Communication Matters: The NCA Podcast | **TRANSCRIPT**
BONUS Episode: Communicating about the Role of Race and Social Change in Politics

Please note: This is a rough transcription of this audio podcast. This transcript is not edited for spelling, grammar, or punctuation.

Participants:
Trevor Parry-Giles
Glenn Bracey
David Cisneros
Lisa Flores
Isaac Hale

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RECORDING BEGINS

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Welcome to *Communication Matters, the NCA podcast*. I'm Trevor Parry-Giles, the Executive Director of The National Communication Association.

Hi, listeners and welcome to a special bonus episode of *Communication Matters*. This is the second in a three-part special series of virtual public programs presented by NCA. Now NCA typically holds public programs twice each year and these public programs serve to disseminate relevant information about communication to various public audiences. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NCA's Fall public programs are being reimagined as a special series of the *Communication Matters* podcast series as well as video recordings of the conversations that we're having. The public program series entitled *Communicating During a Presidential Election Year* will include and does include three public programs: "The Politics of Health and Healthcare: Communicating about Health in a Presidential Election Year," today's recording about "Communicating About the Role of Race and Social Change in Politics" and finally, "VEEPS 2020: Kamala Harris versus Mike Pence." So, be sure to check out NCA's YouTube channel for a video recording of today's and the two other conversations in this special public program series. Before we begin, let's get a sense of who's joining us today on our public program series about race and social change in politics. Joining us today is…

Glenn Bracey:
Glenn Bracey, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Villanova University.

David Cisneros:
David Cisneros, Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois.

Lisa Flores:
Lisa Flores, Associate Professor in the Department of Communication and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the University of Colorado-Boulder.

Isaac Hale:
Isaac Hale, lecturer of political science at the University of California-Davis.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Thank you so much everybody for joining us today. For those of you listening and viewing this program, you can view all of the panelists' full biographical statements and learn way more about the great work that they've done at our website at ncanatcom.org/PublicPrograms, all one word. That's natcom.org/PublicPrograms. So, let's get started. We're recording this by the way on a particularly eventful day in the 2020 presidential campaign. For those of you who don't know, we're recording this on the day that it was revealed that President Trump has in fact contracted the coronavirus. And so, the news is all abuzz. But I'm hopeful that this ongoing cycle of news that we find in this campaign doesn't minimize the powerful importance of race and social protest and social change in the presidential campaign. And Glenn, you I know are in a great position to talk a bit about how you think the 2020 election might affect current social movement activities, these movements around the country that we're seeing for social change and for social justice. Do you expect them to demobilize, to intensify? How are they going to play themselves out over the next 32 days?

Glenn Bracey:
Yeah, I think that the election itself is going to be impactful on movements. I think that's pretty clear for everyone. Depending on who wins, movements are going one of two directions. But the most important thing I think to remember is that it's events not the election itself that will drive protests. So, to the extent that police continue to murder black citizens, to the extent that vigilantes like we saw in Georgia around Ahmaud Arbery continue their activities, to the extent that groups like the Proud Boys which we saw in the debate Tuesday night continue to be energized or excited by our political leadership, then events are going to continue to happen that need and justify the protests that we've seen. So, I anticipate continuity of the protests even through the election, even as we struggle through COVID winter, I guess number two. But in terms of the election itself, if President Trump wins, then I think that you'll see a next summer like the one that we saw this summer because President Trump is not only an attractive target for social movements around race because of his own rhetoric and his political policies but also because he does actions that dramatize movements. So, in sending military forces or militarized police to protest movement areas, he creates the kinds of drama that only fuel protests and have since the civil rights movement at least. If Vice President Biden is made president, so if we're talking about a President Biden, then I think you'll see protests move more away from targeting the Office of the President

and more toward targeting actual policies that they want to see implemented, things like federal oversight of police in practice and a renewal of some of the things that we saw under the Obama-Biden administration.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
So, do you think those movements will like, I don't know, start paying more attention to Capitol Hill, trying to mobilize actual legislative movement rather than this sort of on the street kind of movement?

Glenn Bracey:
Yes. I think that they will target specific legislation and particular federal activities if Joe Biden is elected president. If he's not elected president, then we'll see a continuity that we saw this past summer.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
It's interesting that this past summer's protests seem largely focused on issues of race and particularly blackness, black studies, black activism and the like. And I'm curious if any of you has a sense that maybe this is stalling or foreclosing other related social justice issues, queer and gender rights, migrant and refugee rights, disability justice, questions along those lines? And in a related note, to what extent does the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett maybe bring some of those more to the fore, women's rights, for example, in ways that they weren't before or they were being crowded out before by the focus on race?

