



A Coup in Plain Sight

[00:00:00]**Dr Bradley Onishi:** Welcome to Straight White American Jesus. My name is Brad Onishi associate professor of religious studies, Skidmore college, and I'm here with my cohost today.

Dr Dan Miller: I'm Dan Miller, associate professor of religion and social thought at Landmark college. Good to see you Brad, after a couple of weeks here.

Dr Bradley Onishi: Yup. you too.

It's a, I don't know how you're feeling. California is going through an immense heat wave. And, I am in recording in my upstairs office with no air conditioning. So fans, are running. So folks, if you hear a fan, that's what's happening. So anyway, Dan, we have to lament the end of one of our core segments.

You know, a stout work part of this podcast, which has basically been the, what has Jerry Falwell Jr. Done this time. install a segment of this show. So, I had an interview with Diana Butler. I asked this week she was great. She provided great insight, but we, you know, we're no longer going to be able to just point to the Follies of Falwell every week.

So I want to give you one last chance just to, you know, say goodbye to an old friend and [00:01:00] really think about the good times.

Dr Dan Miller: Yeah. It may be bad that it's fitting that like Falwell Follies would have been the great second the title. Right, right. When he's gone. Yeah. For those who don't know, he had that bizarre photo, right?

Like he was on a yacht or something and he, his pants are unbuttoned and he's got something that looks not like what Bible thumping Evangelicals are supposed to drink in a glass and his arms around a woman whose pants were also on button. And I guess the logic was that she's pregnant or something. And you know, it was, it was weird.

The explanation was weird. He at first, it sounded like the voluntary leave kind of thing. It's sort of like Fox when people always go on vacation after something controversial, but he has been placed on indefinite leave of absence from Trinity. They named a new acting president. So he's a he's out. I'm sure we don't need to cry for him too much.

I'm sure he'll be paid like millions of dollars in a golden parachute and nondisclosure agreement on his way out. But yeah, it was, it was a bizarre, but yeah, we will no longer be

able to rely on slow [00:02:00] news weeks punctuated by, something crazy by Falwell Jr. Or maybe we will, maybe Fox will hire him and then, you know, we'll have new segments to watch.

Dr Bradley Onishi: I don't know. Well, if I, yeah, if things. Don't go well, you know, in, in my career here in the next couple of months, I am going to, maybe send an email to see if I can't be the ghost, right. Or for his comeback memoir, and just get, you know, that sweet six-figure money that, you know, you know, that he's going to be paid 1,000,000, and 10% of that is going to go to the person who actually writes it.

So, anyway, Dan, maybe I'll maybe I can get that gig. anyway, I'm just kidding friends. Don't tweet at me saying I'm a trader or whatever. Alright. Little joke. Okay, here we go. Big Newsweek, Dan there's more to talk about than ever. I'm not gonna lie. It feels like this has been true for three and a half years, but this week it felt like a full out unhidden unconcealed assault on our democracy.

I know. We're just used to hearing that. I know that it's no big deal. Now. I know that we're numb, but anyway, there's a lot going on. We're going to get there, especially when it comes to the post office. Before [00:03:00] we get there, we have to talk about Kamala Harris, Joe Biden's choice for vice president. We both have a lot of thoughts here.

I just want to open with a piece from Anthea Butler. Anthea Butler is a professor of religion at U Penn, somebody that we've cited often, she has a great piece of, at NBC news and on the kind of hateful rhetoric that's being spewed toward Kamala Harris. So if you haven't caught this friends, and I know Dan's going to talk about this in a minute, there has been basically birtherism 2.0, that the suggestion coming from certain places that she's not or questionably eligible to be president because of her parents.

I'll let Dan get into that in a minute. But I just wanted to read a bit from Anthea Butler before, before anything else. Here's what she says. Despite the common theme among professional pundits, that Harris was quote, a safe choice. The truth is that in a country that is widely embraced, open racism and sexism, she was truly not. Sure achieve to presumptive nomination because of her skills and intellect, as well as her publicly demonstrated [00:04:00] ability to dissect through the lies of this administration.

Her elevation at this moment serves as a bridge between old, the old politics of the democratic party. As represented by men like Biden and the newer, progressive politics the party of the party represented by a women like representatives, Alexandria Ocasio Cortez of New York and others.

Kamala Harris is a woman of color stepping up to serve a nation that has seemingly forgotten that it was built not only on a revolution against a tyrannical power, but on the tyranny of slavery. And because of immigration, E pluribus Unum out of many, one does not apply to you. Yeah. Men and it never has.

Women are an important part of the many here at America. And it is time that we have a woman near the top, if not quite yet, at the top of the executive branch. I know there's a lot of opinions about there. Some folks are decrying her from the left saying she's a cop. Some

are decrying from the right saying she's a Marxist. I just wanted to open with this Dan so that we [00:05:00] don't overlook that she is a woman of color. She's a historic candidate for many reasons. And, no matter where we stand on certain issues or her past or whatever, maybe that's important. So anyway, over to you, what are your thoughts?

Dr Dan Miller: Yeah, so first, I mean, before even getting into the birtherism stuff, I think it's worth talking about that.

It's been interesting that, as you say, she's been kind of hit from all sides. Republican messaging has been all over the place on one hand. As you say, they accused her of being like super progressive lefty. That's going to destroy the nation. And then they also say that she's too tough on crime all while Trump's talking about being the tough on crime candidate.

You know, this, this came out a lot when she was running for president. she's. I guess middle of the pack in terms of political ideology, she's to the left of people like Klobuchar and others. She's probably to the right obviously of like Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren, I feel like, and again, people may disagree and they're free to disagree and like, you know, but for my money, it's been interesting to watch her evolution [00:06:00] right.

As she has, I think. Embraced Black lives matter has marched and has participated in that. And one of the things that I've been thinking about, just sort of personally with this, it's easy to be cynical when politicians do this and often with good reason, they can be kind of chameleons and so forth, but more and more.

