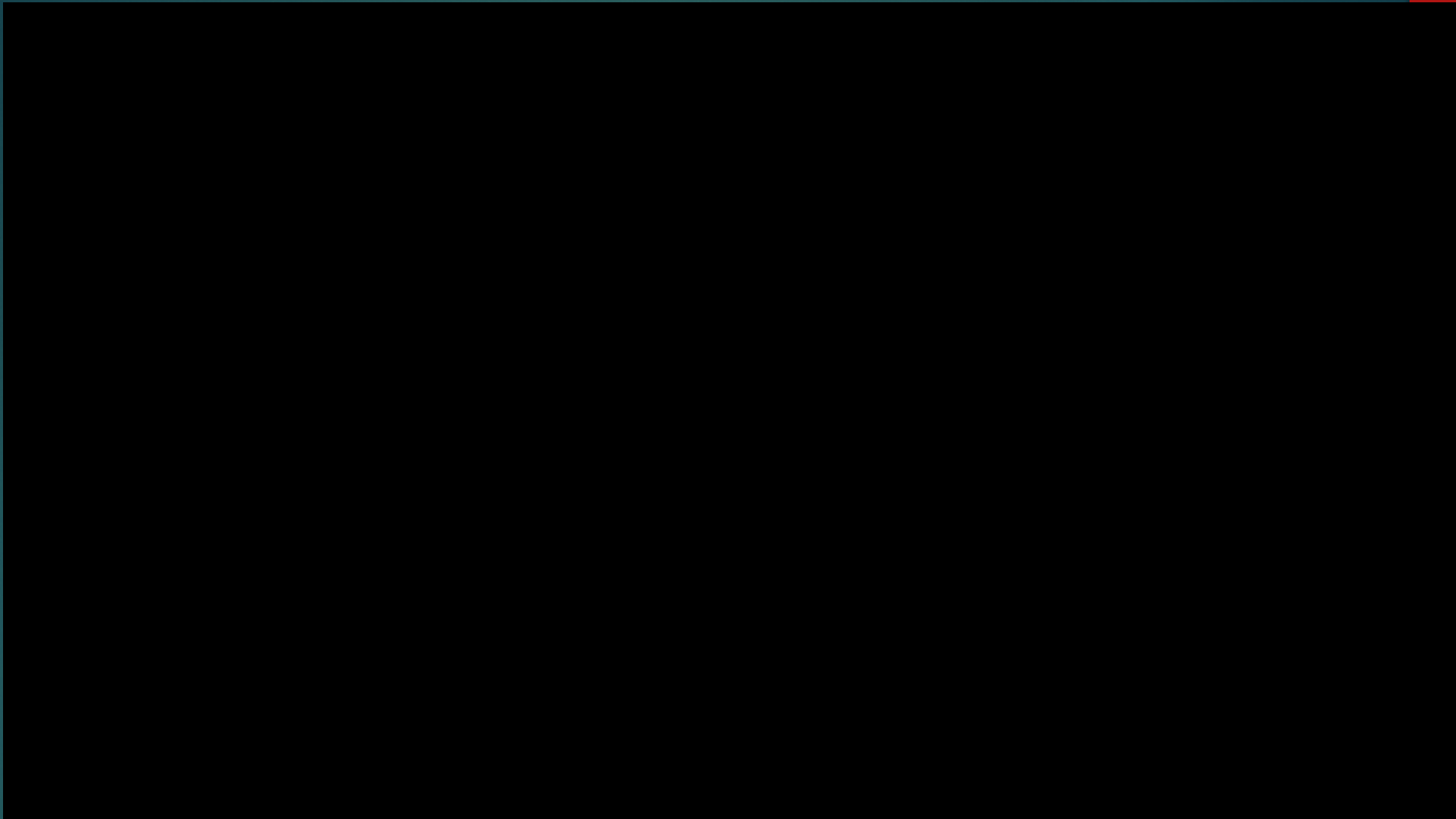


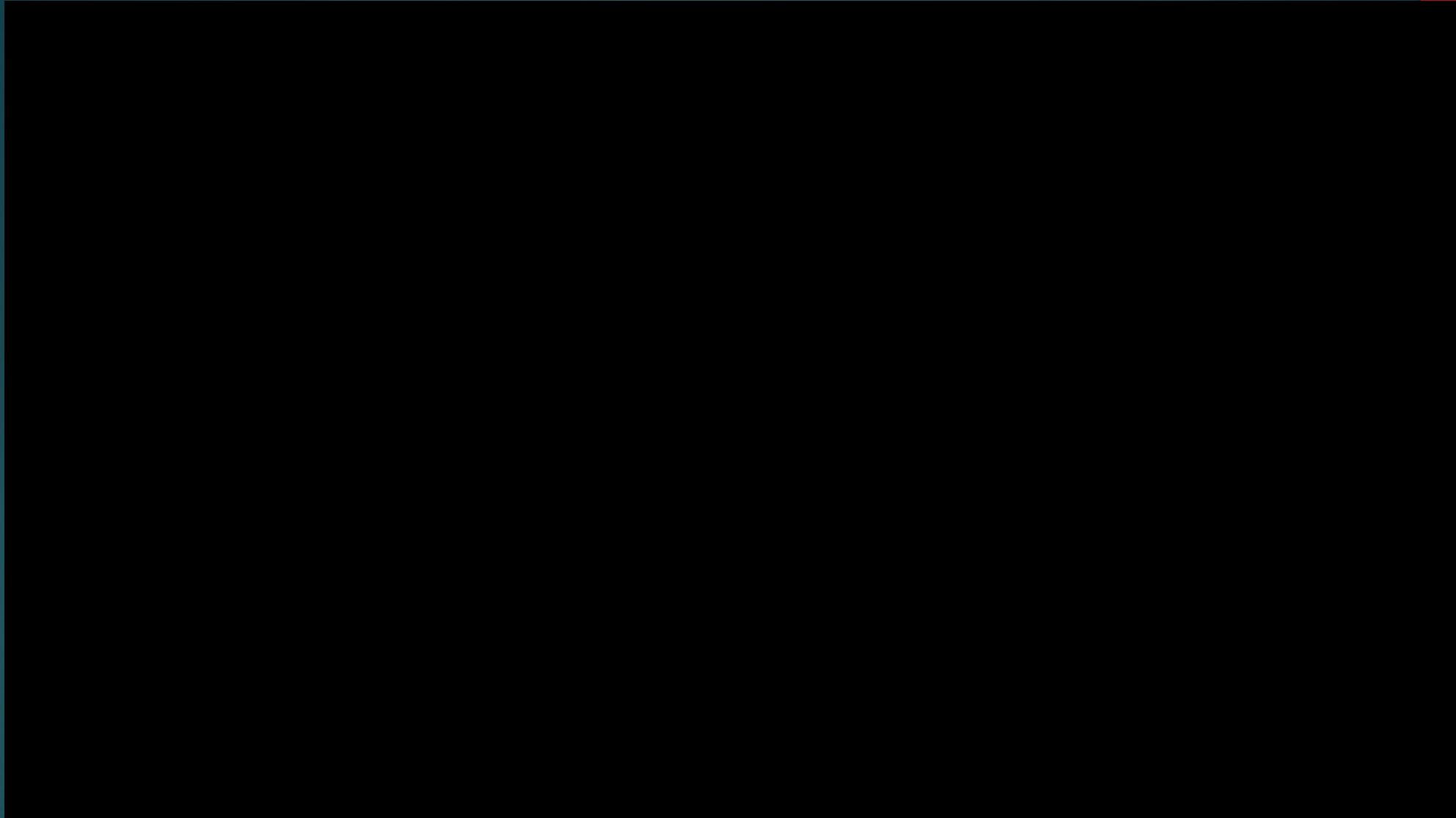
# Engaging Across Difference

THE DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE AT WILLIAM & MARY  
NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION, FALL 2023



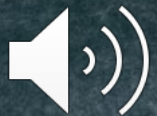


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# PRINCIPLES *of a* BETTER ARGUMENT

THE BETTER  
ARGUMENTS  
PROJECT

## Take Winning off the Table

Lead with a desire to understand and learn, rather than to win. The debates we are exposed to are often set up to have participants battle it out with the goal of winning or defeating the other side. A Better Argument, however, is about presence and the robust exchange of ideas.



# PRINCIPLES *of a* BETTER ARGUMENT

THE BETTER  
ARGUMENTS  
PROJECT



## Prioritize Relationships and Listen Passionately

Focus on building honest connections. An argument is improved when we prepare to listen, not just advance our own points of view. Seek to learn more about a person beyond their opinion on the topic that you are arguing about and make a point to share more about yourself than just your own opinion.

# PRINCIPLES *of a* BETTER ARGUMENT

THE BETTER  
ARGUMENTS  
PROJECT



