



**UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE NATIONAL AGENDA 2020
WE ARE THE PEOPLE**

Yamiche Alcindor

“Election Aftermath”

HOSTED BY

University of Delaware –
Center for Political Communication

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DR. HOFFMAN: Good evening. Welcome to the final installment of our tenth annual National Agenda Speaker Series at the University of Delaware. I'm Dr. Lindsay Hoffman, Director of the series and Associate Director of the Center for Political Communication. This year's theme has called attention to the power of us, the citizens of the United States. National Agenda Without Borders, as I've been calling it, has been interesting, to say the least. We've been drawing nearly 600 viewers from 20 states and several countries. So, we are reaching a wider audience. To all of you out there, thank you so much for making this program a success and look forward to another exciting series next Fall. Tonight, we're continuing the conversation about the election as well as Trump's reaction to it and the growing national Covid crisis among other pressing issues facing the nation. Yamiche Alcindor from *PBS's NewsHour* joins us. A final reminder, National Agenda is about demonstrating civil dialogue and engaging with the community. Even though we're virtual we will be asking audience members to submit questions. Just type your questions into the Chat and it will be selected during our Q and A at the end of this talk. I also would like to welcome our partner university, Professor Kristen Landreville and her students at the University of Wyoming and our cosponsor the Department of Communication here at UD. So, Yamiche, if I can give you a bit of an introduction. Ah, you are a White House correspondent for *PBS NewsHour* and a political contributor to *NBC News* and *MSNBC*. You were inspired by African American journalist Gwen Eifel who died of cancer four years ago this month. And this year you were awarded the International Women's Media Foundation 2020 Gwen Eifel Award, The White House Correspondents Association Aldo Beckman Award for overall excellence in White House coverage, White House coverage, and the National Association



of Black Journalists 2020 Journalist of the Year. I hope I'm not missing any awards. That's a lot of awards for one year. So, everyone please join me in welcoming, ah, virtually, to the University of Delaware, Yamiche Alcindor.

MS. ALCINDOR: Thank you so much for having me. I'm, I'm so excited to be here. I'm a little bummed of course that this is virtually but this is the word that we're living in; this is how we stay safe. So, I'm excited to be here with you, excited to, um, to, to share all of the experiences that I've had, and I'm, I'm just really, really grateful for this opportunity.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and ordinarily it would be kind of exciting to be in Delaware right now with the President-elect, ah, residing in the state of Delaware. Um, let's start with the election aftermath. President Trump just yesterday fired Department of Homeland Security Chris Krebs who had rejected Trump's claims of widespread voter fraud. What evidence exactly does Trump have that fraud occurred in this election? Like, what is he basing his statements on and what went [indiscernible] state official after state official has called his acclaims offensive and wrong?

MS. ALCINDOR: Well, critics of the president, um, and critics of the Trump campaign say that they are really, um, putting on not lawsuits but theatrics and not legal maneuvers but fiction. Um, people say, including judges as well as state election officials – Republicans and Democrats – say that this election was done in a by-book manner, that the election did not have fraud. There was no massive conspiracy theory against the president. Um, so that question of what evidence does President Trump have to make these claims of voter fraud is a good one but it's the one that we really haven't had an answer to because the President has not provided any substantial evidence to back up his claims that

he won the election but somehow it was stolen from him and that President-elect Biden somehow cheated his way into being the president-elect. Um, we see lawsuit after lawsuit being thrown out in states like Nevada, and states like, um, Pennsylvania and Georgia, in Michigan, in Wisconsin. Um, so, what we're seeing is a, a campaign, a public campaign that is doing two things. The first is its messaging to the republican base that republicans desperately want to hold onto for 2022 and 2024 and other elections. President Trump had some 71 million people come out and vote for him, so the Republican Party is sticking by him because they want to make sure these voters stick with the Republican Party. The second thing that the president is doing is he's collecting a lot of money. And when you look at the money that he's collecting and he's saying it's that it's going to a, an election defense fund. Well, we've done some digging at the *NewsHour* and in fact something like 60 percent of it goes, um, into the Trump Campaign, into this new political action committee and it can be used for all sorts of things including personal expenses, travel – ah, critics would say it's a slush fund, some people say it's going to fund the president's lavish lifestyle after he leaves office. And then about 20, about 40 percent of it goes to the Republican National Committee which can use it on other republican candidates. So, that's a longwinded way to say even if there is no evidence, there is still money being made, um and money being collected, and there's also this messaging component. So, a lot of this is politics. Um, but overall we just have not seen – the President has lost at least two dozen cases in court with judges saying that, that, that the claims that the Trump campaign is making that there was voter fraud, that their election observers were not allowed to see the election, that people skirted voter ID laws. Judges have said that that is utterly

unsupported and fiction.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, you just reported tonight on, ah, *NewsHour* just about an hour ago that the Trump administration is pulling back on suits in Wisconsin. They had wanted recounts in every state, but they've decided against the eight million dollars for a recount in Wisconsin. What does that mean, that the Trump camp not, not putting towards legal action these states he claims to have won? What is that mean –

MS. ALCINDOR: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- he's not pursuing that?

MS. ALCINDOR: Yeah. Um, before I answer that question I should also answer a little bit more of the question that you posed in the first one which is Christopher Krebs. That is a completely whole situation which where it, where you see the President firing somebody who works essentially for the Department of Homeland Security in cybersecurity for telling the truth. Christopher Krebs was saying this election was secure. We did not see massive voter fraud. We did not see any foreign, um, or domestic interference that was substantial in this election. And what the President did was say, well you're not saying what I want you to say and as a result you are going to lose your jobs. Christopher Krebs had been saying for several days that he expected to lose his job. So, we're in a situation right now where the President is making false claims and firing people who are not backing up his false, his false claims including people who work for his own administration. Moving forward when we look at Wisconsin, the question that you just posed to me, um, there was a time where the Trump campaign said we want recounts in every single state, especially the states that are contested which would be Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, um, Nevada, um, as, as well

as Arizona. Now, they're saying in Wisconsin we don't want to pay the eight million dollars that they would have to pay for the statewide recount, instead what we want to do is focus on two counties, Dane County, Dane County and Milwaukee County. Those two counties are Democratic strongholds, um, where Joe Biden won overwhelmingly, so there are people who say they want to keep up this, this recount but it's really just to show they want to keep up a fight. It's not to, to, to actually try to win back the state because you can't win it back with just those two counties especially because they're such blue counties. And we have to remember that Joe Biden is beating Donald Trump in that state by the unofficial count like 20,000 votes. So, there is no way, critics would say, it's almost impossible, most would say including Republicans that the President will find enough votes to make up the 20,000 deficits that he is at right now. So, and in Wisconsin we see a, a sort of shift going on where they are saying one thing but when it comes to actually putting their money where their mouth is the Trump campaign is doing something totally different.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, GOP [indiscernible] Representative Adam, ah, Kinzinger defended Krebs and said there's basically a loyalty purge, ah, today. What has been the GOP response to Trump's claims?

MS. ALCINDOR: It's been twofold. Um, when you get people on TV or on the record there are a lot of Republicans who are wanting to stick by the President, again because he's the leader of the Republican Party, they're worried about the fact that there are all these different millions of Americans, 71 million of them who voted for President Trump who make up the Republican base. If you're a senator who's looking at your own reelection, um, efforts, looking at your own ability to continue to serve long after President Trump leaves office then the

incentive is there for you to stick with the President for politics. So, they're kind of handcuffed, I would say, by the politics of this. But then privately there are Republicans who are telling me we know that President Trump lost, we understand that he's not going to be president; it's 45 more days, let him say whatever he wants to say, let him process, let him lash out, let him maybe not even ever concede except as long as he can leave the White House we'll still stick with him. So, there is this political calculus that Republicans are making where they're publicly saying yes, yes, we really support the President, where privately I'm hearing some people, um, including Republican senators who are vocal allies of the President say you know what, I actually want to go and congratulate Joe Biden. Um, Senator Chris Coons, a, a, a friend of Joe Biden has said that he has privately been contacted by senators in the Senate, they're Republican Senators, to privately congratulate Joe Biden though they still refuse to say it, um, publicly that Joe Biden is in fact the president-elect which is of course what he is. Where this is not a partisan situation. Trusted sources including the AP, all the major networks have seen and projected that Joe Biden will win this election. Just like four years ago when they projected that President Trump would win the election. We started calling him President-elect Trump the very night he won. So, nothing has changed, ah, from 2016 to 2020 except for the fact that the President wants to try to put up this fight, um, to try to hold on to power though he has been now, and, and is, is now the predicted loser of this election.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and one of my students, Spencer, asks the question, you mentioned on Twitter that Republicans are waiting for Trump to come to terms with his loss. Do you think he will concede? Do you think that will happen

before January 20th?