And maybe it's my bias because I want Trump out of the white house or whatever, but I've also wondered this. I posed this question to a few friends, like. Isn't that what we want from our politicians. Right? Don't we want them to be responsive. And I think that over the past, I don't know, three, four years, at least since I've been watching her, she has been responsive to that.

She has shifted her positions decidedly to the left. And so, I think for a lot of political reasons and practical reasons, it's a, it's a really good choice and we'll, we'll get to those, but those are just some of my initial reflections before even getting into the, the birtherism stuff. Which we shouldn't take up here in a second.

Let's talk about Camilla Harris and, her, her life and background. So her mother, is Indian or [00:07:00] Indian descent. Her father is Jamaican and, and so she's a mixed race person. She is also, and I'm going to highlight this in a minute. I'll wait, but she's, comes from an interfaith household and that's not something to be overlooked.

However, Dan, I'll just throw this back to you. It's not, is it, are we surprised that a nonwhite candidate is on the presidential ticket and here we go, birtherism, is she allowed? Is she a real American kinda sounds like things we talk about every week. Yeah. It's no surprise at all. yeah. So as I understand it, right, her father was Jamaican and her mother was Indian, right.

Both immigrants. So born somewhere else. And that's, that's the whole key. There was a Newsweek article that came out, I think earlier this week, written by, A guy named John

Eastman. He's a law professor at Chapman university. I'd be kind of looking at him. Didn't know the name before I heard about this.

He apparently is a pretty strong citizenship kind of guy, but he wrote this op ed and Newsweek has been [00:08:00] under fire ever since, basically arguing that because her parents were foreign born immigrants who were not naturalized citizens when she was born, that she doesn't meet the qualifications to be a vice president.

So for those who don't know, the vice president qualifications are the same as the president qualifications, which are that you have to be born a US citizen. You have to be at least 35 and you have to have lived in the U S for 14 years. 14th amendment says that people born in the U S are citizens.

That's what we mean by birthright citizenship. She was born in Oakland, California. And so the vast majority of legal scholars and others think that there's nothing to this Eastman apparently has, has like a history of opposing birthright, citizenship, and trying to argue for interpretations of the 14th amendment that don't support a birthright citizenship.

I found this, sorry. I wanted to, to quote, another, legal scholar talking about this. [00:09:00] This is an immigration law expert aaron, I'm not going to get his last name, wrong Roselyn Melnick. and what he says, as he says, there is no genuine scholarly debate about any of these issues. That is the interpretation of the 14th amendment and what it means.

There are a handful of outliers, like Eastman, who try to argue that the citizenship clause is debatable. Then there's the 99.9% of scholars who think that's bunk. We've seen this and, and even in his article, that is Eastman's, opinion piece. he says, and this is a quote from his piece in Newsweek.

He says at the Senator Kamala Harris has just been named the vice presidential running mate for presumptive democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden has some questioning her eligibility for the position and he goes on to list those reasons why he completely leaves the 14th amendment out of it. He doesn't deal with it at all, but just notice the language has some questioning her eligibility.

It doesn't, there's almost no, nobody questioning her eligibility. Same thing. Trump does all the time when he does his, a lot of people say. [00:10:00] Right. Or some people say Trump's side of this same thing in one of his press conferences the other day. And he used the same kind of language. A lot of people say, or a lot of people wonder or posing things as a question when they're not a question, all of that to say.

It's racist. It's just basic racism. This doesn't come up for anybody else. We know this. There's no legitimate reason for this question nor was there with Barack Obama, the Newsweek editors put out a note, that was sort of problematic trying to defend this. They said it had nothing to do with birtherism or racism.

They said this and I'll, I'll throw it back in just a second, but this was a statement from the editors by, of Newsweek responding to this. They said this natural born citizen presidential

requirement was debated during the 2000 and 2008 presidential campaigns of McCain born in the Panama canal zone.

The twenties 16 presidential campaign of Cruz born in Calgary, Alberta ended other times. That's bogus, right? [00:11:00] People can go back and look, yes. People pointed out that that Cruz wasn't born in the United States and that McCain wasn't born in the United States. You did not have some big uptake of this.

There was no debate about it. There's no debate about this. So all of that is just to say, if you'll say, well, what's going on. It's exactly what you say. She's a person of color and a liberal. And so we're going to go after her the same way we did the first African American in the white house or running for the white house, Barack Obama at the time.

And now the first, African-American mixed race by, by biracial woman who is now on the ticket to be the second highest person in the country. There's nothing behind it, except for racist birtherism.

Dr Bradley Onishi: I agree and yeah, it's, it's, it's convenient to point this out, right? Dan, you know, Marco, Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz is born in Canada, John McCain, born in Panama Mitt Romney, born in Detroit, George Romney, his dad, the governor [00:12:00] of Michigan, born in Mexico.

So we never hear about this. Never a question of who's a real American when it comes to them. Why? Cause we've talked about it. How many times, Dan? Christian nationalism and a white ethno nationalism. They define a real American as being white Christian, submitting to a patriarchal norm heterosexual, so on and so forth.

Nothing new here. What I think is something worth pointing out, as an Asian American and as just an American is, she is of South Asian descent yet for us Asian-Americans this is a massive deal. it's one of those times when you kind of, you know, see yourself, in some way in a presidential or vice presidential candidate, it means a lot.

I was never going to be, on the yang gang. I was never on the yang ticket, you know, but it was really nice to see an Asian American, you know, on the television, running for president nice piece here from routers in States, such as Florida, Michigan, North Carolina, and Georgia and Texas, all of which are closely contested ahead of [00:13:00] this years.

Presidential election, the AAPI, the Asian American Pacific Islander population grew more than 40% between 2012 and 2018. Asian Americans are a small part of the American population, but they are growing and there's evidence that they may have, a kind of decisive influence in a couple of States here.

