

Speech Matters April 20, 2021

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EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: Good morning west coasters and good afternoon to the rest of the country. My name is Michelle Deutchman, the executive director of the UC National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement. I am pleased to welcome all of you to the third annual #SpeechMatters conference. Last year's conference was my last plane flight before things closed because of the pandemic and while I wish we could be together to network and share food and drink, I am grateful for the technology that allows us to connect and has allowed programming and outreach throughout the year. It has been quite a year, full of heartbreaks and challenges. Today and tomorrow, as we chart the course for campus speech and engagement, we have the opportunity to look back, and more importantly, to look forward to what is possible now that we are on the cusp of returning to physical life on campus.

Over the course of the next 2 days we have the privilege to hear from advocates and activists, scholars and students on a host of interrelated topics. Please feel free to share your questions with our experts by using the Q & A feature. We will address as many as we can. Additionally realtime captions are available here in our zoom conference room, click on the closed caption button and select "show subtitles" to view the captions. Before we begin I want to thank some people who were integral in putting today together. And to the life of the center over all.

Brenda Pitcher, the Center's executive assistant, is a master of detail and handling problems with poise and innovation. I want to recognize Jonathan Schwartz, the Center's brilliant intern who has been working with the Center for the past 2 years. We are grateful to the Glen Echo Group for all they do to make the Center look and sound our very best. I want to extend our heartfelt thanks to our colleagues in the Chancellor's suite at UC Irvine and the Office of the President, all of whom are key to the

Center's success. And, finally, I'd like to thank the members of our Advisory Boards for their ongoing support.

Nothing has been more top of mind in the past year than public health and science. And that is the topic we are going to begin this year's conference with - "On Trust in Science and Public Health" The moderator for this conversation is none other than the President of the greatest public university system in the world, President Michael Drake. In August 2020, Dr. Drake became the 21st president of UC's system of 10 campuses, five medical centers, three nationally affiliated labs, more than 280,000 students and 230,000 faculty and staff. Dr. Drake previously served as president of the Ohio State University from 2014 through 2020. Prior to OSU he served in several roles at the University of California, including 9 years as Chancellor of UC Irvine and 5 years as the systemwide vice president for health affairs. An ophthalmologist by training, he received his AB from Stanford, his M.D. and residency from UCSF, and his fellowship training in ophthalmology at UCSF and the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary.

Dr. Drake will be facilitating a conversation between two experts NPR reporter Pien Huang and Dr. Mark Ghaly, secretary of the California health and human services agency.

Dr. Ghaly was appointed as Secretary in 2019 by the governor Gavin Newsom. In his role he oversees California's largest agency dedicated to health care and safety net. Previously he was medical director of the southeast health center, a public clinic in San Francisco. There Dr. Ghaly practiced pediatrics and led a transition to the patient centered medical home model of care. In 2011 Dr. Ghaly became the deputy director for community health and in the greatest programs for the LA county as Department of Health services. Dr. Ghaly earned his MD and MPH from Harvard and completed residency in pediatrics at UCSF.

Pien Huang is a health reporter on the science desk at NPR. She was NPR's first Reflect America Fellow, working with shows, desks and podcasts to bring more diverse voices to the air and online. She's a former producer for WBUR/NPR's On Point and was a 2018 Environmental Reporting Fellow with The GroundTruth Project at WCAI in Cape Cod, covering the human impact on climate change. As a freelance audio and digital reporter, Huang's stories on the environment, arts and culture have been featured on NPR, the BBC and PRI's The World. Now President Drake, I'm goes

to pass the baton to you.

PRESIDENT DRAKE: Very nice. Thank you very much, and appreciate being here today, and really for all the work you have done Michelle, particularly this last year in helping to keep the enterprise moving forward, and I would like to get right into our discussion. We are very fortunate to have Pien Huang on Mark Ghaly with us today. These issues that are so critical to all of us are great fodder for our conversation this morning or this afternoon depending where you are.

So can I begin by saying first hello. And that I'm looking forward to the conversation, and that the University of California has had a long role in free speech, and trying to foster the kinds of conversations that are the most important for our society really to have and these have been challenging times for these conversations. I again the conversations are always challenging. Can always be difficult but the last year has been something really quite special.

So I'd like just to ask our 2 panelists post of whom I see and welcome. Nice to be with you this or after. I don't Pien, I don't know where you are fiscally

PEIN: I'm in Washington D.C. so it is actually afternoon.

PRESIDENT DRAKE: I will say good afternoon and good morning to my neighbor Mark. It's been a very very difficult year for fact based professions such as journalism and public health and higher education. And could you each briefly describe some of the most significant challenges you've faced when it came to messages or reporting on the pandemic and maybe if I may I'll start with Pien.

PIEN HUANG: Yeah, thanks for the question. It's been a challenging year for basically everybody but specific to my role as adjourn I have the covering the pandemic. You know my goals are to inform the public with our rapidly evolving public health emergency that could involve everyone and I will name a couple of the categories of challenges we face this year.

Those would be political cultural and personal. So politically I think many people would agree there were confusing contradictory messages coming from the country's leadership for much of the pandemic that made it really difficult for people to agree on some very basic fact you know that there was a deadly infectious disease that emerged and it was bad for humans and the threat should be stopped and you know that was as a reporter if we as a

country are not agreeing on some basic sets of facts it's difficult to sort of come up with some cohesive messages and an explanation for people of what's happening. Paragraph paragraph of culturally I would also point to the fact that you know there's been a real sense of pitting individual interests against the good of the whole society. And I think that's a false dichotomy. Ideas like I don't feel like wearing a mask even if that's good for everyone else, or pitting individual businesses and the economy against public health.

