



**UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
NATIONAL AGENDA 2021
REFLECTING AMERICA**

"Four Years Later"

with David Joy and Asma Khalid
2017 National Agenda Speakers

HOSTED BY University of Delaware –
Center for Political Communication

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Lindsay Hoffman Director of National Agenda and Associate Director
of the Center for Political Communication,
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David Joy Author of the Edgar-nominated novel ***Where All Light
Tends to Go*** (2016), Joy received the 2020 Hammett
Award for literary excellence in crime writing for his most
recent book, ***When These Mountains Burn*** (2020). His
stories often focus on troubled characters who share a
deep connection to the land but struggle with poverty and
addiction. Joy has written other books while his latest
works have appeared in the *New York Times
Magazine*, *TIME*, and *Garden & Gun*.

Asma Khalid Award-winning journalist, NPR White House
correspondent for and co-host of ***The NPR Politics
Podcast***. Khalid reported on the 2014, 2016, 2018, and
2020 elections. She focuses on the intersection of
demographics and politics, often diving into the political,
cultural, and racial divides in this country. Khalid covered
the crowded Democratic primary field of the 2020
presidential campaign, then continued to report on Joe
Biden's candidacy. Her reporting has taken her to
Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and China.

Transcript of Event

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Place: Mitchell Hall and Webinar
Newark, DE

[Musical interlude to 0:00:34.4]

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

Please welcome your host for this evening, Dr. Lindsay Hoffman.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Hello. Welcome everyone. I'm going to remove my mask, hopefully without messing up my microphone. Um, thank you for being here. These are unusual times but it's certainly a joy for me to be back in Mitchell Hall sharing different perspectives with you guys; diversity of viewpoints and I'm great, I'm happy to welcome all of you virtually as well. Apologies for the few minutes late that we got started. Things are a little different this year. So, this is the eleventh annual National Agenda Speaker Series. We're here thanks to the Delaware, ah, the University of Delaware Center for Political Communication, as well as the Office of the Provost and the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as the Division for Student Life. So this year's theme is *Reflecting America*. You've seen that on the screen. And what we're looking at is how is this historic era of political divides, social movements, and economic upheavals fueled by the pandemic and politics are defining America. Have we ever faced anything like this before in this country while at the same time having more access to information than ever before? We'll explore these questions this semester with six speaker events from journalists to activists to artists. What are Americans doing during this stressful and uncertain time to stay engaged with politics in their communities and learning how to communicate effectively with each other. We'll still be inviting audience participation from our audience in the house, both in the theater and online. To ask a question here we'll have two microphones. They're

set at the front of the auditorium. When we open up for Q and A, simply raise your hand and I will ask one of our volunteer student mike marshals, is what I'm calling them, to, ah, come to you and escort you to the microphone and ask you to go back to your seat when you're finished with your question. To submit a question online simply type your question into the Q and A box at the bottom of your Zoom window and it may be selected during our Q and A at the end of the talk. So, tonight, um, first I want to state that we are six feet apart and according to UD policy we can remove our masks. Ah, so the speakers have, have the option of removing their masks while we're on stage. And I want to introduce two amazing speakers that I, I spoke with separately four years ago. David Joy is a novelist from Appalachia from Western North Carolina who has a deeply unique understanding of people in his region and has often been called to sort of explain, ah, why people in his region maybe voted for Trump or voted for, in a certain way. Asma Khalid is a, a, an, a well-known NPR correspondent for the White House, White House correspondent who has, comes with lots of experience on reporting on the White House, on demographics in this country. And, I'm just so delighted to have them back four years later to talk about what's different, what's changed since they were here four years ago. So, please join me in welcoming David Joy and Asma Khalid.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you so much for being here. I'm going to try and remove this side of my mask. There, I did it. Yay. Ah, thank you everyone for being here. And thanks to those online who have joined us. Um, so, let's start with why the two of you; why did I bring the two of you back? What happens when an Appalachian novelist, a public radio reporter and a professor go to a

bar? [Laughter.] Its kind of where we're at. Uh, you were both here separately, like I said, ah, when, the year that Trump was elected and here you are, a, again. They must really love the University of Delaware. But the first question broadly is what looks different about America to you today than it did when you were on this stage four years ago. Start with David.

DAVID JOY: I think it's a matter of increased polarization. Ah, and you know I think that, ah, I think that's something that's really taking place over a larger period of time in that, in that kind of the middle ground of politics . It's not that those people don't exist, ah, they obviously still exist. I might even argue that they make up the vast majority in this country, ah, but you no longer hear anything from that area. And I, I think that, ah, and I think that both sides have moved further and further sway from center, ah, and that, and that maybe more than anything it just happened that, ag, at a, ah, much faster pace over the past, you know, four or five years than it has, ah, over the past 20.

DR. HOFFMAN: Asma, you follow demographics. Um, what's changed?

ASMA KHALID: Yeah, I mean, I think that in the four years, and I'm trying to remember just sort of where my head was when I was here last time, but I do think there was a general sense of perhaps shock in the country at President Trump's election. I think there's very little politically that shocks, ah, me as a political journalist at this point in time. Ah, ah, I think we've seen subsequently a number of, ah, sort of Trump-esk politicians; politicians who model themselves after him who have been elected as members of Congress, who model themselves after him running for, for governor. And then of course we have the events of January 6th at the Capitol which, I would argue, ah you know, were certainly inspired by some of the rhetoric and the words that you heard from

President Trump. And so, I, I, I would say that particularly after what happened on January 6th there is a sense, and I agree with, with David on this that it just, things are very, ah, ingrained. I think polarization is very ingrained and, and I don't know – while I agree with him that there is certainly a middle – I don't know that that middle will necessarily like rise up and be heard loudly unless there is a conscious deliberate effort by, by politicians or by other people to make space for these people in the middle.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, well I will, I will remind you four years ago, I don't know if you said it on the stage or with my students in the classroom, but I remember somebody asked you if you were going to go back to reporting on campaigns because you had left –

ASMA KHALID: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: – after 2016 you said I'm not going to report on campaigns anymore. So, why'd you come back?

ASMA KHALID: Why'd I come back? Yeah. So, I guess just to step back for no (inaudible.) I covered the 2016 election in-depth. I just traveled all over the country. I was, ah, ah, covering both the Republicans and the Democrats. It was a very tumultuous election cycle and, I mean, I think this kind of goes maybe as an assumption but maybe I should just spell this out but long story short there was not a lot of people who looked like me, ah, covering the campaign, specifically going out to sort of more – and I shouldn't even say more conservative pockets because I grew up in a fairly conservative town – but into places where people felt they were like newly emboldened –

DAVID JOY: Hum.

ASMA KHALID: – to make sort of claims and arguments about Muslims or

race-based sort of statements in ways that I would say felt unthinkable to me as a child. And you just heard them out in the open, and it was just, it was tiresome after a while. It was sort of like what am I doing this for and so after 2016 I was just burnt out. I, wanted to have kids. I have since now had two children [chuckle] and, ah, and I just felt like I needed a break. I think that political reporting and political journalism can be really addictive and there was a big part of me that finally agreed to come back. I came back in 2018 ahead of the midterms and agreed at that point that I would come on and cover the 2020 election because I felt like 2016 was part of the story but there was certainly another part of the story and, and 2020, to put it in like movie terms, felt like the sequel and I wanted to know what happened in the sequel.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle.]

DAVID JOY: [Chuckle.]

ASMA KHALID: So here I am now. I've still got it. I'm covering the White House now.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Well, it, I, ah, can't go without congratulating, um, here you guys are, I can't go without congratulating David on the upcoming movie adaptation of his novel *The Line That Held Us*, which will be starring Billy Bob Thornton and Robin Wright. Pretty impressive. Um, and ah, tell us what this book is about and how it taps into folks who live in Appalachia? This is basically your opportunity to sell your book. [Chuckle.]