So we'll have to keep an eye on that. The other thing, Dan, from, Religion standpoint is the fact that Kamala Harris comes from a thoroughly interfaced household. A nice piece, at, being both global community of interfaith families by Susan Katz Miller, who's written, about this topic quite a bit.

And she says this, when Joe Biden picked Kamala Harris as his running mate yesterday. He created the possibility of the first interfaith kid in an interfaith marriage in the white house. This is a quote from Kamala Harris. I grew up going to a Black baptist church and the Hindu temple Harris told the Los Angeles times and primarily Jewish husband, attorney Imhoff [00:14:00] at the marriage.

They had a flower Garland from the Hindu wedding tradition. And breaking a glass from the Jewish tradition. So a self identified Baptist with a Hindu mother and a Jewish husband may, excuse me, may be headed to the white house. We can only hope this helps to normalize the rich, religious complexity, many of us now in body personally, and in our families.

You know, Dan, it's just, it's just something to point out. We're scholars of religion. We know the complexities of religious identity. We know that religious identity and ethnic identity and racial identity are all entangled. Kamala Harris is not easily categorizable. She's not easily reducible. She's not simply a Black American.

She's not simply a Baptist. She's not simply of South Asian descent. She's a lot of things. And we're going to see the media here, especially from the right. Try to categorize her, reduce her and explain her in ways that probably do not do justice to all these very nuanced components of her identity.

So any last thoughts on Kamala Harris at this point?

[00:15:00] **Dr Dan Miller:** Yeah. To just get into the politics of it. Right. So, so setting aside all of the rest of that, this has been, you know, it's always a thing with every election now there was referred to it as the Veep stakes, right. Who's going to be named as the running mate.

You know, and there's been a lot of speculation and, you know, Biden said early on, he was going to choose a female running mate. Trump, unleashes misogynist tendencies and said something about how a lot of men were offended by that. It's not even worth more of a comment than that as he's trying to supposedly win back suburban women.

But I, you know, I've been watching this and it seemed like the, the top candidates. It illogically a lot of people were interested in, Elizabeth Warren, but she's not a woman of color. And it became pretty clear that this candidate probably would be, I was also concerned about Warren and I'm sure this went into decision-making had she been chosen and if a Biden, Warren ticket won Massachusetts has a Republican governor and the Republicans would gain a Senate seat out of that.

So I think that that probably just qualified her, [00:16:00] Bass out of California, was one, that a lot of people were looking at. But I think the other one, the main contender was Susan Rice. And I was really nervous about that because for those who don't remember Ben Gazi and the Republicans sort of feeding frenzy around Ben Gazi and there's there's, as they say, there's not much there, there, but there would have been, I think that would have been red meat, but more than that, I'm looking at this.

And for those who saw Kamala Harris during the Kavanaugh hearings, She is going to destroy Mike Pence in the vice presidential debate. So I'm, I'm actually, I may actually make popcorn

for it. Cause I think it's gonna be interesting, but there's been a lot of speculation too, about. Will Biden run for a second term.

If he's elected, he's going to be like the oldest person on his first inauguration day ever inaugurated. He hasn't said that he will, and some people had said that, you know, Kamala Harris clearly has eyes for the white house. She ran for president, this year, was eliminated pretty early in the process, but, I should say this election cycle rather [00:17:00] in 2019. So people said, well, maybe she's going to be gunning for that position.

I think that's good. I think she looking longer term if Biden wins, she's probably the most electable person and I think that's still something that has to be taken seriously. And then finally sort of throwing in from that. This has been a popular choice. There there's some numbers out, showing that, majorities of Democrats and Black voters approve of Harris.

That's probably not surprising. 84% of African American or excuse me, 84% of Democrats support, her 79% of, African American voters, a plurality of independence, a supporter 44%, more importantly, only 27% disapprove. And I think, you know, this is maybe what's as important about running mate is anything necessarily who approves of that person, but how many disapprove, 53% of voters overall support and think it's a good choice.

Only 29% disapprove. She only fails to get a majority of approval among voters in a [00:18:00] 45 to 64 cohort voters over 65, like her voters under 45, like her. So it's as, as the, the piece that you cited says there's some conventional wisdom. It was a safe choice. I think that's not clear, but I think just from a political pragmatic. Let's try to get somebody into the white house to get Donald Trump out perspective, which has maybe the crass perspective, given these other things we're looking at. I think it was a, I think it was a really smart choice. and apparently she was the front runner for quite a while. And I think with good reason.

Dr Bradley Onishi: I agree with, with everything you said, just touch on a couple of things before we move on.

One is I'm really hoping Elizabeth Warren can find her way to be the head of treasury, education. Something along those lines because, you know, we all know that the role of VP is, is pretty limited. And if she were in one of those roles, I think we know that she would have a tremendous influence.

So my hope was, is for Elizabeth Warren to end up in one of those cabinet positions. I agree Dan, that, Biden [00:19:00] feels like a transitional candidate. I hope he sees it that way. I know, I don't even know if he's going to win, but my hope is. That he would see it that way. And look, we're one of the few developed nations to not have had a woman at the helm of our country.

Just period in this country that sounds revolutionary in most countries, that's something they did 30. I mean, Margaret Thatcher was prime minister 30 years ago, 35 years ago, Dan, and this is still a big deal in our country. Last point I'll make is just to reiterate what Anthea Butler said, and that is if you're a person of color in this country to be on a high profile political ticket to be a candidate for a big office is never safe. I'm sorry. It just isn't. You're going to get attacked. You're going to get death threats. You're going to get all of the

nationalism, the birtherism, all the, the garbage is going to come your way. Now she's a, she's a woman of color. She's a Black woman of color.

She's a South Asian woman of color. There's nothing safe about being in her position when you're that you're going to get attacked from every side. And so yes, [00:20:00] in pragmatic terms safe. In identity terms in the realities of living in this country, never safe. I mean, I think that the Obama family saw that in the eight years that they were in the white house, they experienced things that, I'm sure we'll we won't hear about for a long time until biographies are written 50 years from now.

