



## NATIONAL AGENDA ~ MIDTERM MATTERS

**AMBERIA ALLEN**

**HUMOR MATTERS**

**HOSTED BY**

University of Delaware  
Center for Political Communication  
With support from the Office of the Provost  
Cosponsored by the Center for Black Culture

**PARTICIPANTS**

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Director of National Agenda and Associate Director  
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Amberia Allen

A former writer for Comedy Central's *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*, Amberia is an award-winning stand-up comedian who draws on her experience as Ph.D. candidate and a small-town girl navigating life in Hollywood. She was the 2014 winner of the HBO-sponsored Comedy Wings Competition; appeared on Aspire TV's stand-up special *We Got Next*; is a contributor for the online show *The Young Turks*; starred on the reboot of *Punk'd* for BET; appeared in Chris Case's *Winning Ugly* on Fox, and in other television shows including *Silicon Valley*. She is the co-author of the UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report.

Transcript of Event

Date: October 24, 2018

Place: Mitchell Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, DE



DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you so much for being here for our Eighth Annual National Agenda Speaker Series brought to you by the University of Delaware Center for Political Communication. Ah, we're also happy to have support from the Office of the Provost and the College of Arts and Sciences. And tonight's event is also cosponsored by the Center for Black Culture. I am Dr. Lindsay Hoffman; I'm the Director of the Speaker Series and Associate Director of the Center for Political Communication. This year's theme is Midterm Matters. The midterm elections are just under two weeks away, folks. And we've been talking about all things related to these elections, as well as issues that matter to the nation right now. We are a nonpartisan organization and we've been proud to have, host speakers across the spectrum. You may recall my discussion with Joe Biden and John Kasich last fall. A conversation with former governor of Maryland, Bob Ehrlich, one of the earliest supporters of now President Trump. And our first speaker this year, the very outspoken feminist columnist, Lauren Duca. This year has also featured cybersecurity expert and UD alum, Dave DeWalt, who spoke about social media and online hygiene; and a teen journalist named Gabe Fleisher who writes a newsletter everyday from his headquarters in his bedroom before he goes to high school and has more than 50,000 subscribers every day. You can find all of those podcasts, transcripts, and videos on our site at [cpc.udel.edu](http://cpc.udel.edu). I'd like to remind our audience that even though it seems like this country is more divided than ever, it is possible to engage in civil dialogue even when we disagree with each other. Our goal here is to model such dialogue speaking with folks from a variety of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. So, let's remember to be candid but also courteous of each other. Our final program of the year is November 14<sup>th</sup> and

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features two Pulitzer Prize winning journalists from the Washington Post. And we'll have a post-election discussion about what happened in the midterms of 2018. If you appreciate these events, I know I say this every time, please sign up for the Center for Political Communication email list in the lobby before you leave and consider supporting the CPC, so we can continue to bring you such great and interesting programming. Just go to [cpu.udel.edu/support](http://cpu.udel.edu/support). As usual, we'll have an open Q and A at the end of this talk using a Catchbox. This is a microphone that two of my students will facilitate tossing around the auditorium, so you can ask your questions. And you can also tweet questions and comments to #udelagenda to join the discussion. I absolutely love this space in Mitchell Hall and I hope you will join me in entering it curious, openminded, compassionate, and you never know what insights or discoveries you might come away with. I know I have come away with a lot over the past four years of hosting this program. Without further ado, tonight we have Amberia Allen, a standup comedian and an actress. She was the 2014 HBO-sponsored Comedy Wings Competition winner and appeared on Aspire TV's stand-up special *We Got Next*. Amberia has also served as a writer for Comedy Central's *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah* -- you might have heard of that show -- contributing sketches and stories particularly about race and gender. She's also one of the stars of the reboot of *Punk'd* for BET and in Chris Case's *Winning Ugly* on Fox. She's appeared on several television shows including HBO's *Silicon Valley*. Her interests are also political, and she has served as a contributor for current event, current events program, *The Young Turks*. She made her network television debut earlier this year performing standup on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*. In addition to all of this, if you can imagine, she's also a Ph.D. candidate

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for sociology at UCLA with a specialization in race, gender, inequality, and media. In that role she coauthored the UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report which tabulates the roles that women and minorities play in television, in the television and film industries. So please join me in giving a big Blue Hen welcome to comedian and Ph.D. candidate, Amberia Allen.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

MS. ALLEN: Thanks so much.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, I have so many questions for you --

MS. ALLEN: [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- but I know you have some opening remarks you've prepared.

MS. ALLEN: Sure.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, let's start with that. Let's start --

MS. ALLEN: Sure.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- the conversation.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah. Um, when I first started to think through the theme of humor matters, um, I started thinking about the ways in which humor has been significant for me, particularly my trajectory in comedy. Um, so I started [chuckle], I was three years into my Ph.D. program where I, I decided that I wanted to also pursue a career in standup.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: And also, six months into, ah, a new marriage, so I was really just testing the vows quite early.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

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MS. ALLEN: Um, [laughter] and taking a vow of poverty also as --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- both a graduate student and a comedian.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: [Laughter.] Um, so I was working really hard to not have an income at the time.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Um, [chuckle], and um, it was, it was really early on in my standup career that I started to confront some of the structural barriers that often restrict women's access and mobility within standup comedy. And those are things that I expected; things like sexist booking practices; um, the rampant sexual harassment; um, that has become a focus of media attention as of late; and then certain, like, commitment mechanisms around motherhood. But what I found interesting, um, was some of the other subtle and sometimes overt interactional challenges, um, that women had to confront as they navigated, um, standup. Um, and that then became the basis for my dissertation study which is a three-part case study on women's experiences in, in different aspects of the comedy industry. So, as standup comedians, in writer's rooms, and also as comedic actresses, and it really kind of explores the ways in which women have to use different embodiment strategies, um, to navigate the challenges that they confront and the ways in which these strategies are shaped by, um, race, by sexuality, by gender presentation, um, often by age, or tenure. Um, and, I, I started to think about the ways in which this study and some of themes that came out of it were not just about standup. It really became a commentary on how gender operates in the workplace more broadly, and because it takes so long to

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write a dissertation, [laughter] it spanned what feels like generations.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Um --

DR. HOFFMAN: I feel that.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah, I know. [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: But it, it, the timing of writing the dissertation happened alongside, um, the explosion of the #MeToo movement, um, which, ah, has really galvanized women not only in the entertainment industry but also across professions. Um, so, it, it's really kind of pushed, ah, women into this current momentum. Here we are two weeks before the midterms, ah, where women's, women have become agents of change, ah, where we have a record number of women running for office, where women across demographics are now, um, a voting basis that everyone's talking about. Who's going to decide the election? Um, so, when I think about how humor matters, um, in terms of this discussion, it's really been me looking at the comedy industry and Hollywood more broadly to help us understand how some of those issues that we face in the industry, um, help us interrogate these larger questions around power, dynamics, and representation. So, I know we have some pointed questions and we're kind of going to run the gamut of, of topics --

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- so, I'm excited to dive in.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, if I can just ask you to clarify. What do you mean embodiment?

MS. ALLEN: Embodiment is, is a really unnecessary word, ah, that

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academics use [chuckle] to describe things that you do with your body. It's your comportment, right? Like how you carry yourself. It's personality strategies. It's dialect. It's, um, sartorial choices. It's what you choose to wear. Um, it's how you embody certain personality traits. Um, ah, and also do emotional labor, so how you perform things like graciousness or niceness or how you, um, in the face of someone being rude to you, um, you embody, ah, a presence of mind to not attack them, right, and to perform certain gendered strategies of like, um, being supportive, right? So, it's, it's --

DR. HOFFMAN: Or apologizing.

MS. ALLEN: Or apologizing.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Indiscernible.]

MS. ALLEN: Or downplaying, um, a moment to, to often deescalate problematic, um, moments or to often really, ah, move around issues of sexual harassment. So, it's a whole host of things that women do at the interactional level, not only with the things that they say but with the things that they do with their bodies to, um, often get out of challenging situations.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, the professor in me wants to ask --

MS. ALLEN: [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- all about that --

MS. ALLEN: Yeah, let's, we should, and I would like to talk --

DR. HOFFMAN: -- but I, I know --

MS. ALLEN: -- about it, yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- that we're interested in other things.

MS. ALLEN: [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: So, so you've written for The Daily Show.

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MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: One of the longest running late night political humor programs. What is it like in the writer's room, particularly when the news, as it has today for example, coming at such a fast pace, how do you make sure that you are recording and taping what's going to be the most important thing that evening?