DAVID JOY: Ah, well, well the book that's getting adapted was actually the first novel, ah, it was *Where All Light Tends to Go*. But yeah, I think, I think that I write about a very specific place and it's because it's all, all I know. And so, you know, all of my books have been set very specifically in Jackson County,

North Carolina. Ah, we had a conversation earlier and we were talking about this idea of Appalachia, and I think a lot of times when people think of Appalachia they think of it as a, as a town. Ah, it's like I've been there. Ah, which, you know, it's across 13 states, 420 counties, 205,000 square miles. Ah, so to try to talk about that place with any sort of definitive statements is, is really an impossibility. So, I always try to make it clear that I don't speak for Appalachia but the place that I do speak for is Jackson – you know, I, I have a very clear understanding of Jackson County, North Carolina. Ah, and so I've set all of my, all of my novels there.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, congratulations to you and also to Asma for winning her, ah, ah, college Outstanding Young Alumni Award. So, we have two, um, really established wonderful speakers with us today. So, I want to start with talking about; there are a lot of things I want to talk about today, but I think fake news has been something that we've heard a lot about, in over the last few years. In a recent study outlined in the the Washington Post over the weekend found that from August of 2020 to January of 2021 news publishers known for putting out misinformation got six times the amount of likes, shares and interactions on the platform as did trust – on Facebook – a did trustworthy news sources such as CNN, or the World Health Organization. Asma, how do you as a journalist grapple with the fact that more and more people are drawn to fake news and what can journalists do to ensure trust and what should audiences know about information they find on social media like Facebook?

ASMA KHALID: So, in terms of what journalists can do, I think transparency is key and sort of opening up as much as you can to the understanding of how a newsroom works I think is really helpful. I know some news organizations have

for example like broadcast portions of their editorial meetings. I actually just think that that's really helpful for people to get a glimpse of how news judgements are made. Another small example is recently I interviewed the Vice President Kamala Harris, and the full interview did not air on, on NPR on the radio but we, to my knowledge I believe did air the entire portion online and a transcript of it. So there is a sense that okay, if we are making like editorial cuts this is what the raw audio is. And I think just opening up what the process looks like can be helpful for people. But I think the other flip side to that is like the consumption side of news. And so, you know, as much as I think there are some news organizations doing really good work, I would argue like I am befuddled sometimes even with my own friends who just like are not attuned to how to consume news and they will click on things that I would never click on. Right? Like I would never click on news that does not come from certain reputable sources. And I have heard more and more, and in an academic setting I'd be curious what you, you say about this, of just like colleges and even high schoolers working on essentially like a news fluency and literacy because I do think there is a sense that like how people consume news has changed. And, and I see this, I see this all the time from people who send me random stuff – people I know – and you know once I had somebody send me something, it was like “dot” ru (.ru) at the end and I was like that's a Russian site. Right? Like I do not think this is a, a trustworthy bit of information that I would be using. And so, you know, I'd, I, I would say that I think as journalists we can only do so much. Right? We can put out what I believe is often good quality content but part of it is like why people are clicking on this information as it goes to people's like base instincts and people want inflammatory content. Right? Like that is

what people get riled up about. And so, I do think that there needs to be a better job and not everybody goes to college. I mean, maybe it has to happen at a younger level, at like a junior high level where people learn like news literacy in the same way that they maybe would learn like basic – or they ought to be learning like basic financial literacy.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, we had a great conversation earlier today with my class about what's, what young children should be learning, but we talked more about civil discourse. And David, I wonder if you wanted to elaborate on some of your ideas about like what do people, what do young people need to know about how can we engage with each other across differing perspectives, differing opinions?

DAVID JOY: I don't know if I can speak to what I think they need to know but I think I can speak to the to the, you know, what I think is happening in this country which is that I think we've lost any ability to maintain any kind of civil discourse and maybe that's something that's perpetuated even more and more by social media in the sense that you no longer have any, you no long, you no longer have any obligation to have real conversations. There's also no accountability to anything you want to say. You can say anything you want on there, things that you would never think to say to my face, or to her face, and eventually that goes on long enough to where people become more and more emboldened. And I, and we most certainly have, have seen that. As far as how we get back to that ability, you know, to have that type of discourse, for one, it has to take place at a high level. It's not just the American people that are not capable of, of maintaining civil discourse, it's American politicians. You know, if you follow me it becomes very clear where my politics lie and, and that's, you

know, that's fine. I fall pretty far left. But when I look at the things that, that disgust me most it's not things that happen just on the left or things that just happen on the right. You know, I think about during the Trump presidency for, for instance, we would watch moments where there would be like, they call it clap back or something. You know, this moment where let's just say Nancy Pelosi makes a move and, and claps back at something that, you know, Donald Trump did, and everybody applauds it and rewards it as if its entertainment. Well, I'm sorry but I, I don't have any interest in being led by children. I don't want people, you know, I don't want people making decisions that govern whether or not I get healthcare or whether or not, you know, somebody can find a job or, or any of these big-time decisions who is incapable of, of sitting down and having civil discourse with somebody. I want you to be able to do that; with somebody that you disagree with is even better. That, that; s the only way that you find any kind of common ground and, and this country has seemed to move further and further away from that. You know, sensibility is not sexy anymore. You know, common sense doesn't sell. It's whoever yells the loudest that's who's given the microphone and, and the only way that you're going to get back to any kind of a, a, ability to, to have dialogue and discourse is, is to take the microphone away from children and say you've had your time to speak and now you will sit there and you will listen. And until that happens I'm not a very hopeful person to think that they're going to sort it out by themselves. I, I; you know, they've shown, they've shown no reason for me to believe that. It, it. It's, it's gotten worse and worse; perpetually worse.

DR. HOFFMAN: Can you elaborate on, on listening? Particularly active listening and why that's important in civil dialogue?

DAVID JOY: Yeah. Yeah, I, you know, I, this is part of me just being southern, I think, but, ah, and I'm sure it happened elsewhere but I'm just going speak to where I grew up and how I grew up culturally. And I grew up in an environment where children were expected to be seen but not heard. And what I meant by that, mean by that is that, you know, when the adults were talking you were expected to be in the room and you were expected to be quiet and you were be, you know, expected to listen. And at the time it was horrible, you know, you just wanted to go outside and play, and you got antsy and, and you wanted out of there. But, when I look back it taught me multiple things, you know, from a professional standpoint it, it taught me the importance of story and it taught me how to tell a story. But the bigger aspect is that it taught me to listen, and I think that we as a country have lost that entirely. And it's not just in this country. Like I look at some of the places that where, where it is happening elsewhere. I remember the last time I was in France I told them, I said, one of my favorite things I experienced here the last time I was here was we were at a dinner and everybody was screaming at each other in French and I'm sitting there like, you know, like, what's going on because I have no idea what they're talking about. Well, they were having a political discussion and they were all arguing with each other. Very adamantly arguing. And at the end they all started laughing and they said we enjoy this. And, and that was how they, it was commonplace and the last time I was there I asked them, you know, if that was something that had changed, and it was. I, I, I think that it's happening not just here; I think it's happening worldwide and maybe again it ties back to, to social media. But until we get back to the point to where we can sit with people we disagree with and truly listen to the things that they have to say I don't, I don't see how we move

forward in any type of productive way.

DR. HOFFMAN: You talked about this initiative with an author who is doing this kind of storytelling sharing?

DAVID JOY: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Can you expand on that a little bit [inaudible.]