So let's move on down to just a couple of other, election issues. One is some new pulling out, basically showing Trump's numbers are the same. They've been since may something like 38, 39% approve. 58, 60% disapprove. Now this is happening in the context this week of news that, Kanye West candidacy for president that might be buttressed by the white house and by its proxy.

So you want to take us through that?

Dr Dan Miller: Yeah. So, Kanye West had been a big Trump supporter, right. Shows up at the white house, wears his Maga hat and so forth. And then a few weeks ago announced that he no longer supports Trump and he's running for president, had that weird appearance where he's kind of off the [00:21:00] rails, is wearing like a tactical vest and saying mean things about Harriet Tubman, like things like that. but you know, and there, there was an assumption by a lot, especially on the right that this would attract lots of Black voters, the kind of notion that if you just put a black person up there, they'll all flock to them, a simplistic kind of notion, but that was the idea.

But a couple of things is political had an article about how he's, he's failing in that regard. Nationally he was pulling it 2% approval, which has seven points behind people who say they have no opinion. and he's only pulling something like 2% of the African American vote. So neither side is really, you know, pundits on neither side are seeing him as a real significant thing right now, keep an eye on it and whatever, but we talk a lot about conspiracy theories on here. And one of the difficulties, and we've kind of talked about this, right. Is what do you do when the conspiracy could be true? Or how do you, how do you know a true conspiracy from a crazy Pizzagate conspiracy?

And there are real questions about whether or not Kanye West [00:22:00] West has really disaffiliated from Trump and is doing his own thing or whether or not this is by design or certainly by effect. Basically a move by the Trump administration to try to shave off African-American votes from the Democrats, African Americans are the most reliable democratic voting block.

And, and why do we say that? You say that because a lot of GOP, affiliated PACS political action committees are channeling money to Kanye West. His talking points are made basically Republican talking points came up this week that Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law advisor to the president.

Seems to have a job title that includes like everything, related to the Trump administration has met with Kanye West. He declined to say what that was about. He's like we're longterm friends and we talk about lots of stuff, but you didn't say that they weren't talking about the election. So there, there are real questions about whether, whether or not this is actually sort of a backdoor effort by the Trump administration to, to disrupt, African American support for the Democrats.

And [00:23:00] I don't want to title conspiracy theories. You don't want to compel conspiracy theories, but there are legitimate questions and there's, there's real evidence that at least, you know, it makes it a question about whether or not this, this could be a thing.

Dr Bradley Onishi: Yeah. Let's just, let's just get that clear, right?

The difference between a conspiracy theory and the theory is that a conspiracy theory is based on little to no evidence. It's usually based on innuendo. It's usually based on a series of steps that go from. I'm not saying this is true, but if it were true and then if that were true, and then if that were true, it's possible that JFK was murdered by aliens.

Right? And so that's a conspiracy theory, a theory don't get me wrong. A theory is a theory. It's not right. It's not proven, but a theory says, here's the evidence. Here's other components like motive or, you know, other logical steps. And so what do we have, Dan? We have. The president's son-in-law. I mean, basically the like, [00:24:00] you know, whatever he is, kleptocratic, you know, law in chief here is meeting with Kanye West.

Now there's a lot and I'm, this is not conspiracy theory either. This is not rumor. There's a lot of people, including people from Kanye West family who have suggested that he is not, he is not well mentally, that he is mentally unstable. We have the president's son-in-law meeting with Kanye West, who has shown signs of being mentally unstable.

He is on the ballot in Wisconsin via pathways that seem to be connected to Donald Trump and his campaign. This seems like a shady way to siphon voters from Biden and Harris in swings states. That's it? That's not a concern. I mean, I don't know, from my perspective, that's not a conspiracy theory. Is it a theory?

Yes. Is it proven too? No doubt. Beyond reasonable doubt. It is not. Is it worth talking about and being concerned about yes. Especially given the track record of this administration. Right. So, anyway, it's worrying, it's something to keep an eye [00:25:00] on. I want to talk, something that is, is not a theory because the president backed it up yesterday is what's happening at the post office.

Dan, I'm not gonna lie. I think at times we feel like if a crime happens in front of you and the person committing the crime, doesn't have shame about it. It must not be illegal because they're not trying to hide it. I don't know what else to say. In this context, we've become so numb to these like warnings, these five alarm fire warnings.

But the president is defunding the United States post office. I can point you to pieces from, everywhere from vice that say that thousands of sorting machines are being taken out of

circulation. The kinds of machines that count ballots. I can point you to things on NBC news. Let's say that the postal workers, union, endorses, Biden, and warns that the survival of the United States postal service is at stake.

Okay. And as I know, you'll get into this, [00:26:00] there's a lawsuit in Pennsylvania about whether there's actually any reason to be worried about mail and fraud and the whole hubbub surrounding the post office. Yesterday, Thursday, August 13th, president Trump said out loud. If we don't provide money in the stimulus bill for the post office, then they, the Democrats can not do universal mail and voting.

He's called it a fraud. He's called it all kinds of things. Dan, I think you've got some numbers and some, some evidence as to why that's not true. And some other thoughts. So all yours.

Dr Dan Miller: Yeah. So a lot of things there, again, I liked when you said that part about like Trump saying the quiet part out loud again, where everybody knows everybody knows right.

Left and center knows that the reason Trump wants to defund the us postal service is to disrupt mail service for mail and voting. But the standard political game is to not say that and make up reasons like why, you know, that it's not efficient enough or [00:27:00] something, or doesn't deserve the funding or whatever.

But Trump says it out loud, right? Just as explicit. Here's the, here's the fear that the GOP has, right? Traditionally the GOP is only in power, right? We know that demographically, the GOP is slipping, right? Their base is getting smaller and smaller and smaller. And so they participate in efforts of voter suppression.