MS. ALCINDOR: Well, there is a school, there are two schools of thoughts. The first is, when I talk to Republican sources who are at, who are very closely allied with the President, aligned with the President, um, they say, yes, if, if things go the way they're supposed to go, if they can prove that – I was, I was on a call with another source today and they said, and they said well if Joe Biden can prove that he won of course the President can, will concede; of course the President will, will do what's right and, and, and essentially say I lost, Joe Biden won. However, proving that he won, when, when I ask well how does Joe Biden prove that he won, those same Republican allies can't actually come up with a response and so what they say is, well, we're not quite sure how he would do that. And of course, the, the main way that we've done that for the last 200 years or so is we've had trusted sources look at the votes and say this person is the projected winner, they are the president-elect. This is not a term that started with Joe Biden, it's not a term that's going to end with Joe Biden, hopefully. So what you see there is no matter who, you know, in four years if it's a Republican who wins we'll be saying President-Elect Nikki Halley or President-elect, um, Romney, or President-elect whoever is the next president, or President-elect Harris. So, the idea is that, um, this is something that has not changed. Then there's the school of thought, especially from critics of the President who say there's no way he's going to concede, there's no way that he's going to be able to accept his biggest fear in life which is losing. The President has openly said he hates to lose. He hates to be in a position where he feels embarrassed, where he feels like he is not coming out on top. And in this case, he lost. Um, he is projected to lose this election. It's a hard truth. It's one that the President has not wanted to

embrace. So, there are a lot of people who think that the President is probably going to leave office physically, leave the White House, but he's going to do so by saying I was cheated out of this election, the election's rigged, by the way I'm running in 2024 and I'm going to start a media company in the mid, meantime. So, there are a lot of people who think President Trump is going to use all of his political power, all of his messaging power, all of his media power to, to falsely claim that he was cheated out of the election to then go on and have influence within the Republican Party and beyond by claiming that he cheated, that, that people cheated and by, and by never conceding formally.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, let's focus on Georgia for a moment. Ah, with the recount, the longest hand count in US history, plus, ah, runoffs in, ah, the Senate, ah, tensions are high right now. Georgia for nearly three decades has been a Republican stronghold. My student, Autumn, wants to know, was it the Black Lives Matter protests that had an impact on turnout in Georgia?

MS. ALCINDOR: I think there are a couple of things going on in Georgia. The first is that Stacey Abrams who ran for governor, um, did a lot of work turning out republicans, turning out democrats in Georgia. She got more votes, um, by my standards, by what reports say, um, in Georgia during her gubernatorial race than Barack Obama did which is a big deal because Obama is really known as someone who was the litmus test for how big of a turnout you can get even though I should say Joe Biden got the most votes of any person who has ever run for president ever. But Joe, but, but, but Barack Obama was in some ways the, the, the goal for most, um, candidates, Republican and Democrat in terms of turnout. So, Stacey Abrams did a lot of work getting democrats in Georgia registered, getting them to understand that they could have a voice, that they

could have power to change the state blue. It, it, it was years and years and years of work. So, there's that. The ground game is, is I think, very much credited to Stacey Abrams. Then of course, this is an election that was happening after the death of George Floyd who of course ah, ah, died after a police officer kneeled on his neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds, two minutes and 53 seconds where he was unconscious. Then you have those cases of Brianna Taylor who was killed in her home, um, who was unarmed; her boyfriend was, was shooting at the police, he, he said in self-defense. Um, there was, there was, was Ahmaud Arbery who was running in, in Georgia, um, and was shot by a group of white men who, who said that he looked like some sort of suspect, um and those men are now facing charges. There was all this kind of racial reckoning in the air, and, people were home, right, because we're in the middle of a pandemic unlike in other places where people might be busy and moving around. People are still of course working at home and taking of their kids, taking care of their kids and other things. But people were still highly more focused on racial justice in a way that I haven't seen as a reporter, in the way that you saw corporate companies come out talking about the Black Lives Matter. You saw sports, um, organizations embrace the idea of Black Lives Matter. So, I do think that not only in Georgia but overall, in this election there was this, this real impact of the Black Lives matter protests. We saw people take to the streets in all 50 states. So that made an impact. But I should tell you, on the flip side, it also made an impact when it comes to GOP members picking up seats in the House. There are Democrats who absolutely feel like they lost their elections because President Trump successfully argued that the protests that, that were largely peaceful but that did have pockets of violence, that they were a threat to

American democracy; that they were people going, going too far; that people were too against the police. So, they also helped the Republicans in some states where you saw GOP members picking up seats and you saw Democrats lose part of their majority in the House. There's still of course held, held onto the House but it's still not the place where they wanted to be, um, come November 2020.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I'm seeing some questions coming in on the Chat, uh, and everyone can ask questions in the chat for our Q and A starting at about 8:30. Um, but before we get to your experience as a White House correspondent in the Trump administration, I wanted to ask you about the state of journalism. So, journalism is often called the Fourth Estate, keeping a check on the three federal branches of government. With the rising concern about fake news as well as conspiracy theories and widespread distrust in news, how can journalists win the American public back by letting them know that journalism purpose is central to a democracy?

MS. ALCINDOR: That's a, it's a great question but I have to tell you, I don't spend that much time thinking about how I win people back. I think you just do the job and you do the job well and you meet people where they are, um, and you try to make sure that your, that your reporting is accurate and fair and that you get real people into your story. So, one of the things that I think *NewsHour* does really, really well is that we go into cities; either it's virtually or in person. Um, I as the White House correspondent, I don't just sit in front of the lawn, I just don't sit in the White House. I go out to southeast Washington D.C. I go to Mexico to, to talk about the President's, um, immigration policies. I go and talk to people in their, in their living rooms. One of the things that we've been doing

with, with the pandemic is showing what the, what privileged people have to work from home. So right now, I'm, I'm talking to you from my living room. So many Americans don't have the, the internet or the technology or the time, um, or the convenience to be able to talk and, and do their jobs from home. Amazon workers have to still go to work. There are immigrants in this country who – I'm thinking of one that I interviewed, a woman that I interviewed who is living seven people to an apartment. Um, and, and showing what it means. And when she had Covid she had to be in one room and six people had to be in another room. So, I think really um what I'm trying to get at here is that journalism is supposed to just do what it does which is be fair and and educate people. And it's really, I think, we have a responsibility, a shared responsibility as viewers, as consumers of news to also think, okay what is my personal responsibility when it comes to information. So, for me I watch all the networks. I also read a number of newspapers – I read the *Miami Herald* because it's my hometown paper being from Miami, I read *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*. I read, I read local news and national news because I think there is this responsibility as citizens, um, that we all have to have when it comes to understanding of, understanding race, understanding the economy, understanding how the pandemic is impacting people's lives. I'm not a health care reporter but I can tell you I've been on the phone with a number of health officials just getting them to explain to me what it means that we're in the middle of the pandemic; what are we missing; what does it mean when the transition isn't happening. Um, so I in, in some ways I feel like that's what we have to do as a country and it just can't be journalists saying oh well we really want to win back your trust. It has to be also people making the decision that they want to take in information that sometimes

goes against their natural biases.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, we'll come back to Covid a little bit later but I want to jump into what I think a lot of people know about you, if they've been following your trajectory over the year, is, ah, beginning in March, ah, Trump at a White House, ah, press briefing asked you to be nice and to not be threatening. But that wasn't the first time the President didn't like your line of questioning. On March 13th you pressed Trump on his failure to take responsibility for the Corona virus testing failures and the White House global pandemic office that he disbanded, ah, he said well, I just think it's a nasty question. And in a news conference following the midterm elections in November 2018 you asked Trump, on the campaign trail you called yourself a nationalist; some people saw it as emboldening white nationalists, ah, prompting an interruption from Trump who said I don't know why you would say that, that's such a racist question. What I'm interested in is that these seemingly intentional intimidations don't phase you. The word that comes to mind for me is unflappable, um, that you aren't intimidated by these things. How do you maintain your professionalism and composure when the President of the United States is, ah, legitimately arguably attacking you for the questions that you're asking?