DAVID JOY: Yeah, the author was Colum McCann and I'm sure this, this, he's an Irish novelist, you know, a lot, *Let the Great World Spin* was one of his biggest novels. And *The TransAtlantic* was another. A really, really great brilliant novelist. I mean, sharp. But he came up with this idea one that he wanted to, to, that he, that he thought one of the ways you teach people to listen is that you make them responsible for what they're listening to. And so, he wanted to make this pedagogy; like he wanted to take concept, put it in a classroom and see what happens. So, he did it with, you know, in, with high school kids and for instance he would take a class in Swayne County North Carolina in the mountains where I live and he connected that school with a school in the Bronx and one of the kids would tell their story to another kid and then that kid would tell their story to that kid, and then when it came back to the class time this kid would tell that person's story as if it was theirs. And what it forced them to do was one, to actively listen to the story because they had to get it right. But the other thing that it, that it forced them to do was that they, they had to take ownership of it and suddenly when they took ownership of it there was a level of empathy that was inherent in that act, and, and that's something that's still going on. I, I, I think it's a brilliant project, but I think, you know, anything we can do to, to try to, you know, get back some sort of ability to do those things and to do those things with an empathetic heart, you know, and mind are, are good things.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I want to move on to, we've talked a lot today about geographical divides. You know, you come from Appalachia, Asma comes from the Midwest in Indiana. I, myself grew up in Kentucky and I find sometimes that students and folks at UD don't really understand the perspectives of people in those regions. But before I jump to that I want to pull up this tweet from Asma where you said you were; it was the first time out in the wild interviewing people since last summer. Our objection rate of people willing to talk has gone way up. So, I wanted you to talk a little bit about like what has it been like trying to interview people in a pandemic, post pandemic or whatever, wherever we are right now –

ASMA KHALID: Yeah. I think that was when I was out in Pennsylvania recently. I was working on a story about inflation and, I don't know if you've spent money on anything lately you probably have noticed you spend more money on like a cup of coffee. And so, I just, I was getting rejected by a whole bunch of people and often what you'll do as a reporter is you might like park yourself outside of a Walmart and just spend a couple of hours trying to hear from people, getting different perspectives. And you know, I just, I found that I do this a lot in campaign cycles and you get pretty good at it and people feel pretty comfortable talking to you and they have a lot to say. And a lot of people did not want to talk on this most recent trip. I don't, was that in July? Yeah. In July. Late July. And, I, I, you know, I don't know what the reason is. I was talking to people about the economy. I think everything seems to tie-in to politics right? So, maybe people are just felt it was politically loaded. It also could just be that like we are reentering this world after being kind of sequestered away from other humans for a while and you don't really want to be stopped by a stranger in a

parking lot and –

DAVID JOY: [Chuckle.]

ASMA KHALID: – and be asked your thoughts. But yeah, I mean, I don't know. I think that it's a, it's one of those things that journalists often do. I think that its important to do. It's important to talk to people and not as a, at least I think, as a political journalist. Like, exclusively focus your stories out of Washington, D.C. I think that's very limiting and it's something I hope that we continue to do even though it is certainly harder and just logistically in this moment that we're living in.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, let's jump back over to David for a moment. In a, this comes from a, a student of mine, Ryan. They submit their questions in advance and we will have an opportunity like I said to have a Q and A in just about 20 minutes. He's; Ryan found that in a recent interview you gave for your new book, *When These Mountains Burn* – which by the way is in, on sale in the lobby after the event. David has been kind enough to sign the copies for people who purchase the book. He said, you quote George Saunders that fiction when it's done well has the ability to serve as empathy's training wheels. In this time of political division are there any fictitious works that are addressing the growing lack of empathy and understanding between these, these, the left and the right in these too polarized communities. Like, what can you recommend that people read? Maybe even non-fiction as well that –

DAVID JOY: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: – that helps –

DAVID JOY: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: – to help us to understand how can we find the humanity in

each other?

DAVID JOY: Yeah, I, I think what Saunders was getting at was just, you know, I think, I think the role of art is twofold. I think one it needs to illicit some sort of emotional response and I don't really care what that emotional response is. If it makes you mad that's good; if it makes you laugh that's good. But it needs to illicit some sort of emotional reaction. And the other thing that it needs to do is, is illuminate some aspect of the human condition. And, and that's what Saunders is, is getting at, is, is the idea that good fiction allows you to walk in the shoes of somebody else for 240 pages or 300 pages or whatever that may be. And it allows you to do that in privacy. Sometimes I think, especially if you're somebody like me who, you know, I'm rarely around anybody, ah, you know, I'm, I live in the middle of nowhere. It's just me and a dog. It allows me to go into very uncomfortable places and to do that alone and to sit with it, and that, that may feel safer than to go seek out those situations elsewhere. I would also say, I think, you know, I think we're seeing a , a real rise in American literature celebrating diversity and it's, it's the best thing that's happened in American literature in my lifetime. I think about the most interesting thing that I have, that I believe is happening in American literature is, is you've got a lot of black writers writing, it's all, it almost strikes me as like what South American writers were doing with magical realism. So, I think about a writer like Maurice Ruffin with the novel *We Cast A Shadow*; or I think about a short story writer like Rion Amilcar Scott, what; *The World Doesn't Require You*. And he's taken these very real; everybody said *We Cast A Shadow* with satire. Well, it wasn't satire. It was very much a reflection of our current state. But what he did was he turned it on its head and presented it in such a fantastical way that, that it made it approachable.

And, that's what, that's what they were doing. You know, that's what Gabriel Garcia Marquez was doing. That's what Jose Saramago was doing. And I think sometimes you can get to a place that's so uncomfortable that you can no longer entertain those conversations directly. And in a moment like that it takes an author or an artist turning the world on its head and allowing you to look at it from another angle. Colson Whitehead, you know, another perfect – *The Underground Railroad*, you know, making it a, a literal railroad. Trying to find way to make it more approachable so that, so that it's not the same old story. I, I think that's the most interesting thing that's, that's happening in American literature right now. And, and it's addressing all of these issues.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, one of the reasons I brought both of you here is because you're both writers. You, you know, and I'm curious what do you suggest beyond the fiction that you recommended, what things should Americans be consuming if they want to understand what's actually happening in this country and if they want to be able to engage in civil discourse and civil dialogue? So, Asma, you, obviously you're a journalist from NPR. You're probably going to recommend NPR [chuckle] –

DAVID JOY: [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: What, what do people need to do? I always tell them that they need to diversify their media portfolio; they need to read from a lot of different sources. But what are your recommendations?

ASMA KHALID: Yeah, I mean, gosh, that's a really interesting question that I guess I maybe don't give enough time and attention to. I mean, in some ways I, I feel that social media has created a whole lot of problems but at the same time I spend a lot of time on say a platform like Twitter and I actually feel like I'm

exposed to a lot of different opinions on Twitter by selectively choosing who I follow. And I've created like curated private lists, so nobody can see who is on them besides me. You know, for example, the situation out of Afghanistan, I realized when I went back through my lists that I had created a list called AFPAK – Afghanistan Pakistan – a decade plus ago for myself, and had, to be honest, just not really gone through and followed those people latterly but they were on this kind of private curated list. And there's all sorts of local Afghan journalists on that list that are telling me stories of what's going on inside the country that no Western journalist is able to hear or to access at this point in time. And to me those are really important voices. Like I love NPR; I work there. But, I would have to say I think one thing – and we were talking about this earlier in the classroom – is that the United States as a whole, and I don't say this as a critique necessarily of NPR, but I think all news institutions are just very inward looking and sometimes I think it's important to hear about the rest of the world, myself included. I mean, I don't speak, you know, multiple fluent lang (SIC), foreign languages etcetera but I think many people in Europe do. And, and I love listening for example to the BBC News Hour. It was actually the very first radio internship I had. It's a really random story. I was in England, and I somehow happened to intern for the BBC News Hour. I never had worked in radio before. And I fell in love with the power that radio can do. And I think radio is a really, like, intimate source of news and it helps you hear how people sound. And I think hearing a person's voice has a level of intimacy that you never get when you read the words. I mean, no, I'm not saying –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle.]