Right? We've seen this over and over and over again. I'm with you. That's in controvertible study after study hundreds of polling places closed in places like, you know, Texas and Georgia and things like that in 2018. And they're usually in communities of color. Gerrymandering which yes, some democratic States participate in, but it's like a three to one margin of Republican States doing that.

The built in advantage of the electoral college that helps the GOP. I'll just throw this out in terms of like the advantages the GOP has there has only been one Republican president who has won a majority of the popular vote. Since George W. [00:28:00] Bush or excuse me, the first George Bush was elected and that was his son's second term.

No Republican president, Republican presidential candidate has won a majority of the votes since then. Right. And that's a really long time they have these advantages, they build them in. And so their fear is that mail is and voting makes it easier for groups who may not turn up for polling or, who are in these areas where polling is closed, or frankly may work lots of, lots of jobs like service industry jobs and things like that, where they don't have the luxury of taking off work and going to vote in person.

Because they don't have childcare or they don't have paid time off or whatever else. And their fear is that it's going to lead to more voting. There have been studies that have been done that have shown that that doesn't seem to be the case. It doesn't seem to advantage one party over the other, but that's been a GOP fear for a long time.

And it drives Trump's fear. The ironies right now though, or are number one, the [00:29:00] duplicity of Trump. I talked about this before, where he says that he supports absentee voting, but not mail in voting. They're the same thing. We just saw a, this week. He and Melania requested their absentee ballots for Florida.

So he's going to vote by mail, in the 2020 election. We've seen the duplicity where he's now calling in people in North Carolina and Florida to vote by mail because this election cycle, because of COVID what the GOP beyond Trump was actually afraid of. And this is why he's not getting a lot of traction on this from the rest of TV.

They're afraid that people won't vote because of COVID. That there will be issues and the votes that they need, won't be there because they'll add some Trump supporters will actually listen to him, not vote by mail and so forth. So there's all of that. But as you said, a key issue, I think really interesting to watch, Republicans have gone to court in multiple States to try to block them from expanding mail in voting.

And there they've had wins in some places, but I think a SCOTUS, the Supreme court just, [00:30:00] declined to intervene in a challenge in Rhode Island. Rhode Island, I guess, is trying to expand its mail in voting. And the Supreme court basically said that they won't stand in the way of that. So that's a knock to the GOP.

The most significant one is a judge in Pennsylvania, who just ruled. I think those are just a couple of days ago that. You said fine. If you, if fraud is what you're concerned about, you have until Friday to produce evidence of fraud, prove it, show it, show that this isn't a conspiracy or just a political ploy and show it.

And I'm interested to see how this plays out. I'm interested to see I'm confident. There won't be any evidence because there hasn't been any, I'm interested to see if this plays out in other jurisdictions, right. If, if this plays out in other courts, begin to say this. But yeah, so it's a concerted effort from the GOP.

Continue to try to suppress the vote when they think it will hurt them. And Trump says it out loud, he says it over and over and over the reason we oppose it, it's not really fraud. It's that he's afraid that the people [00:31:00] are, that the Republicans are gonna lose. If people vote by mail, he has said it. Other Republicans have said that they're basically a party in the house.

I think it was this week, said that it was like a liberal wishlist to have more funding for universal voting. Voting is a right. It is as fundamental a right in the U S as anything else, including I've talked about this before. Right. If you're aiming at people on the right, it's okay. Every bit as fundamental as anything in the second amendment about gun ownership or possession.

And so when any politician says, we fear more people voting because we're going to lose. That's as anti-democratic, as you can possibly get. So I'm, I'm ranting now. And so I'll wind down, take some deep breaths and throw it back over to you.

Dr Bradley Onishi: Well, don't forget Paul Weirich architect of the religious right.

Said, and I, you know, the clip has played in, this is a nice plug for the orange wave. Go to the orange wave series, go to the episode. It's not democracy. It's war. And there's a clip there from Paul Weirich the [00:32:00] architect of the religious, right. Who says I don't like it when everyone votes. In fact, I don't want everyone to vote.

He said, Elections are won by who doesn't vote. And so, yeah, this has been a strategy going on 60 years and more from the GOP it's buttressed by the religious right. And other supporters, I'm going to do something I don't do very often friends that I'm going to ask you to do, to take action. So what I'm going to say is I'm going to ask you to try to tell five or 10 people about what's happening at the post office to make sure that they know.

Where they can drop off their ballot at a local, dropbox, voting dropbox, or where they can take it. Okay. So, right now I think a lot of us are feeling helpless and hopeless. One thing, small thing you can do is this use your social media use. Whatever means you have and try to reach five or 10 people, make sure they know what's going on with their ballot.

And I'm not talking about your friend who you talk politics with every night. I'm not talking [00:33:00] about your friend down the road who's you know, as a policy politics wong and listens to nine politics podcasts. I'm talking about your aunt who may not know I'm talking about. Right. You know, your friend down the street from work.

I don't know who it is, but I'm going to ask you to do that five or 10 people because to me, we will look back on the Trump presidency and if, if he wins another, reelection. We will ask ourselves why we didn't do anything in times like these it's out in the open. I know that as soon as I say that, there are so many folks are going to say you're overreacting.

You've been saying Trump, you and everyone else. Isn't saying Trump's and exits exits existential threat to democracy for three and a half years, blah. Okay. I don't know what to say. They've effectively flooded the zone with so much noise that it's really hard to tell when there's an actual five star alarm.

Well, this is it. This is it, period. We're living in a pandemic. I do not want my elderly parents going to the polls and standing in line for [00:34:00] three hours. I just don't know. I don't think that's safe. It'd be nice if they could put it in the mail, their ballot and send it off. Okay. In addition to voting the mail and the postal service is essential for people to receive their medications, for people to receive documents for kinds of legal status, immigration status, so on and so forth.