MS. ALLEN: It's tough, um, because the news moves at a mile a minute. There's always something breaking. We were joking earlier about how you stepped away from the news for 30 minutes and like two more people received bombs. Like, it was, it's really like constantly there's always an influx of breaking news. Um, you have to roll with the chaos and that's what we've learned to do. Um, we start the day with an agenda that often changes. Um, it, it, it changes quite frequently. Um, so, what that means for a writer is you come in loose. You come in armed with jokes. There's so many jokes that we do that just get thrown away. Like, just hundreds and hundreds of jokes during the day. Um, and, it, it also means that you don't get attached too much to certain stories or to your own agenda. Um, you, you want to make sure that the narrative of the show is your focus. And, often it means, you know, sometimes news breaks, um, after we've already written the show, we've rehearsed the show.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

MS. ALLEN: And then we have to make the decision do we include this? The good news is there's a show tomorrow. That's the great news about doing a daily show is that whatever we don't cover today we can cover tomorrow. Um, and the world isn't going to stop if Trevor doesn't tell a joke about what's going on in the news. You kind of take the pressure off yourself and do what you can

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in the day and just realize that, you know, you, you can't do it all and you roll with the chaos. [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I just so happen to have a clip from The Daily Show.

MS. ALLEN: Do you now?

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.] I come prepared. Um, that you contributed to. We talked about this, an event that happened right near here in Philadelphia just earlier this year. A lot of the folks in the audience probably remember when two black men were arrested at a Philadelphia Starbucks -- do you guys remember this -- um, back in April, as they were waiting to meet a business partner. It sparked a national outrage. I think Starbucks actually closed all of their national locations for a day to do racial sensitivity training. I'm not sure what's happened with that since then. But, um, I thought this was a really great example of how shows like The Daily Show, and I've already admitted I'm a huge comedy nerd, um, can shine light on a problem, can help alert us to a social issue while also making us laugh. So, I'm going to play a little bit of, of this clip for you.

VIDEO:

TREVOR NOAH: How crazy is this? Two men arrested for waiting to meet someone at Starbucks. You see, this, this here, this is why black people should always show up late.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

TREVOR NOAH: Yeah, if you're early it's loitering. For our safety black people, we show up late everywhere we go.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

TREVOR NOAH: In fact, maybe, this got me thinking, maybe it's not true that  
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black people are never on time, it's just that we only know about the one's who show up late because all the early one's got taken away.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

TREVOR NOAH: Maybe that's what it is.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

TREVOR NOAH: And I know, I know, I know there are some people say, well why were these guys in Starbucks doing nothing. Huh? Why? Well, because that's what Starbucks is for.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

TREVOR NOAH: Everyone is doing nothing.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.] [Applause.]

TREVOR NOAH: Everyone.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

TREVOR NOAH: Starbucks, Starbucks is basically a bus station with espresso machines. That's all it is.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

TREVOR NOAH: In fact, the only mistake these black guys made was not using the tactics of the white man. That's all they did. Yeah. When the manager accused them of doing nothing, nothing they should have replied, uh, actually I'm writing a screenplay. That's what I'm doing.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

TREVOR NOAH: But look, if I, if I can get serious for just a minute here. I will say this, do you, do you have any idea what it does to a person's dignity to be arrested by, by the cops?

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

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TREVOR NOAH: Huh?

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

TREVOR NOAH: Think about this. Think about this. Someone calls the cops on you and instead of driving up with sirens wailing --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

TREVOR NOAH: -- all bad ass, they're like ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

TREVOR NOAH: And how do they even get you back to the station, huh?

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

TREVOR NOAH: Do they throw you on the back of a bicycle built for two?

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.] [Applause.]

TREVOR NOAH: And now, now you're in custody but you have to help them pedal.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

TREVOR NOAH: Is this [indiscernible], man this some bull\*\*\*, man. This is some bull\*\*\*.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.] [Applause.]

TREVOR NOAH: We look adorable though. We look adorable.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DR. HOFFMAN: So, I, I thought that clip was just particularly funny because it was for us in the region, it was just another example of, of, you know, black people being called out in just doing daily activities. So, I'm curious, how do you find the funny in the darker depressing stories that kind of confront us what seems like every day?

MS. ALLEN: I mean, I think this one was particularly fun to do because

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this is an instance in which the cops are called, and it doesn't result in a tragedy. Right? So, that already is a win. Um, and I think what, what we tried to do was find all of the -- like it's already an absurd thing, right, to be, to, to have the cops called on you in a Starbucks for just being there. Um, but then we started to find all of the other ridiculous aspects of the story. Right? Like, getting arrested by a bike cop. Like, you didn't even have the dignity to arrest me in a regular police car. Right? Like you go through and you try to unpack all of the ways in which this is absurd. It's, it, because it happens so often, um, and, and we've heard these stories so often the, the trick is to find the things that are going to give the story nuance because black people are always showing up on the news. And it's not always in a negative way. Even when they're innocent, it's still replicates the idea that like black people have all of these, like, negative interactions with police. That doesn't really do anything in terms of audience reception that changes the narrative that black people are innocent because people are still seeing black people having negative interactions with the police even when they're innocent. So, what we try to do is just highlight how ridiculous it is and really try to find a new, not necessarily a new demon in the story but really to, to highlight that it's really society, like, it's really a scope onto society and like how we understand these issues and the implicit biases that we have that maybe we don't even understand that we have.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

MS. ALLEN: Um, so that's what we try to do. What's interesting is that this was just the first in a series of 911 calls on black people. So, this was really like, we were really like flexing, like, we got all of the jokes out and then it was like, oh, this is going to happen 17 more times and we have to write these jokes

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17 different ways. Um, so there was really a wave where we really pulled out all of the jokes, ah, [chuckle], that we had on this topic and white people kept calling. It was like they saw the show and were like we want you guys to come up with new jokes.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: We need more jokes. And they kept calling. So.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, its interesting that you bring that up because I do have another clip.

MS. ALLEN: [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: I'm looking at, at Steve back here. Um, having a phone with us at pretty much all times means that people can record these incidents --

MS. ALLEN: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- like at Starbucks. Um, we've heard this year about Cornerstone Caroline.

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: A woman who claimed of being touched inappropriately by a nine-year-old boy which wasn't actually true. Permit Patty who called 9-11 (sic) on a girl selling water. Barbeque Becky who called the cops on folks having a barbeque. By the way, I love alliteration so --

MS. ALLEN: [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- I'm such a big fan of this, like, narrative. But, has technology made us more aware of racism this, racism in this country and is it helping to reduce such accusations or are we just now shining a light on something that's been happening forever? And then I'll show the clip after your

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answer.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah, I think, I mean, the history of black people in this country and policing is, is long. Um, I think the first instance of that was Rodney King. We saw, I mean, in the 90's we, we saw it happen and we saw, um, one of the first instances where the public saw a set of cops, right, not be held accountable. And then that's continued in a new era with, um, these 911 calls for, um, not even criminal behavior, right, in, in these particular instances. Um, my view is that the, the repetition of black people and black people's bodies in interaction with the cops, as I had said before, um, for some it, it does help, um, change the narrative. Right? It does help expose, um, the, the challenges that, that black people experience just navigating their everyday lives. Um, and the fear that black people have, um, that sometimes, ah, people think is like hysteria or that we're paranoid and it's like these instances show, like, nah, they were just sitting in Starbucks. Like, you can get the cops called on you for very innocuous things. So, I think in, in a certain way it does help expose, um, things that, that folks try to reject about the black experience, more broadly. Um, but I don't know if the replication of those images, of seeing black people, um, having these interactions with police, um, if it actually helps the situation or if folks, um, see it and they're just, they're continuing to replicate the image of like, oh black people and cops, black people and cops, black people and cops. Like, there must be a reason that you keep having these interactions with cops. I don't know if everyone is putting, is doing the analytical work that it takes to go, oh, this is wrong. I think some are, but I think there is something to the replication of this same image over and over.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah. Yeah, I think it's an interesting phenomenon and I, I  
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do think that we should point out that Cornerstone Caroline --

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- did actually end up apologizing and after watching the closed-circuit camera footage --

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- it said that it wasn't; this isn't what happened, and I think that, um, it's just an interesting -- I don't know if you guys have all seen Black Mirror? I don't know if you've watched this series. Um, it's kind of scary. I feel like we're entering a place where everything we do is recorded, it's, you know, and so, I don't, I guess my question is like is that a good or a bad thing?

MS. ALLEN: I think it's helpful when you're a black person and you're accused of [chuckle] something and its like hah, there's evidence.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Um, be, and I think with the, with the instance of Cornerstone Caroline, I think all of these names are, there's going to be too many names, um, it's --

DR. HOFFMAN: I'm just hoping there's not like a Lindsay coming up any time soon.

MS. ALLEN: There might be. Lindsay --

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah.

MS. ALLEN: -- is pretty popular --

DR. HOFFMAN: [Indiscernible.]

MS. ALLEN: -- among white women so --

DR. HOFFMAN: I know.

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AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- you might, you're, it's going to be a bad day on Twitter for you. You're --

DR. HOFFMAN: I know.