That seems to me to be a false dichotomy and it's damaging you know it kind of makes it seem like we as a society are not working together to get rid of a problem we are instead fighting amongst ourselves against each other and the problem is getting worse in the process. I would also say just personally you know everyone's circumstances changed during the pandemic. People lost friends. They lost family members much they lost jobs, and everything was and is very uncertain and for me personally one of the challenges I faced was just spending much of the pandemic completely alone.

You know there was a lot of isolation. That I felt and other people felt in terms of living and working during this pandemic while trying to go about their lives in some way that made sense so I would say those are a couple of cat categories that I felt that I was thinking about this question.

PRESIDENT DRAKE: I appreciate that very much, and you're right it's fascinating pandemic, in that we all have different stations and places in life, but it's really affected everyone. There's no one who's not changed dramatically in the way their daily life. As you mentioned in the most tragic cases have lost lives or been extraordinarily ill or lost members to those who have lost jobs or businesses that may have taken generations to build on one edge and for everyone else. Daily life has been challenging and difficult. So this has been a year like no other.

Dr. Ghaly, I mean you lived this every moment, can you reflect your thoughts and the things that have been some of the most significant challenges you've faced  
DR. GHALY: First to Michelle, Pien and you, Dr. Drake thank you for including me in this exciting conversation. Really echo some of the things Pien just mentioned. I think absolutely, there's been other dichotomies set up I will go over a couple of those that have been striking to me, but first and foremost you know there are certain

infectious disease truths and facts that people new and under understood and communicating those in basic and simple ways offer the course of a pandemic. I don't think people approached early other on the response as something that was going to last as long as it has.

I often say the way we talked about the pandemic in March of last year looked very different than one the way we talked about it this year. So the fact things were evolving quickly about our knowledge. We did we I think became really preachers of the fact that we had to communicate about something that was quickly and rapidly evolving. I often said for California I wanted to be part of a state that learned the most and the fastest but that meant integrating new knowledge and the message every single day. And the fact that we didn't have a sort of national approach to the pandemic that states were left to really chart their own course, day over day, with different cadence of communication. There were definitely states that are daily press conferences and others that are you know every other week press conferences about this different types of leaders in the front communicating about the fact. I think the role of scientists in public health and clinical professionals was very different in the role of the chief communication offices in many states being the governor or other leaders I think created an interesting dynamic that I think some states did really well throughout the course of the pandemic, other states sort of had bumps in the road as we went along.

I know here in California the approach that we led with science, and that that science evolved over time and we had a both an important responsibility to communicate that and incorporate it into our response. At times I think led people to feel confused, and then the other thing that I think we were up against just sort of picking up on this idea that there were different choices or dichotomies was one where it was public health versus the economy, and so many of us early on said, well we need to address them together. The economic health of our state especially over the medium and long run depending on the public health, successes early and communicating that was particularly challenging especially when we had a significant degree of turning, turning messages into not just public health messages but political messages.

And then the last factor that I think we, we anticipated but I this think felt it even more than we anticipated it, was this notion of fatigue, and that messages that worked early were frankly significantly less

effective later. We saw that in communicating here in California restrictions to how people's personal behaviors might change. I think the things when so many a people said yeah I can do if for the team for about 6 to 8, 10 weeks but as you get into 6 to 8 to 10 months people started to feel so exhausted I think the ability to communicate effectively the truth and the science was harder and harder as we went along.

PRESIDENT DRAKE: Well thank you Mark. I appreciate that, and you're right that the same message landing on earrings during different times in the pandemic landed with different effects and we all experience that had.

Let me have you go you first with my next question. Which is what might be done to build more trust in the media? And in scientific experts during this moment, and as we move forward. Is there a role for higher education in that and what about research institutions

DR. GHALY: Yeah, coming to that part of the question last. I think one of the things I'm most proud of that we worked hard on at the very beginning, and look, together science health and communications did one very helpful thing I think for us over the next 5 to 10 years, which is plainly make clear to folks that in equities in our society are real and matter.

The disproportionate impact was picked up very very early. I remember Chicago tribune. New York Times articles in the first weeks of the pandemic highlighting the impact of COVID on lowincome communities, communities of color, this concept of essential workers. I think we amplified something that so many of us in the public health and health community have dedicated our careers to but with the help and you know partnership with our journalism and communication colleagues we amplified this in public health and for some states like ours we've been able to carry that forward with the real policy direction that has mattered. But to bring that a little closer to the ground, I think the media, and I think states and cities and counties in the case of California, have really used trusted messengers. You know people that you don't always pull into the communication cycle.

The media cycle to tell a story. Whether it's the effect of COVID on them or their families, decision that is they made. We had one really important conversation with somebody in one of our rural counties. MADERA county where a young woman who was probably the reason COVID came into the home, into her home and lost some family members important, grandma grandpa in this case that that message

was very impactful so using people who look like. Who experience the same as some of our hard hit community members was very effective, and I'm proud of the way we did that. Of course we can always do more.

Public service announcements. Other messages we've done a lot that have with testing and vaccination to get up to go higher in our case in California, really partnering with groups like our farm worker organizations to deliver messages so I think there's so much that we can do not just in the big media perspective but really some of the messages that resonate, and we talk about trusted messengers. We talk about authentic messengers.

I think the number of people who have helped with communication during this pandemic have I think brought some degree of credibility to the profession broadly I would don't always depend on and I think we will more and more.

As it relates to where academic institutions can help us, and we, we did this not until the fall and early Winter in California think divisions of behavioral science have a real role in helping us understand how we might have done. The early months of the communication work differently and certainly we have leaned on them. Some of our UC colleagues in different parts of the system but beyond, have helped us think about the behavioral health tendencies of individuals. What messages might work at different various times. So in our pandemic response so the ability to connect early on with those professionals and those academic to help us not just informed by existing research but help us do even more research to allow the message to evolve over time.