Isaac Hale:
Yeah. So, I want to defer to my co-panelists on this question who I think have more expertise on this subject. But I wanted to briefly jump in on the previous question if that's all right?

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Sure, go ahead.

Isaac Hale:
I think that Glenn made a really fantastic set of points there. But I also wanted to draw a little bit of a historical parallel. I think back to 2008 when we saw the historic election of President Barack Obama. We saw that there was a lot of liberal frustration with Wall Street during the height of the financial crisis and I think a lot of liberals were galvanized at the time. We saw some of the energy diffuse after the election of President Obama and it's possible that a similar phenomenon could manifest in 2020 with a lot of people who are not directly affected by the police killings, people who may be allies of the Black Lives Matter movement, who are broader parts of the Democratic coalition, who are as Glenn says, currently have this very clear opposition figure in the White

House, whether they stay active in the movement, whether that energy continues going forward I think is an open question if Democrats are able to retake the White House. And I think this is especially a challenge considering there's some great research by Professor Jacob Grumbach over at the University of Washington who talks about how when it comes to state governance in particular, the Democratic and Republican Parties are polarized on almost every issue area but policing is not one of them. And so, the considerable ideological overlap that still exists between the Democratic and Republican Parties when it comes to policing may make that an additional challenge even if Democrats are victorious in the presidential election.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
I'm old enough to remember that when somebody invoked history and a historical thing, they were maybe talking about 1968, not something that feels like yesterday to those of us dinosaurs in the room. But no, that's very true. And again, I think the questions about policing have largely been oriented around questions of race and blackness in particular and I'm wondering to go on because I think your points are fantastic but they do lead into this other question of how do we grapple with or navigate or calibrate all of these quests for different types of social justice especially within the context of this presidential campaign?

Lisa Flores:
I think that's a really critical question, Trevor and I'm going to just preface by saying it's one that frustrates me, the question because it's almost parallel to the move to All Lives Matter or Bblue Lives Matter in that it presumes that these are separate issues. Right? As if we can talk about disability justice, gender queer rights, migrant refugee rights without thinking about them as linked to race, racism and anti-black racism specifically. I cannot imagine how in this moment we continue to separate. Right? And I know that that's where the motivation for the question comes from. It strikes me that if we are to listen carefully to and take seriously what race scholars are telling us, what anti-racist activists are telling us, what those who are doing to interrupt anti-black racism specifically are telling us is that the dehumanization and degradation of blacks and African-Americans is fundamental to dehumanization and degradation broadly. Right? And so, there is no possibility to move forward in any reasonable way on any justice movement without connection to solidarity with anti-racism. So, my frustration comes from perhaps it's the dinosaur legacies of being asked to choose this box or that box, this organization or that organization, this concern of that concern and really wondering. And my frustration comes from the politics of higher education where we continually separate and question and ask well, what about us and what about us and what about us as if the pieces are not connected. We know that we have white structures or structures rooted in whiteness. We have institutions rooted in whiteness but that doesn't mean that we have to have policies and practices that are also rooted in whiteness. It doesn't mean that we can't craft politics, practices, cultures that are about connection, solidarity, complexity. I don't know often how we do that. But I do know that the question does the emphasis on race, on anti-

racism, anti-black racism specifically mean that we're not putting attention elsewhere is kind of like social change that is about diversity only, that is about which bodies are in the room. And that is clearly to me just not a politic that works.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
I think that's right. I worry though that how do we as academics, as teachers and scholars confront what is ultimately a public communication challenge. Right? How do we make those arguments for that overlap, that connectiveness, that—I don't want to say because it's sort of become a cliché but it's true—that intersectionality, right, where all of those forces, the forces of social justice, for disability rights, for women's rights and all of that, how they're I think in the public mind and in the public media, they're often pitted against one another? And what can we do? What's the role of public communication and communication scholar teachers and academics generally in combating that?

David Cisneros:
Two things that come to mind are complementary. One I think is amplifying the voices and the perspectives of activists and movements that are highlighting these connections now and I actually think that's been a strength and an inspiration of a lot of the movements for social change this summer is that they've continued to highlight this, like you say, this intersectional frame. I mean even the conversations around Breonna Taylor's murder and then conversations afterwards, after the travesty of the grand jury decision and all those conversations I think have continued to highlight this connection and comparison between that unique position. So, I guess one thing would be to highlight those voices in our classes, in our scholarship, in our panels. And then I think as academics or scholars or teachers, we can also participate in helping deepen those contexts, deepen those conversations, for example, in our classes and our students when we're talking with our students. When we're talking about these issues, it can be easy to kind of, like you say, Trevor, kind of slip into that comfort. Like we're going to have a conversation this week about Black Lives Matter and race and then next week we'll talk about feminism and *Roe v Wade* and abortion and the Supreme Court and then next week. Whereas that's an easy thing to slip into but I think we need to work hard to always have these conversations at a multi layered level.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Not separating them out.