MS. ALCINDOR: The way that I maintain my composure is by focusing on why I became a journalist and, and on focusing on the privilege that I have to, to hold leaders like the President of the United States accountable. I think there are people here that are joining us tonight that maybe lost a family member or maybe you know somebody who lost their job or maybe you are just missing your, your, your human connection and, and missing school. All real losses. Even if you haven't lost a loved one the feeling of losing your friends, of losing human

connection. All of those things can feel like all sorts of deep, deep loss. And when I think about being unflappable and thinking about, about focusing on my question, I think there are so many Americans who deserve a press who is focused on them and their worries and their lived experiences. Um, so many people are not going to make it into the White House. So many people may never walk into the gates of the White House so I count it a privilege, um, as a, as a daughter of Haitian immigrants who came here believing that, that America you could be anything you wanted to be, that they were immigrants who believed in this country enough that I could then be born here and ask the President so many questions. So, to me, I really think I, every time that the President maybe is calling me nasty or saying those things, I'm constantly thinking what about that worker who has to go to work today; what about that mother who just buried their 13-year-old who died of Covid; what about that person who doesn't know how they're going to feed their family tonight and by the way they just got an eviction notice. That's what keeps me poised and focused because I just think that America deserves a press that is thinking about them and that is, and, and it's too busy trying to get answers from this president and this administration that we're not worried about any sort of attacks of, um, attacks or arguments or, or tense things. I think that I'm here to ask the questions that you at your dinner table are wondering about especially when it comes to testing and issues of life and death, issues of racism in this country, um, that that is what is on my mind when I, when I have those exchanges with the President.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, ah, before we move into a conversation about Covid which has, ah, become increasingly important and tragic over the past few days, um, I wanted to talk a little bit about the fact that we talk a lot about civil dialogue

and that's part of my objective as part of the speaker series is how do we engage in civil dialogue, particularly in speaking across differences, um, but perhaps sometimes that's not the ideal. And my student, Mark, asks, ah, he says there have been a lot of calls for unity and an end to the normalized divisiveness, most notably from president, president-elect Joe Biden. And he said, I'm not sure if you saw the clip of Yvette Simpson (sp?) where she said unity is great, but freedom is better. Um, how do you respond to that line of thinking? What is your stance on the calls for unity and cooperation compared to the divisiveness that we're seeing today?

MS. ALCINDOR: I mean, I think it's going to be a tall order. There are people who look at Joe Biden's, um, call for unity – he obviously won the election so there are about 75 million Americans who, who believed him when he said he could unify this country, who believed him when he said that he could rustle back the soul of the nation. Um, he, he, he cast this election in such stark terms and but also in [indiscernible] terms saying that he was the person who could heal our country from kind of a raucous time period. So, I think the, the big question is going to be how is he going to do it? What are you going to do? How are you going to get people, the 71 million Americans who not only voted for Trump but maybe millions, millions also who don't believe that you're the duly elected President of the United States – how are you going to get them to get on your same page? I think those are going to be the questions that are going to be hard questions to answer but those are the questions that I know I'll be posing and so many other Americans. Um, but there is the sense that this is a country that is long before President Trump, um, very, very, very polarized and became increasingly polarized through the Trump administration. So, I think we're going

to have to really figure out how we do this and what it means, ah, for our country, um, that we, that this election was so close because I think – well a lot of the things that I talked to, to, when I talk to Democrats about, there’s a lot of soul searching going on in the Democratic Party to think well I, I don’t understand how this could have been this close. I hear that from a lot of democratic sources. Meanwhile, Republicans are saying of course this is an election that’s close, of course we’re a nation that’s divided. So, I think, um, it’s going to be a, a real challenge, um, to, to unify this country. I don’t know when if at all we’ll ever get there. Um, but that of course this is a tall order and something that, that Joe Biden wants to do.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and I just want to remind the audience, ah, the audience, that we are a nonpartisan center. We’re not – even though we’re affiliated with this school that Joe Biden graduated from as an undergrad, we are a nonpartisan center. But, I’m curious, um, how do you think this will different; what do you think will be different in terms of those press briefings that you have with Trump where he is somewhat aggressive and somewhat intimidating? What do you think that’s going to look like in a, ah, Joe Biden presidency? What’s going to be the difference?

MS. ALCINDOR: Well, Joe Biden has said, um, that he plans on bringing back the daily press briefings, so, there was a time where Joe, where President Trump he was the main person communicating with the press. He was the person who would either talk to us on the lawn or he would talk to, um, reporters when he was getting on Air Force One at the airport, or he would, um, sometimes, I think there was one time where he actually came out to the driveway of the White House and, and did a kind of mini press conference. So, I think there are a

number of, um, ways that the President interacted with the media that's going to be different than when Joe Biden interacted with the media. So, we'll just have to see. I, I, there are sources especially on the Democratic side who say it's not going to be a tense, he's not going to lash out, he's not going to be calling people nasty or threatening or all of those things. But I think that we, we've always had the media and, and, and political leaders. We've always had a sort of tense relationship. Um, long before I had a tense relationship with, with, with President Trump I was covering Bernie Sanders and he didn't like some of my questions. So, I think that at the end of the day the press is not there to be friendly with political leaders. We're there to push them. We're there to hold them accountable. Um, and that relationship should be a little tense when you think about the roles that we're each playing.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, that was another question I wanted to ask you, is like, how different is the press relationship with the Trump administration from previous administrations?

MS. ALCINDOR: So, I only covered one president. I've only covered President Trump. Um, so, in some ways I can only take, I can only give you the information of, of what Judy and, and – Judy Woodruff, the anchor of *PBS NewsHour* – as well as other people have covered many more presidents than me. They said that the relationship was more, was, was, was not as tense, um, that you didn't have presidents lashing out at people. That, yeah, the presidents might get annoyed, they might get, ah, ah, frustrated with, with a question or two but they weren't openly um, aggressive to the media in the way that President Trump is. Of course, President Trump has also called the media the enemy of the people. Um, some of his top aides including Steve Bannon said very early on

in the administration that they needed to make the media an opposition so that people wouldn't believe reporters. Um, so it wasn't just that they would push back on the media but then they would make them a political opponent so that they would be seen as the enemy and, and that followers of President Trump wouldn't believe journalists even if they were telling the truth. So, there was a strategy there that the President and his allies laid out. Um, I don't think we're going to see that same strategy with, ah, President-elect Biden. They say that the, the, if you look back at the Obama administration you didn't have the same exchanges with President Obama and the President but again – and, and, and the press corps I should say rather. But again I've never covered another president so I'm very eager to see, um, what the next iteration of the White House, um, briefings looks like.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, how effective is that strategy going to be leading into a Biden presidency? Is it; are we going to see a Trump effect where people are, continue to be distrusting of American journalists?

MS. ALCINDOR: I mean, I don't think it's a Trump effect. I think long before President Trump came along there were people all over the country who were questioning whether or not they, they, they could trust the media. As someone who has covered race for a long time, I can tell you decades before President Trump came along, um, there were African Americans who watched their local news and say, I don't see myself reflected in news that I watch. A lot of people that I've talked to say, when I turn on the local news I see black men who are mugshots and I see black women who are, are, are poor; and I don't see black fathers who are raising their families. I don't see black women who are CEO's. Um, I don't see Asian Americans who are not just doing math, they are also in

the arts. I don't see white men who, who maybe are, are into, um, social justice. I, I think that there are a lot of times long before President Trump people were questioning the media so and I think that that's going to continue to go on. I think the media should at, at, at times be challenged to make sure we're being diverse, we're being fair, we're being accurate. And I expect that, that to continue.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, let's move on to, ah, the Corona virus. Ah, cases are surging in the upper Midwest. We are now seeing more than a quarter million Americans dead from the virus. That's more than Dr. Anthony Fauci predicted in March. Um, but we're also seeing two companies announce successful vaccines for Covid-19. Do you think we will see American vaccines in Trump's final days in office, question one; and if so, do you believe he will promote the widespread distribution of those vaccines?

MS. ALCINDOR: Um, so the President had a press availability where he, he had remarks last week on the Corona virus vaccine and he said that by December at least 20 million Americans will have access to the Covid-19, um, vaccine. Now we're not sure which company that's going to come from. It might be, but, but that's, that's the promise that his administration has made. And he has been promising pretty consistently that he would deliver a Covid-19 vaccine by the end of the year. So, we'll have to watch and see if that happens. And then of course, come, going into 2021, um, this is a transition that has not officially started yet, so President-elect Biden has, and, and some of his allies as well as people who are outside of the Biden campaign who are familiar with transitions, they tell me that this transition not happening yet might delay the Covid-19 vaccine from being distributed because the Biden administration, um, will not have had the, the head start of knowing all the plans that were going into

the vaccine. So, we'll have to watch and see. In terms of the, the president, um, President Trump's stance on the vaccine, I mean, he's been saying that he thinks that people should be getting the vaccine. And he, he has said that he thinks that this is going to be one way to really deal with the vaccine, um, with, and deal with the pandemic. Um, his Chief of Staff, Mark Meadows, at one point said, they weren't going to be able to get a control of the vaccine. So, in some ways this is a White House that has shifted, at least in rhetoric, um, from saying we, we, we want to contain the virus to saying well we know our real focus is going to be on therapeutics -- treating the virus and getting a vaccine so that we can protect people from the virus. There are a lot of critics who say that that means that they're abdicating the idea that the, that the virus is going to be running rampant, um, and that a lot, more people are going to get infected. But, President Trump says the best way to deal with the virus is to come up with a vaccine and come up with therapeutics despite the concerns of critics.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and I have a couple of good questions about, ah, Covid. Particularly, I, I think this is a conversation we hadn't really, we haven't seen happening, but we know that there are a lot of Americans who are skeptical of vaccines, ah, generally. Um, do you think we're going to see yet another divide among Americans who will and will not agree to take this vaccine once it becomes available given we saw an increase in, um, measles over the past year. Just, a report came out a few days ago, um, ah, from people who refuse to take vaccines. What are the, the anti-vaxxer vaccine, ah, proponents discussion. What's this going to look like in 2021?