ASMA KHALID: Sorry, the words on a page. But like when you read a

newspaper you just don't hear the, the person's inflections or their tone in the same way. So, I love listening to them. I think podcasts are another great way to curate news. I think one of the challenges though is that every, like, platform that I'm mentioning also in my view has, like, tremendous ills. Right? Like, I feel like podcasting has also allowed for people to really just kind of like dig deeper into these horrible echo chambers. We're only going to listen to like the flashy celebrities who you already agree with. I find social media terribly destructive in some ways. Like Facebook to me, every time I get on there its just, you know, I – I mean this is a whole another issue but like you know we talk about masking and vaccine mandates and I read stuff from like old friends from high school and it's just, you know, people have like very, people across the board will just reinforce opinions that they already have on social media platforms. And so, I'm a big believer that a lot of the divides we talk about in terms of like civil discourse would not exist if social media did not also exist which I know is a complete like hypothetical. You can't prove that what I'm saying. [Chuckle.] But, but at the same time I think it's a matter of being like judicious. And if you don't know, I mean, this is like another thing, I think we've weirdly culturally come to, like, distrust experts a lot and I don't understand that at all because maybe, you know, I'm not a, I'm not a doctor. Multiple people in my family work in the medical profession. If I have a question this day I call my dad; I call, you know, my sister is in public health and it's weirdly confusing to me as to why like we as a society come to distrust people who have expertise in something. And so, the same way I think that like with news I like to, if I don't know something recently I called up a friend, you know, asking where would she go for X, Y, Z information? And I think that's important. So, I think maybe that's actually what's perhaps most important

is this idea of learning to re-trust experts. I don't, I don't understand why and, and that is whole – I mean, I don't know if you all gave any thoughts –

DAVID JOY: [CHUCKLE.]

ASMA KHALID: – of just why we have completely moved away from, you know, if you would go and you need an eye surgery you would not go to your dentist for it. You wouldn't go to somebody who's never done an eye surgery before. But like for some reason we do believe like every, you know, Joe Shmoo who spouts some like medical information on social media and I don't understand why and how that started happening. So –

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I think, you know, the, the danger of echo chambers is very real not just on social media but in our, in our personal lives as well. And I think what you're suggesting is sometimes step outside of your comfort zone and ask someone who you don't know or who, who feels differently from you where would you go to find information about this? And, I think, again, I, I suggest to all my students to follow international news. Follow Al Jazeera, follow, follow BBC News, follow public news, public radio, public television as well as commercial television. I'll be honest with you; I do not watch cable news [chuckle] unless there is something very big happening on there because it's meant to draw eyeballs for advertisers and that's not the kind of news I want to consume. So, I'm looking for expert commentary. I'm looking for excellent journalists who can do very good interviewing of those experts. So, I did say we were going to move on to kind of these – we've been talking a lot today about geographical differences and I have a tweet from – whoops, is it going to work? Where do I point it? So, you've notified me there's a webinar question coming up but it's not letting me – oh. There we go. So, David, this is something that you tweeted also

in July. Sorry, I'm a bit of a, a Twitter –

DAVID JOY: [Chuckle]

ASMA KHALID: [Chuckle]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle].

DAVID JOY: There's no telling what you'll find.

ASMA KHALID: It has good uses; I really do.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle]

ASMA KHALID: I feel like it is the number one place I go to in the morning –

DAVID JOY: Yeah.

ASMA KHALID: – for news.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well –

ASMA KHALID: At the same time, they say its evil too – I mean –

DR. HOFFMAN: And I just, I, I think that it's, it's limitations on words just offer these opportunities for very quippy cut things. So, you said this, you said I'm moving further and further away from the word Appalachia. It's been politicized, weaponized, commodified to a point I don't feel comfortable using it and the truth is that I don't know anybody in, of this place who'd ever have used that word anyhow. So, I wondered if you could explain that a little bit?

DAVID JOY: Yeah, I think, you know, that word, ugh, the word really became politicized in the wake of the 2016 election. You know, and we, we spoke a little bit about this, but I think for a whole lot of America they were, they were looking around and when the cloud of dust settled they looked around to find that they were in places unfamiliar and they thought how in the hell did we get here. And, when that happens you tend, the easiest thing is always to say, well that's why or that's why. And so, you had this, this political scapegoat-ism

that took place where all of a sudden Appalachia became the thing that everybody talked about and all of a sudden everybody, all the news agencies – news agencies that didn't, they, they didn't care about, you know, think of, think about the, the way the water was in Ferguson. There's places in, in Kentucky they ain't been able to drink water for decades. Nobody cared. Nobody cared about that place. They still don't really care about that place,. You know, but nobody cared about that place until they needed it for a very specific purpose and ever since then that word has kind of become this, this kind of hot topic word that people throw around and I find myself very distrusting of it in that typically the people who use it don't understand it and the people who identify with, with it are people that I, that, that not always but a lot of times that I don't see where I live, you know. I, I've never known a mountain person who'd tell you I'm from Appalachia. They'd tell you I come from Scotts Creek, or I come from Greens Creek, or I grew up in Dillsboro, or I grew up in Hazelwood, or I grew up in Frog Level, or I grew up in Wolf Creek, or I come off, you know, Rattlesnake Mountain, Rattlesnake, whatever. They'd tell you a place because that's, that's what it was rooted to. It was rooted to a very specific place. You know, there is, there's a line in, in my, in one of my books where they, it was, it was where place was tied to name and it's like if you told me you was McCall I'd say oh, you're a Glenville McCall, or are you a Little Canada McCall, are you a Balsam Grove McCall, and you would be very clear about which one you were. A Balsam Grove McCall would tell you they ain't having nothing to do with that. But what I'm getting at is that it was very specific and out of all those people none of them would have said I come from Appalachia. They don't, you know, and we tend to talk about this, that whole place in these very homogenous terms. People would; and, and what

they mean by it is they mean coal country. They mean Eastern Kentucky and West Virginia. They're not talking about me and they're most certainly not talking about, you know, the foothills in Alabama. You know, they're talking about Eastern Kentucky and West Virginia. And, and people where I live they don't know any, or where I live they don't know anything about coal. You know, we're apple people. You know, and it was timber. But what I'm getting at is that, is that, you know, the word started to get thrown around and thrown around and thrown around and rather than anybody ever wanting to talk about it with any sort of complexity. They always reduce it down to a very singular thing that is, you know, very far from the truth, And so I want, I want to get back to the truth. And we've got all these wonderful writers doing that. And you know the other thing they mean by Appalachia is white people. They think everybody looks like me, you know. Looks like me with a still, picks a banjo. I don't know.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle.]

DAVID JOY: Meanwhile you've got all these people who have been doing important work for decades. You know, you've got a writer like Crystal Wilkinson who, who has been named the Poet Laureate of Kentucky. Just had a gorgeous book of poetry come out called *Perfect Black*. If you want to know what rural America looks like from those eyes and what Appalachia looks like from those eyes read that book. You know, don't go reading *Hillbilly Elegy* and think that that represents anything about that place. It doesn't represent anything about that place. He has no understanding of that place. And so, you've got all of these writers who are doing the work and I just wish that for once those were the people that we were projecting and those were the people we were lifting up and putting on the stage. Um, and through doing that you come to a, a lot more, a

larger understanding of that place. You begin to, to, you know, experience that place with, with a lot more ambiguity.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I do want to get to the audience questions soon, but I, there's another question from a student in my class, Margo. This is for both of you. You know, this generation faces unique challenges – every generation does – she wants to know what are the most critical changes that her generation – Gen Z – can make going forward to ensure a better future? What should they be doing right now as you guys are old millennials, I think.