David Cisneros:
Yeah, yeah.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
And assuming that they're discreet sorts of things.

David Cisneros:
Right, right.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Yeah, yeah.

Lisa Flores:
And I think really just naming that it is the very same politic that the impetus that allows the nation to continue to sit by and watch the brutal racialized murder of blacks on the streets and to have nothing happen. It is that same ideology, that same politic that is behind aggressive politics of detention and deportation, around the assault on women's reproductive rights. The underlying peace is there and if we can continue to articulate that and link it to dehumanization and degradation, then we start to make those connections for people.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
I think that's right. A dimension of all of this is the sort of larger aspects of distrust amongst particularly underrepresented folks and folks who are for a variety of reasons since 1619 automatically distrustful of promises of change, of hopeful messages from the government, from elected officials. It affects their voting behaviors. It affects their participation in vaccine trials. I mean it's throughout the whole conversations that we have about this. How do we deal with that? What do we do about that inherent and perfectly justifiable mistrust that is a function of the systemic racism that surrounds us all the time?

Glenn Bracey:
I think one thing is to recognize the legitimacy of that response and its history and that we don't end up functionally blaming communities of color for responding to the history of white abuse that we have suffered. I say we as a black man in this conversation. So, I also want to bring up the notion that controlling for class and education, black people do participate in the political process at even higher levels than whites. So, it is not that race means lack of participation. I think what we're talking about is the effects of oppression causing lack of participation. And so, there's going to have to be some healing done frankly and some trust building done if we want to see these things change in the way that the question alludes to.

Lisa Flores:
And I think your point Glenn is really important. The problem doesn't lie with black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, American Pacific Islander communities. It lies with the systemic peace. Right? And so, if we think about it in terms of voting, it lies with voter suppression, voter intimidation. Right? I'm sure you all saw the news in Texas yesterday that counties are now going to be allowed one ballot drop off. Right? A clear move to suppress and to intimidate.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Especially when you're talking about very large counties where a lot of black and brown people live and vote.

Isaac Hale:
I just wanted to add to what Lisa and Glenn were saying. When we're thinking about obviously the actions of politicians, state governments, the national government are a big part intentionally obstructing the ability of minority voters to participate. But I think we also coming out as a political scientist, looking at it from like this 10,000 foot perspective as well, there are a lot of fundamental institutions that happen to be very disadvantageous to minority voters in the country as well. If we think about our single member districts that we use for congressional races that tend to do a poor job of representing urban voters where a lot of minority votes tend to be concentrated, the design of the United States Senate which is heavily malapportioned and significantly overrepresents white voters as does the electoral college, those are all things that I think if we're thinking about long-term goals for what would make people feel more represented in the system and maybe alleviate questions of not only participation but representation, those kind of institutions I think have to be things that are up for consideration.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Especially given their roots in whiteness and the perpetuation of slavery and the accommodation of slave owners during the founding and the whole drafting of things. Yeah. No, I think that's interesting. That also feeds on a lot of these calls that the presidential candidates and senatorial candidates are being forced to answer about these sorts of structural changes. I'm not certain that those questions are often asked in relationship to the systemic racism that those structures represent. Do you think that? I mean I don't hear that a lot. When somebody says are you going to pack the Supreme Court, they don't tease that out and demonstrate its linkages to say systemic racism and the filibuster in the Senate or something along those lines.

Isaac Hale:
Well, I think it's very interesting to see, for instance, that Senator Dianne Feinstein of California last week was asked about the filibuster and she said in essence that she did not want to change it, to modify it. And there was a lot of outrage on the left and among liberal circles about that statement. But interestingly, the history of the filibuster and how exactly it's been used historically in order to suppress civil rights legislation, right?

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Absolutely.

Isaac Hale:
That was the way that civil rights legislation died in the U.S. Congress for decades. That hasn't been part of the conversation but I think it absolutely should be.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Right. Let's not forget the filibuster in chief for years was Strom Thurmond. I mean that was his stock in trade. Right?

David Cisneros:
And that actually I think relates to the previous question about how we can promote these conversations in a more complex way. And I think one thing that is important in the sort of horse race coverage of electoral politics, it focuses so much on strategy to the detriment of talking about structure and root causes. So, I mean I think exactly what you all were just talking about where the conversation is Biden going to want to get rid of the filibuster, is he going to pack the court. Right? But the conversation is always at the level of like a political strategy left versus right, blue versus red. And so, to the extent that movements for social change or researchers can push the conversation to those structural and those kind of radical meaning to the root level, that would be advantageous and also can help like in the previous question you were asking about how can we show how these issues are interconnected. So, I think there was just a news, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor at Princeton a couple days ago published an article in the *New York Times* that had a provocative title, we should abolish the Supreme Court or something like that. But the thrust of the article was kind of the argument that you all are making about the undemocratic nature of the court and the way that it's upheld white supremacy and patriarchy through these decisions. So, I mean I think, I'm not necessarily, again, I'm not talking about strategy I'm talking about pushing the conversation to those root levels I think is really important.