Okay. We do our taxes by mail. We get our tax refunds by mail. We do so many things when it comes to legal, status, and so on and so forth by mail. We have a want to be authoritarian trying to steal an election. I know Mr. Ranting, Mr. Off-course, you're a professor stay on the evidence. I'm not going to do that because I am on the evidence.

He said it yesterday. I'm not, this is not me on some stuff, sort of political ideological, like red herring. He said it. We live in a pandemic, one that he has exacerbated. And so this is happening. We have to do something about it. All right. Dan, any last [00:35:00] thoughts on the post office before we they'll move on?

Dr Dan Miller: The last thought is that it's a great point about, people checking into how they can deliver those right. No, I guess they would think it was the postmaster general. This is before Trump stuff. This is before we talked about defunding. It has already apparently notified some States that just their rules and laws about like when ballots have to be received to be counted and, and different things like that.

It's already notified some that just given like regular postal delivery rates and things like that. Some States may not get all the ballots back in time. And that that's not a, that's not because of a conspiracy. It's not, it's just that. A lot of States didn't have universal mail in voting. They're expanding it, but some of their regulations, as I understand it, about how ballots have to be counted and when they have to be received and things don't keep up.

So I echo what you say to take action. It's wonky and hard to figure out like all these nuances of like when ballots have to be received in your state and things like that. But encourage people, not only do that, but contacts, you know, do what you can to check with your [00:36:00] election board and find those things out, both to make sure that if you do get a mail in ballot, you fill it out and send it in in time.

But also the, to urge your state, legislature to, you know, make changes to the laws if they have to, or to, you know, make it allowances or for governors too, it has to be done through executive action, whatever it is. To just make sure the ballots can be counted. However, you're going to vote, whether you're going to vote for Kanye West or Donald Trump or Biden, or like writing your grandmother's name, like whatever you're going to do, everybody should be able to vote.

Every eligible voters should be allowed to vote. Lots of States, do universal mail and validating and it works really well. So all of that and just the, just that there are already going to be some issues in the logistics of expanding this without Trump, defunding the post office. So yeah, it's an explicit, naked attempt.

And I just, again, affirm what you say that all of this is people have to do is look at what Trump says. It's not a conspiracy. It's not hidden. I've talked about this before. If people study populism and [00:37:00] nationalism and authoritarian leaders, Trump is literally like a textbook example. If you drew him up in a TV series, People would pan it and say that it's hamfisted and too obvious.

And he's a caricature except that it's real life. And it's our society and our democracy that he's turning into a caricature with him.

Dr Bradley Onishi: I know we've got a couple more stories. Dan. I want to talk about one more along the lines of authoritarianism and populism. Think about if you heard a, about a different country, this happening, the leader president, prime minister, whoever it is appoints two people to be, the head and deputy of a really important, you know, government agency or government domain. Let's call it the Homeland agency domain. Okay. So there they're in charge and they're done so illegally. All of the laws and ordinance that are supposed to be followed when this president or prime minister or chancellor appoints these two people [00:38:00] to the, government office of the Homeland agency.

It's illegal. Well, those two people then go on okay. To lead the federal, excuse me, the deployment of federal soldiers and officers to a major city in that country. Tear gas, the hell out of them. Okay. And escalate the violence that is going on in response to the protests. Okay. Well, that's, what's happening in this country. The Department of Homeland security, the acting secretary is Chad Wolf, the acting deputies, Ken Cuccinelli.

Okay. It has been determined that they were, appointed to those roles illegally. They have no legal right to be in those roles. Okay. And yet they are what you saw out at what you saw play out in Portland last month was the result of secretary Chad Wolf doing the bidding of Donald Trump and tear gassing the hell out of people.

In [00:39:00] addition to a federal I don't know what to call them. Soldiers, officers, something. Okay. Snatching people off the street, throwing them in vans, et cetera. Some of this happened in Chicago there's reports of cases in New York. There's other places. Okay. Think about that friend. We have the ho the department of Homeland security run by people who have not been given the legal right to run it.

They're raging war on cities across this country. And it's not even a blip in our radar anymore. Yeah, I'm, I'm hesitant. I'm always hesitant on this show to be too hyperbolic, to be too alarmist. Okay. COVID-19 has shown us the crisis war in, in ways that, we should've seen before. Many others did see before, but it should be clear and open to everybody now.

We are in a crisis of our democracy. And these are just drip, drip, drip, drip stories that keep coming out.

[00:40:00] **Dr Dan Miller:** As you said, it's been determined by different sort of regulation agencies and so forth that they were illegally appointed. There is no federal police force in the U S and by design, that creates problems, as we know, with like police brutality and things like that, because.

Everything's local and so forth, but one of the reasons is because of precisely what's happening. And what Trump has done as you've said is he has appointed two people, but now appears without legal authority, which means that they have no legal authority to be sending a militarized police where they are.

But Trump has effectively used his two illegally appointed handpicked. Individuals to create a de facto federal police force to do what he wants. And I'm just going to remind people that this same person acting DHS, chief Chad Wolf, was quoted as describing one of the policies in Portland as proactively arresting people.

I'm not a legal expert, but usually you're supposed to have probable cause before you arrest somebody. Proactively arresting this is like right up there with minority [00:41:00] report dystopian stuff. Right. We also heard in the news a few weeks ago, there were, DHS trainings on various like sort of legal machinations that could be used to physically remove people from protest areas and then like relocate them and not charge them.

But basically just take them away. So they can't exercise their first amendment rights in a way to disrupt protest and so forth. So I'm with you again, if people look at it in the

abstract, like it seems familiar because it's the frog and the boiling kettle kind of phenomenon. Right. You put the frog in like a room temperature, pot of water, and it's fine.

And you slowly turn up the heat and it doesn't notice until. It's dead and that's kind of what can happen to democracy if you describe this anywhere else. If this were, if this were Russia and this was happening, if this was a sort of a, a former Eastern bloc Soviet regime where this was happening, if this was a corrupt regime in South America, where this was happening, if this was happening in China, We would be, decrying.