DAVID JOY: We're old.

ASMA KHALID: [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: The elder –

ASMA KHALID: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: – millennials [laughter.]

DAVID JOY: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: What do you, what do you see young people in college, high school and college right now, what can they do to, to sort of further these causes we're talking about in terms of engaging more in civil dialogue and, and speaking across differences?

ASMA KHALID: That's a heavy, heavy question. I mean look, I don't envy always the younger generation in part because I feel like as much as we've been talking about social media, I think you all have grown up in a world of social media in a way that I had the luxury of not being, I think, just not having to always be online when I was younger. And there's a certain bliss to that I think. And so, I think that that is offered you all a lot of amazing opportunities to connect with different kinds of people but it's also I think just like a heavy burden and

challenge that you have. But at the same time, I do think when we talk about civil discourse and finding out how other people are living and being connected to that, because you all have been online for years of your life you can do a lot of that through social media. I mean, there's a lot of really amazing things that you can in places and voices you can find. You know, again, I mentioned Twitter but like it's no joke that Twitter is legit probably the first thing that I check in the morning and the last thing that I check at night. And I check my curated lists of different kinds of people. I have lists for all different kinds of things and I put interesting people into those little lists and that's what I click on. And I feel like that's an amazing thing that you can do. I mean, I think, we were talking about this earlier, that one of the challenges at this moment is that it does feel very much like the country is polarized left and right and I'm not entirely sure, at least as a political journalist, that I see the polarization ending any time soon. I think that the next election cycle will be a very polarizing election cycle. So, I don't think that these challenges are going away any time soon. I think just one of the things that for you all that is really important is figuring out ways to have conversations with people who are not like you. Whether that isn't just a matter of how they look but what their politics are because I do feel very much that people are not having political conversations amongst one another. Very often they're having them, you know, sort of like across one another. And I don't know that there's that many places to be honest where those conversations are even happening. One of; you know, this old host I used to adore at NPR said one of the things he loved was that NPR in some ways was kind of like an old town square. You'd hear from all parts of the country; you'd hear from different voices, and I think that's true to some degree but I also still think that like all news

organizations could do a better job of hearing from different kinds of people and going to places that make us uncomfortable and better understanding. And I actually time and again believe that like the best way you grow is when you are feeling a little bit uncomfortable. It's what I –

DAVID JOY: Yeah, absolutely.

ASMA KHALID: – sort of love about journalism. I go out and feel uncomfortable all the time [chuckle.] But it's not, once you get over that little bit of discomfort it's so worth it. And so, I think being in places that make you feel uncomfortable is really, really important.

DR. HOFFMAN: That's good advice.

DAVID JOY: Yeah. We were, when you said that word it was like it must have been going like –

ASMA KHALID: [Laughter.]

DAVID JOY: – a ping pong ball and back and forth between us because what I was going to ask you was, was why do we find out, why do we put, place ourselves in these echo chambers and the, and the answer is comfortability. And, and one of the best books that I read this year is a book called *The Comfort Crisis*. And that's specifically what it's about and it's, it's, its largely about the way that humans evolved to become comfortable. You know, everything, everything that we ever did whether it be shelter, whether it be clothes, it, whether it be the ability to store food. Whatever it was it was things to make our lives easier so that we could, we could be more comfortable. And what this book does is it looks at all of, all of the things that have happened especially oh, you know, the past 150 – 200 years. And we're too comfortable, and, to a detriment to ourselves. I'd, I'd encourage anybody to read that book. But I think she's

absolutely right, is to seek out discomfort. Seek out things that are challenging. That's the only time that you experience growth. You can think about it from a bodybuilding standpoint if you want to. If you pick up five-pound weights all the time, you know, you're never, you're never going to build muscle. The way that you build muscle is to break, break those muscles down, rebuild them. Your brain is the same way. You know, you know, you need to seek out these, these places, these situations, these conversations, these people that make you uncomfortable and challenge the things that you believe. And only through a constant challenging of your beliefs are you ever able to truly solidify, you know, what it is that, that you, that you believe. And one of the, as an author I, you know, but more so as a reader the easiest way for me to do that is books. I, I engulf them. You know, I think it drives Ashley crazy because they just stack and stack and –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle]

DAVID JOY: – and you know eventually we have to load my truck and take them off and then more and more. But it, its that constant, it. It's a yearning for that. I want to read people who don't think like me. You know, I want to read people who challenge what I believe and that has always felt like a really safe place to do that.

DR. HOFFMAN: Do you think because of the storytelling nature of your childhood?

DAVID JOY: I think it's that but I, the, the, as far as the safety aspect of it it's that there can be no confrontation. You know, versus if you sit down in a situation it, it's like that situation I was describing with, with all of those friends of mine in France that were yelling back and forth and they're screaming at each

other. Well, they were really good at that, you know, because culturally they were used to that. If that happened in America, especially if that happened where I grew up somebody's getting hit.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle]

DAVID JOY: You know, event, [chuckle] eventually it's going to escalate to a point to where it's, its not, where it becomes volatile. Americans, I think, are kind of volatile by nature. And so, so books and podcasts or, or the news or anything else gives you a way to experience all of those things that challenge you and make you uncomfortable but to do so on your own terms.

DR. HOFFMAN: I think those, that's great advice from both of you.

So, I think we're about 8:30 here so it's about time to get some questions in the online queue so if you're watching from home please use the Q and A function in, in the webinar to ask some questions. I'm going to wrap up my last question with our speakers but if those in our audience have questions be ready to raise your hand and one of our student mike marshals – so this is the point where I'll ask the two of you guys to come down here. I didn't identify which mike you should go to but whoever is closest to the nearest mike. Are my students out here somewhere? Thank you. [Chuckle.] So, yeah, one of you will have to kind of walk around. Thank you. You're good. All right. So, Drew and Sarah, thank you. So, be ready to raise your hand and one of our mike marshals will guide you to the microphone. And again, because of COVID purposes we're going to just ask the question into the microphone and then return to your seat. Please keep your masks on as regulated in UD COVID policy for indoor campus buildings. So, while we're waiting for some questions to come in, here's the big question. Four years later what's been the biggest change in this country since

you are here four years later. For you it's having two children.

ASMA KHALID: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: That's a big change. But, you know, you were here in 2017 when Trump was elected and there was a lot of turmoil. Now we have a former a, a, a Blue Hen in the White House, a University of Delaware alumni in the White House. What's different? You talked a little bit about how the press conferences look a little different. But what's the biggest difference you see? David?

DAVID JOY: I think, I think we're just at a place where the conversation is, is, its going to be very difficult to get it started again in any type of constructive way. I think, I think she's absolutely right in not finding, I don't find myself hopeful that, that the polarization is going to, you know, get back unless we begin to hold them accountable and, and you know, and say we're tired of watching this. You know, and, and so for me it's just, I mean it looks like chaos. That's why I don't tune in to it. I go sit in the woods –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle]

DAVID JOY: – and read books.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle]

DAVID JOY: And as, I told her last night I was sitting at a, at, at the hotel and I was having a drink and I, these, all these people were talking and they, they were talking political. They ain't know each other from, you know, Tom, Dick or Janey but they was all talking back and forth. And one of them happened to say that he said, he said well where do you get your news? And the person said, well, you know, and they kind of went around the conversation. And he said, well I, he said I watch Fox News 24 hours a day. And, and it wasn't a

matter of Fox News – because you could just pick the opposite, whatever the opposite to that is – but it was the fact that he was tuning into that 24 hours a day. And you could just see it in him. I mean he was; I mean he was about to explode. And that’s the average American anymore and its because they, they consume it. Stop consuming it. The minute you stop consuming it they no longer have a reason to sell it and maybe we can get back to, you know, having some type of real conversation. But I, you know, I felt, I, ultimately I felt sorry for him because he needed to go sit outside.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAVID JOY: I mean really. And, and so, yeah, I, I think, to me, maybe four years ago there was it was like this and now it –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAVID JOY: – eye starts twitching and before you know it –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAVID JOY: – these people are in trouble. [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. I was hoping for something a little more optimistic –

DAVID JOY: Oh, I [chuckle] –

DR. HOFFMAN: – but –

DAVID JOY: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

ASMA KHALID: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAVID JOY: All right, we been –

DR. HOFFMAN: I should –

DAVID JOY: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: – I should never (inaudible) –

DAVID JOY: We're not, we're not a hopeful –

DR. HOFFMAN: – this much from you.