Glenn Bracey:
I think this is where social movements really enter the conversation because they are attempts to push the system to be responsive to people that it historically has not been responsive to and that what we're coming up against now is that it's not just the system that the people in the system have been unresponsive to these communities but that the system itself is designed to not be responsive to those communities and that there are a series of things that Isaac laid out that are easier means of preventing the system from being responsive to historically black and brown communities than it is to be progressive or to create a more democratic system. Creating a democratic system seems to be harder than creating an anti-democratic system and that was by design of the founders. I think one thing that we need to do and one reason that the President I think is so hostile to critical race theory is because it stops deifying the founders as perfect, it stops deifying our system that is so unresponsive to minority communities as perfect and it starts saying look, we have work that we need to do in our generation to create an actual democracy.

Isaac Hale:
I think all of these institutions are interconnected obviously with the policy outcomes that we see which can be so disastrous for minority communities. Right? If we think about, for instance, the landmark *Shelby County v. Holder* case that came out of the Supreme Court which gutted parts of the Voting Rights Act, we can step back and think why do we have a court that has a majority that can produce this kind of opinion? Well, those majority justices and the majority there are nominated by Republican presidents, confirmed by Republican senates and then we think about how do these presidents and senates get elected? Well, thinking about in the last 20 years, a Republican presidential candidate has only won the popular vote once and repeatedly we've seen the senate majorities being created with minority support of the national vote because of the unequal apportionment of senators across states that are equally apportioned regardless of population rather which is what we call malapportionment in political science.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Right.

Isaac Hale:
So, those processes compound on each other and these political outcomes are deeply interwoven with the unequal institutions which we have.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
I've often laughed because rather than grapple with the structural biases and problems with the Senate, the answer from some is well, let's just make Washington and Puerto Rico states and then we'll just add four more senators and that's going to somehow solve the problem and get at issues of racism as well because you're talking about majority African-American and Latinx populations. I'm not certain that actually gets the job done.

Glenn Bracey:
I think it's important for democracy. I think we should make them states.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Sure. I do too.

Glenn Bracey:
Yeah. But I don't think that it gets the job done because of the malapportionment issue that Isaac is talking about. And I think that one thing that we should in terms of the communications and the conversations that we're having, there's a broad conversation happening that suggests well, when whites are no longer the majority, then things will change and what we see is already a system in which we have a tyranny of the minority that even when whites are the plurality, I'll point out they

will never be in our lifetimes the minority, they will be a plurality if they lose majority status at all. But that plurality is more than capable of continuing to dominate as a plurality or even as a minority which we already see. So, we need to make structural changes that lead toward democratization, small D democratization in every way that we can.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
That kind of leads into my next question which I think goes to the difficulties that folks on the left and in particular, the Democratic Party and in the context of this campaign, the Biden campaign in advancing arguments or planting their flag on those systemic structural changes. We write off the Republicans and we say well, they're kind of whiteness personified and they sort of pursue that and do a wink in a nod towards Tim Scott. But that's about it. Right? How do the Democrats overcome this? I mean it seems to me that these kinds of structural changes are difficult. Are they managing at all to move the ball down the field? What's your sense of how the Biden campaign I guess is dealing with these structural issues but with race and all of that in general?

Lisa Flores:
Maybe the question, Trevor, is what if any interest and investment do they have in moving the ball? And here's the distrust comes. I have very little optimism to think that Biden is invested in undoing racism. I see little evidence around me that very many folks, even all those who are wanting to attend the sessions and are listening to the talks, when it comes down to making structural change, that's where everything stops.

Isaac Hale:
Yeah. I think it's worth noting that as a candidate in the Democratic primary, a lot of the appeal of Biden's pitch was that structural change which he was not going to be bringing structural change. Right? He was going to be bringing continuity. And his own personal history with race as I'd say complicated to say the least. Right? He was the co-author of the 1994 Crime Bill, gave eulogies for Strom Thurman and Robert Byrd, pushed President Ronald Reagan to ramp up incarceration and now infamously, thanks to a debate with his vice presidential nominee, he opposed bussing as well. Right? And so, all of those things kind of suggest that I don't think we should necessarily expect that if Biden weren't representing a larger coalition that he would necessarily be that interested in, as Lisa says, moving the ball on that. Whether voters perceive all of those previous things in his candidacy is a whole different question. Right? As Obama's vice president and as the leader of the Democratic Party which is increasingly associated with racial liberalism, it's very questionable whether voters are applying the Democratic Party brand or thinking about Biden's own personal history. But I think given his own legislative track record, I agree completely with Lisa that we should be deeply skeptical that he's going to be really committed to changing those fundamental institutions if he becomes president.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
But then what are we left with? I mean arguably, Obama didn't change any of those institutions. He didn't move the ball much down the field I don't think and certainly may have moved it backwards in terms of migrant rights and immigrant questions. So, what are we left with?