And I think that will help us. Obviously the ability to connect dots from the state and federal level is going to be key, and I think one thing many of us wish we had more of was that consistent coordinated leadership. Not just at the political or public health level but even in our ability to tell stories. I mean, I think we all become used to various different news outlets that had quite different spins on the same story, and that has become more and more evident in COVID, and many of the other issues we've dealt with

PRESIDENT DRAKE: Thank you Mark. Pien let me repeat the question again as it comes you to. What might be done to build more trust in the media and scientific experts during this moment and moving forward and there a role for higher education in particular research institutions.

PIEN HUANG: Sure. Well, building off what Dr. Ghaly said

I think he talked about the need to connect you know real scientific information with people. I would sort of like to talk about the flip side of that coin which is something I think academic institutions could really push forward on right now and help, which is understanding the misinformation and dysfunction that has come out during this pandemic. And sort of helping to understand where it's coming from, you know, who is propagating and perpetuating it and how to combat that.

I think one of the things that we've seen a lot of especially when it comes to vaccines and treatments, and is that in this place of uncertainty, and in a place where you know realistically science and scientific understanding takes time to evolve you know. You need to gather data. You into he had to analyze the data and fill in the gaps of what's happening and answer the questions, and as that's happening, you know people are anxious. They have a lot of questions and there's a lot of misinformation that's filling that void.

And so I think we've seen a real rise of inaccurate information really getting out there and so I think academic institutions can really sort of help understand what's happening, and how to combat that. And sort of in terms of you know, what's what can be done to build more trust in the media. I looked up a poll by, by... back in January found that trust in the media was pretty low. It was at 51% hovering below trust in government and the business and the aren't didn't get granular but it probably differs by audience and media outlet and the experts involved. .

What's interesting is during the pandemic I actually observed and many others did do that academic scientists stepped in to fill avoid left by the government for much of the pandemic. The federal government. The CDC was largely absent from the public for months on end from the media perspective and researchers and scientists really stepped up to inform the public. To share data. To share information. You know Johns Hopkins university for instance has a tracker for the number of cases and death that is still considered to be the most reliable count by NPR and other institutions.

So I mean I think that you know, I think there is work to do to rebuild trust in the media, and to sort of make it clear that the messages that we are trying to share and perpetuate are based on scientific fact, and are accurate and reasonable and balanced and so I think you know that is a decision that sort of gets calibrated every



day in the newsroom but I think there is room certainly to build on that

PRESIDENT DRAKE: I appreciate that. It's been quite a year as you said with mixed messages. I wonder if the Edelman study I didn't read the study but it would be interesting if you asked the respondents how much their preferred media outlet was trusted and I'm guessing you could get a high level of agreement with a high level of disagreement that that media outlet had you had be trusted by people who had another preferred media outlet. Which is yeah, the sign of our times I guess.

To you Pien with the third question which is that last week the CDC declared racism to be a serious public health threat, and what does this how does this change or what does this change for the way... how do you VUT

government's role and the medias role in addressing racial injustice as it relates to the public health space

PIEN HUANG: I think this is a really big step the CDC declaring racism a public health threat. It's been a long time coming. Broke a story about CDC calling outs the toxic culture around racism and people were saying you need to look internally and externally and grapple with the harm that racism is perpetuating to our health as a nation.

Acknowledging that systemic in equities based on the cop... racism damages society and health that's a huge step forward and it's not much after surprise as Dr. Ghaly was saying. The pandemic has brought those inequities to the forefront.

I think the responsibility now is to sort of explain to the public what this means and how widespread of a problem it is and how to really address it. I mean you know right now I think the media as role is on to shine a light on what's happening to elevate the voices of people work ongoing the issue for many years but haven't necessarily gotten the airtime and to hold leaders accountable to the goals they set. You know I think this declaration is important. It's sign of progress and the question now is like what will we do next as a society to really right this.

PRESIDENT DRAKE: Thank you. And Mark, same question to you.

DR. GHALY: Yeah, just building off what Pien just said the declaration is such a meaningful and important step, and I think it comes in a year as I said where the COVID has unmasked in many ways additional in equities in how it really has become a matter of life and death, and the role of race in those in equities has been long stood by those

in health care and it's opportunity to have those perspectives amplified. The exciting moment for me who has been part of the conversation for a long time but been waiting for that opportunity where not just a declaration is made but the commitment in a time where we have resources to invest in the alteration of the structural factors that drive racism and race as a public health crisis and issue, the role of race in public health crisis in our public health crisis I think is very very important, and I know in California the question now is it what do we do to build on the momentum that's happening across the country? What are the immediate investments? One, and what are the longterm expectations.

And part of it is making sure it's our normal lexicon. What we talk about day in and day out and to COVID I don't want to overlook the civil unrest in the state which I was born and raised in in Minnesota at the heart you know the heart of so much in the past year, in the past couple of weeks even, that we have other events beyond the pandemic. Maybe spurred and related but beyond the pandemic that highlight racism in our communities and in our society, and how are we in this moment going to not miss another boat to really make the structural changes that we need to see, and so in that way it's a real privilege to be in a leadership role where I can be in the room, voice what other people have done in this scientific and health care community to really advance this idea and make real lasting change

PRESIDENT DRAKE: Thank you, Mark. And in speaking of equity and the way the pandemic has affected people, and then the way that we as a nation are responding to it as well as other things be in the broader public health space, let me just go to Pien. And say in your reporting you've covered some of the equity problems involved with vaccine distribution. In what ways has the roll out nationally put vulnerable populations at a disadvantage and what stories in vaccine roll out should be getting more attention.

PIEN HUANG: That's a great question thanks. It's interesting as someone covering vaccine distribution since before it even started. But you know there was a lot of thinking that went into how to get vaccine out in an equitable way even before they were authorized. The CDC advisory academy. The national scientists. The groups were seeing how the pandemic affected people based on race and class and making recommendations who should get the vaccines based on the risks exposure and the risk of severe illness and death.