MS. ALCINDOR: Um, I think that we're probably going to see a divide. We're probably going to see a divide, um, between people who want to take the vaccine

and are excited about it and people who feel skeptical about it. Um, polls show that Americans are worried that there was politicization who, that went into the vaccine, that the vaccine might have been rushed for political reasons because President Trump wanted to credit for taking the vaccine. There's also this issue of who is going to get the vaccine and, and who, um, signed up for trials. There's a, a lot of attention being paid to communities of color who are more likely to be, um, to die from as well as be infected with the virus when you're looking at black Americans, Latino Americans, Native Americans. But there's a lot of distrust of health organizations and health, um, the health apparatus in the United States, among especially African Americans because we've seen in the past, um, things like the Tuskegee Experiments where they infected, um, unknowingly people with syphilis in the African American community. There's also just a, a lot of mistrust from government, um, from people not feeling like the government has, has been focused on helping African Americans in particular, um, who suffer from all sorts of different diseases, um, at higher rates than African, than, than white people including hypertension and diabetes and asthma. So, I think there is a, there's going to be a robust conversation around vaccines and there's going to be, um, as, as a country we're going to have to figure out how we go forward. But I know I wrote a, a, a pretty long story for *USA Today* when I was a reporter there on the anti-vaxxer, um, movement and it's strong. There are a lot of people, there are millions of Americans who believe, um, that vaccines are wrong even though of course scientists insist that this vaccine is, that vaccines in general are safe, that vaccines in general don't cause autism and, and, and some of the other things that we've heard. Dr. Fauci has said if the, a vaccine is scientific he will tell the nation. He, um, polls show that a lot of people, a lot of Americans trust Dr. Fauci.

So, I think it's probably going to help a lot of people along if Dr. Fauci comes out and says, look I took the vaccine; you should get the vaccine. That will probably impact a lot of the way that people see. But, then of course there are going to be Americans who are just simply scared and, and skeptical.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and that's an interesting point you bring out that we need leaders to demonstrate, ah, what the best practices are. And I was kind of interested in a tweet that came from a South Dakota emergency room nurse over the weekend that went viral. I don't know if you saw this. Ah, she expressed frustration that many of her patients don't believe that they're dying of Covid-19. She tweeted about patients who said they don't believe the virus is real while they're gasping for breath –

MS. ALCINDOR: Hum –

DR. HOFFMAN: -- and, it wasn't one particular patient, it's a cumulation, culmination of so many people she said in talking to *CNN's Newsday*. And for some of them they're last dying words is this can't be happening, it's not real. Can a President Joe Biden and the American media and whatever institutions that are, are leading the conversation in this country, can they curtail such conspiracy theories? How can we battle that?

MS. ALCINDOR: It's really tough because, um, a lot of people believe things that are just simply not true. And I think, um, President Obama talked, talked about truth decay, this idea that Americans apart from being polarized, that they can't even, um, they can't, they can't agree on the facts, on the truth, on the very foundation of things. Um, and that's a really, really tough place to be. And I don't, I don't know the solution for that because it's, it's, it's just, um, a, a reality that we're dealing with and I'm not quite sure how to, how we go forward.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, ah, I'll follow-up with one more question about Covid. Um, my student Callie (sp?) has a question about how have you dealt with needing to go out to these press conferences while also having to be careful about Covid-19. What precautions have you had to take?

MS. ALCINDOR: So, I'm very, very cautious. Um, I wear gloves, I wear a mask, I wear, um, face shields at times. I have, I have a big bottle of hand sanitizer with me. I also make sure to, to really social distance with people. Um, one thing that I do when I go to the White House – I'm not at the White House at all as much, as often as I used to be. I used to be at the White House, um, pretty much five days a week, sometimes six days a week. Now I'm at the White House, if I go to the White House for a, a PBS shot I'm there for maybe 30 minutes instead of eight hours. Um, but I also, when I go to check in at the White House I go, if, if, if I don't have a live shot I go maybe twice a week instead of five times a week. I just try to be really, really cautious, um, and I try to put myself in situations where I'm not going to be close to other reporters, or I should say close to White House aides. Um, it's tough because obviously I need to get reporting done but I also don't want to put myself in a situation, um, where I'm unsafe because there are people in the administration who of course had the virus including of course the President, the First Lady, the President's Chief of Staff, the White House Press Secretary and several of her, um, press aides. And the list goes on and on.

DR. HOFFMAN: Right. Um, well, I have a couple of questions about the state of journalism today before we hop onto the Q and A. And for those of you who are watching, ah, you can still submit questions via the chat function and my students, ah, will be so kindly, ah, asking those questions for you. Um, so, I

often tell my students -- I teach Political Communication and Media in Politics -- in that journalism often wipes the slate clean every day or maybe now even every hour or minute, ah, these days. So, we kind of start on a refresh over and over and over again. What stories are we not talking about right now as we focus on the day to day of the Trump administration, of the election, of the pandemic.

What stories are we missing out on right now?

MS. ALCINDOR: That's a great question. Um, I mean there are a lot of stories. I think, I mean, I, because I think when we stay focused on the pandemic there's the numbers of the pandemic, but I think there's the evictions that we're not really, that we don't may, maybe aren't covering in the same way. There's the hate crimes with the Asian community seeing a lot of people targeting them, um, because of the, of the Corona virus coming from China. Um, the FBI said that hate crimes, um, against Asian Americans were up. Um, I think that we are, we're not covering who didn't vote. I'm still very fascinated by all the Americans who don't take part in the election and what they think about, um, this country and, and the way forward. I, I think about homelessness, right, and, and, and what it means to live in a pandemic and live through this pandemic without having a, a proper place to sleep without proper shelter. Um, and then I think a lot, at, at, at PBS I should tell you that we have, um, great, we have great, we have a great, um, ability to cover a number of things so if you watch our newscast it will help you well now if, if you haven't already. Um, we're the *NewsHour* so for the first, for, for, with an hour of news, maybe the first 20 to 30 minute, 30 minutes, what you'll see pretty much everywhere else which is top line stories, it's Covid, it's the economy, its, you know, it's, it's national security, its foreign policy. But then we also have science stories, right? We also have social

media stories. We also have art stories. Um, I'm proud to work at a place that still is doing that work while we're in the middle of all of this stuff because I think it's important for people to know that there are other things happening. But of course, at the same time as someone who covers the White House, these are life and death issues. The pandemic, um, there's so many different facets of it that are literally killing hundreds of thousands of Americans and we have to make sure that we're covering that and covering it in a robust way. That means maybe we're covering it in an arts angle, and a local angle, and we're covering it through, through science and through learning at home and through education and through immigration. So, I think there are a robust number of ways that we cover things.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, the way I, I talk to my students about it is that news media tends to cover political events in episodic frames which is episodes or one-time instances rather than thematic frames. And what do you think that journalists can do to – I think homelessness is a great example – what can journalists do to bring attention to long-term issues, complicated issues that don't have an easy package to put together? Um, it's not something that just you can have a simple answer to like what Trump said today. What, what are your suggestions for journalists who want to cover things in a much more thematic way?

MS. ALCINDOR: What's my advice for journalists who want to cover things in a much more thematic way? Um, I think you should find places that allow you to do that. Um, I think that there are, like, we, we do great series on the *NewsHour*. So, we did a series on China. We've done a series on Brazil. We've done a series on, um, the Mueller Report. We've done a series on, um, on, on

marijuana. So, I think that there are – you just have to find the, the newsrooms that allow you to do that work. And sometimes it means that you spend the first five even ten years of your career, um, grinding it out and doing stuff that you, and then telling the stories that maybe you didn't want to tell. Like I remember when I was in, at, at *News Day* in Long Island, my first job, I was doing stories about lost puppies; I was doing stories about missing cats; I was doing stories about, um, whales. I was doing stories about something I didn't really care that much about. I'm not really someone who, who wants to do stories about kind of the, the, about, about like a lost puppy per se. But I was really interested in doing, in, in learning the craft and then I got to do stories about criminal justice, and I got to do stories about crime and about, um, race, and about social justice, and, and, and the economy. So, I think in some ways you have to, I think, um, earn your due, um, and pay your dues. But I think that there, there are newsrooms all over this country who definitely do great work thematically.