Glenn Bracey:
I think we're left with the point and the power of social movements which is to drive the agenda to force our political officials to move in particular directions. I mean President Obama very famously called on the OFA to continue to push him so that he could embrace particularly progressive policies. And we saw that after Ferguson and the Black Lives Matter movement really manifesting, he then was able to use the Attorney General's Office to oversee police and do some of the things that progressives are looking for. So, if the movement continues and continues to push, Biden's interests as a person are important. I don't want to say that that human agency is not important. Human agency is important. But using social movements as ways to push them to use their agency in particular ways is going to be important. And so, we have to stay organized.

Lisa Flores:
I was trying to think of this by looking at efforts on my campus to interrupt and it seems to me that the most progressive and I think it's not at all progressive move that we ever see coming from highest levels of positional power is the move to diversify. Right? To add more bodies. And if we're going to wait, like on my campus, if we're going to wait for social change to come from the chancellor, well, we just give up. Right? The change comes when we say all right, so what is it that we are able to do which I think, Glenn, is very much in line with what you're saying.

Glenn Bracey:
Yes.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Okay. So, movements are going to—has that ever worked before?

Glenn Bracey:
Yes. I mean the civil rights movement was very effective in causing some structural changes, the fall of Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act, Fair Housing Act, a whole series of other things, the end of the immigration quotas from 1924. To the extent that women have more access to the workplace and means of combating sexual harassment, things like that, those came through movements that were both state-centered and public-focused. So, there is reason to hope. I'm not often the hope preacher here but I do think that our history does give us some reason to hope in social movements in that way.

Isaac Hale:
Yeah. And I also just wanted to add to that, I think that there's often a view of history that gets espoused that the civil rights movement was something that was occurring in the population and then LBJ had a change of heart. It really got to him and then because of that, we have the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, racial realignment, the process by which the parties can't have sorted on the basis of racial attitudes. But a lot of more recent scholarship has pointed out that that's really a simplistic view of what happened in the civil rights era and that really if you're thinking about why LBJ was able to enact the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act with the support of a Democratic Party that had a lot of Southern segregationists in it, the answer is decades of movement building, decades of pressure within the party, a very concerted and strategic effort by civil rights activists to pressure the Democratic Party from within. It was not some pivotal moment where the Democratic Party could have gone either way in the 1960s. It was more of the culmination of decades of activism and movement building and external pressure which finally yielded that policy outcome.

David Cisneros:
I agree with everything that Glenn and Isaac and Lisa had have said. And I wanted to say I think sometimes I get nervous about the word hope because of the kind of ideological baggage it has now. But I do agree with the sentiment and I was going to add another layer to it which is a lot of times when we focus on movements and the power that movements have, we focus on movements pushing for kind of political change at the federal or state or even local level. But the other thing I think that's powerful about movements and the movements that we're seeing now is that movements are opportunities for building community, building the kinds of communities that we want to see, for putting into practice the visions that we have which no matter how hard they push aren't usually done in the matter of one administration or the other. And so, I mean I'm thinking for example of all of the rise of mutual aid that communities that have arisen over the Spring and Summer in light of the coronavirus pandemic where different communities, I mean we've seen this here in Urbana-Champaign where I live, coming together to provide for those in need, to pool resources and skills, to help people who are isolated. Then those kinds of communities are the things that movements can produce that at the national political level aren't sort of mobilized in the same way.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Yeah. And as all of you are talking about this hopeful sense of movements, I'm struck with the difficulties that we face when we talk about, I guess I'd call it a rhetoric of progress. Right? This idea and maybe it's king's arc of justice or arc of history bending towards justice and things like that. It strikes me that those rhetorics both of hope and progress and of justice are so linear and almost relentlessly sort of progressive that they can't really account for a Trump, right, or the ten steps back that we take. I'm thinking here of the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and all that she

represented for decades. And now we're looking at a 6-3 majority to strike down *Roe v. Wade,* to get rid of the Affordable Care Act, to potentially undermine LGBTQ rights and all of that. I don't know. What do you think? Am I just whistling dixie here or should we stick with the sort of movements will change the world kind of idea?