In if reality the recommendations were considered it be very difficult to implement. Some of the criteria was job related. Others were circumstantial and age related and nobody really wanted to be the one to enforce who was getting the vaccine and not, and so in reality you know the process for getting and making an appointment prioritized people of access to technology, to go online and make those appointments. To knowledge, you know to people who were able to know what was going on, and know all the nuances of the weird ways that individual places were having in terms of making vaccine appointments.

People with access to transportation. People with access to time who were able to take time out of their work days and jobs to get a vaccine sometimes far from where they lived and it ended up making it a lot harder for the populations who were prioritized and who were most severely impacted to conveniently and successfully get appointments. So that was a huge problem when supply was limited. Now we are in a place where vaccines are more available. There are more locations to get the vaccines. And there are resources being sent to community centers for things like outreach and language translation, and mobile vans deployed to communities that are hard to reach so the situation is getting better.

But in terms of stories I think in the media what we need to be doing is tracking where the resources that are devoted to the efforts are going. You know whether they're reaching the people their intended to help much who is getting vaccinated and according to the CDC numbers vaccinations in minority communities. Black Latino and Asian are lagging behind those of the white population. Tow there's work to be ton.

PRESIDENT DRAKE: Appreciate that. I have my own experience I did a clinic in February that was a popup clinic on the street in the mission district in San Francisco. And noticed the diversity and ethnicity of the population there. I did one at a community mental health center a little more organized not a popup but a place where you made appointments and that was in what is traditionally an AfricanAmerican community. But I noticed that there are actually relatively through AfricanAmerican community members among the very very diverse group of people who seemed to have access to making an appointment and showing up there.

So that was actually a surprise to me. And I know it's one of the these things roll forward in challenges. It's one of the things I know we have to face.

And California has worked very hard on this I know Mark, and there's been a lot of national coverage of vaccine wariness among segments of the population and I was mentioning communities of color and difficulty getting vaccine to those communities but it's also wariness ... and lately Republicans as a political category have been vaccine hesitant or wary. Tell me about California's well noted effort to try to get vaccine broadly to people.

DR. GHALY: Yeah thank you for the question. And Pien, I'm think really grateful for your insights before, and during this vaccine roll out.

Michael I would say your experience around what we call vaccine tourism is notable. I also one of the things experiences I had with vaccines was delivering them in south Los Angeles as a federally qualified health center. Largely black Latino population. I said I'd never seen so many visitors to this community as I saw that day. And it raised early on the awareness that it wasn't enough to just make the allocations disproportionately to communities of color and communities where we new we'd have to scale a taller wall. A steeper mountain to get across the message and importance of vaccines.

And then in the arms of individuals. So in California we've done a lot. It started, and I'll just emphasize one thing we started out behind on an equity perspective and it was deliberate. We new it was going to happen. We focussed on people in the health care industry who are not you know the frontline workers in hospitals, especially on the health care delivery side are not people lowincome people of color right. There are physicians and in yours and other tech was degrees of education that I think we started in that way. Appropriately on the focus on protecting the health care work force and yes we caught the complete number of workers in those settings so yes some people of color on lower wage jobs but had already we started behind and I don't think the nation has ever caught up.

And it starts in California with allocating vaccine to the right communities and in the right providers. We actually have gone through painstaking detail to look at provider by provider performance on delivering vaccines to individuals and then some unexpected champions of equity have emerged, and they have received additional vaccine. Of we've also deployed resources both financial, media and others to help support the communications. I often say vaccine equity like most equity work is hyper local right. What works in one Latino community, 2 miles away doesn't

work. In a similar Latino community so really how do we craft approaches that recognize, and validate and appreciate the hyper local nature?

So this is finding different types of CBOs in one community T might be the archdiocese. In another it might be you know, a community center. How do you find and create the connections between the ground Troops, and the vaccine providers? I think the point you made pop up clinics, mobile clinics have been a key part of the strategy. Allowing the traditional digital divide issues to be combatted by people who actually go door to door. I think some of the most exciting successful things I've seen are the doorknockers.

The people who go in and sit at the front stop, and talk about vaccines. Some strategies. Same mission site. Mission vaccine location you just mentioned. The fact that they're doing work with people who come and get vaccinated and using the 15 minute monitoring period most vaccine. To actually find out who else is in the household. What else can be done.

So I think we have done a great deal but into he had to do more in terms of communication and language, making sure that we are using trusted messengers. Which then leads to the second part of your question the focus on people sort of on different sides of the political aisle. You know people who are historically maybe more conservative, view of have a different view of health care and vaccines and requirements, and the push for government. Think again using trusted messengers. California digging in more with some of our public safety professionals and leaders, whether that's in sheriff and police and fire. Working with the faith because communities or the evangelical communities to get leaders to believe in the role of vaccine. And another piece of the data I'm looking forward to getting out into the world more and more and we are seeing in it California. The CDC started to release it last week on "breakthrough infections".

One of the strongest points is if people hospitalized with COVID are increasingly those who have not been vaccinated, but those who have been vaccinated are avoiding the hospital I think we have a very powerful tool that can resonate with others if we tell that story the right way. So I think all of those are pieces of the response that California has used both broadly speaking, but specifically with some of our communities that have been traditionally, vaccine weary

PRESIDENT DRAKE: Thank you Mark. Pien, can you give us

some insight into the challenges involved in covering some of the worrisome elements in the pandemic story. For example vaccine variants or just a couple of weeks ago now the pause and the J & J vaccine. And then still reflect object the amazing reality of the vaccine and just the historically short period of time. Do you think negative bias in the news has impeded vaccination efforts.

PIEN HUANG: Sorry I was muted.