MS. ALLEN: -- going to be like not, not Lindsay who --

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- who called the cops. It's, it's tough because although that situation was like oh she did end up apologizing, so many resources had to be deployed, right? The cops were called, the community had to rally around this, you know, this poor boy who's been traumatized by this experience only for her to watch a tape and go, oh, it, it didn't happen, I apologize. If that's what it's going to take to reverse like racism, that's, it's going to take a long time. If every person, if every white person needs their own video tape of them not being harassed by a black person, that's going to be a lot of tape. It's going to take, its going to take a lot of time if individually that has to happen. So, it, it's, it's a good moment but it's also like this is, I can see why policing goes, goes wrong. If this, if all of, if black people never get the benefit of the doubt, I think that is what I took away from the situation is that this is a nine-year-old, right? Like, how can we not, like, why, why did it rise to the level of criminality in this case? And I think that is what, that's what black people see when they, when they watch the clip even though it did end in an apology and a nickname and it went viral.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah. Yeah. Well, and it almost has become a joke in and of itself --

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- like, with this, these alliterative names. Well, I, I think that,  
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um, there's a recent piece that came out, I think it was yesterday or the day before -- and I'm looking at Steve to; thank you. I'll just introduce it. Ah, Niecy Nash is a, an African American comedian. She was on Reno 911, which is a very funny show --

MS. ALLEN:           Amazing.

DR. HOFFMAN:       -- a while back. And, she put together, and I'm a child of the 80's so like this looks like an infomercial from the 80's. If I play a little bit of a clip for you just because it's, it's a, it's how are we talking about these kinds of issues.

MS. ALLEN:           Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN:       And she provides a real alternative, and this is actually a real phone number that you can call. So --

VIDEO                You know what, no charcoal grill, no charcoal grills are allowed. You're scared. Just leave me alone. You're white. African American. Illegally selling water without a permit? But with cellphone cameras and social media calling 911 on your black or brown neighbors just isn't what it used to be. Hi, I'm Niecy Nash, actress, inventor, and advocate for not calling 911 on black people for no God \*\*\* reason. I'd like to introduce you to a radical new product that will save you all the headaches of being found and outed as a racist douche. It's called 1-844-WYTFEAR and it's revolutionizing the way racist white people cope with black people living life near them. 1-844-WYTFEAR, there's a black guy outside my neighbor's house and he's walking around. Our experienced staff have been living while black in America their entire lives. Darren here is a former Obama aide who had the cops called on him for moving into his new apartment. Yes, that is actually my neighbor Michael. Yeah, no problem. Our \*\*\* Expletive Deleted



records are actually showing that's actually his boat. Yeah, I know popular boats too now. Studies show that people of color are more likely to be arrested, convicted and serve longer sentences than white people for similar crimes. So, calling 911 for non-emergency situations is really just a \*\*\* move. I got so scared when I saw a black guy walking around outside and so I called 1-844-WYTFEAR and it turns out we're neighbors and I'm a racist. Now black people have been helping white people be better since always. So, she's looking around and standing there? A regular frisbee or an ultimate frisbee? Call it when black people are having a barbeque, taking a nap in a rec room, mowing the lawn, waiting for a friend at a coffee shop, golfing, shopping, enjoying a vacation at their AIRBNB, going to work, coming home from work, working while at work, campaigning for office, swimming with socks on, delivering newspapers, buying a house, selling water, parking their car, using a coupon, and so much more. 1-844-WYTFEAR. It's a real number for real white people who should mind their own damn business. What's going on here? If you've been a victim of 911 harassment, please email us at [844wytfear@NYtimes.com](mailto:844wytfear@NYtimes.com).

DR. HOFFMAN: So, it's actually a real thing. I checked it out.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: But, it's, ah, it's a, a, kind of a humorous example of taking on these issues that are traumatic for a lot of Americans who are simply living their lives. Um, I do have a question from Twitter, if we want to pull that up. Um, what advise do you have for female identified high school and college students hoping to someday work as professional writers or content editors based on your research and personal comedy room experiences? So, women in high school and college; we had had this conversation earlier with --

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MS. ALLEN: We did.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- some students.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

MS. ALLEN: Women who want to kind of breakthrough. Ah, your research from the UCLA Diversity, ah, um, Hollywood Diversity Report shows that there is a real lack of women and people of color in the writer's rooms so what advice do you have for -- other than doing something like Niecy Nash, ah, kind of reaching out and doing something unusual like that -- what advice do you have for some young women?

MS. ALLEN: Ah, yeah, so we did, we did talk about this earlier. My advice is, is twofold. The first is to seek out mentorship. Is to find folks who you know who are doing the job that you want, um, and seek them out. You, it, Hollywood is very much a network of friendships and relationships. Um, I was saying earlier that I wish I could tell you that if you just work hard it's a meritocracy and you'll get the job. It's not like that. Um, they hire the people that they know, the people that they're comfortable working with. Um, so you've got to seek that out, um, and have those folks pour into you and vouch for you. That is often how you're going to gain entry into whatever field that you're interested in. Um, that's what happened for me. I had a, a, a male comedian vouch for my talent, um, even though my talent I thought was obvious it wasn't until he was like oh yeah, she funny that they were like, oh, yeah, she is funny.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: And it was like, really, is that, is that how it works? Um --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: So that's the first step is to seek out mentorship. Be, be very

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strategic about that. If you, if you can't access the folks who have the job or the title that you want, access the folks that are in their circle. You, you, it's really a process of strategic navigation. And then the other side of that is be prepared, um, when you get tapped for an opportunity. So that means creating content that you find personally meaningful, um, content that you think is exciting, that is different, um, so that you're ready when you get the call.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I have so many questions still. I, I, I have, I, I think --

MS. ALLEN: Let's go.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- I've let you guys know that, um, this is also a class.

Amberia met with 26 Political Science and Communication students earlier today and I asked them to submit five questions to me each before the event. And so, I've so many good ones. But I'll start with this one which I think is a, a little ah, a little bit different. Natalie talked about how the New York Times podcast, The Daily -- I don't know if you listen to this --

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- with Michael Barbaro. They just did an episode where they interviewed the owner of the Comedy Cellar on his decisions to allow Louis C.K. back on stage. Ah, Louis C.K. is, as many of you know, was accused of, ah, sexual assault and harassment, um, and the interview brought up an interesting question. Is there ever a good time for a comeback for comedians like Louis C.K. and if so what would that look like?

MS. ALLEN: Oh, man. It's, it's really tough, um, because the issue of sexual harassment is so rampant within comedy, within standup, um, that, that the structural barriers are already so restrictive for women just gaining entry into the field. And then on top of that, it's all of these interactional challenges and

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gender-based harassment that you experience. Um, I think what's, whets, what, problematic is, um, that the, the Comedy Cellar is, is a renowned, um, comedy club, right? So, um, its, its difficult to see someone who we know, um, has perpetrated, um, these issues of harassment to come back and to be allowed back on this, this really, really huge stage, um, particularly after the acknowledgment and the apology a lot of women felt like they were left wanting. Um, so I don't know, and I think that's a question that we are still confronting in terms of how do you atone for, um, issues of, of gender-based harassment. How do you, how do you prove, um, that you've changed? Um, from what I'm aware of is that he came back out and was doing more rape jokes. Um, so, for me that becomes the marker of whether or not you are apologetic. Whether or not you've, you've changed, um, and I know that that's a difficult, um, issue to kind of arbitrate in comedy because it's like, oh, its jokes. And that's also why, um, comedy is rife with sexual harassment because often, um, things that cross the line are passed off as humor. Right? And women have to in order to show that they are, um, you know, that they can participate, um, in that culture, they have to take it. And it's like, that's not a joke. That was crazy. You said something crazy and that's harassment. Um, which makes it a, a murky --

DR. HOFFMAN: Yes.

MS. ALLEN: -- territory. Um, so, I judge it based on your content and based on your actions, and if you're coming back out on the world stage where, where you know folks are going to see you, um, and your jokes are still inappropriate, um, and they don't show any kind of empathy or regret for what you've done then I think it's problematic and I think that, um, the gatekeepers in comedy bare the responsibility of restricting access in that way. In the way that

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they so easily restrict access for women for not being funny, I think, or for the perceptions that they're not funny, you can restrict access to folks who have perpetrated sexual harassment. That's my opinion and I think that's, that's one of the tangible ways that we can see if folks have changed after they've done something that's extremely problematic.

DR. HOFFMAN: But then this idea of like where have you crossed the line, when have you crossed the line --

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- is really interesting and as many of my students know and our audience know, knows is the accusation of fake news has become a really prevalent part of our political discourse particularly as we enter the midterm elections. So how do you explain to people, ah, and to viewers -- this is from Abby (phonetic spelling) --

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- from my student Abby -- the difference between satire and fake news. How you break apart complicated issues, um, and, you know, how do, how do you basically tell people, yes, satire may be fake but it's not fake news necessarily. The bad, the lines are so blurry. How do we help our, particularly the youngest generations --

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- understand what they're viewing.

MS. ALLEN: I think we have a responsibility to teach everyone. It's unfortunately its not just young viewers, it's, it's all viewers, um, that all media is biased, right? That, that, that neutral sources are rare to come by in this particular environment. Um, so if you walk into all the media that you consume

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with that lens, that its all biased, um, then I think it better equips you to understand what you're consuming. And that's regular traditional news media because they also have a vested interest in entertainment and, um, and, ah, I think it in terms of, of, of what we do as, as satirical news show, we also have a bias. We also, you know, our vested interest is in making jokes. We don't cover any news where we can't get a joke out of it. Right? So, that's already filtered the kind of content that you're going to receive from us, right? So, you're already not getting a larger picture of news. Um --

DR. HOFFMAN: Is there any particular event that you didn't cover just because it couldn't be made into be, being funny?