Glenn Bracey:
I think that I mean you have a point. Right? That it's definitely not a linear process. I appreciate one of the points that Ibram Kendi makes in *Stamped from the Beginning* is that it's not as though progressive movements are the only ones that are moving. Regressive movements are advancing as well at the exact same time. And so, there's a co-relationship there that we have to attend to, that pushing in one direction, there also needs to be a rear guard because the opposition is pushing as well. That's just the feature of time and movement. Nothing is inevitable. We all are working to advance our interests.

Isaac Hale:
Yeah. And I just wanted to briefly add to that. Exactly to Glenn's point, there are large parts of the country where Roe is already *de facto* overturned. Right?

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Sure.

Isaac Hale:
If you live in certain parts of the country, there is one abortion clinic that you have to drive a whole day to get to and then you have to come back again the next day because of the procedures put in place by the state legislature. Right? And this is the result of the success of the kind of regressive movements that Glenn talks about and obviously, it's a push and pull. And we can think about when it comes to things like abortion, when it comes to things like economic inequality which has been increasing quite steadily over decades, there doesn't seem to be a whole lot of progressive success on the income inequality front, for instance. There's a lot of forces moving in the opposite direction as well and a lot of interests that are very powerfully aligned against the movements for racial justice or economic justice or gender justice care about.

Lisa Flores:
It goes back to the public communication piece of this. Right? The progressive narrative, the linear narrative is just a narrative of whiteness, white supremacy that allows us to relax, that says well, things are so much better now. So, you can check out of the conversation. I think we have to disrupt that narrative of progress in every way possible and really name kind of a racial temporality to it. What would it mean to articulate movement that is not linear and/or circular, any of those pieces and as a way to think about how we challenge conversations around race?

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Speaking of challenging conversations about race, I think the last couple of days have been particularly poignant. Prior to the President's diagnosis of coronavirus, we had his performance on Tuesday night in the first presidential debate where he, and I don't know if this is necessarily all that significant but it seems symbolically significant at least, where he refuses to condemn the Proud Boys.

Audio Clip of President Trump:
What do you want to call them? Give me a name. Give me a name.

Audio Clip of Chris Wallace:
White supremacists and right-wing militia.

Audio Clip of President Trump:
Go ahead. Who would you like me to condemn?

Audio Clip of Vice President Biden:
Proud Boys.

Audio Clip of President Trump:
Proud Boys, stand back and stand by.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
And ends up then going to Duluth, Minnesota on Wednesday or Thursday, whenever it was, and really pulling out some significant white nationalist racist tropes against Ilhan Omar, the Congresswoman from Minnesota.

Audio Clip of President Trump:
And what about Omar where she gets caught harvesting? What the hell is going on? I hope your U.S. attorney is involved. What, what is going on with Omar? I've been reading these reports for two years about how corrupt and crooked she is. Let's get with it. Let's get with it. I mean frankly harvesting's terrible but it's the least of the things that she has done. How the hell? Then she tells us how to run our country. Can you believe it?

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Any thoughts on how this might play out and how we deal with all of this as interested parties seeking to educate young minds and move the society towards greater social justice? It just seems frustrating. So, I'm curious about your reactions to these recent events.

Isaac Hale:
I think that Trump's remarks, while they're inflammatory, are also quite par for the course for his Presidency and his 2016 campaign. I think it recalls his post-Charlottesville remarks where he said there are very fine people on both sides, referring to the white supremacists who showed up as counter protesters in Charlottesville. We can also, of course, all recall back in his 2016 campaign where he said that many Latino immigrants are criminals and rapists. And there are a lot of examples in this vein and there's a lot of political science research including some work I've done with Dr. Carlos Algara at the University of Texas-El Paso that shows that Trump and Republican candidates down ballot have benefited from these kinds of racial appeals and racially conservative white voters are swayed by them. Right? We've seen that there is a real electoral incentive for Republican candidates including President Trump to engage in this kind of rhetoric. And whether or not his remarks are off the cuff from the heart or purely strategic, I think he knows that that kind of rhetoric helped him win in 2016 and I think like many politicians, he wants to win re-election. And so, I think it's disappointing to hear that kind of rhetoric but certainly not surprising.

Lisa Flores:
And sometimes I wonder if the alternative is the rhetoric pre-2016 which was still a rhetoric of whiteness, just one that was tempered in racial neutrality. And again, if we think about trying to do interruptions at local levels around policies, practices, culture, it's so much easier to interrupt the overt and so much harder to interrupt the latent and the implicit because we have to work that much harder to convince. Again, I'm thinking about this in terms of like the higher ed landscape but I think it's a pretty relevant metaphor for politics to convince those who can make the change that a particular policy is racist if it's couch racially neutral language. And so, then the work that we're having to do in order to advance those changes is longer, slower and with way fewer allies. So, there's a real risk to a lot of bodies when he mobilizes white nationalists. We know that there's violence on people's bodies and the violence is still there without the overt white nationalism.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
But you're saying that in a way, we're fortunate that he's so overt about it, that it changes at least the calculus that we have to do in the pursuit of social justice.