DR. HOFFMAN: Do you think that there's a difference between, ah, non-profit and public media? Or I'm sorry, for-profit and public media in terms of how they cover things? Do you think that there are different motivations to cover topics when you are for-profit versus a public media?

MS. ALCINDOR: It's tough to say because I've, I've covered, I, I've worked for for-profit and I've worked for public media and my goal and my, and the goals of my bosses have always been the same which is tell good stories, illuminate vulnerable populations, um, and that's, that was the case at *The New York Times*, at *USA Today*, and at *PBS*.

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay. Um, all right, let's move on. Ah, my student Angelina (sp?) has a question for you about why is representation, ah, particularly among

women and people of color, why is that important in journalism? Why do we need to see, or should we see more people of color and more gender, ah, gender diversity in journalism?

MS. ALCINDOR: I think because it makes the journalism better. Um, when you're trying to cover a, the, the country and trying to cover, um, big stories and life and death stories you need people who represent America so that you can see America in that way. So, as an African American who has lived on the East coast who has immigrant parents, um, I have a, I have a certain life experiences that I bring to the job. Just like if you're a white man who maybe grew up in Kansas or Delaware, um, or a white man who grew up in, in, in Detroit or a white woman who grew up in Miami, or like my husband, he's an African American man who grew up in rural Virginia as well as he's a, he's a, he grew up abroad as a military brat. So, all of those life experiences put together mean something. It means something in that you have gay and straight, gay and straight um, journalists. It means something that you have transgender journalists because all of those life experiences make the journalism better. You can't cover America in a robust way, in a way that's accurate and honest without also having people, um, that represent all of the different parts of America.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I've got a couple of more questions before we hand it over to the audience. Ah, so, let's get those questions in the cue as I wrap up my questions, my last two questions with, ah, Yamiche. So, um, my student, Jane, asks when our government – and she's comparing this I believe to other governments in other types of democracies and authoritarian countries – when our government is outwardly aggressive toward journalists and media outlets, what does that mean for the state of our democracy? Um, should we be

concerned because, I mean, as what I said earlier, the Fourth Estate [indiscernible] has been honored for so many years in our democracy, um, but we're seeing open outwardly aggressive, ah, treatment of the media, um, and we're seeing that in public opinion polls that it's making a difference. People are distrustful, people don't believe in the news, they say its fake news. What does that mean for the state of our democracy or and can that improve in some way?

MS. ALCINDOR: I, that's a good question and I don't think I really have a good answer to it. I think we all have to see what it means for the next few years. Um, that we're a polarized nation and we've been polarized, we're getting more and more polarized, um, and I think it's, it's a big issue and it's something we have to deal with but I'm not quite sure what that actually means to our democracy.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, the final question before we jump to questions from the audience, comes from my student, Sean (sp?), and he mentions that you interned at the *Westside Gazette*, ah, in Miami, a local historically black newspaper. Um, many of these black press organizations have deep historical roots. What do you believe is the future of black news organizations like the *Westside Gazette*?

MS. ALCINDOR: I think it, they need to – I, I love the black press. I love the fact that I got started in a, at a black newspaper because black newspapers often are the first gateway, um, that black journalists have to doing the craft. So, when I got, ah, when I was an intern at the *Westside Gazette* I was 16, 17 years old and had no journalism experience. They taught me journalism. They taught me what it meant to write a lead. They taught me what the AP was. Um, they taught me so many different things. So, for me I think that, that these are cherished organizations that we should all support. But as we know local news, especially

local black papers, um, they don't have those same resources. They are dwindling. Their staffs are smaller. Their papers are smaller. Um, and that really I think is a disservice to our country because there are so many things that black newspapers cover in a way that is so smart, that is so, um, so honest, about the way that, that people are living their lives that we all have to, I think, try to get together to support those papers. So, if I, [indiscernible] my, my, my advice to students as well as other people who are watching this, find out where the black newspapers are in your city, subscribe to them, find out the local newspapers in your city. Subscribe to them. That's how we help the press, um, continue to be robust and how we help journalists able, ah, journalists, um, tell stories in, in a way that, that, that matter. Um, I think of course it's, it, the, all newspapers have the responsibility to cover African Americans, um, in a way that's honest, in a way that's fair. I don't think that just because you have the *Chicago Defender*, *The Chicago Times* takes a pass, but when you look back at history if you were reading the *Chicago Defender* and you were reading *The Chicago Times*, um, they were telling two completely different stories about America. And that come, sometimes can still be the case when you look at black newspapers. So, they're critically important and I hope that they survive and continue to survive.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and I, I hate to put off our questions for a minute longer, but, I just, I really was touched today by your conversation with my students about, ah, acknowledging their own truth and not listening to, um, people who try to pretend that they know their truth when, when you were saying that maybe you couldn't be a TV journalist. Um, so I was hoping, if you don't mind, if you could kind of give us that motivational speech once again for our

college students and those in our audience who are feeling a little lost, a little like they don't know where to go. Um, and giving them a kind of confidence that you exude which was so powerful in our class today.

MS. ALCINDOR: Yeah, so I mean, one of the things that people often say to me is how do you stay grounded, how are you not moved when the President is saying things like you're nasty or you're threatening, and I say you're, you, whether you've, either, you're either going to experience it or you will experience it. People will tell you things about yourself that you know not to be true. People will say that you don't look the part, or you're not pretty enough to be on TV or that you're fat and that means that you can't be on TV, or that you don't look like, like a certain person, or that you're, you're, you're gay so that means that you don't fit in this newsroom. Or that you're from a small town that no one knows. Or maybe you didn't go to an Ivy League school and you're in a newsroom with a bunch of, um, Princeton graduates. And this can be, I think whether you're a doctor or a lawyer or a teacher or a firefighter. People will tell you that you do not have what it, what what it takes to succeed and I tell you, press forward, be too distracted focusing on your mission in life, focusing on the purpose that you were created to do, the, the purpose of, of, of why you are here on this earth to be distracted by any of that. Be too busy chasing your dreams, too busy chasing your purpose, too busy making this world I hope a better place to be thinking about the naysayers. Um, so many times in my career people told me you don't look the, you don't look the part; your hair isn't long enough; you don't look, you don't look like what you think, what, what normal TV journalists look like. And I just ignored them. Um, luckily for me I have a family, I have friends that really have my back who told me, girl just keep on going. But I'm here to tell you if you

haven't had anyone else tell you keep on going, don't listen to anyone else, um, because no one is going to be there for you, um, if, if you listen to all these different naysayers instead of yourself. Listen to your gut and your gut is telling you if, if you haven't heard it loud enough, your gut is telling you that you have everything that, that it takes to succeed. You just have to want it and you have to want to stick through it. It's not going to be easy. I, I applied to 200 jobs before I got my first job. Its not; and my mom wanted me to be, my mom was very supportive, she wanted me to be a journalist. My dad wanted me to be a lawyer. I had to even sometimes not listen to my own father to say, you know what, I'm going to do what I have to do. And guess what? My dad now he's like oh, my daughter's on TV; oh, she's that journalist who's asking the President questions. He, he got onboard, right? He got onboard because I knew what I wanted to be. And I'm telling you that the people who are naysayers, the people who are telling you maybe you don't look the part, they're going to get onboard and they're going to be looking at you thinking, man that's the person that I, that I, that I thought wasn't good enough. And they're not going to be having anything else to say. So, just continue on, press forward no matter what.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, that's very inspiring. Ah, I know my college students really appreciated that perspective today. So, ah, all right, so we're going to get into the Q and A. It's a little different since we are now virtual but folks on our end have been reading through all of your questions you've submitted in the Chat. There's still time to submit them if you want to submit them. For each question chosen one of my students in the National Agenda class, because there's a class that goes along with this, will read that question. So, let's start with Emma who is our first questioner. Ah, what's our first audience question,

Emma?

EMMA: Tracy Holden (sp?) of UD references when President Trump told Miss Alcindor and other women journalists to “be nice” which drew attention to how female journalists were among the few to challenge him directly. Why did this take so long and why did women draw so much fire from the President?

