

THE AGORA

Press Kit — June 2026

Launching Thursday, June 11, 2026 · theagora.fm

Show Description (Short)

The Agora is a twice-weekly AI-generated political roundtable podcast. Five distinct AI panelists — a moderator and four commentators spanning the ideological spectrum from progressive to conservative — debate the week's most consequential U.S. political stories in roughly thirty minutes. Built for politically engaged listeners who want genuine multi-perspective argument rather than partisan reinforcement.

Show Description (Long)

The Agora is built around a simple premise: real political disagreement, conducted with rigor and wit, is harder to find than it should be. Most political podcasts are either tribal echo chambers or anodyne both-sides exercises. The Agora is neither.

Five AI characters — each with a fully developed intellectual temperament, rhetorical style, and synthesized voice — convene twice weekly to debate three substantive stories in depth, plus a closing lightning round on a story where culture intersects with politics. The host, Arthur Kline, runs the panel with the brisk, theatrical cadence of classic political-television roundtables, most directly in the lineage of *The McLaughlin Group*. The four panelists — Eli Navarro (progressive), Nora Kessler (center-left), Grant Mercer (center-right), and Sloane Barrett (conservative) — argue from coherent worldviews, not partisan scripts. They disagree on substance. They cite verified facts. They occasionally change their minds.

Episodes are produced through a custom Python orchestration pipeline that combines Anthropic's Claude models, Perplexity's Agent API for pre-fetched verified facts, and ElevenLabs voice synthesis. Topic selection, fact verification, and audio production remain human-supervised. The show's approach to character design and fact-verification is documented publicly on the show's website.

Five voices. Four issues. One republic.

The Panel

Arthur Kline — Moderator Commanding, theatrical, and dry. Arthur runs the panel with terse provocations and clipped rebukes; his job is to compress, redirect, and make every panelist earn their airtime. He speaks with the clipped New England diction of mid-century political television.

Eli Navarro — Progressive panelist Quick, sharp, morally engaged. Eli argues from a structural left perspective — class, power, institutional critique — and speaks with an educated Brooklyn/Manhattan inflection. Signature rhetorical hook: a well-placed Yogi-ism to puncture solemnity.

Nora Kessler — Center-left pragmatic panelist Coalition-minded, policy-detail focused, allergic to performance. Nora is the panelist most likely to ask what would actually pass and who it would actually help. Bay Area intonation. Signature: historical-moment sports analogies.

Grant Mercer — Center-right moderate panelist Plain-spoken, institutionalist, allergic to either tribal pole. Grant serves as the panel's reality-check on what mainstream conservative governance actually looks like in practice. Great Plains flatness. Signature: classic film quotes and scene analogies.

Sloane Barrett — Conservative panelist Disciplined, dry, often acidic. Sloane defends traditional institutions and limited government without descending into reactionary register; she is the panel's most rhetorically rigorous voice from the right. Texas drawl. Signature: short rhyming verses from hip-hop and pop music.

Format & Cadence

- **Release schedule:** Twice weekly — Mondays and Thursdays at 5:00 AM ET
 - **Runtime:** Approximately 28-32 minutes
 - **Episode structure:** Cold open -> three substantive issues -> lightning round (culture-meets-politics story) -> predictions segment -> sign-off, with signature musical stings marking each transition
 - **Launch episode:** Thursday, June 11, 2026
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What Makes The Agora Different

- **Genuine multi-perspective debate.** Each panelist argues from a distinct, coherent worldview, not a partisan script. Listeners cannot predict which panelist "wins" any given issue.
 - **Real character craft.** Each panelist is an independently reasoning AI character with a distinct ideology, biography, rhetorical style, and signature verbal habit. Each has a distinct rhetorical "lane" — Yogi-isms for Eli, historical-moment sports analogies for Nora, hip-hop and pop verse for Sloane, classic film quotes and scene analogies for Grant — with discipline rules preventing any panelist from poaching another's signature. An "earned vs. forced" rule applies to every reference, and a rolling tracker prevents the same flourish from being deployed twice across recent episodes.
 - **Two-stage factual grounding.** Before the panel speaks, the specific facts behind each issue — dates, dollar amounts, vote tallies, attributions — are researched and verified, and the panelists are constrained to those facts. After generation, the full transcript runs through a fact-checker that verifies remaining claims against live sources and applies surgical corrections. A separate pop-cultural attribution checker verifies signature-hook quotes.
 - **An AI "director" picks the best take.** For each beat of debate, all four panelists generate candidate responses in parallel. A separate director-role model call selects the one that produces the best television, judged on ideological clash, rhetorical quality, and speaking-time balance. Roughly a third of beats become crosstalk, where a runner-up breaks in over the speaker.
 - **Maximized news coverage.** Episodes default to autonomous topic selection from a live news feed, ranked by stakes, controversy, currency, and televisability, with a deliberate culture-meets-politics tilt for the lightning round. Deduplication prevents consecutive episodes from rehashing the same stories, so listeners who tune in twice a week always get fresh subjects.
 - **Breaking-news special episodes.** Because the panel has no scheduling constraints, The Agora can ship a single-topic special episode within twenty-four hours of major breaking news using the same pipeline.
 - **Production transparency.** The show is openly AI-generated and documents its character-design rationale and fact-verification approach on its website.
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Pull-Quotes from Pilot Episodes