I think that's a really important question, and one that is very present in our daily newsroom conversations. How do you report on vaccine hesitancy without unnecessarily contributing to the problem. And I will take the J & J vaccine pause as you mentioned as an example because you want to on the one hand communicate things that are real and potential had highway scary to people while helping to people things in perspective. There were different layers of the coverage around the J & J. I would say the least nuanced question was should I worry about this or not? That was something that people just wanted to understand. Like you know is this something I should be concerned about?

And yes or no. You know but I think that the more nuanced question to ask was, what happened to cause this pause? And how can we actually be minimizing the harm? Is and I think that it's important to get to the deeper questions about this to help people understand the real fact that there are potentially serious severe sideeffects that might be associated with the vaccine, but on the other hand they're very rare, and you know helping people contextualize the risk themselves as being very low I think that those are those are things that will help people identify and understand the risks to themselves and make better decisions for themselves.

I had a lot of conversation was my editor the past week how to talk about this, how to frame it. How to you know, help people understand what the problem was in a rational way instead of a fearful way and that's a balance we try to strike in the messaging because I think at the end of the day as a journalist a lot of it is about balancing what the audience wants and what we want to tell people you know. People tend to want the hot take. They want to know how everyone else is feeling and be able it make up their own mind and similarly as a journalist I want to tell museum what's happening and I want them to also listen for the reason and react rationally instead of fearfully. It's balance we try to strike

PRESIDENT DRAKE: It's fascinating thinking in the way the

stories are reported, an individual significant reaction to the vaccine would get more coverage than 1,000 people dying from the virus. Or 10,000 people actually dying from it the virus. It's quite interesting the way our things that are unique or unusual get a more focus. And sometimes that can tip the balance so it's been an interesting challenge.

I have 2 guess for you secretary I say secretary Ghaly. It's written on my screen. Mark. Forgive me. But just thinking about that the 2 questions one is variants, and your feeling about variants and this great pressure on the virus broadly to find escape variants opportunity so I would love to hear a word about that and then after that I had I've question about public health generally but let me hear from your feeling about that on an April 20th. I know it changes daily

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: I'm going to pop in to say I have a couple of the audience Q & A after you finish Dr. Ghaly.

DR. GHALY: Thanks. I will be brief on this. You know first I think the public assumed variants are a new and surprising thing and I think we do have a responsibility to communicate that this is what RNA viruses do. They do mutate. They mutate a lot. Some of those mutations are meaningful. Others aren't. So for those of us who are at this moment nobody is surprised that we are dealing with this. I think though we are in this situation in California especially so other parts of the country a little different story.

We really are because we have enjoyed low transmission to date. I think our test positivity has almost never been this low at 1.3%. As it stands today. But it really is this race in some ways of getting people vaccinated. Reducing transmission. Reducing the likelihood that replication of the variants that replicate and new mutations get passed on so for us it's really how do we just amplify the vaccine administration work in the face of variants that you know we need to continue to keep our guard up but people are tired on our biggest tool right now to fight variants is getting vaccines administered to as many communities as possible

PRESIDENT DRAKE: Michelle, you have questions from the audience so let me pass over to you to share the.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: Okay. First of all, thanks to all of you. I have to jump in and cut the discussion short. A couple of different things. You know one of them you know Dr. Ghaly I doesn't know if you can spook he can to this is from an audience member asking about how do we trust public health in public health communication what it doesn't

prioritize every including everyone with universe. ... economized communications like captions and ALT text and how can you speak to that sort of massive in quality with only sighted or hearing people accessing infographics and so forth.

DR. GHALY: This is a tremendous opportunity for us to learn and evolve. I think we have done a lot to recognize the inequities and the impact of COVID on the lives of people with disabilities, with other with other needs but we really I think every single news conference I had, had sign language interpretation, but not even in language interpretation and it took us a while so for a state as long as California. We didn't do as much in Spanish as we would have liked to. And it's important opportunity to figure out moving forward because we will have public health media campaigns and conversations moving forward. They may not be hopefully won't be as intense we've had this lot of year but it is the real opportunity, and getting back to this issue of where to our academic and university partners come in. I think this is a tremendous place to relook at some of those opportunities and how we could have seamlessly done a better job.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: Thank you so much. I think we probably have time for one more question and to each of you including you President Drake which is what's the biggest lesson on one of the lessons you learned from communicating with the pandemic over of the past year. Another way to phrase it was what might you have done differently if you could go back to March or April of 2020 and Pien we will start with you.

PIEN HUANG: Sure. So what are some of the biggest lessons. That's a tough question but I will give it a shot. I mean I think you know I this I one of the biggest lessons I've learned during the pandemic is the importance of communicating uncertainty. There was so much not known in the giving the pandemic in terms of how it was transmitted, what parts of the body it was affecting. Some very basic science questions. But even as our scientific knowledge of the disease evolved there were other uncertainty like what was the trajectory of the pandemic and how would people respond to it. And so I think one of the biggest values that we have as journalists is to not only convey the accurate scientific information but to also accurately convey what is not known about a situation. And how you know different scenarios could affect different outcomes so I would say that reporting the full picture including what's known and what's not known is something



that I've been really striving to do.

And that I've sort of realized is really important in terms of maintaining the trust of the public in explaining to people why we think one thing is going to happen but why it might not necessarily happen in the future.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: President Drake do you want to jump in with lessons learned.

PRESIDENT DRAKE: I think this think lessons learned golly, or principles verified or underlined or exhibited I think is how I would address this. A couple of things I think are important.

Once one is that we've seen the importance of inclusion and diversity. Broadly across our country in so many ways that the circumstances of the decisions we make under stress and it times of uncertainty are such that the more you have people from different points of views as a part of the conversation the more effectively you can reflect things that one or another person in the group might not see. And any group we put together who and who looks at an event if you ask everybody who looked at the event what they saw, no one will see exactly the same thing and no one alone will see all of it but if you put the group together you get the more nuanced understanding of what is happened.