MS. ALCINDOR: I think that, I mean, here’s the thing, I think that there were people who were pressure, pressing the President and who were trying to hold him accountable, um, including men, like Peter Alexander at *NBC*; um, John Roberts at *Fox News* has asked him really tough questions. So I’m not – I, I, I can’t say that my male colleagues in the press corps weren’t pressing the President. What I can say is that, that collectively the President often lashes out at people, men and women, um, and there are sometimes where of course he lashes out at women in particular. There are times where he lashes out at African American women in particular but I will say that I think the, the collective, um, the collective conscious of the White House Press Corps is to try to get this President to tell the truth, is to get real answers from this President, and, you know, there was an adjustment period. We were all I think as, as, as an organization, as a, as a industry, but also I would, I would say as a country we’re trying to get used to the idea of a president who often did not tell the truth. We had not really seen a president like President Trump. So, I think that if we, if, if we’re honest with ourselves we could all give each other some grace by understanding that it took a little time for us all to adjust and think, hey this president is not telling the truth and we should probably point that out over and over again. We should probably just use the word lie because that’s what he was doing. So, I think there were, there was this, this, this moment where we all

had to adjust and get used to the real, the reality that we were living.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Well, let's take our next question. Ah, this comes from my student, Winston.

WINSTON: Christine (sp?) asks, how do you stay so poised at White House press conferences when President Trump and his staff for [indiscernible] you with such vitriol?

MS. ALCINDOR: I mean, I can't answer that question which is I, I really do focus on my purpose and my mission and, and for me I got into journalism because of civil rights journalists. Um, there was a story of this young boy named Emmett Till who was 14 years old who was murdered by a group of racist white men in, in 1955, um, and his mom had an open casket funeral for him and the nation, um, on the cover of *Jet Magazine* saw this maimed young boy and the world shifted. So, you have Rosa Parks who's inspired to go, um, be a civil rights activist. You have John Lewis who's, who's living in his hometown saying, hey Emmett Till just died, that's a, a wakeup call; I need to, I need to be active myself. Um, the, the March on Washington was, was held on the anniversary of Emmett Till's death. So, that young boy, um, was a, was a catalyst to, to things shifting and he was also a catalyst to my own career. So, when I think about that and I think about so many Americans who are suffering especially during a pandemic, that's how I keep my poise. I keep my poise because I'm thinking about you and your families, and I'm thinking about all the people in this country that deserve a press that is focused on them and focused on getting answers for them.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Ah, let's see. Um, we have our next student question is coming from Lauren (sp?).

LAUREN: Ann Elmwinger (sp?) asks, do you feel any responsibility for giving voice to lies from Trump and his administration?

MS. ALCINDOR: No, because I think that you have to report what the President's saying and then you have to put in context. So, at the, at the *NewsHour*, um, and when I'm on *MSNBC* I'm constantly putting the President in context saying this is like, like, especially right now, the President continues to say I won the election, there were, the election was still won for me, we won the legal vote. And every time I say that I say well first of all there's no evidence of voter fraud. Then I say what the President said. Then I remind people actually the President has lost legal battles and he has not shown the evidence, um, for the claims that he's making. But, I don't, I don't presume to think that the media is going to shield people from President Trump and what he says because you can, you can throw on the TV or you can go to Twitter to see what the President says. I think it's my job to put the President into context, um, and to tell people what's going on.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I'm going to interject here with a question from one of our partners at the University of Wyoming, Dr. Kristin Landreville who teaches political communication. Um, and she's talking about, ah, what national media outlets are doing an excellent job covering issues that people in Wyoming and other rural areas care about? Um, so, and she also says, as a professor in Wyoming, how do I convince my students that issues relevant to urban areas – the coasts, the big cities – are relevant to them?

MS. ALCINDOR: Say that question again? I want to make sure I understand it.

DR. HOFFMAN: I think she's asking how does she tell her students in rural

Wyoming that the issues that come up in news programs like *NewsHour* and *CNN* and all the things that we're talking about in terms of major actions are happening in urban areas, how does she help students in rural Wyoming help them to understand that these issues matter to them as well?

MS. ALCINDOR: I think it's by showing them, um, I think it's, I mean I think it's twofold. I think it's by allowing them to take in the, the, the national news media, um, and asking them what, what, what relevance does, do you see in, in your life. Where do you see this being impacted by your life? I also think it's; it's focusing on local news. Maybe when they watch, um, *PBS NewsHour* tonight they don't see anything that impacts their, their life. In fact, what they want to see is look at the local PBS station or they want to look at the local news and that's something that impacts their life. I don't presume that every single story I do, um, is going to impact, is going to be about something that impacts the person's life directly. But I do think a lot of what I report on including the President's handling of the pandemic, including the economy, all of those things are relevant. But I think in some ways it's, it is about making people, giving people the choice to understand. Do you see this impacting your life? Because it has to be dialogue. It can't be that we're forcing the news down people's throats saying yeah this is definitely important to you, you need to care. It has to also be that people watch for themselves and see themselves, um, and reflected in the news, and see their issues reflected in the news. So, I know for at the *NewsHour* we try to make it a point to travel to different countries. So, to travel to – I've been to Wyoming because of, um, Bernie Sanders. Trying to go to different states so that we're not just reporting on the kind of the East coast which is where I'm from. I'm from Miami and, and New York, and D.C. That's where I've lived, that's where I'm

used to. I married a man who's from rural Virginia. That gave me an entirely new world where I understood broadband and, and, and that challenge is there. I understood just running water and all sorts of things that on the East coast frankly are things that are kind of subtle where land use issues are so big in rural Virginia. There's so many data centers are such a big thing. Jobs and access to hospitals, access to healthcare. You know we talk a lot about the African American urban communities like the Southside of Chicago not having healthcare but a lot of rural communities don't have local hospitals and people are dying of the Corona virus because they have to drive two hours for the local hospital. So, I think it's also incumbent on the media to make sure that we are doing the stories that, um, relate to people's lives and not only say, okay, this story about New York it definitely impacts you in Wyoming. I think it has to be a two-way street.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, building off of that, what are some media sources that you trust most and that you would recommend to, ah, these students who are both at the University of Delaware and the students who are at the University of Wyoming, um, that, that they can get information that is useful to them and to their communities even though their communities may differ dramatically from each other?

MS. ALCINDOR: I think go look at your local newspapers. Go find your local newspapers, go find your local ABC station, your NBC station, your PBS station. Go watch the news. Um, and, for me, I, I would say I watch, I read the local papers so I read the *Miami Herald*, I read the *Sun Sentinel*, I read the, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*. I just am a political junky so I read *Politico*, I read, I like Time, I read, um, *Newsweek*, I read *The Atlantic* because I

like magazine stories, I read *The New York Times Magazine*. Um, I would say I also, I'm, I'm very big on international news. My parents being immigrants, my dad still lives in Haiti. So, they listen to the radio a lot. Um, so, and, and listen to the Haitian radio. But I would also say you need to watch BBC, read *The Guardian*, read the *Telegraph*. Read the French newspapers. I think sometimes it's lost on people how, how, how things are viewed, um, in the United States and what is happening in the United States because sometimes it's the Europeans that show us, um, some, some interesting story about the US that maybe no journalist in the US is covering. So, I think, ah, the, the biggest thing I would say to students apart from reading your local news and, and paying attention to local news is also look at international news. Go look at how the, the Brits are covering us and then get a sense of what it's like, um, to look at America from the outside. It's critical to understand what's going on.

DR. HOFFMAN: And I would add Al Jazeera to that list as well, and middle Eastern sources. Um, it's, ah, what I always tell my students it's about diversifying your portfolio, diversifying your media portfolio. It's about following more than one or two sources, um, because that's how misinformation spreads is when we are following one source, we're relying on one piece of information. Um, so, thank you so much. I'm going to toss it to Chelsey (sp?) who's our next audience surrogate. What question do we have from the audience?

CHELSEY: (Sp?) Ward of Annapolis, Maryland asks, should the new president tweet as much as Trump, and should Twitter be banned for use by a president and get back to normal corresponding?

MS. ALCINDOR: It's a great question but as a reporter I literally have no opinion on that. [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I mean, is it, is it appropriate for a president to use that as a way of communicating with the American public rather than through say press briefings etcetera.

MS. ALCINDOR: I mean I can say that I think press briefings are critically important, um, and that we should definitely have them and I think that regular press briefings are a service to the American people.

DR. HOFFMAN: But is Twitter or social media a good thing or a bad thing for the president to use?

MS. ALCINDOR: That is literally not something that I would have an opinion on.

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay, all right. Well, let's move forward. Ah, we have a question from Jane from our audience.

JANE: Steve Lissert (sp?) asks, with the startling number of scandals and outrages coming from the White House, do you think it was a coincidence that it overwhelmed the press's ability to cover all of them or a deliberate strategy?