DAVID JOY: – people. [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

ASMA KHALID: Look, I think the, the, the reason maybe I, I say that I think the next election cycle will be no less polarizing and that I think it will take drastic changes to, to really have some sort of kind of like recalibration of where things are in this country is because I look at a number of the Democrats running this past election cycle. The criticism of Joe Biden from the left was that he was too conciliatory, that he tried too much to work at, at a bipartisan level, that he was old fashioned, he didn't understand where Republicans were and then he was elected and that is the very man that was contested and told you did not win. This is not true. We're going to storm the Capitol. And so, to me like when that was the reaction, when Joe Biden, like him or not you could hate his politics, but the man repeatedly said I'm going to reach out, I'm going to have this olive branch and he was responded to by a storming of the Capitol. To me that shows that like I don't see what kind of optimism (inaudible) because you may have hated Joe Biden's politics, but you could have hated George W. Bush's politics too.

DAVID JOY: That's right.

ASMA KHALID: You could have hated like Ronald Reagan's politics. But there's this new sense of like he is not the rightful winner, resign, tyrant –

DAVID JOY: Yeah.

ASMA KHALID: – traitor. Like, that type of language isn't a, a belief that the

system is working. I think there's a fundamental belief –

DAVID JOY: Yeah.

ASMA KHALID: – that like the system isn't working. Things are rigged. Facts are not facts. And it's really, really hard. I mean, I mention like, I go out around the country, I've done interviews, like, it's really hard. I mean, sometimes you – you know there's a woman I interviewed I remember in Florida over the summer. She was working at a Trump little merchandise booth, and I interviewed her. She was not wearing masks. And, as a detail in the story I think I described something like, you know, they were selling Trump masks; they were not wearing masks. Anybody who listens to NPR knows we give a lot of detail and color in our stories. She was extremely upset that I mentioned the fact that she was not wearing a mask and over texts message sent me what I would argue were like extremely, you know, just antagonistic text messages because I had said this about her. And, in my view, like, the story was very fairly done. In fact, the local county Republican Chair told me he thought I did a really right and like fair job on the story. I thought I did. I made a very conscious effort to reach out to all kinds of different people. But if your preconception is like, you know, this journalist is coming through; she's going to paint me in a bad light, it's really hard even if I would argue I did not paint you in a bad light to convince you of otherwise when ultimately, like, we are so baked in to different opinions. And so, I will say as somebody who does actually, I think, makes a conscious effort to go out and talk to all kinds of different people, it's really, really hard I think a) to get people to talk to you, to trust you; but secondly, even when the story is done I think people come to that story with a set of, like, preconceived ideas of, of what they believe that the narrative its. And so, yeah, like, I don't see the 2024

election as being any less heated than what the 2016 and the 2020 elections. And, and look, I would argue it very much depends on who's running in 2024. If you have former President Trump running again and if you have a candidate of color you can bet it will be an extremely, extremely unpleasant campaign cycle. So –

DR. HOFFMAN: Right, again, very optimistic –

ASMA KHALID: [Chuckle]

DR. HOFFMAN: – view.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Lets take a question from the audience. So, I'm looking in, in this direction. So, is there anyone – actually, I see a hand up there. Would you like to come forward over to this side? And, someone over here be thinking about your question because you'll be next.

Q: Hi, is – okay, it's on. One of the things that I've encountered a lot; nowadays one of the arguments I hear is the I'm not willing to argue with you about that anymore. You hear a lot about this with like climate change, or LGBT rights. I'm wondering if the both of you can respond to that and how it relates to civil discourse.

ASMA KHALID: Do you hear that I'm curious from folks that believe that climate change does exist or do, does not exist? Or from both sides?

Q: So, it, it maybe my own echo chamber but I hear it a lot from the left of people who are saying climate change is real, I'm not willing to argue about that anymore; or LGB right, LGBTQ rights are human rights, I'm not willing to discuss that with you anymore.

DAVID JOY: Hum.

ASMA KHALID: Hum. Okay.

DAVID JOY: I, I, I think when it, ugh, I think there are times when, when it becomes very difficult to engage in conversations that are fundamentally harmful to another person. So, with, you know, whether that be Black Lives, Black Lives Matter movement or whether that be LGBTQT (sic) or, you have issues that to me it becomes very difficult. I completely understand the ability to say no, I can't, I can't engage with this conversation anymore. She and I were talking about, about this before we came in which was that a lot of times, which if we want to jump to climate change, a lot of times people don't want to engage with facts anymore. And, so how do you have a conversation when somebody doesn't want to engage with anything that is, that's real. And, I find it very, I don't know, I don't know. As far as, you know, these, these really difficult conversations that kind of we've ground into the ground, you know, drove into the ground and that people are sick and tired of talking about, again, I think, I think that's what makes what some of those writers like Maurice Ruffin or Rion Amilcar Scott are doing so fascinating is, is that they're trying to turn them on their heads so that there's something new and I, I find that fascinating. So, I think maybe that's one way. But yeah, I don't know. I would tend to say she'd be a whole hell of a lot better at it than I am. Part of the reason being because of where I live, it's very insular. I don't have to engage in those things, physically engage in those things on a daily basis.

ASMA KHALID: And I do it from like a level of removal – I mean you asked me about coming back after 2016. I mean, candidly, what I told my editor was I would never have signed up for the 2016 campaign if I knew my right to exist as a Muslim in this country was up for debate which –

DAVID JOY: Yeah.

ASMA KHALID: – it very much was up for debate.

DAVID JOY: Yeah.

ASMA KHALID: And I, I would not have signed up to cover that election.

Like, this, this was not a debatable issue internally in my own head. And so, I think that the way I at least engaged with it as a journalist is it's sort of like a weird out of body experience. Like I have, had plenty of conversations with people who tell me all sorts of things about Muslims in this country and what they lack. And, you know a woman who told me she doesn't really care that I wear a head scarf. She doesn't think I should. I mean, all sorts of things. People feel very comfortable when they get to start talking to you about things and I guess I believe a part of me is sort of able to do that from a level of like removal. Like I am –

DAVID JOY: Uh-huh.

ASMA KHALID: – not taking it – because therefore I am engaging with it as on a professional level. But, look, I mean, we're approaching the 20th anniversary of 9/11 and you talk about not wanting to engage with people. I think one of the things I've heard from a lot of Muslim friends now is, as we get closer to the 20th anniversary, is right after 9/11 a lot of Muslims in this country felt the need to apologize for the 9/11 attacks whether or not, you know, I'm not saying they had anything to do with it but there was a lot of like public remorse. And I think that what's interesting to me now is like 20 years on a lot of Muslims in the country are saying we had nothing to do with this, we should not feel the need to apologize for this. And that conversation has shifted. You know, like I can understand the desire to do both of those things. Maybe that's kind of

generationally where I sit but I think that to some degree to, what David was saying, I think it's very hard for people to engage in conversations around cultural or racial things where, you know, the saying is it, it's like you can debate a whole lot of things but if you're debating very right to exist or your –

DAVID JOY: Yeah.