MS. ALLEN: Sure. So, um, the, the scandals around the U.S. Gymnastics Team and sexual misconduct there. Um, the issues with the volcanoes in Hawaii where people are, there's a loss of life. Um, those are huge stories, um, that we just don't want to make light of, um, and there's also not, um, a set of social issues that we can provide commentary on in a way that, that's going to illicit humor and make people feel good after they watch the show. Um, I think some issues you just have to sit with and, um, and we, we try to be very careful about the topics that we make fun of, the way that we, um, construct jokes, um, and who we're punching at when we make jokes.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, if we do have folks in the audience who watch The Daily Show or watch John Oliver or watch -- there's lots of different satirical programs people can watch now -- how do you suggest they balance out that diet so they're getting, ah, the best sources of information?

MS. ALLEN: You've got to read. And I know it's so annoying.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

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MS. ALLEN: And it takes so much time and you have to read past like the headline because the headlines are so deceptive. And you think; even past the first paragraph where you think, you're like, oh, it's like, you know, we all have done, we've done college. We skim. Right?

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: You read through and you're like, oh, I got it. Spark notes. Um, unfortunately you have to read to the very end of articles. Um, it seems like media has a, an, an interest in being salacious in, in click bait. Um, so you've got to read, and you've got to read a wide array of things. You've got to read from the sources that you hate. Sometimes I read stuff that comes from Fox, just so I know who's informing you, who's informing the folks that think differently than me. And, and, and how did they get their data? Is there data, right, like, or is this all just someone's opinion? How did they, how did they collect the data? It's, it's so much work that we, we have been, um, conditioned to not have to do, um, that we have to do. So, that's how I would balance it out. I go to satirical late-night programs to hear, um, from voices that I want to hear, um, from, right? And that's really why we go. We want to hear what John Oliver has to say about, um, ah, you know, gerrymandering, right? Um, we want to go, we want to hear from Sam Bee about sexual harassment. Um, so you go, and you get fed that but then you've got to balance that out with, um, what is the literature saying. What are journalists saying. And what are a wide array of sources saying. And then I think you can, it's like the, the food pyramid, which I think actually is trash now so maybe that's not the best --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

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MS. ALLEN: It's like, [chuckle] you're supposed to eat like a bunch of carbs and I'm like --

DR. HOFFMAN: I think it's, I think it's like a, a circle now.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah, even that's changing.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: So, you know, but that would be my suggestion, is to critique everything and to balance it out with a wide array of sources and then fact check those sources. It's a lot of work but I, I think you want to know what you're consuming and why you believe what you believe.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, I, I agree with you and I think that it's about taking some personal responsibility for what you're consuming.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: And the way I put is diversify your media portfolio --

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- and, um, you know --

MS. ALLEN: That's [indiscernible].

DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you.

MS. ALLEN: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, Twitter and other social media platforms are a great way to do this. Follow people that, ah, that you don't, might not necessarily agree with and you'll see the kinds of different conversations that are happening -

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MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- in a parallel way and it's fascinating to observe. And, I, you know, my students have often asked me, like, how do stay sane and you

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consume, like, all of this news. I'm like, well, it's, you know, yeah, there might be times where I'd need to turn it off and I'll plug my -- I did a TED X talk not long ago where I said sometimes you just need to turn it off --

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- and take a break but then come back to it and composed and be prepared to, to observe a, a variety of perspectives.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: I'm sorry, now I'm interviewing myself.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: No, no.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um --

MS. ALLEN: I like it.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, so I want to talk a little bit about what your Ph.D. and Diversity in Hollywood.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, my students were really just blown away by the fact that you are doing this standup comedy, you're writing for The Daily Show, you're doing all this stuff. Um, so Kim (phonetic spelling) asked, ah, going through this, have you found that people maybe don't take you seriously as a doctoral student because you're a comedian or if they don't take you seriously as a comedian because you're a doctoral student?

MS. ALLEN: Yeah. So, what; both have happened. Um, when I first started doing standup a lot of standup is, is, because there's such an

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oversaturation of standup comedians -- everybody wants to be a standup -- um, that annoys people who are very serious about standup. They're like, ah, like, it's going to weed you out; this is about time. I'm trying to think of like an analogous career that's sports related but I'm not interested in sports, so I can't. Um, it, so, also being a woman you're already not taken seriously and then you come from this other profession where it's like comics who have like a day job, they're like, oh, you're not really serious; you still, you still work at that accounting firm; or you're still, you still work at the bank. This is like an all-in kind of thing. Um, so it really worked against my credibility that I was also a graduate student. They thought, like, oh, this isn't serious; you're just kind of testing this out. Um, and then I was good at it and [chuckle], and you have to force people to believe that you're serious. Um, in the opposite direction, in graduate school, you know, ah, it, it helped with the graduate students who -- because you know we have no lives -- and they were like, oh my God what is like on the outside talking to people and --

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- doing fun things? And you're out and oh --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- wow. This is great. I'm like, oh my God, don't touch me.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: But it [laughter], it, it became an interesting thing, but it also worked against my credibility as a serious research -- it's like, what are you

doing? Like, we are, we're funding you to go to school and, and your advisors,

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you know, these, these, the people who pour into you have, have a vested interest in your finishing on time and you publishing work, um, that, you know, also shores up their reputation, right? Um, but, somewhere in the middle after the strange transition period both started to serve me well. Um, in standup because of my, um, work as a sociologist I was always observing things and I could see things, ah, different intersections around race, and around gender that informed my comedy. That made it different than, um, other folks who were telling jokes, um, because we're all kind of mining from the same thing, um, and you've got to have some nuance to stand out in, in comedy. And then in terms of my dissertation, um, it really, really bolstered my credibility in terms of my dissertation because I was able to gain very, very unique access to these worlds that like other academic, you know, most professors aren't like, yeah, I did standup for two years and then I wrote this book about it.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Often they go, and they observe a field, um, but they're never a part of it. So, I had already spent two years as a standup and was like, hey, no one else has access to these spaces but me. No one else has been in a writer's room but me. And no one else has been behind the camera but me. Um, and this is running alongside me also doing this, this quantitative work with the Hollywood Diversity Report where we're finding, hey, there's no women and there's no people of color in these rooms and it's like, I'm here. Maybe I can write this dissertation. And then all of a sudden folks didn't want to kick me out of school anymore.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Um, and comics were like, oh, she's kind of funny and like,  
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this, this is like a reputable thing. So, yeah, in the beginning people always second guess and question your talent and, you know, what' your abilities are, and you just have to have the endurance to, to stick it out and, and, and prove them wrong. So, I'm still in the process of proving [laughter] to my advisors that I'm going to write this dissertation or finish this dissertation and also to my poor husband who's still holding out hope that I will be sitting in your chair. I'm still on the stage. --

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- babe, but it's just a different chair.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: So, um, he's a lawyer so he really thought we were going to be like a power couple. So, this is --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- this is crushing his poor dreams of --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: He's like I'm going to run for office. I'm like, no you're not, you're not.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: There's going to be a comedy set you're going to see that's going to ruin your chances. So --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: So, anyway. [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: I have confidence in you. I think you can --

MS. ALLEN: I'm glad you do.

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DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: We'll see. [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: I'll serve as an external reviewer.

MS. ALLEN: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, I wanted to pull up something from the Hollywood Diversity Report. If I can --

MS. ALLEN: Cool.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- get my remote to work properly. Here we go.

MS. ALLEN: Perfect.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, this was, ah, a graphic that I'm sure you're familiar with, um, that demonstrates that, ah, the, only 1.4 out of 10 lead actors in films are people of color. And you actually compared this to, um, the actual number of people of color in the United States. Um, I wonder if you could talk a little bit about this because you, and I want to know, first of all, if you've been working on this report since they started it which was 2011 because its been following this, you know, five, six year trend, seven year trend, um, and in most of the graphics that I saw not a lot has changed over that time period. So, I was curious if you talk about representation first of all and then sort of over time change?

MS. ALLEN: Yeah, so, I was there during the inaugural study and this year, five years in, it's all, it's called, you know, five years of progress but missed opportunities. Right? So, there's been slow and gradual change but overwhelmingly there's still a ton of missed opportunities there. Um, the issue is, is that, ah, what we see on television doesn't reflect the diversity of the country, um, which is as of 2016 I believe 40 percent minority and about 50 percent female and that's not what we see. Um, so, it, it, it's, you know, what we show in

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the report is that overwhelmingly diversity sells. Right? And TV shows and films that have at least a 30 percent minority cast, um, those are the shows that perform the best among, like, across demographics. And even internationally, the shows and movies that are more homogenous, um, tend to be the poorest performers. So, there's this disconnect between, um, not only the diversity in society, but also in, in terms of like the diversity that, that, that the public wants to see reflected on television and the business practices of Hollywood. Um, and there's also this, this disconnect in terms of like, you know, Hollywood wants to make money. We've shown in the data repeatedly year after year that diversity sells but it's still not happening, um, which points to some other more structural and again interactional issues, um, that are really entrenched in Hollywood in the way they go about doing business.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, you mentioned in this report that there's this myth provided by Hollywood decision makers that foreign audiences will, pardon me, automatically reject films centered around people of color and the conventional wisdom in the film industry is that black films don't travel. How can you change that perception?

