At this particular moment I do not prefer Sen. Bernie Sanders as the choice of the Democrats for president of the United States in 2020. I have not made up my mind about whom to support, and I won’t until more is known about each candidate.

Nevertheless, as someone who has spent his career studying and teaching communication, I applaud Mr. Sanders’ decision to do a town hall this past Monday evening inside the Fox News bubble. Mr. Sanders is one of only a small number of Democrats thus far to do so. Eric Swalwell may be the only other to appear on Fox. This is significant rhetorically. A key principle in political communication is that candidates for public office may not be successful by exclusively preaching to the choir. Mr. Sanders has taken this to heart. Moreover,
moving outside his comfort zone — to speak to an audience composed of many who do not share his political beliefs — appears to have been successful.

To the surprise, if not chagrin, of the Fox hosts, Mr. Sanders received enthusiastic applause from the town hall audience on several important issues. Most notably the audience expressed a clear willingness to give up their current health insurance for a single-payer provider. The bottom line is that whomever the Democrats nominate should learn a rhetorical lesson from Mr. Sanders: Defeating Mr. Trump next year will require getting outside the echo chamber as well as motivating the base.

RICHARD CHERWITZ
Ernest S. Sharpe, centennial professor, Moody College of Communication
The University of Texas
Austin, Texas