ASMA KHALID: – your sort of – I think that makes it harder. I think policy issues-wise; I think it's important to debate policy issues. You know, climate change to me, that, that's a policy issue –

DAVID JOY: Yeah.

ASMA KHALID: – it's less of a cultural issue, racial issue and I do think it's important to debate those issues. You know, I was talking about vaccines and mandates. I mean, that to me is one that's really interesting where I'll open up Facebook and I'll hear all sorts of chatter from people. I remember before the election seeing someone from my hometown saying that come November – when was it, when was the election ever, November 4th?

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

ASMA KHALID: As soon as that, that date you, you can imagine this whole, this whole pandemic is going to be over because they believed it was a manmade sort of deal to essentially hurt President Trump at the time. You know, those are conversations that I think are important to have. I think it's difficult because some people are basing that information again on like scientific expertise and other people are not. But to me, like, I guess I still believe it's important to have those conversations because – and, and maybe this is naïve to some degree – but I guess I believe that once people have access to information that they trust the access to information that they trust outweighs like the fictitious

information.

DAVID JOY: Hum.

ASMA KHALID: But maybe that's naïve because we know a whole lot of people don't really believe true factual information. But I guess I still believe it's important to have that conversation.

DR. HOFFMAN: And I think that's what we're doing here. I think that's part of the reason that we are here, and that people are watching us online as well. So, before I jump over to this side of the room, I do see that there's a webinar question. So, Steve, I don't know if you can pull that up on the screen or if you can put it on my monitor? What other changes can you or us do to narrow down the separation? What other changes? So, I guess, like, what can we do to feel more connected to one another to feel less separated from one another?

DAVID JOY: Yeah. I, I think it all goes down to dialogue but I, you know, I, I think one of the things that we actively do is hold people accountable. And, and, so for me as, you know, I register independent. I tend, I tend to vote democrat. For me it's holding my people accountable. I think that's something that, that, we've experienced too is that politically there's become this, this idea of infallibility. It didn't matter what the hell somebody did; it was that well that's my guy, so he did so I'm with him.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

DAVID JOY: That's, that's not the way that, that American politics should work, were meant to work, anything. If anything, it should be your job to hold them more accountable because they're, they're willing to have those conversations with you. They're going – you know, especially in this moment in time they're going to look at me and dismiss me right off the bat. But who

shouldn't is, is the people that I voted for. You know, I look at, you know, I voted for Joe Biden. I didn't vote for him in a primary, but I voted for Joe Biden in the general election. And I look at the things that he's done. A lot of the things that he's done that bother me immensely. There's still children in cages down on, down on the border. It's, hell it's like we forgot them. You know? And that was a big deal a year ago. Still is a big deal. But why are we not holding him accountable for that? You know? He's released more drilling permits than, than any president since Bush. Environmentally that bothers me. I need to hold him accountable. And, and I think that's, that's something that people can actively do. And you can do it across the aisle as well, but I think one of things that we have to do is get back to, get back to holding the people that we supposedly align with accountable. You know? And, if, if it's them again acting like children we have to make it clear that's, that's unacceptable. You know, and only through doing, through doing those things I think can you have any, any hope at all that maybe we can get back to some –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

DAVID JOY: -- to some bit of normalcy.

ASMA KHALID: I agree, yeah. I think it's very important to, to sort of be critical of whoever and whatever ideas that you believe in or whoever you believe in. You know, one thing I've been struck with as a political reporter who is, is that whenever I pointed out things, you know, throughout the campaign cycle, and I covered President Trump in 2016 as well, is that whenever you would point out say a factual error that President Trump had made you'd get all sorts of like Twitter comments and, you know, kind of what you were saying clap back, and if you point out or you are critical or even I would say factual – I mean, I did a story

that just aired I think it published today about Is the Forever War Truly Over? That President Biden promised to end the forever wars and, and, and there's been, you know, both critics I would say and even allies of his who have talked about the fact that the military authorization for the use of force from 2001 is still on the books as well as the fact that they're reviewing sort of counterterrorism policy. And long story short, basically, like, has the war shifted to like drone warfare as opposed to being, you know, sort of ground troops. And some Biden allies were, they very much like scoffed at the theory of this story. Of saying, you know, well, we promised this, and you're sort of being overly literal. And I guess I believe my job as a journalist is to hold people accountable whether they're from the right or the left. But I think a lot if politics now feels like sports to people –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

ASMA KHALID: – and so you're either on my –

DAVID JOY: That's right.

ASMA KHALID: – team or their team and its very uncomfortable sometimes. Again, I believe it's good to uncover but its uncomfortable to be a journalist because, because people don't like to – I mean, I'm working on another story right now about China trade policy and how thus far we haven't seen a huge shift from President Biden from President Trump's China trade policy. And we heard a lot of Democrats clambering about how terrible President Trump was initially on putting forth tariffs. Well, if those tariffs were so bad, you know, they're still in place at this particular moment in time. I'm not saying they won't change but, you know, as, as of the moment they're still in place and we're not hearing the same clamber from the left of how bad they are. And so, I just think being critical –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

ASMA KHALID: – of everything and everyone you read is really, really important –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

ASMA KHALID: – even if it is something you, you know, you might think. You say what else can we do? I think thinking critically about your own set of assumptions is really, really important. And if there's even someone you agree with, I'm just questioning where they're coming from is, is important. And at the same time, I think, you know, I felt like there was a lot of criticism of things that President Trump did because they were coming from President Trump. And I had some very interesting conversations on background recently about trade policy. And someone said to me that, you know, tariffs with China are not something that Democrats necessarily would have put forth but they're in place now. President Trump put them in place, and you do have some Democrats, someone like Sherrod Brown of Ohio who, you know, has been to the left, I think, on, on a lot of trade policy. And it's interesting to me how the narrative of what President Trump was doing at the time period is far more negative I guess than perhaps where some of the same voices on the left are today. And I think holding them accountable to that level of discrepancy is important because whether or not they may have agreed with a particular person who was making those decisions –

DAVID JOY: Yeah.

ASMA KHALID: – I think just drilling down why people have that level of inconsistency to me is really important and interesting.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I think we have time for one more question from this

side of the room. We have someone right here. If you want to step up to the microphone?

Q: Hi. So, you know, as college students, as Gen Zers I suppose, you know, we've kind of come of age in this very polarizing political climate. You know, I was only 16 when President Trump was elected. But, you know, I've kind of always known politics to be generally pretty polarizing but as a sort of elder millennials as we said earlier –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

Q: – is there –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Inaudible.]

Q: – [Laughter.] [Inaudible,] yeah, sorry. I didn't mean to, that to be offensive.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

Q: But –

DR. HOFFMAN: There's sort of a joke online that like the –

ASMA KHALID: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: – elder millennials are, it's like it's, it's kind of a ridiculous name. I'll take on Exennial (SIC). Like that's my –

DAVID JOY: [Laughter.]

Q: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: – that's my –

Q: Yeah –

DR. HOFFMAN: – moniker.

Q: – whatever, whatever name you find appropriate. But –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle.]

Q: – is there sort of a moment that you realize that civil discourse was becoming a real issue in this country in politics?

DAVID JOY: Yeah.

Q: Like, you know, how can you kind of describe that moment, that like aha moment where you realize, oh, you know, we can't really talk about politics in the same ways that we might have used to.

DAVID JOY: Yeah, I think, I, she and I were both in the high – you know, for me it's a very distinct moment. And she and I were both in high school, same age when it happened. We were both seniors in high school –

ASMA KHALID: Um-hum.