This people [00:42:00] would be decrying it everywhere. And yet, you know, here it is. And the politics of it are pretty clear. I don't hear all those same people that, you know, talk about the evils of government, on the right, the right wing extremists, decrying, Donald Trump, creating a federal police force to, to go in and enforce his personal will.

And the last piece of this that I'll just throw out to, again, to say it's not hyperbolic is again, if you look at populism and you look at nationalism. One of the defining features of what we can call the personalization of politics. That is the society becomes around. It takes shape around the person who rules, right?

And so Donald Trump, as kind of the embodiment of the authentic American people, he treats everything as if it is there at his back. And Paul, the call we've talked about that the justice department is his defacto legal protection at this point, he's using DHS to coordinate his own, personal police force to enforce his will around the country.

And yeah, it's happening right in front of us has been determined not to be illegal. And of course we don't hear a chorus of [00:43:00] Republicans coming out, to, you know, the, the law and order Republican party is not coming out, screaming about this. So it's not hyperbolic, unfortunately it's a real threat.

And all of this brings us back around to why it's really important for people to try to take action to correct this.

Dr Bradley Onishi: If you're looking to learn more about this. If you're looking to learn more about how Trump has perpetuated, authoritarian tactics in this country, and, anyway, tune into the orange wave on Tuesday, I'm going to drop, the penultimate episode.

It's about the end of the world. And sometimes the end of the world doesn't look like what you think it does. And I'll just say that a couple last stories here, Dan, I have one more and then I'll throw it to you. Is, Ryan Berg, who's been on our program as a sociologist has some nice data out that shows something I think is, you know, for you and I, as scholars of religion is important and that's that, Trump has lost some white voters.

It seems, it seems that some white, suburban women, some white people with college degrees and advanced degrees have, [00:44:00] have abandoned the president. It seems that a lot more of folks who say that there nothing in particular, when it comes to religion, the nuns have abandoned the president. But he's gained ground with, Hispanic voters in ways that I think often goes unnoticed that, Catholic, Hispanic voters are supporting the president in surprising numbers about a third of them. And those numbers are kind of

consistent, in terms of the rises across the Hispanic vote. And so it's just something to keep an eye on. There's so much going on. It's hard to put this at the forefront of our thinking and to really sort of zero in on exactly what's going on here, but it highlights something you and I've talked about.

I think over the course of the show, which is Democrats assume that the growing Latin X population in this country is going to lead to more electoral victories. And if you follow what's happening with Latin X voters, that's just not the case. A great chapter on this is in the power worshipers by Catherine Stewart.

She has a whole chapter [00:45:00] on, how this is playing out in places like Southern California and Arizona and in Texas, where issues related to gender and sexuality and the family are being used by right wing, conservative Christians and politicians to recruit a Latin X church goes to their causes and their very patriarchal policies.

And so anyway, Dan, we don't have time or bandwidth right now to dig into all of this, but I did want to point it out just cause that's what we do here on this show. That's who we are, scholars of religion. And I do think it's important. Any other, final thoughts on that or final stories you want to make sure we talk about.

Dr Dan Miller: Not so much a final story, is sort of a continuing interest in it kind of ties together.

Some things we've seen, right. We've seen Trump in recent weeks trying to appeal to women voters. Right? One of the big stories since 2018 is a suburban women. Yeah. In particular to the abandoning, the GOP, at least during the Trump presidency, we'll see, you know, happens in 2020 and beyond. And Trump has tried to appeal to them by, you know, keeping people of color out of their [00:46:00] communities and saying, who's going to protect the, the quote unquote suburban Housewives and so on.

I think it's worth watching and seeing what happens now that there is a woman and a woman of color on the democratic ticket. What happens with Trump? He also referred to her as being nasty the other day a week. We know that this is one of his epithets that is reserved almost entirely for women, a women in power women who questioned him.

He calls them nasty. I'm interested to see if any of these things that he's aiming at, work he's, he's funny, like. It's not funny, it's sad, but he's such a misogynist that he can only appeal to women by being misogynistic. So like his thing about suburban Housewives, right? This assumption that they're all, they're all, they're all Housewives.

They're all white. We've talked about something like a third of suburban dwellers are people of color. So his way of appealing to women is to use misogynistic terms. He's like the kind of person who says, you know, if you say you disrespectful and he's like, I don't [00:47:00] disrespect women. I think women are beautiful.

Right. Like reducing them to their looks to show that you somehow respect women, which Trump has done. So that's, that's just something that I think is really, really interesting to

watch. And the other thing is just, we keep talking about the timelines. It's a long time till the election. And yet I have highlighted this before that.

Every week that goes by is a week closer to the election. We're just a few weeks away from some of those first mail in ballots, going out in the mail, a mail and balloting and a lot of places will start really, really soon. And that's a concern for a lot of people right now. It's a real concern for the, for the GOP, because Trump is down in the polls.

If people vote, I don't know, say mid September, October 3rd, whatever it is, And then Trump rebounds in late October. It won't do any good. So those ballots that are already in that's the concern of the GOP. I think those are two things to watch. I said for a long time that I think what's really gonna matter is where is Trump around labor day?

In terms of approval, in that, what will we see the GOP do? How will they respond? We're [00:48:00] close to labor day now we're, you know, just kind of half a month away. And then I feel like that traditionally, that, that last stretch, we're going to have the debates anyway, rambling about things, but all that say the timeline is compressing.

And so the stability of those numbers, for Biden and for Trump are I think going to increasingly matter. So just two things that I think are I'm watching, I think people would watch. I would love to hear from women listeners about, you know, other things that they're hearing or, or maybe how people are proceeding in reading these comments by Trump and the these efforts to, to supposedly appeal to women by insulting other women.

Or by insulting them?