*"Article I isn't in a coma — Article I is in a medically induced coma, and the Senate is the anesthesiologist." — **Eli Navarro**, on Congress and the war-powers vote*

*"The Framers built a system where war required deliberation. We've built one where war requires deniability." — **Sloane Barrett**, on the War Powers Resolution*

*"That's not a coalition. That's a hostage situation with better catering." — **Grant Mercer**, on the Senate's failed war-powers vote*

*"The constitutional order isn't dying from a coup. It's dying from a called third strike with the bat on the shoulder." — **Nora Kessler**, on congressional inaction*

Visual Assets

[Once visual assets are hosted on theagora.fm, replace the bracketed link placeholders below with direct URLs.]

- **Cover art — five-character composition** (Arthur Kline centered as moderator; Eli Navarro, Nora Kessler, Grant Mercer, and Sloane Barrett flanking; with wordmark): high-resolution square PNG — [link]
- **Individual character portraits** (Arthur, Eli, Nora, Grant, Sloane): 1500×1500 PNG each — [link]
- **Show wordmark** ("THE AGORA," navy serif): transparent PNG, vector SVG — [link]

Visual identity is heritage American political-poster illustration: confident black ink line work, stippled halftone shading, and a restrained palette of muted oxblood red, heritage navy, and warm newsprint cream. The aesthetic evokes a serious political publication's commissioned editorial portraiture. All assets available for editorial use, attribution requested.

Audio

- **Trailer No. 1** — 90-second introduction to the show and panel. Live May 29, 2026 at theagora.fm/press and across podcast platforms.
 - **Trailer No. 2** — forthcoming ahead of the June 11 launch.
 - **Pilot episode** — full sample episode available to journalists on request: press@theagora.fm
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Production Methodology (Summary)

The Agora is generated through a custom Python orchestrator built end-to-end by the show's creator — no third-party agent frameworks. The pipeline combines Anthropic's Claude models (panelist generation, a director call that selects each turn, a post-generation fact-checker, and a pop-cultural attribution checker), Perplexity's Agent API (pre-fetched verified facts and a live news feed for autonomous topic selection), and ElevenLabs voice synthesis (per-character voice design).

Each panelist is an independently reasoning AI character with its own ideology, biography, rhetorical style, and a signature rhetorical hook, governed by discipline rules that keep characters in their own lanes, an "earned vs. forced" rule that prevents shoehorned references, and a rolling tracker that prevents the same flourish from repeating across recent episodes.

For each turn in the debate, all four panelists generate candidate responses in parallel; a director-role model call selects the one that produces the best television, judged on ideological clash, rhetorical quality, and speaking-time balance. The strongest runner-up sometimes breaks in as an interruption — the source of the show's crosstalk.

Final audio is assembled from per-turn AI-synthesized stems, with intro and outro music beds, a brief opening banter section, and signature musical stings marking the transitions between segments. Topic selection, fact verification, audio mixing, and editorial judgment are human-supervised. The show's character-design rationale and fact-verification approach are documented on its website.

The creator is available for interviews and technical walkthroughs of the production pipeline.

About the Creator

Josh Morton is a commercial real estate attorney based in Houston, Texas, in practice since 2004. The Agora is an independent project pursued outside of legal practice — not a startup, not venture-backed.

Contact

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The Agora is an independent project. All panelists are AI characters; none is intended to represent any real person, and any resemblance to specific commentators is incidental. Topic selection, fact verification, and editorial judgment remain human-supervised. The show is not affiliated with any other media property.