And diversity and inclusion were shown to be important in all of the things we do, and in many ways. Another thing I think was clear here and made clear is something we've known made clear is the importance of leadership. The importance of integrity and the importance of accuracy. Kind of shockingly important. I would say because we found that people could be either not led astray or not led in the way they needed to move, and that the effects could be devastating. People could pay for that with their lives but still be led in ways that were to their disinterest for no particular purpose.

So that was sort of stunning to see. And importance for all of us in kind of maintaining a focus on our values. Those things that are important us to. Those things that matter to us and why. And knowing that they continue to plot that straight. That course towards that I'll call it the north star or whatever. That the plotted course towards that's things that are the most important us to and why and do what we can to support that's values and make decisions based on that.

Let me finish by saying things like the importance of family and community and love in our lives,

and when we look at the virus and what it's done, it's really interrupted our ability to interact with our other people. Our families and the things that are the most important to us and how we have to remember what's important and in work in ways to maximize our ability to be able to celebrate those things as we move forward. So.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: So well said. Thank you. Dr. Ghaly I'll give you kind of the final word before we close.

DR. GHALY: Yeah. A couple of things if first. A pick up on themes already shared. But I think one is communicating uncertainty by also the thing we new early things would change, and being able to communicate effectively that we would incorporate the change into our thinking and our policy. One of my common questions that I received sort of in the middle. In the fall, and the Winter was well back in April you said reporters would ask me and say hey you said in April and I finally said one day, well April was like a lifetime ago in COVID knowledge. If you hold me to what I said based on the knowledge we had back then in the approaches and the tools we had, I wouldn't be doing my job. If that's what I depend on today.

So how do you communicate that early on that things would evolve and change. Because I think that led to "confusion". And we could have anticipated some of that earlier, and you know certainly friend like Pien and others on the sort of reporting side, we should work together more to figure out how to thread that needle. The other thing is we often had our messages feel like everyone needed to do the same thing. And we would give broad sweeping messages to all parts of our state on our community. And the truth is because the pandemic affected people disproportionately based on the community they lived in. Some other, you know differences, I think we might have done a different job, a better job of communicating what people in different situations needed to do to get through this in a different way. And this still holds true and vaccinations. When we had scarcity of vaccine there were certain communities we really needed to get vaccinated and not have it with in every one. And the last thing and this is probably the appropriate way to end rather than looking back. The opportunity looking forward.

I have called COVID the great unmasker and the great accelerant. It has unmasked so many things that we have seen or thought of in society like inequities. Disparities. You know many other things but it also gives us this chance accelerate thing that because we are in a funny situation in many states and because of the federal

government as relief we have resources to really build a structure and infrastructure that is quite different than the one we had going into the pandemic.

So how do we use the lessons moving forward? Is all of the things we talk about today and so much more to really build on investments that allow us to have a very different type of response, God forbid we have in 5 years or ten years or 20 years or 20 decades from now, a similar challenge because we use this as an opportunity to build thoughtfully together moving forward, and that's the hope I think I bring to the role and the job today and I expect that everyone on this zoom wants to see us success in that way. So we have a better brighter future for those who are going to be picking up the pieces and for our young people moving forward.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: Well, listen, I am grateful to the 3 of you for sharing your time, and your expertise and your insights. And I look forward to continuing this conversation in the future. So thank you. You know for everyone who is on with us you know this thread about facts and truth and information and disinformation is going to continue during our next session. Which is about challenges to truth, and disinformation and in the digital age. Before we begin we will ask the audience members a couple of questions. You will see a poll come up on your screen. And we'd like to take your temperature on a couple related to disinformation of the first is have you ever believed an article or story and later found out it was not completely true. That's question one.

And then 2 is have you ever shared an article or story and later found out that it was not completely true? And this is anonymous and I'm going to ask folks to be honest and I'm going to ask you to take a minute to participate. Because I think this will be an interesting and fun way to kickoff our next discussion. So go ahead. And take a moment, fill out your poll.

I am going to introduce you to our fearless moderate or for the next panel and that is David Greene senior staff attorney and instabilities director at electronic frontier foundation. David has extensive and significant experience litigating first amendment issues and state and federal trial and appellate courts and has written and lectured and areas of first amendment law including as a contributor to the international encyclopedia of censorship. David was for 12 years the executive director and lead staff council for the first amendment project. I'm going to welcome David and hoping that we can show the results of that poll

as we bring David on.

Okay. Let's take a quick look and our other panelists can join us. Have you ever leafed an article or story and found out it was not true. That's 81% of folks so thank you for sharing that. And then 50% of folks for sharing an article or story. So I think this is an interesting especially in light of the fact most of the couple hundred people on our zoom today are related to higher education.

And so to think of this as the percentage of folks in this realm what will it be in other once. With that David I'm going to disappear.

DAVID GREENE: Thanks Michelle. And I do I think the poll is a nice way to set up the discussion we are going to have here about disinformation. As Michelle said I am a free speech lawyer and typically I am on panels to explain all the legal barriers that exist to try to regulate disinformation, and actually the significant protection that the U.S. legal system that the first amendment affords even false speech, and the hazards of giving governments the power and how the power to punish false statements get abused by less democratic governments so I'm happy we are not going to talk about regulatory solutions today. We are actually going to talk about nonregulatory approaches, and even the challenges of nonregulatory approaches to disinformation. I'm going to let each panelist introduce themselves.

I will start by offering each one a question and ask them to introduce themselves and the work they do in this area and then to answer this question which is how do you define disinformation? And that is you know how do you define this panel? The problem of disinformation and so I'm going to start with Renee DiResta.