MS. ALLEN: I mean, we have. Like Fast and Furious, there were like 18 of them and like they blew out the box office internationally; Black Panther, internationally. Like there's so many films that year after year show that like folks want to see diverse films. They're still not being made. Or we'll make one and then we'll have ten years of just like white guys. You know, and then it's like [laughter], and then we have another film and there's nothing wrong with white guys, I hope it gets made.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

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MS. ALLEN: It will get made. Um, but, they, they become these outliers as opposed to an actual trend and a shift that's moving more towards diversity.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, your most recent data are, it looks like, from 2016 --

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- into 2017. We saw a dramatic shift in the fall of 2017 with the Harvey Weinstein accusations and the #MeToo movement. Do you expect the data for next year to look significantly different?

MS. ALLEN: I don't know. I think, I think we always have years where there are spikes in changes because there's a movie that gets released that does really well. So, like, Black Panther will be included in next year's dataset, um, so it'll be an outlier. Um, I'm hoping that the #MeToo movement will help shift not only representations of women in terms of content but also, um, changes among the ranks, right, in studios, in writer's rooms, um, that there's a real push towards diversity across the board in terms of staffing, um, and having women in positions of power. Women in positions to, um, shape the content, and that's like from the bottom up. Right? Like, there need to be women, like, running cameras and doing, you know, ah, PA work, right, like, so that they can cultivate this talent at the lower level because Hollywood is about time and relationships. Right? So over time this person who started out, um, doing the lighting can be a studio executive. And, and it also matters in terms of like talent agencies, which is something else we talk about. Um, um, talent either, three top talent agencies that represent like the majority of talent, those talent, um, agencies are your, your agents and, and managers and they're overwhelmingly white, they're overwhelmingly male, and overwhelmingly, you know, older. So, um, that shapes the kind of talent that gets recruited. A lot of, um, women and a lot of

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people of color go unrepresented and if you're unrepresented the, it already just completely restricts the number of opportunities that you get. I mean, come pilot season, which is when there's just like an influx of, um, auditions, if you don't have a manager, you don't have an agent you're, you're not even in the mix. Which is why you see the repetition of the same faces on television. Um, it's rare that you get new faces unless they're operating on the outside of that framework or if they get recruited and, you know, you really have someone who's mentoring and, and representing that person so that they can rise, um, along the ranks. So, it's really kind of a multifaceted set of interventions that need to happen in Hollywood, um, in order to affect change that we actually see consistently in our dataset.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I have a few questions about kind of the current political climate and, and humor and --

MS. ALLEN: Oh --

DR. HOFFMAN: -- and then we'll pass it on to --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- ah, the audience. I'm sure they have a lot of great questions. Um, and again, we'll be using that Catchbox. I have two students who will be helping with that. You don't need to get up just yet. Ah, but maybe --

MS. ALLEN: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- in about eight minutes or so I'll [indiscernible].

MS. ALLEN: No one was getting up to help. Just so -- [laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: No, I'm just saying, that was, I hope --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

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MS. ALLEN: -- I hope when it's time that someone jumps into action.

DR. HOFFMAN: I hope -- you guys better be out there ready to help.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, this is actually a bit of a more serious issue that occurred to me today as I was watching news about what appeared to be explosive devices, ah, mailed to the Clinton's, to the Obama's --

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- to George Soros, and to CNN's office in New York. And we were talking about how even more had appeared over --

MS. ALLEN: Right.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- the course of the day. It wasn't that long ago that the tragedy at Charlie Hebdo in Paris claimed the lives of 12 employees of a satirical newspapers, injured many others. When, if ever; well, first of all, are you ever concerned about your own safety and when if ever should concerns about safety censor speech? Should it ever make us not speak out?

MS. ALLEN: So, I think when you work for, um, in, in journalism in, in general but particularly for our show -- I know in times past before I worked for the show, um, there were writers and show staff who, you know, their, their personal information was compromised, um, when they were working during, um, like the Democratic National Conventions and the Republican National Convention. So, there is a way in which you are, um, vulnerable to some kind of attack, to being compromised in some way. When, when I heard that I was like, oh, this is, this is, this is serious. Um, in terms of my personal safety, I, [chuckle]

I always thought that if, you know, if something was going to happen to me it was

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going to be another one of the writers because that's just --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Everybody's weird. So, if it --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- like that's, that's when I would call my family. I would be like, I don't know this guy sneezed six times in a row. I don't know, he's kind of weird so maybe --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- if something goes down it's the guy in the corner. Um --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: But I, I think it is, it is, it is a valid concern. Um, when even our elected officials are at risk of, um, not only when they're playing baseball, but at restaurants and --

DR. HOFFMAN: Went to dinner, yeah.

MS. ALLEN: And to dinner, right. So, I, I think there is a real concern about just the, the threat, the constant threat of violence based on a difference of opinion. Um, I understand the hostility when people feel like they're lives are at stake, when they feel like there's been a restriction of their personhood. Um, I might jump a person if like you take away my Medicare, or, I don't have Medicare. But, like my, my, my healthcare or, um, if you try to write me out existence, um, in terms, you know, like, that, that's an affront to my personhood. I understand, um, the anger and the hostility that undergirds that, um, but I think when it comes to threats of violence, um, it's particularly problematic. It is something that's been a concern. It is something that we prepare for, um, as

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folks who work in the industry.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I don't know if we've actually mentioned the President's name thus far tonight, but I think President Trump is certainly --

MS. ALLEN: [Audible exhale.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- an important figure to talk about. Um, he's been at the center of multiple controversies involving comedy. You guys might remember the incidents with Michele Wolf at the White House Correspondent's Dinner; um, his attacks on SNL. Um, do you think that his reactions are, this comes from Kaitlyn (phonetic spelling), do you think his reactions are a deterrent or an incentive to comedians looking to make jokes about him?

MS. ALLEN: They love it. I mean, it's, it's fodder for material. You know, anytime you engage it's, it's like when you text back the, the guy who, you know, was trying to start a fight with you. It's like don't send a text because it's going to, it's going to be a fight. He likes it. You know? That's Trump. He likes the fodder, like, and I, and we like it, um --

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

MS. ALLEN: -- because it, it'll, it's an opportunity to engage, um, but then it's, it becomes this never-ending cycle.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

MS. ALLEN: Um, what I think is interesting, and we talked a little bit about this earlier, is that we're, we're, we're living in, in a context where even when Trump is being funny we can't see him for telling a joke. Like, we can't, we can't accept his humor because he's been so problematic. Um, but sometimes he tells jokes. Sometimes he's funny. Sometimes, you know, it's, its, sometimes it's a poor attempt but there is, there is humor there. Um, but the lines have gotten

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blurred and everything has become so politicized, um, that sometimes jokes just don't get to be jokes. And I get that when someone is at the seat of power sometimes them telling jokes is not as funny because they can restrict your rights. Um, but I think it's, it's, it is an interesting time, um, where, you know, you have the President engaging with, with comedians and us going back and forth with, ah, the head of state. You know. So.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, it's kind of fun a little, in a way.

MS. ALLEN: Its kind of fun. Its kind of exhausting. I mean, like, as a black woman, we just have zero time for --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- like his antics. So, my, like walking into The Daily Show it was just like a, a, a, like exhaustion, um, because, you know, the tendency is just to be like, okay, like and what, like, like what, what are we, like, we've dealt with, like white supremacist crazy me forever. So, like what are we, like what are we going to do? It's like, yeah.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: So, [laughter] I think sometimes it's fun and sometimes it's funny and I think that's why I like sometimes when he tells jokes because it's relief from his normal craziness. And I'm like, oh, that was cute. I forgot that I hated him for five seconds.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Um, I enjoy those moments. They, they're not, they don't come often. Um, but, yeah, sometimes it's fun. A lot of times it's just like, this is going to be a long day.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, on that I think, um, let's go ahead and ask Parker,  
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thank you, and Hannah, I don't know where Hannah is. Right there. Oh, you guys are all ready for me. I'm going to ask one question before --

MS. ALLEN: Sure.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- they start tossing it around. How has, ah, this comes from Lauren (phonetic spelling), how has the comedic space changed before Trump and after Trump?

MS. ALLEN: Um, it, it's, it, ah, there's an oversaturation of Trump and political satire. Everyone is now, um, everyone now has commentary, political commentary. Every, like, every single person. There's ten shows that now do, um, late night satire. Like, everyone has come [indiscernible].

DR. HOFFMAN: Podcasts.

MS. ALLEN: There's podcasts, there's --

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah.