Lisa Flores:
I don't want to say fortunate.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Okay.

Lisa Flores:
I want to say there are a lot more people listening and ready to say okay, let's think about this. Let me think about what I'm doing. Let me think about this practice. Let me think about this policy. And it's much harder to do that in racially neutral language. So, the mobilization of white terrorism is terrifying and black bodies have been scared for a very long time with very good reason.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Right.

Glenn Bracey:
I think that this takes us back to one of the points we were making before which is that progressive movements and regressive movements move at the same time. So, some of the work that I've been doing, a lot of my work studies white evangelicals especially as a social movement group, and some of the work I've been doing with The Barna Group and The Racial Justice and Unity Center, we did a survey in 2019, July of 2019 where we asked people do you think America has a race problem. The options were definitely, somewhat and none. And then we asked the question again, Barna did through the Race Today Study again in July of 2020. We found that the number of people who, of practicing Christians rather who said that there is not a race problem at all went from 11% in 2019 to 19% in 2020 which is almost a doubling. And keep in mind what happened in that interim. What happened to that interim was the George Floyd and Breonna Taylor murders. So, what we're seeing and what Chad Brennan was able to demonstrate in an article in *Relevant Magazine* is that for those Christians, for those white Christians who were watching Fox News, they were even more likely to deny that there was a racial problem in the country. So, where you're getting your information, the communication that you are digesting is greatly influencing these outcomes. And so, we're going to see both move together. The President is going to be effective in using these kinds of outrageous statements to excite his base and they're also going to have the effect of mobilizing some people on the progressive side at the exact same time. We're going to see these move together. We shouldn't read one as a failure or as a success.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
So, I guess in a sort of wrap-up mode, in a way to sort of bring this all together, thinking what, four years, five years down the road, depending upon what happens in the next 32 days, what does our racialized political life look like? What does our discourse feel like? What can we expect moving forward?

David Cisneros:
Some of it depends on the election but then a lot of it doesn't. I mean I think obviously as we've been talking about, the election matters and can shape the kinds of conversations that are happening on the other side of it. But at the same time, we referenced this earlier, that to some

degree some of these conversations around policing and conversations around gendered violence and conversations around issues of immigration, I think those conversations will hopefully still be happening at the grassroots level and the difference is that there will be political opportunities or political openings that allow for those conversations to take hold and push policy in certain directions. So, yeah.

Isaac Hale:
And I think I'll just briefly speak to the electoral side of it since that's my wheelhouse and that's what a lot of my research and teaching is about. But I think it's interesting we're thinking about the future four years down the line. Right? Thinking about 2024, for instance. Right? On the campaign trail, former Vice President Joe Biden has advanced the view that President Trump isn't the new normal. His quote is that history will treat this administration's time as an aberration and that after Trump leaves office, "you'll see an epiphany occur among many of my Republican friends." Right? And I think his assertion raises this important empirical question. Right? Is Trumpism distinct from the GOP's winning electoral formula going forward? But I think some research by myself and others have shown that like even if you just look at the 2018 midterms without Trump atop the ticket or if you look back to the Obama era where Trump wasn't present, we can see this immense centrality of race and racial attitudes in American elections. And so, I think the view that's espoused by some including the Democratic presidential nominee, I'm somewhat skeptical of it. Right? And I think it's exacerbated as well by the shifting party coalitions. Right? We've seen the white working-class voters that were traditionally part of the Democratic Party base have swung hard towards the Republican Party in the 2000s and we've seen simultaneously that suburban highly educated white Republicans, particularly women have been moving into the Democratic coalition as well and being strongly targeted by Democratic candidates. And these white working-class voters who are previously part of the Democratic New Deal Coalition because of the liberal economic policies, many of which they continue to support, while the success that the Republicans have had with them is in part, of course, driven by these racial appeals and the fact that the Democratic Party has been decreasingly making economic appeals to these voters. And so, there's a really strong electoral incentive because of these shifting party coalitions for Republicans to try to continue to try to run up the score and eat into these formerly Democratic voters. And I think that creates this really strong messaging and electoral incentive for them to continue to make these kind of racialized appeals which were able to not only deliver them victories in the 2016 presidential election but also rack up congressional majorities in 2010 and 2014. And so, I expect that with the current trend in the party coalitions, we'll continue to see Republican candidates utilize nationalist rhetoric, make racial appeals. The electoral incentives are there.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
So, a repudiation of Trump's not going to make any difference if it happens.