RENEE DIRESTA: I'm at Stanford and I would say the definition reuse for disinformation is information with an intent to influence but an intent to deceive. It's component of deception of that doesn't necessarily translate to content that is false. It can be the actor for example that is the element of deception like attention as ses eggs I have the that is a Russian troll. ... it's just an opinion. But if you're presenting those claims when you are not actually a text as... when you are a paid operative in Russia we get into an element of deception and that's where the disinformation component comes in.

DAVID GREENE: René, I've heard you speak before about authenticity, and I wonder if you can comment on that a bit as well.

RENEE DIRESTA: Authenticity is the low hanging fruit. The idea of authenticity who was more important to truth. We didn't want the platforms evaluating the substance of the content of the question of authenticity came into play around the idea is of is the person you're engaging with who they say they are. Is the person who is you know the is there a real journalist or is it a puppet. Is there a real person or is it manipulation campaign.

Authenticity was a way to assess disinformation again not context of the content but in the context of the behaviors around the content how it was spread. And the voices behind the content. Who was actually creating this material.

DAVID GREENE: Great. Okay, now we will move to Ebonee Rice. Please introduce yourself and how do you fine disinformation and the problems of disinformation.

EBONEE RICE: Hi everyone. I'm so pleased to be here as David said I'm Ebonee. I work with the news literacy project and we are a national nonpartisan education nonprofit and our work focuses on providing educators and the general public with resources programs and support to be active consumers in news and other information and to teach how to discern fact from fiction in news and other forms of media so it that people can be equal and engage participants in our democracy and every day civic life. We believe that one of the primary solutions to the misinformation problem that we find ourselves in and the disinformation problem is education.

And so we primarily work with teachers but we also work with a general public to provide support, to understand and to combat miss, and disinformation. My work really focuses on connecting with educators in regions across the country on the ground to work together to figure out the best way to get news literacy education in schools across the country.

I help to build our local footprint on the ground which is why this topic is so important. And we really define disinformation I think Reneé said something important which is the intent behind it. Which is so difficulty to know when you are looking at your news feed. What someone's intentions are. Disinformation is created to cause miss usually manipulates something happening in societiten as eat misleading... we defined disinformation as something created to create distrust or manipulate something that's already happening in a way that is chaotic and advances some type of underlying agenda.

DAVID GREENE: So we saw in the poll almost I think 50% of

the respondents said that they had believed they probably had spread around something that was inaccurate. But I think they would all have asked say they probably didn't have an intend to deceive people. Are they how do we are they part of the problem? Are half of our participants part of the problem or because they lack the intent is it are they not?

EBONEE RICE: I would say, and I would love to hear what Alice and René say so there is a larger moniker of misinformation, and many of us if not all of us shared something before online or otherwise that wasn't true. Without an intention. You either thought it was true so your sharing information you found valuable or helpful with family or trusted friend or you saw that is that caused a reaction and you're like other people should know in information and your shared it and later found you to the it wasn't true. We have all fallen victim to this which is inherently, a part of the issue. It's easy to share and pass along information because vetting it that's something that we're like learning how to do but sometimes our national inclination when we feel an emotional or tug to have a response to something, which is why disinformation is so dangerous, because it spreads so quickly.

I mean there are so many stats how quickly incorrect information spreads online. And so I'm saying all that on say that under this large moniker of misinformation there are things that we just shared because we didn't know whether it was true or not. Or it came from a trusted person. A celebrity or some kind of figure head. A political someone in politics we trust so we saw something we shared it, and we thought it was true and that based on what we understand disinformation to be would not be considered disinformation. It would just be misinformation shared probably with a pure intention but yet it is dangerous and caused potentially some kind of harmful effect of the end of it.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: Thanks. Alice, same question. Please let everyone know who you are and what the work you do.

And how do you define disinformation and the problem.

ALICE MARWICK: Sure, thanks David. I'm Alice Marwick. I'm a qualitative social scientist and a professor at UNC chapel hill where I'm principle researcher for the center for information technology and public live looking at the relationship between emerging technologies. Information and democracy. And part of my work looks at media manipulation and disinformation. I'm especially interested in the context of disinformation. Whether it's the

communities and spaces where it's generated. A lot of those are sort of this fringe communities or extremist or far right communities. And I'm also interested in how people interpret disinformation and how they take it up.

In terms of how we define it I think that you know people already seen a little bit after difference in the panelists today. I personally think of it as information that is strategy false information spread purposely. I'm interested in how I think disinformation I believe is sort of inherently political. It's often linked to identity and it's also often linked I think to questions of inequality and perpetrating inequality.

DAVID GREENE: And, where do how do we, the current discussion we have now about disinformation how does this sort of fit in historically with other I mean I don't think any of us think disinformation is a phenomena. How do you see this fitting in historical context.

ALICE MARWICK: That's a great question. It's been since 2016 people have been really focussed on disinformation. And if you do a Google search or anything like that you'll see there's been like a huge increase in trust in disinformation since then. If we think about disinformation as something with a long history we can see a lot of antecedents to today. One project is we have been looking at historical episodes of disinformation that at the time we probably wouldn't have thought of as disinformation but now we can look back and see they were.

One example is during the Reagan administration there was perpetrator transportation of the Welfare play. It was based on a woman. She was a con artist. And the Reagan administration came up with at idea of a woman usually a black woman who was sort of scamming the Welfare system and getting thousands of dollars in Welfare benefits and spending the money and fur coats and Cadillacs. This was ridiculous. It had no basis in reality of it is flat out racist but it was used over the years to justify really big decreases to Welfare and really harsh restrictions on who could get well fair and the kinds of people who deserved public benefits. And so we can think of this as strategically false information spread for an ideological information that had an outcome of increasing in quality and when you think about disinformation outside of like you know 2021 we also to realize there's things besides social platforms where disinformation is spread.