MS. ALLEN: Everyone on Twitter. Right? Something happens and it's like there's a whole feed of, like, I'm like don't you, don't you work at Target?

Now like you're --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- now you're, you know, providing political commentary. It's, it's, there's an oversaturation of just like everyone has political commentary.

Everybody is trying to get a joke in. Everybody is trying -- and I think that can be very exhausting and I think that has, that landscape did not exist before Trump.

Um, and now everybody wants to consume it. Like, there's, it, it's, it feels like, um, there's constantly, that there's no relief. There's no just like calm. When

something happens, I'm like, okay, don't go to Twitter. There's going to be a

thousand people talking about it. Don't watch TV. Media coverage, it just feels

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like there's, um, a constant influx of hysteria around even the smallest things.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

MS. ALLEN: Um, so nothing is normal. That's what it feels like. There's, there's nothing. If Trump knocked over this bottle of water, it would be like --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- you know [laughter.] It would be ah because he doesn't believe in climate change, he disrespects water.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: And it's like, or he's clumsy.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: And it's like President doesn't have dexterity too.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: And its like, okay. Everything has become a thing and now we don't know what's normal anymore. I think that's what's different about this context and a few years ago.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and that's why, um, if you guys have followed this speaker series over the past four years I always bring in someone from a comedy background because I think it's, it's a nice way to kind of just take a breath and take a step --

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- away from the craziness of news being thrown at us every single second of the day and it's kind of a, a, for me a creative cognitively interesting outlet for exploring the issues of the day. So, I really appreciate you being here and for the work you've done on The Daily Show and in standup. So, I'd like to open it up at this point to questions from the audience.

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MS. ALLEN: Woo-hoo.

DR. HOFFMAN: And Hannah's got the crazy Catchbox. There you go.

MS. ALLEN: Oh, that's cute.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah.

MS. ALLEN: I mean, use hand sanitizer after you guys leave here.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: That thing's going to be -- it's flu season, you guys, you can't be --

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: This was an interesting idea but it's, it's not safe. But go ahead.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: [Laughter.] Sorry. Go ahead.

Q: That's fine.

DR. HOFFMAN: I had never thought of that.

MS. ALLEN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: So --

Q: So, with the oversaturation of these political talk shows, do you think shows like Sasha Baron Cohen's Who is America and shows like that bring a breath of fresh air or do you think overall, they could be more of the same or even detrimental?

MS. ALLEN: I, I mean, I think it depends on who, who you are and what  
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you want to consume. I think it's fun; it's nice to have something that you just laugh at. That's just, that's not, um, that, that universally is funny and, I mean maybe not even universally is funny because I'm sure the folks who feel like they're the butt of the joke don't find it funny. And in that way, it does contribute to this like liberal slant and, you know, attack of the right. Um, but I think there need to be more shows, um, that allow you to just laugh. Um, and, and that aren't, um, leaning, um, or that aren't triggering in a way. Um, I do think his show is interesting because it does expose some of the ridiculousness and the posturing and the performativity of just, being a political figure, right? And the lengths that, that they're willing to go, um, to really save themselves and their agenda. I think if he were to do -- and I've not watched, um, a, a lot of the episodes; I've seen clips -- I think if he were to do some of those pranks on some of, um, liberal congress, members of congress there, there would be, there'd be similar findings because they're all ridiculous. Like, we do know that they're all, that, you know, that they [laughter], I think there are some who have, um, you know, a vested interest in, in pursuing public good. But a lot of them really, you know, there's, there's a performativity there, um, that I think if you push hard, or not even hard sometimes that you expose. That's funny to me to really, um, pull back the veil and expose just how ridiculous, um, and how inauthentic some of this is. And I think just as like voters and as citizens it's like cut the \*\*\*. Like we just want [laughter] like do your job, don't be ridiculous, and, and then I think we can all move forward. Um, so I guess I, I say that to say that, um, I do think that show could be helpful maybe if it had a more evenhanded approach, um, to kind of expose the ridiculousness on both sides.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, I'll just follow-up on that. Do you think that we have

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become too concerned with political correctness? Have we sort of become blinded by being too obsessed with being PC? Because that show is decidedly not politically correct, right?

MS. ALLEN: I think being politically correct, and maybe it needs a new title. I think everything ultimately comes down to branding. Like, if we just like label as like respect --

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- then I think it would be better. Like PC has now become a thing and it's branded as like this thing. Um, I don't think there is any harm in trying to respect the people around you if that means that they don't want to be called a certain thing, then do your best to try not to do that. Right? Um, and that takes the other person also engaging in that learning process with you and not, like -- and I, I get that that's hard when you're on the end of being offended but sometimes it takes doing that, that interactional work of like, hey, don't, don't say, don't say Indian, or don't say like, and this is why. Um, and then it's on that person, you know, the onus is on that person to try to do better. And then also recognize that those, those, um, labels change from person to person. And that's the work that we have to do. And I think we've just learned to be like, look I learned to say, um, oriental and that's just what I'm a say (sic). And it's like, that's not the way. Like, like you have to unlearn, if you've learned the wrong way; like if you learn the wrong way to drive and you were just running into people all the time you'd be like, you know what, I should try to do this right. Like --

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

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MS. ALLEN: -- because my premiums are going up. Like --

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- it's like you would try and if you've learned how to do something the wrong way you should learn it the right way. Like you drive differently in different spaces. Sometimes you have to speak differently in different spaces. We do it all the time. You don't speak the way you do in church as you do when you're on a date and when you're on -- like, we do it all the time. We just don't want to do it when, you know, if we don't want to. And I think that's the work, um, that it takes to not be PC but try to respect people as much as possible. And you're going to mess up. And I think both folks have to recognize that it's a process that's in flux constantly.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Let's take another question from the audience. Hannah, I think there's a couple back there on your side and then we'll toss it over to Parker.

MS. ALLEN: Ah, caught the flu.

Q: And its like, oh, wow, it's in my, that's really cool. Um, first I want to say thank you. This has been really great. I really --

MS. ALLEN: Thank you.

Q: -- appreciate you coming out. Um, my question kind of goes along with what has been ah mentioned with the PC and, um, kind of where the line is.

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

Q: I think when you mentioned Charlie Hebdo it made me think of like Muslim communities --

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

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Q: -- in France are historically marginalized. And, um, and other marginalized communities that are disenfranchised from mainstream. Like when does comedy cross the line of making jokes that marginalized individuals versus attacking the power structure?

MS. ALLEN: I think that's something, I mean, at The Daily Show that we tried to be very sensitive about. It's who is the target of the joke? And if the target of the joke is a disenfranchised group historically, currently, um, we try to avoid it. What's, what's the point? Um, you want to, you don't want to punch at folks who, um, whose rights and livelihood is at stake. Um, on the opposite side of that, you don't want to keep punching at the same group because that also, it's not helpful to be like, oh white guys, white guys, white guys, white guys, white guys, white guys because white guys will be like you can't compete with me. Like, I'm not going to pay attention. Right? So, there's a way in which you need to be evenhanded, um, with the way in which you tell jokes which is why we often try to point at like society. Right? So, we're all kind of complicit in the problems -

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

MS. ALLEN: -- unless there's an instance where we're not. Right? Like, if its white people calling the cops over and over I'm not going to be like, black people need to try and be like not white people. You got to stop calling the cops.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

MS. ALLEN: Like, um, so we try to have an evenhanded approach so that, um, you, you're not punching at the wrong group.

DR. HOFFMAN: I think we have one more over on this side. Actually, this side of the audience.

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MS. ALLEN: I just realized my shoe has been facing the audience. Is the price of the shoe still on the bottom?

DR. HOFFMAN: I don't think so.

MS. ALLEN: Great.

DR. HOFFMAN: I do the same thing.

MS. ALLEN: Woo. Thanks.

Q: Hi. Um, my --

MS. ALLEN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

Q: -- name is Sonny (phonetic spelling). Um, first of all thank you so much for coming. I am a huge, huge fan of The Daily Show and one of the reasons I really like The Daily Show is because you guys really do both sides. You really talk about both sides and it's --

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

Q: -- really opened my eyes to understand the arguments of both sides.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

Q: Um, and one example is when you interviewed, or The Daily Show interviewed Tomi Lahren who is an incredibly controversial public figure and I really felt like she was listening during her interview even though I do not agree with anything that she said, it was still --

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

Q: -- really interesting. Um, and it's inspired me to always listen to the other side.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

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Q: And I want to know how I can influence others to also listen to both sides and not just scream at each other. Start an open dialogue about these really, you know, touch and go issues that we don't want to talk about.

DR. HOFFMAN: I, if I can interject?

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Come to National Agenda events. [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: That's part of what we're doing. I'm also going to mention in, in a moment, we're going to have what's called a living room conversation tomorrow in Trabant Theater where we're bringing together democrats, republicans, and independents to talk about the – oh, there we go. Right there. Thank you.

MS. ALLEN: Nice.