Dr Bradley Onishi: Yeah, not, yeah. It's it's odious. It's, it's par for the course, unfortunately. All right, Dan, we need to wind down. We need to probably go for reasons for hope. So I'm not going to give a reason for hope this week. Maybe that's irresponsible. I don't know. I am hopeful. I'm always hopeful.

I, you know, Kamala Harris is, is [00:49:00] not, everyone's going to be her biggest fan, but I'll tell you friends. Right now I'm in San Jose, California. And when I walk in my neighborhood, My neighborhood looks a lot like Kamala Harris. There's a lot. I mean, it's an overwhelming majority of people of color. It's a lot of immigrants.

It's a lot of folks trying to squeak out. What's left of the American dream, South Asian folks, black folks, Latin X folks, people with mixed religious backgrounds. That is a reason in my view to be hopeful, but I want to close on this, Dan, and then I'll throw it to you. This is from, Wade Davis. Who's an anthropologist writing at rolling stone this week.

COVID-19 didn't lay America low it's simply revealed what had long been forsaken as this crisis unfolded with another American dying every minute of every day, a country that wants turned out fighter planes by the hour could not manage to produce the paper masks or cotton swabs essential for tracking the disease, the nation that defeated smallpox and polio, and that the world for generations in medical innovation and discovery was reduced to a laughingstock.

As a buffoon of a president, [00:50:00] advocated the use of household disinfectants as a treatment for a disease that intellectually he could not begin to understand. If you read the whole article. Dan, it's just more of that. If it's somebody who's, who's not an American who's, who's writing from Canada, sort of providing, I think the perspective that we need sometimes, we are witnessing a sea change in our country.

We're witnessing a sea change in how the world views our country. And, I think we need to be aware of that. I'm not here to be overly depressing. I'm not here to provide some sort of doom and gloom perspective. It just feels like we're at a stage where. We really need to understand, what's at stake.

And I know you hear that a lot. Social media commercials, celebrities, everywhere you turn. I'm sure people are saying that. So, it's feels trite to say it, but, I don't know, damn this week with the post office stuff with the birtherism 2.0 friends, 1300 Americans died yesterday from COVID, just cause we're not talking about it doesn't mean it's not happening.

I mean, [00:51:00] we could have spent all day today. Dan talking about COVID, 1300 people died yesterday from the disease. Nothing. I mean, it's not gotten better. People are going back to school. Thousands of kids either exposed to, or coming down with COVID. I'm sorry. You know, we were, we're in a spot here that's critical and we're going to have to figure out what to do.

Alright, Dan, with that flowery. Lovely. Just, you know, sunny disposition laid at your feet. What is your reason for hope? If you have one.

Dr Dan Miller: Yeah, I wanted to think a Bradley Ray of sunshine Onishi for the.

Dr Bradley Onishi: No, that's my name. So, anyway, go ahead.

Dr Dan Miller: No, it's it is, I mean, it's, it's really serious, I think. And I've thought about this, like one just overarching thing is if there are things of value coming from this experience, it is that it is making explicit, what many people thought wasn't present in American society and that's uncomfortable and awful.

But it's, it's like going to counseling or something where you kind of have to get to that point where you [00:52:00] recognize things about yourself that you may not like, before you can address them. So I think nationally we're sort of, but in terms of hope, you know, it feels like, I don't know if COVID temporality has been as weird for everybody as it has for me, where on the one hand.

I feel like I haven't done anything for the last six months, except like, Go through weird Netflix shows because nothing new is being made now or, you know, whatever. And on the other hand, it's been like six months, you know, with my kids home all the time. Great. I love my kids. It's a lot of kids.

Dr Bradley Onishi: No we get it.

Dr Dan Miller: But no, but it does occur to me that, you know, every day we get there, we're rounding a curve where we are closer by all the accounts I've seen to vaccines and

treatments and things like that. And there will be difficulties and logistical issues with producing those and releasing them, but, but even Dr Fauci, who also for many, can seem to not be a real Ray of sunshine, sort of guy as likable as he is. Says that he's pretty cautiously optimistic that by the end of the day year, there [00:53:00] may be a vaccine that is by the end of 2020. That's a shorter timeline of back in March. People were saying 12 to 18 months.

We talking about like a year from now that gives me hope. I see lots of things about, you know, advanced clinical trials and different things like that you know, so. I think as hard as it is, there is kind of, and, you know, it's distance. and it's hard to see, but I think that there, there may be an end in sight.

That's going to depend on a lot of things like people taking them vaccines. If there is one, that'll give us plenty of fodder when the time comes, when all the anti-vaxxers who don't want to be chipped by, you know, a whatever company has secret microchips or nanobots in their vaccine, don't want to take it.

We'll deal with that when it comes. But I am hopeful that, you know, we're starting to see. That at least on the horizon and maybe a long ways off, but it's there. So that's one of our reasons of hope is, you know, as we get further from the initiation of all of this, it means that sort of by definition one way or the other, we are closer to a someday [00:54:00] return to normal life.

Dr Bradley Onishi: Yeah, that sounds pretty good right now, if I'm honest, normal life, meaning a lot of things, I guess. all right. As always friends, you can find us on Twitter at straight JC can find me on Twitter at Bradley Onishi can find us on the Facebook page. You can find us on Patriot and we could really use your support, straight white American jesus.podomatic.com.

I'm really thankful for all of those who supported us. you make this show happen. We're working on a comprehensive website over, over, overhaul, and we're hoping to provide transcripts and readings. And, bios and everything, one would need to, learn from this show. So that's coming soon. The next episode of the orange wave will drop Tuesday, August 18.

So please look for that in a couple of days and we will be off next week. One more, get away from me Dan, what I mean by that as I'll be just screaming into a pillow for 36 hours. So, that's my vacation. Just kidding. Sorry, you can't see this. Dan is laughing. I'm laughing. Do not write me messages being like [00:55:00] I'm worried about you.

Yeah. Anyway, other than that, Dan, thanks for being here. I appreciate it. And we'll talk next time