DAVID JOY: – which is 9/11. For me that's the shift. And I don't necessarily just tie it to politics, I tie it to lots of things. I, I, I, you know, I am a gun owner. You know. I believe in gun rights for a whole lot of things. You know? I also believe in gun reform. But if I look at gun culture, for instance, and the way that that shifted. To grow up in that environment it's hard for me to imagine because there is no before, there is no before time. Like for instance, you grew; what happened post-9/11 was you have rampant nationalism, rampant xenophobia, rampant Islamophobia, and all of it becomes very, very vocal. And so, I'm going to just, I'm going to just use the, the gun example because that's something that I know well. Well, suddenly you have all these people, they're coming for us. Terrorists are coming to this country. They have attacked us on our soil. We have to do something about it. The shift that happens is all of a sudden what they're pushing out the door is AR-15's. And they're pushing them out by the million. Suddenly you have, you, you start to equate patriotism with this so that you sell a bucket of ammunition, and you call it a freedom bucket.

And you put a, you slap a big American flag on the side of it and you sell 500 rounds 223 under the guise of liberty. You begin to associate liberty and freedom with, with all of these things. And so, to have grown up in that era, you know, when I, I didn't grow up those guns. It's not that those guns didn't exist, they did. You know? And you could buy them. You could, people had them. But that wasn't what you saw. You know. And so, I look that shift that took place. And the same thing happened with, with a larger American politics and the way that that conversation shifted. And, some of the same emboldening that took place in that moment. I find it unfathomable to imagine having been a Muslim in that time. Like that, it, it f**¹ me up to think about. To think about what they must have experienced in that time and, and none of it went away. It never, it never went back. And that's not to say that it was comfortable before because it wasn't comfortable before. But that is to say that that little bit, that fire when it started they've done nothing to extinguish it. They've dumped gas on it. And here we are no longer to even entertain these conversations. But for me it all ties back to that moment in time. And I'm not sure. I mean, we're, we're still experiencing, I mean the truth is, we're still experiencing real-world effects of Reaganomics. It's not like there aren't things before that that affect us now. But that moment in time to me felt like, like the world turned into kickball and everything that I had saw before I no longer saw and, and have never seen again. You know, you think about that war and hell they was, there was fathers fighting with sons, alongside sons who weren't even born when the war started. I mean, but to me that's the moment to answer your question. To me that's the moment.

¹ Expletive deleted.

DR. HOFFMAN: Asma? Do you want to have a couple of minutes left?

ASMA KHALID: Of when essentially politics became so divisive. You know, it's hard for me to pinpoint an exact moment. I do recall when President Trump was running, I often told the editors, and maybe I was one of the few people honestly in this country – I'm not trying to like toot my horn – but you went out and talked to people and it was very clear to me that it was very plausible the man would win the election. It was not a gigantic surprise actually. And I think the reason I say that is that to me he tapped into a preexisting condition; he did not create the conditions. He did not create the symptoms. The symptoms were already preexisting. In fact, you could argue he was a sort of political genius to, to tap into this in the way that he did.

DAVID JOY: Hum.

ASMA KHALID: You know, I struggle with, I, I, I whole heartedly agree with, with David that I think September 11th was a very clear pivot point in terms of where the country was and is politically. I think what's interesting to me is while there was this sort of sense of patriotism and it became very, I would argue there was this weird moment of – weird I say because I think it was very short-lived sense of like bipartisanship immediately after 9/11. And you look at George W. Bush, he had these through the roof approval ratings, and you had every member of Congress but one vote to go to war in Afghanistan. Like it was, it was across the board patriotism. And in fact, it became very unpatriotic to even critique any aspect of, of what was going on right after 9/11. Right? There were, I mean I'm, I'm trying to describe this to you all now because I feel like it seems impossible but there were just, you know, sort of decision after decision just went through on a bipartisan basis. So, it was, it was very unified. You had things like

the Patriot Act which we know has surveillance. You talk about a lot of the surveillance. There was no Department of Homeland Security. That came about afterwards. There was no, I believe there was no National Counterterrorism Center. That came about afterwards. There was a lot of just institutional infrastructure that came about after 9/11 because there was so much unanimity that there was a terrorist threat that needed to be dealt with. I was recently looking at some polling from the Pew Research Center that showed that, that both Republic; there was a minority opinion to believe that Islam was more violent than other religions among both Republicans and Democrats in 2002. And, then they polled on the same question in 2019 where I believe about three quarters of Republicans did believe that Islam was now more violent than other religions.

DAVID JOY: Hum.

ASMA KHALID: And so, I'm left wondering like what happened in those interim years because, you know, there was unanimity that patriotism rah, rah, rah for like everything, you know, we're sort of going to push through a bunch of legislation. There was also a president, George W. Bush, who very famously went to a large mosque in Washington, D.C. and spoke I think rather kindly about the need for, you know, tolerance towards, towards Muslims in the country at that time period. But of the interim years you had wars, and you had just a culture and a, a culture that I would argue in some ways was, you know, it, it wasn't clear I think the partisan level of like cultural and racial divides. And by this point in time, you know, the cultural and racial divides are very, very apparent. You, you go back, and you fast forward to the 90's and you had a more mixed republican voting block if you look at how George W. Bush won. It, it's by and large, and

I'm, I'm sort of generalizing here, but by and large many minority groups now vote for the Democratic Party. That was not the case –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um.

ASMA KHALID: – when George W. Bush won. He certainly, you know; African Americans have long voted for the Democratic Party, but it was more mixed amongst both Latinos and Asian-Americans. And so, I don't know, I guess I'm left wondering like, what happened between 2002 and 2019. And, and was there one moment or is it this gradual process of just like reinforcing opinions and pop culture and, and –

DR. HOFFMAN: The internet.

ASMA KHALID: – It was really – yeah. And it –

DAVID JOY: Yeah, yeah.

ASMA KHALID: – was the internet –

DAVID JOY: [Inaudible.]

ASMA KHALID: – it was social media. And –

DAVID JOY: [Laughter.]

ASMA KHALID: – you could argue that Democrats did not actually feel as strongly as they did about racial issues, I, I could say firsthand about I—

DAVID JOY: Yeah.

ASMA KHALID: – issues around Muslims until the rise of Donald Trump.

And the reason I say this is I recall very public moments during the 2008 campaign where, you know, a very public moment where Barack Obama's campaign – they later apologized for it – removed two women in headscarves who were standing behind him at an event. There was another moment where a photo was released with Barack Obama where, you all might recall this, like a

turban of some sort in Africa and it was released as if it was, you know, kind of like political ammunition. Right? That this would be a liability for him. And, it was strangely the rise of President Trump where you began hearing a lot about just, I think you just began to see the Democratic Party talk about race and culture in a very different way, almost in opposition to President Trump. Now whether this is a short-lived change but I'm not entirely sure. I mean, I have a lot of thoughts on the degree to which race, and cultural issues have become very, very partisan and there could be a potential backlash I think also within the, the Democratic Party. But I don't know. I'm sorry, this is such a long-winded way of answering your question that I don't know when it became very polarized. I don't know if there was a particular pivot point, but I'm struck by how the way that the country felt. And if I can say back in like 2015, 2016 it was different than how it was even right after 2002. And so, what is it that changed? What is it that makes it even more volatile I would argue right now than in that immediate aftermath? Is it just the sort of like low simmer for the last two decades? And if you have a low simmer at some point –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

ASMA KHALID: – it just kind of bubbles up and explodes out –

DAVID JOY: Back when the –

ASMA KHALID: – of the pot.

DAVID JOY: – first person –

ASMA KHALID: I'm not sure.

DAVID JOY: – that's colored to ever be in the White House. I, I, I think that's another pivotal –

ASMA KHALID: Yes.

DAVID JOY: – moment. I –

ASMA KHALID: Yes.

DAVID JOY: – I, I think you've got eight, eight years of, of, you know –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

DAVID JOY: I ah –

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I hate to cut you guys off because this is a fascinating conversation [chuckle.] I hope it gives you guys a lot to think about. So, please give a big round of applause to our two speakers.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DAVID JOY: Thank you.

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