Q: Oh, I think I just lost my --

MS. ALLEN: Go ahead, distract from --

DR. HOFFMAN: Distract.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yes. Don't pay attention to the -- no, um, so we, you know, there are I think as an institution we need to do better at providing those opportunities for students and I hope that students will take advantage of those opportunities. But, I knew your question wasn't for me. So --

MS. ALLEN: No, I like it.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Patience. That's really, its really tough trying to bring someone over to not even your side. And I think that's also, like to dismantle the

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idea of sides. Right? Like, I want you to believe what I believe, right? So, engage with the objective of listening and with presenting an opinion and then being patient if that person doesn't just accept it. Right? Often, like changing an opinion takes so much time, right? Um, so be willing to engage multiple times on that topic and to back up the things that you're saying with facts if they exist anymore.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Um, and --

DR. HOFFMAN: They do.

MS. ALLEN: -- and, and to -- yeah -- and to abandon a conversation when it becomes toxic --

DR. HOFFMAN: Hum.

MS. ALLEN: -- um, to preserve your own, um, that's the, that's the black girl --

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah. That's good. [Indiscernible.]

MS. ALLEN: Snap. Um, which means I'm; that's the amen corner and I appreciate it.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Um, to abandon when it gets, when it gets too toxic because you can spend all day engaging, engaging, engaging and then it, it ends up hardening you, right, to where you, you don't have the energy to not only take care of yourself and the things that you need to do but also to engage again.

There are going to be plenty more people that, um, that don't believe what you believe, um, that you have the opportunity to, um, provide a corrective if their, you know, ideas are just completely wrong, um, or just the opportunity to have,

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um, a healthy discussion. If you don't have the energy for it because you've been, you know, engaging with trolls all day, um, it's, it's, it's not going to work out. So, patience is something that I have, have learned. Um, and then being open to in the process of you trying to, to change someone's opinion or open up their mindset that you might learn something that, that surprises you, um, and that allows you to understand why someone shares a different perspective.

DR. HOFFMAN: I'm going to do something a little unconventional. Hannah, I don't mean to put you on the spot, but you, you, my classroom, my National Agenda class has been reading a book by the psychologist Jonathan Haidt and -- is it okay if I put you on the spot?

HANNAH: Yeah, that's fine.

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay. Ah --

MS. ALLEN: She's so mad --

DR. HOFFMAN: -- if you can pass this over to --

MS. ALLEN: -- right now.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- Hannah.

MS. ALLEN: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: I think this is an also response to your question is, um, how to kind of develop empathy for other perspectives and to understand that, um, that, that the really the point of this book -- it's called The Righteous Mind by Jonathan Haidt -- it, it suggests that morality or sort of our, our, our, our attention to what is good and bad both binds us to people who agree with us and blinds us to those who disagree. And I think that, that the students have really gotten a lot out of this and I, Hannah wrote a nice blog about it and I was wondering if you

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could talk a little bit about it --

MS. ALLEN: Ooh.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- just in response to this question if that's okay?

MS. ALLEN: Nice.

HANNAH: Yeah, sure um -- I love this book, it's so fun -- um, so, there was this whole, um, bit at the end of a chapter about how he had grown up in this really liberal bubble and how he had a really hard time seeing people who didn't believe things like he did as evil. And, I like felt myself really relating to this and I was really excited to, like, get to the conclusion where he gave me all the answers. And like obviously that didn't happen --

MS. ALLEN: [Laughter.]

HANNAH: -- because otherwise we wouldn't have this political divisiveness in the first place. But, what I sort of realized is that, like, its about moral priorities and so like when you like approach a conversation like that it's not about like right or wrong a lot of times. Like sometimes someone will be like factually incorrect but more times they just have something else prioritized higher.

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

HANNAH: Um, and it's I think a lot easier to approach a conversation when you realize that they are just approaching it from somewhere else from a moral perspective, from a philosophical perspective. And I thought it was really interesting.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, and I think --

HANNAH: Thanks.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- I think at the, at, you know, all things considered its, um,  
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we're all seeking truth, we're all seeking some solution to the problem and we have different ways of getting to that place. But, um, I'm really excited about Hannah and all the students in my classroom who are, are opening up to different ways of understanding the world around them and being, ah, being observant to different perspectives. So, sorry to sidetrack here.

MS. ALLEN: No, that was great.

DR. HOFFMAN: But do we have any questions? I, I don't think we've gone over on this side of the, the room. Thank you, Hannah. Thank you, Parker.

Q: All right, thank you for being here. Um, earlier you spoke about how the, um, the masses have kind of oversaturated the satire market.

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

Q: My question is do you think late night shows have done the same thing? Um, for instance, when we see Alec Baldwin impersonating Donald Trump in what now seems like a weekly basis, does, um, satire as a form of humorous like political activism lose its strength?

MS. ALLEN: Yes. I think anytime you have, um, an influx of something it loses its potency. Right? Um, and I think that that's, um, part of the what's problematic about this current context that we're in is that it can produce empathy. Um, and that would be unfortunate on the heels of a midterm election where folks just feel exhausted, that they feel, um, regretfully misinformed, um, um, or that they just are misinformed and head to the polls based on and, and, and vote based on emotions, um, based on something that they'd seen. So I do think that, that there, in the same way that we ask audiences to, to be responsible for what they're viewing and to, um, you know, understand that, like, this is a satirical show and we're biased, um, that we also do have a

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responsibility, um, in terms of content and the frequency in which that we're, we're covering the same topics in the same way. Um, at a certain point it becomes exhausting to audiences and it also runs antithetical to the, the, the goals that we say that we want. Right? We want informed, um, populations and we want folks to vote and we want these things and it's like, well, are, are we working against that by exhausting audiences or misinforming audiences if we know that, you know, sometimes they rely on us for not only just entertainment but information. So. Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: I wish we could all just like take a daily like break.

[Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Yes. The daily break.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Let's just take a, like a minute.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Just a minute.

MS. ALLEN: The problem is, is that you take a break and then you come back the next day and you're like oh, Jupiter is gone.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Like you, like --

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- like, like you, like you feel like I didn't pay attention to the news for a, for a day and I missed this whole thing. And because of the way we now roll out stories you feel like the news has contributed to this like, oh if I missed a piece of it then I don't know something that I should know. And it's like

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it's all the same, it's all the same but we feel like oh, well did I miss the part where they said that this was the thing. It's a weird phenomenon in which you –

DR. HOFFMAN: It's like, it's –

MS. ALLEN: -- feel like you need to stay tuned in or you're going to miss something.

DR. HOFFMAN: It's news FOMO, like do we still have FOMO?

[Indiscernible]?

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, yeah.

MS. ALLEN: [Snaps fingers.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: That's what it is. I, every, every time I go on vacation and we come back, like, the, a year ago we went on vacation and, and then we, we did not turn on the news. And then we turned on the news the day they decided to rescind DACA and it was like, what did we do – we felt bad for going on vacation. We were like, what did we do?

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Because of us DACA's been rescinded. And it's like, no, that was going to happen whether or not we went on the Sea-dos in Cancun. So, there's a way in which it creates this, these, these feelings that like, ah, I have to know, and I have to – so it's, it's strange. It's a strange thing.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yeah, it's balancing kind of your personal responsibility for keeping up with things –

MS. ALLEN: Right.

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DR. HOFFMAN: -- with also self-care.

MS. ALLEN: Self-care and like you can probably read this later in a way that is complete, um, and doesn't really, um, stir up the same kind of emotion. Right? So, I think reading the news has really helped me and then reading books, right? Like really kind of like, again, expanding your, your media profile really helps you move away from those feelings of like, oh, I didn't turn on the news. So.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Another question from the audience? It looks like there's one over there, Parker. Thank you.

Q: I was wondering, ah, on a historical aspect –

MS. ALLEN: Uh-huh.

Q: -- are the topics that we are handling today the same topics that we handled back in the 50's except comedy handles it in a different way? Ah, I remember, you know, Cid Caesar and Milton Berle, um, Rodney Dangerfield, they never seemed to make things personal.

MS. ALLEN: Hum.

Q: Today it seems to make, we are personal.

MS. ALLEN: Hum.

Q; But it seems like the topics are still the same topics that we were talking about. We make fun of people that aren't like us.

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

Q; We make fun of somebody else that's doing something that we don't want to do.

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

Q; We look to our families to support our own views, but we

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never look at the other guy and try to get into his shoes.

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

Q; So, is comedy today talking about the same things that they did back in the 50's only they're doing it differently?

DR. HOFFMAN: Hum.

MS. ALLEN: I think in certain ways, yes, that, that some of the issues remain the same sadly but the ways in which we approach them are, are different. Um, and I think that change is based on the genre of comedy, um, based on who the comedian is. I think different comedians feel like they'd have different stakes, um, in terms of how they engage with, with comedy. So, women, for instance, in, in the 50's and 60's when they were doing standup felt like they had to be self-deprecating; felt like they couldn't talk about certain topics, right? That they couldn't, um, talk about things that were specific to women out of fear that they would isolate men, um, out of fear that they would, you know, ah, be publicly lambasted for those topics. Um, and now, you know, over time we've ushered in a whole new wave of comics in this, um, you know, this post, you know, feminist -- not post-feminist -- but after the waves of feminism, right, have now ushered in a new era of like political comedy among women, um, who attack the same topics but in different ways and it is personal because for so long it couldn't be. For so long it had to be, um, generic, um, or, you know, when, oh, let me not do an impression.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Because it's going to be, it's going to bad. Um, so I think that's why there's been, um, a push to personalize comedy and so much of comedy is personal because, um, everybody is now talking about everything.