MS. ALCINDOR: That's a great question and it, and, and we know that it was a deliberate strategy because Steve Bannon laid it out. He said that if you overwhelm the media, if you throw a lot of things at the wall that it will overwhelm the system and that's the way to beat the media; to make it an opposition and to overwhelm the system. So, there was definitely a deliberate strategy on the part of President Trump and his allies to try to gin up so much information and confuse so, confuse us, the media in some ways, um, that they would then be too spread, spread through, spread too tin, oh no, I can't talk it's late –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle.]

MS. ALCINDOR: -- spread too [chuckle] thin, um, to cover it all. So, it was, it, it's a great question because it, it's definitely a strategy, um, that we should watch out for. And it's a strategy that I think some critics and some allies of the President would say worked. There were days where people could not keep up with all the different scandals and news cycles that you would have one scandal at, at 9:00 and another one at 1:00 then one at 3:00. I mean, there are so many things that happened over the course of the Trump administration that I think we're all going to sit back and really try to, try to digest and process, um, what we all lived through.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, a question that we had in the classroom earlier today that, that I thought was kind of fun was are you concerned with a Biden presidency that you will get bored [chuckle] because there's so much, perhaps so much less to cover? Biden is not nearly as ,ah, controversial, I would say, then President Trump.

MS. ALCINDOR: That's very interesting. I, I mean, people that are close to Joe Biden tell me that he, um, that he likes the idea of being boring but he wanted to, he wants to be back to normal and the, and Joe Biden has said himself, I'm going to have a normal presidency, I'm going to have a calm presidency. Barack Obama when he was campaigning for Joe Biden he said something that was really interesting, he said, ah, you're going to get, be able to go back to doing whatever it is that you were doing before you had to pay attention to President Trump; you're going to be able to coast and not think about this about the presidency every day. That's really interesting because, um, they, they essentially were running on being boring, um, so, it will be very interesting to see what's being covered and, and, and what is happening in the administration.

I think there's so much to cover – there's going to be immigration, there's going to be policing, there's going to be Joe Biden's relationship with the progressive left and, and AOC and so many others. I think there's going to be a lot of stories to do, um, and I'm excited to cover them all.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, that's exciting. I'm excited for you. Lets, ah, weave it back around to Emma with another question from our audience.

EMMA: Barbara Crowell (sp?) of Wilmington asks, do we know how much influence the presence of Senator Harris had on the turnout of the black vote?

MS. ALCINDOR: It's really interesting. We don't really know the answer to that question yet, but I will say Joe Biden, um, he was, he became the nominee because African Americans broke so heavily for him. Um, he had more black turnout when, in the primaries, in the Democratic primaries, um, and, and he had more support according to polls than Senator Harris when she was running for president. So, Joe Biden has had a long, um, history with the African American community having been in government for more than four decades. He of course was the vice president to the first black president and I should tell you when I went to South Carolina and other places talking to people about why they were supporting Joe Biden they cited that as one of their number one reasons. African Americans on, as a, a whole, they really trusted Joe Biden because he stood for so long beside Barack Obama, um, for those eight years when he was, when, when they were in office together. So, there is this feeling that he has his own support, um, base with African Americans. But of course, black women, I, so many of them were excited, um, about Senator Harris, excited about the fact that she's the first black woman, first Asian American, first woman in general to be the

vice president-elect. So, there was a lot of excitement about the history that would have, that would be made and will be made when she gets sworn in as, as vice president.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, what, what do you have to say about, before I toss it to the next audience question, um, you know, Joe Biden is an alum of the University of Delaware but he's also prone to many gaffes as we all know. He's sort of the gaffe, um, president-elect. Um, what do you think his, what do you think about his change on issues around African Americans and race has meant? Because he has famously worked with, ah, segregationists like Strom Thurman, um where he's also, ah, volunteered and worked at a, an African American pool when was in I think high school or college. Um, and now he's nominated this first person of color to, a woman of color to be his vice president. What does that say about him do you think as a candidate?

MS. ALCINDOR: Um, I guess, what, what is, what's this his history with, with race and?

DR. HOFFMAN: Right, he has sort of a complicated history with race is I think is what I'm saying. Um, do we know, does that help us understand how he's going to deal with some of the tough issues facing people who care about Black Lives Matter, people who care about, um, race issues as we're going into 2021?

MS. ALCINDOR: Well, Joe Biden has said that he understands that African Americans were the reason why he got the nomination and the reason why he's the president-elect and in his, in his acceptance speech he said you had my back, I'm going to have your back. So, there are going to be a lot of African Americans who are going to be wanting to see exactly what he does for

African American communities especially for African American women who were the most loyal part of the Democratic base. Um, so I think that it, it's going to be a, there's a tall order, um, for Joe Biden to do a number of things to help African Americans. I won't list off all the different things, but, when we, when we look at all the sectors, when we look at education or health care or policing, ah, or education, or media, or, or education and, or universities, rather, um, there are so many different sectors where we see African Americans not getting equal treatment that there's going to be a lot on President-elect Biden's plate when he becomes President Biden. So, I think it's going to be a very interesting thing to watch how that relationship evolves.

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay. Very interesting. I'm going to toss it now to Winston who hopefully has another question from our audience.

WINSTON: Ralph asks, were you surprised by the apparent strength of Trumpism among voters this Fall evidenced by the even tighter US Senate and by Democratic losses in the House despite the defeat of President Trump at the top of the ticket? What message do you draw from the election results for the news media's coverage of the US political divide?

MS. ALCINDOR: I think I wasn't surprised because I was out, even though it's, ah, the Corona virus of course is raging, we were very, very careful when we went out. But I went out to several states, um, and I saw a bunch of, a, a lot of Trump supporters. I spent a lot of my time talking to Trump supporters, understanding what they, what, how they take in their media, understanding the connection of Fox News – Fox News of course being the number one watched cable network in, in, in most, um, hours and in, and in most age brackets. So when you see the juggernaut that is Fox News and you see the relationship, um,

between the President and Fox News, you, I, you, you can understand that there are a lot of their, millions and millions and millions of Americans who believe the President's version of the truth whatever it is that he's saying. Um, so, I, and there was also I think some real fear when it came to the protests when we saw what was going on in, in Portland, Oregon and people saying that they were worried that the protests went too far. So, I wasn't surprised at all especially as an African American I should tell you I know that there are a lot of people who heard President Trump's, um, racist language, who heard the way that he, he spoke about African Americans and immigrants, and thought that that was the right way to do it. Um, and that was the right way to, to, to speak about those issues. So, I, I, for me, I was not surprised by the fact that he got some 71 million votes, um, and, and I, and then, and that Republicans were able to slim the, the Democratic majority in the House. I think that we are a very divided country, we are a very divided nation. And I spent a lot of time talking to people, um, about what they see and the differences in how they see the, the world and the country. And there are stark differences from the way that a Biden supporter sees something, from the way a Trump supporter sees something, but they were both very, very passionate about them.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, we've got more questions coming in from the audience. So, I'm going to toss it to my student Lauren who has another question.

LAUREN: Casey Courig (sp?) asks, how if at could foreign relations be impacted by President Trump's refusal to concede to the election?

MS. ALCINDOR: Ah, I think that's still to be determined. Um, I know a lot of people, critics of the president say that his, him not starting the transition officially puts us in a, in a tough position with, with, um, foreign adversaries because it

could look like America's weak and that could be a time to strike, um, and, and try to do harm to America. But national security officials in the Trump administration have been reiterating that despite this kind of transition chaos we are still, um, strong. We still have all our guards up. Um, but I should note something that I learned in my reporting with the, with the transition. The delay between President, um, Bush getting the nomination officially was about 37 days. Fast forward to the 9/11 Commission and they said the delay that Bush had, um, in getting the transition started, the delay meant that he had less people confirmed in his cabinet than in the present, then predecessors before him and predecessor, and people after him and that "imperiled our response to 9/11." So, these, these are real life and death national security issues at play when you think about what could happen if this transition delay continues to go on.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, that was just reported on I think yesterday's *PBS NewsHour*, um, that the 9/11 Commission Report which I didn't realize had, had, um, demonstrated that there was because of the delay between the Clinton and Bush administrations had had real implications on national security.

MS. ALCINDOR: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, all right. Well, we, we've probably got time for at least one or two more questions. So, I'm going to toss it to my student Chelsey for another question from the audience.

CHELSEY: Joline Burke (sp?) asks, as a student from Connecticut, the Newtown shooting is very close to heart for me. What was it like covering stories in Newtown back in 2012 and questioning young students? What affect did this have on you and your career?