Isaac Hale:
I mean I think that you could, there's a tension as I think was mentioned by Lisa earlier between the explicit appeals towards race that Trump has made versus the dog whistle appeals to race that typified earlier campaigns. We can even go back and think about the Southern strategy pioneered by Lee Atwater thinking about the Nixon campaign, the Reagan campaign, the H.W. Bush campaign. All of those featured, of course, dog whistle much more subtle racial appeals and I think if Republicans get the message that these explicit appeals are electorally damaging, we may see a return to those kind of dog whistle-style appeals. But I certainly don't think that racialized messages aren't necessarily going anywhere and considering that the last Republican presidential victory was in part assisted by these racial appeals I think makes it likely that we're going to continue to see at least from a good chunk of Republican candidates explicit racial appeals going forward.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
I'm old enough to remember the lily whitism of Herbert Hoover but we'll put that aside. Go ahead, Glenn. What do you think?

Glenn Bracey:
Oh, wow. Well, I'm picking up on what the other panelists have said. Racism is the dividing line of our country and it's going to continue to have extraordinary legs I would say on both sides, that this movement, the Black Lives Matter movement has demonstrated some continuity. These small local communities that have formed as among activists, they will be able to survive changes in the new cycle, things like that. Events will continue to happen. Whites, especially white police will continue to kill black people unfortunately and other people of color and trans people, etc. That will continue to demonstrate the need for the movement. So, the movement is going to continue. The movement will still be here in 2024, 2025 and white supremacy and the dog whistles, the explicit calls, etc. that Isaac was talking about will also be here I think as loud if not louder in 2024 if only because the sense of white aggrievement or the sense of loss especially frankly among white Christians is going to only amplify as their numbers appear to be in decline.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Diminish.

Glenn Bracey:
Exactly. So, expect more of the same and even louder.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
Well, you guys are giving me a lot of hope here. This grievance politics is going to stick with us for a long time. Lisa?

Lisa Flores:
I guess the piece that I'd add is that we're going to see the financial devastation for a long time and that devastation is going to be global and that means that migrant refugee communities are going to be continue to face probably the biggest hit to their lives and that then means that nations cast within whiteness are going to continue to fear that kind of assault on the nation, that perceived assault on the nation, I should make clear to say it that way, which then is going to just intersect with what Glenn names, that black men are still going to be killed by white police. Right? And when you put those together—and I don't think that this is just a Republican narrative, this is a narrative of a nation in whiteness—that the threat and the fears is out there and the response to threat and fear is to protect that much more vehemently. So, we have to have something to hold on to and we know that a Biden presidency is going to do less damage than the Trump presidency and we know that the local elections, the midterms are also bringing about incredible change. And so, that piece is significant. It's very significant.

Trevor Parry-Giles:
All right. Well, on that hopeful incremental note, I want to thank you all very much. I think this was a stimulating discussion and a very interesting entree point for *Communication Matters, the NCA podcast* and our public program series to really dig into some of the issues surrounding race and social change and social protest as its occurring or not occurring in the context of the 2020 presidential election. So, listeners, I hope you enjoyed this discussion and I hope you'll join us for the third public program in this special series that will be coming out and dropping in your podcast list in a couple of weeks. For more information about NCA's public programs and the Communication Matters podcast series, visit the NCA website, natcom.org/PublicPrograms to look at our series of public programs and the podcast page, *Communication Matters, the NCA podcast* will have a complete listing of every episode that we've done. So, thank you, Lisa, Glenn, David and Isaac for joining me today. And listeners, I hope you've enjoyed this episode of *Communication Matters, the NCA podcast*.

In NCA news, in response to national conversations about systemic racism, NCA has developed a resource bank that provides information about racism in America and offers guidance for allies and people of color in the anti-racism movement. These resources include information on organizations committed to anti-racism work, mass media and both academic and professional articles covering topics such as identifying and addressing racism, advocacy work and dialoguing about racism and anti-racism in the classroom. This is a living resource and will be updated as additional materials are identified. Visit natcom.org/Anti-Racism-Resources to view the NCA Anti-Racism Resource Bank. That's natcom.org/Anti-Racism-Resources for the NCA Anti-Racism Resource Bank.

Conclusion:
This has been a special episode of *Communication Matters*, the NCA podcast. *Communication Matters* is produced by Chelsea Bowes, NCA Assistant Director for Digital Strategies. Additional writing and content development support for this special episode was provided by LaKesha Anderson, NCA's Director of Academic and Professional Affairs and Caitlyn Reinauer, NCA's Academic and Professional Affairs Manager. Thanks for listening.

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