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Right? There because of social media, um, I can get on Twitter and, and, and see 15,000 people talking about, um, what it's like when they go on a date with this type of guy. Or, the, the general pool of topics everyone has now engaged in. So, for comics pulling from personal experience now becomes the way that you're original, right? Like, otherwise how am I, how am I any different than the person who is making Instagram videos about dates and all of these topics that used to universal are now, um, exhausted in a way. Um, so, ah, the personal becomes a way in which you can be nuanced. Um, and yeah, I think that's why the topics, although they haven't changed, the approach, um, is a little different. If that answers your question. I know that there's so many other avenues that I can like go in in terms of answering this question because it is a really big one.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

MS. ALLEN: Um, and I also think that just like different comics have different, there's different things at stake for different comics. Some comics can just go on stage and talk about whatever and they'll get a fantastic career. They can talk about, they can be mediocre, and they can, they'll have a meteoric rise to the top whereas, um, sometimes for comics of color or women you've got to be substantive, you've got to go in – I think Chris Rock says, if I was as funny as David Spade I would not be Chris Rock. Right? Chris Rock has done like intense social commentary, right, that's often personalized. Um, and I think because he wants to but also because he has to, right? That there's a different demand and a different obligation, um, for the type of funny that you can be, um, when you occupy a, a marginalized status or a different status. Um, the type of humor that's expected of you is different, um, when, when you're different.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and if I can just offer a plug. I, I think that's such a  
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great question –

MS. ALLEN: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- in terms of looking at the history of comedy –

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- and how it's influenced where we are today. There's a great series on PBS – I don't know if you've seen this – it's called Make 'Em Laugh, um, that's, that's a history of – has anyone seen this?

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, I recommend it. It's, to sort of look at how different eras –

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- political eras, social eras, cultural eras produce different types of comedians.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, so that's a great question. I think we have time for one more quick question before I wrap things up.

MS. ALLEN: And also, Women Are Funny; that's another documentary that --

DR. HOFFMAN: What's that?

MS. ALLEN: It's Women Are Funny.

DR. HOFFMAN: Women Are Funny.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay.

MS. ALLEN: That's a, that's a good one.

Q: Hi, I am Mary. Very nice to see you.

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DR. HOFFMAN: Mary, [indiscernible] hi.

Q: And, thanks for being here.

MS. ALLEN: Yeah.

Q: This is kind of a lighthearted question but I'm curious what it's like in the writer's room of a comedy show. I imagine you all sitting around a big table like eating pizza and just laughing all day.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Um, it's very close --

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- to that. There are so many carbs all the time it is like you're constantly like swatting diabetes. Like don't

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Like, no more. Um, but it's, it's, um, it's like that. It's very collaborative and I think it depends on the show. Our show begins with, um, kind of dissecting the news of the day and we do that collectively. Um, we write the show collectively often in, in partnership with other writers. Um, the jokes are done collectively. There is pizza. Pizza Friday is our pizza day. Um, and it's a process of, of, um, I talked about this earlier about consensus and I think that that's what's so interesting about the intersection of the Hollywood Diversity data and what actually happens on the ground in the writer's room is that so much of comedy is about consensus. It's about what we all think is funny, um, and that's why sometimes, ah, ah, a, a homogenous room is, is a better room, right? If you have a bunch of black people or you have a bunch of -- or black guys and a

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bunch of white guys it's like, oh we all similar experiences, this joke's going in, it works, we all get it. But then when you start to introduce different voices it's like, oh, it's like, oh, that's a check on that; it's like oh, I've never, I was telling there, there are so many references that were made in the writer's room I was like I've never heard of that in my life. I've never --

DR. HOFFMAN: Steely Dan --

MS. ALLEN: Steely Dan was one.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: And I've been around white people like a long time, my whole life.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Like, my entire life, private school, like my whole life. This was a whole new group of white people that I've been around --

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: -- and a whole new set of references. I thought I knew them all and I was surprised.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: So, consensus [laughter]; I say this, sorry, but consensus in the room is important and that's why diversity can sometimes be a struggle because it's; what's funny to all of us and how do we diversify even what we think is funny and what goes on the air. Um, so sometimes there are points of contention or frustration, um, when you don't have consensus. Um, and I think

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that that is what folks push up against when we try to introduce new voices and, and what becomes frustrating for that person who is the diverse voice. How do you break through, you know, that consensus that you just don't? I don't get it. Its not funny to me but you're having fun. I want to have fun.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. ALLEN: Um, and I think that's, that's the, the transition period is always the toughest part to where we get the perfect balance of voices to where we can create a show, um, that different voices are going to want to watch.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Well, thank you guys so much for your questions.

MS. ALLEN: Oh, it's over.

DR. HOFFMAN: We're not quite over yet.

MS. ALLEN: Oh, okay.

DR. HOFFMAN: Before we give you such a --

MS. ALLEN: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: -- a big thank you. This is such a fascinating talk. I do want to talk about some of the initiatives that we're also doing at the Center for Political Communication. So, I've been talking about this student-led Make it Count campaign for a while. Um, there should be volunteers out in the lobby if you would like to make a pledge to vote. I will email you and remind you that you made a pledge to vote. Ah, you'll get a personal email just from me. Um, you can also sign up through Turbo Vote which even if you're already registered to vote this is a great resource that gives you reminders about your polling location, about any deadlines not just for the midterms but moving forward. Um, and I want to give you an update. If you guys have been here in, in previous National Agenda events, um, we, the Make it Count campaign had a goal of, ah, signing  
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up 2,000 students in Turbo Vote this academic year. So that means now until the spring. As of today, we've signed up nearly 1,300 students.

MS. ALLEN: Wow. That's awesome.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, thank you. Yeah. Please.

MS. ALLEN: I want to clap.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Please. And, I've mentioned that we've been recognized as, um, a, a Top 60 University out of 1,500 American universities in terms of engaging students in voting, ah, by using things like Turbo Vote, by engaging in this all-in democracy challenge where we're competing with other campuses to see how many students we can register to vote and who will actually --

MS. ALLEN: Very cool.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- [indiscernible] the vote. Um, its, the first time that I think we've ever been on a list like this, ah, and I think it's really exciting that University of Delaware is making its mark in that way. So, you can find out more about registration and voting at [cpc.udel.edu](http://cpc.udel.edu). I mentioned earlier our living room conversation that will be taking place tomorrow. I've invited representatives from the college democrats, the college republicans, I have an independent voter, and a representative from that Make it Count voter registration campaign. We're having a conversation about why should you vote; why does voting matter. So that will be in Trabant Theater tomorrow at 4:30. I encourage you to come to that. Ah, let's see, what else have I got here? So many things, so many exciting things going on. Um, we also are continuing to do our Voices Audio Essay contest. Um, I really encourage students to enter this contest. There are cash prizes. It's a great way for you to express your opinions, your viewpoints, and  
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get on our website and, you know, get some cash prizes. So, please definitely look into that by looking at [cpc.udel.edu/voices](http://cpc.udel.edu/voices) for more information. I believe that deadline is December 1<sup>st</sup>. Is that what it says? November 30<sup>th</sup>? It's coming up. So, make sure that you enter in that competition. Our final, ah, ah, speakers are Mary Jordan and Kevin Sullivan. These are Pulitzer Prize winning journalists

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MS. ALLEN: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- from the Washington Post. Kevin Sullivan actually has been in Rijad, Saudi Arabia for the past several days. Ah, check out his reporting

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MS. ALLEN: Wow.

DR. HOFFMAN: -- on the killing of the journalist, the Saudi journalist in the, the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul. He's been reporting on that in Turkey. He's one of his former colleagues, a columnist for the Washington Post. Ah, let's see, I think I'll end with, um, ah, I want to remind everybody that a lot of us in this room are engaged in politics. We're paying attention to politics but your friends, your roommates might not be necessarily so. So, if they're registered to vote, ah, encourage them to go to there's a couple of really cool websites: ballotpedia and ballotready. These are basically websites that will show you when you enter your, ah, home address what your ballot will look like when you get to your polling place. This can be a barrier for a lot of people who don't understand what, what they're going to be voting on. Help your friends, help your family by letting them know what's going to be on their ballot. Um, and then, I wanted to finally mention to vote November 6<sup>th</sup>.

MS. ALLEN: Ooow.

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DR. HOFFMAN: It is the midterm elections. It's an important time.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: And, make sure that you check out our other programming at [cpc.udel.edu](http://cpc.udel.edu). All of these programs we have available as YouTube videos, podcasts and transcripts. And thank you so much, Amberia.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

MS. ALLEN: Oh, thank you guys. This was fun.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you.

MS. ALLEN: This was so much fun. This was great.

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