MS. ALCINDOR: Um, it was probably the worst stories I've ever covered,

Newtown. Um, I've covered a lot of different mass shootings, a lot of different, um, stories that deal with death – the Ferguson protests and the Baltimore protests and other just mass shootings in other cities like Chardon, Ohio. Um, but I have to tell you Newtown, Connecticut, it rocked me to my core. I remember crying hysterically in my car sometimes, um, because I was so upset by the fact that these young children, six-year-olds, were murdered in this way. Um, and it's, it's stuck with me. It's made me I think a more empathetic reporter. It's made me a reporter that is more skeptical of Washington because everyone thought, okay, this is going to, something is going to change after this, this mass shooting when in fact nothing has really changed. So, I think that, um, when it comes in terms of gun reform we've had a little, a little bit of change but not much. Um, so I think that in some ways it, it was, it was a story that also taught me how tough, um, gun reform and, and laws and can, can be when you get to Washington that even the deaths of so many young kids, 20 young six and seven-year-olds, first graders, um, if that didn't move the nation and, and, and that to me, um, sticks with me. It sticks with me because I am someone who's always kind of brought my emotion to my reporting. It's, it's part of what, who I am and what I do. If, if I'm sad about something, if I'm, if it makes me cry it probably means it's a good story. Um, and I've had stories that made me cry and then they ended up on the front page of *The New York Times*. So, for me, I've always brought my full self to the, to the, to reporting and I didn't do anything differently in Newtown except that I also had some self-care. I remember Newtown was literally the only story that I can remember saying, you know what, maybe I need to take a break. And I had, I was there for two weeks covering funeral after funeral and it got to just be a lot and I, I think, um, I had to be

honest with myself about how much more I could take because it was just a really, really, really sad story, um, that continues to just make me sad every time I think about it.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yes, I certainly recall when that happened. I can't imagine covering it. Um, let's go to one more question from, ah, our audience. Ah, Jane, do you have a question?

JANE: Ah, University of Delaware communications professor, Carolyn White Bartoo asks, do you have any system for yourself to take a break or step away from the news or notifications, or is there no downtime for a professional national journalist nowadays?

MS. ALCINDOR: It's hard I will say it, to get down time,. I have this watch on right now, this Apple watch. It literally buzzes every time President Trump tweets, um, because I need to stay on top of the news. Um, so, and I'm, I'm constantly working. I know you probably notice me looking down at my phone to make sure democracy hasn't fallen apart while I'm sitting here. Um, but that's, that, that's the job right? The job, especially of a White House correspondent is to be on 24/7. It's not as, it's not a taxing as being President itself, but you're, when you're covering the president anything can happen at any moment. Um, and that's something that you, that you, that you take up being a, a, a political reporter, a White House correspondent. So, like, I consider it a privilege to be able to have that. Um, but I also take, I take days off. I've definitely, like I said, I love going [indiscernible,] I love going on vacation especially Covid makes me sad for so many different reasons but also because I usually take an annual trip abroad, um, and take some time off. I usually take an annual trip with my mom to take some time off. Um, I've really had to get used to staycations and as we

all maybe are working from home you realize, at least I've realized that means you can work constantly. There is no leaving and coming back. You're constantly working. That can be I think a, a really dangerous for your mental health and for your, for your physical health. So, I've really made it a point to, to start walking, to, to exercise where I can, to swim, to do other things, to just try to remain active, um, so that I take times. But definitely if I'm tired, if my body says you need to go to sleep then I take the day off. I, I, I don't push myself when I know I, when, when I know I can't do it. And my husband will tell you that I push myself a lot and I do. I've definitely gone 24 hours without sleep before. I've definitely worked like 28 hours, 29 hours straight but it was crazy, and it was, and it was because something crazy was really happening. Um, but I try my best to take care of myself, to get at least six to seven hours of sleep a night and, and to try to take care of myself.

DR. HOFFMAN: What advice do you have for the college students in our audience tonight who are dealing with being isolated perhaps with their families when they ordinarily would be partying with their friends, um, in this very difficult political time but also this, this pandemic? What advice do you have for them for sort of remaining sane and, ah, I know a lot of them, ah, are tired of paying attention to the news. They want to step outside of it. What are some ways that, that students who are feeling fatigued by the news cycle, um, to, to kind of recharge?

MS. ALCINDOR: I think the best thing to do is to be gentle with yourself. I remember when I was in college I was in 15 clubs; I was taking five classes. I was overextended, frankly. Um, try to enjoy yourself. I know that college can be a lot about networking, and you're worried about getting a job and you're worried



about getting the next internship, but really this is the best four years of your life when it comes down to it. And I know that's tough to see in 2020 because goodness, this has been a terrible year. But it's still a year where you can have connections with your friends. Zoom with your friends. Check in on your friends. Have happy hour if you're over 21. Drink some orange juice if you're not 21. Um, [chuckle,] but have time to, like make time for those relationships. The best advice I got from college, um, when I was in college, was focus on the relationships that you have. Of course, getting good grades are important. Of course, networking with an executive to get a job at whatever place you want to do. All of that is important. But what I tell, I can tell you as someone who is now ten years out of college the best thing I, I got out of college were my friends. They're my girls. They're my, they're my male friends. They're the people who were there when I can call on them, um, when I have a bad day at work or when I don't understand something, or when I need a lawyer, or when I need a, a doctor. These are my friends that I can count on, I mean, I can bounce things off of and that we can grow together. Um, they're the people that you can talk to about your life's dreams and that will be there with you. Um, so as much as you want to, of course, get the work of college done, don't, don't take it for granted that you have these amazing people that are your peers, that are fellow students, um, that you can hold onto. My best friends, some of my best friends in life came from when I was a student at Georgetown. Um, it came from meeting other students at George Washington or at Howard University. And those relationships I cherish so much. I cherish them so much and I think as I think about how I'm getting through this pandemic it's because of my friends, it's because of my family, friends that I've made my family, um, that have gotten me through hard, tough

moments when I want to cry, when I want to scream. Those are the people that have had my back and I think that check in on your friends. Check in on your friends who you think are strong. People are struggling more than you will ever know in 2020. I mean, and, and, um, allow yourself to be vulnerable. You don't always have to be the strong person. I mean, there are probably a lot of Type A personalities on this call who are making plans and you have, you have a goal and organization but let yourself cry sometimes. Let yourself call your friends and say you know what, I'm not feeling that great today. Um, all of those things will, will contribute to you getting the most robust, um, and purposeful and meaningful experience out of college and out of this time that we're in. Um, 2020 of course has again, just been so tough but it's also been a time of reflection. You're, maybe you're spending more time with your family. Maybe you're being able to see, um, you're getting more time to sit back and do yoga or meditate. Take the moments that we have now to just, to enjoy them as much as you can even if of course your; you might have lost a loved one and, and there's nothing, there's nothing, there's no way to minimize, ah, of course the, the struggle that is this year. But I think that there, there are some bright spots which are: try to give yourself some time; try to take that time. Oprah, one of my favorite people, she says the most valuable thing you can give yourself is time, and time to be more present, time to give yourself, um, time to reflect on what you want to do, on who you want to be, on who you want to love, on where you want to live. All of those things are really, really important and I, I, I would just urge you to take this time to, to have relationship and to also get to know yourself.

DR. HOFFMAN: Those are wonderful bits of advice. I fully support those. We also have been doing, um, as part of this program some mindfulness training



with some students, um, to give them some practice in mindfulness. So, I encourage students to look into that. Um, but, ah, before I say goodnight to you, Yamiche, I wanted to say that there is a commentor from our audience, um, Mark, who wants to say, Yamiche is my hero –

MS. ALCINDOR: Oh –

DR. HOFFMAN: -- speaking to power. [Chuckle.] Do you have any response to that?

MS. ALCINDOR: Well thank you so much for saying that. And thank you so much to the University of Delaware for having me tonight. Um, it's a, it's, it's wild times, it was a, it's a complete joy to talk to you; to, to, to meet your students. Um, to the University Wyoming, it was great to be in the breakout room earlier today meeting some students. I feel refreshed. I feel energized, um, talking to students, talking to, to you Lindsay. So, thank you so much for having this conversation, for moderating this conversation. Um, I know it's a lot to coordinate so I really, really appreciate having the opportunity to be here before your tonight.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, absolutely. And I hope that we can bring you back to campus in person [chuckle] sometime soon when that's possible. So, thank you so much, Yamiche. Ah, and thank you all for being here tonight. And those of you who joined this entire series I hope you've gotten some insights from all of our events this semester. You can find previous programs, ah, plus lots of resources at cpc.udel.edu. And I invite you to join us next Fall for our 11th annual program where we'll hear from more diverse voices and experts about all things on the national agenda. Thank you so much for joining us. Good night.

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