## Pay Attention to Context

Acknowledge the many factors that may influence beliefs. Civic debates don't take place in a vacuum. Rather, they are surrounded by the context of lived experiences, access to information, culture, and more. Make room for these influences by trying to understand why a person holds their belief, rather than having a knee-jerk reaction.

# PRINCIPLES *of a* BETTER ARGUMENT

THE BETTER  
ARGUMENTS  
PROJECT



## Embrace Vulnerability

Consider the benefits of opening up in an argument. Vulnerability is necessary to enter any kind of conversation that is not simply confirming your own worldview. By getting vulnerable, we can open new avenues for human connection. Keep in mind that getting vulnerable is something to consider when you have something to gain or grow from it.



# PRINCIPLES *of a* BETTER ARGUMENT

THE BETTER  
ARGUMENTS  
PROJECT



## Make Room to Transform

Be open to new and varied perspectives. Without a goal of winning, the experience of a Better Argument can instead change how we engage with a difficult issue and with one another in daily interactions. Participants have cited that they walk away with more nuance, less assumptions, and better solutions.

# PRINCIPLES *of a* BETTER ARGUMENT

THE BETTER  
ARGUMENTS  
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- Take Winning Off the Table
- Prioritize Relationships & Listen Passionately
- Pay Attention to Context
- Embrace Vulnerability
- Make Room to Transform



write your own story