That you see disinformation spread in more traditional or legacy forms of media as well. Things like

cable news. Talk shows, podcasts as well as what we would think of as you know mainstream social media and also fringe forms of social media or social media like telegram or what's and and things likes that

DAVID GREENE: Thanks. René I'm wondering if you have a take on this. On what the role that sort of you know social media platforms which get a lot of the attention now in terms of being vectors for misinformation what role do think play in a larger

RENEE DIRESTA: We try to information disinformation ones a form of propaganda. We are not always 100% in agreement as researchers on which term to use and where and I think this is sort of a matter of interpretation. But we see it as propaganda, and propaganda has always evolved to fit the technology of the day and in the era of the printing press in the 1300 looks different than propaganda with mass media and television. So the form of the messages evolves. You move from long form narratives the kind of cold war propaganda active measures and disinformation campaigns where there's front media property and back in the olden days you had to work hard to. There were spies and the ground and money changing hands and agents of influence meeting in dark alley. The now you throw up a Facebook page. There is the front of you use an alias. And you communicate with people over DM to try to entice them into doing are work for you. What's happening is the social media is I would argue like a channel in media.

We treat it as 2 separate things because the afford answers are different. It is ordinary people can create the aliases. Versus media which has a different degree of requirements that go into the establishment of something that has a broadcast license for example or you know ways in which the requirements are a little different but ultimately what we see is information really pingponging back between the two. As a specific example you know in early narratives around coronavirus. Chinese state media was doing something overt putting out misleading claims using it their attributable channels and with blue check influencers on. The ministry of foreign affairs echoing content that was on their state media pages. But then when you see is the false spectrum.

The creation of fake social media sock puppet becomes the fake. They are out there saying the same things that the state media is saying but in a much more subversive way as if they are ordinary members of the public who also think these things. We see a lot of information campaigns today as having this sort of false



spectrum where social media and media again they are talked about differently because there's differences in the capabilities and the way they are regulated or not regulated but ultimately it is using the entire environment to create a popular perception and that's where it's close to a

DAVID GREENE: I have a question for each of you. In the current state when might it be particularly difficult for a consumer, an earnest consumer, well intentioned consumer of information to distinguish between truth and not truth.

ALICE MARWICK: Can you repeat the question.

DAVID GREENE: When be, there are specific situations where it's particularly difficult for a consumer of information to distinguish between truth and not truth.

ALICE MARWICK: I think first of all we can't always assume that what is true and what is false are like really clear things right. There's a lot of debatable political issues where based on your political position, your identity. Your sort of like partisan identity you're going to believe different things are true and some of those things are things that yes we can say this is true or this is false. Like I don't you know I don't believe like for example the QAnon. That is false information but there's other kind of information that aren't necessarily so clear cut.

When we are talking about vaccine hesitancy or coronavirus we can say yes these things are wrong. These things are not true. These things are being spread. They are unclear. But there's a lot of other things that there's more of a gray area and I think that's when we get into sort of it's like hyper partisan media and ideologically biased immediate why where some of the narratives being pushed are more exploitable because there's more of a room for debate and discussion. So I think depending on the context and the type of information you're talking about there may be things where you know even to very knowledgeable people might have a difference of opinion with something that's true or false.

I think a lot of the times what we need to be doing is thinking about okay what are the who is harmed by this type of information? What is the impact of this type of disinformation. And centering communities that are harmed and centering sort of the harmful effects of information that is clearly false or information that has these sort of negative outcomes I think is really partner.

DAVID GREENE: Ebonee. There was a question in the Q & A about efficient ways to persuade consumers of information, of truth, but I want to talk about your work which

specifically focuses on news media. And talk about the in the aches of quality based media with the current channels people use for disseminating and getting news, how that affects the spread of disinformation.

EBONEE RICE: Sure. It's good question. So I think it's important to know kind of right off top that information is really the fundamental element of democracy. So it's the thing at the forefront. In journalism is a core component of news literacy so our work centers journalism and quality based journalism and at the center of the work so when I say when you say quality based journalism you mean news organizations that follow the standards of quality journalism which are verification. Sourcing fairness accountability and context. And in the past there were 3 major white male owned news outlets that everybody for the most part got news from. So it was clear because there were just these few stations people got information from as it related to news media.

Now however there's so many forms of media and so I think it can get confusing because people can choose who they want it listen to or who they watch, who they believe. How they want to engage with information and how they want to ingest it. So we believe it's really important to center and talk about the standard for quality based journalism because we understand when people know what those things are you can hold news organizations accountable and I'm specifically talking about news and not other forms of information but you can hold organizations accountable and discern when something is maybe an opinion piece versus when something is a news article and vetted and sourced. You can find the links to something when you're sharing when you see a quote from an article if you see the link back to the article owe you can go back and check it out so you can follow some standards for yourself. To make sure the information your ingesting and sharing is actually information that is true.

And in another reason why this is so important is because we believe that citizens should know how to analyze, information. We believe that this type of information that journalism is really at the center of societal issues. Of challenges. Determining political priorities like this is really the thing that our society is made of. And so if people can understand how to assess information and I don't mean like going back and checking sources every time you know you calling sources every time you see a news article but seeing who the quotes are from, and if again there's like a link to the article with the

context of the article is so if when you see a quote and social media or something finding the actual context of the quote instead of like taking the quote out of context and then kind of turning something that was meant for one thing into something totally different.

And that is so easy to do when we see it all up and down the news feeds but also in a lot of different forms of media we consume because we have so much different options. So one of the tenets of democracy as you all know is free speech and being able to have this right. So we believe along with that comes the responsibility and importance for us to help to educate the next generation how to really sift through this incredibly complicated information ecosystem that they're in. It is the most complex climate we've seen in human history and if we aren't empowering students particularly, but also the general public, with the sense abilities to sift through information then we are actively district empowering young people from being engaged and participating in the fundamental aspects of democracy.

DAVID GREENE: We hear a lot about fact check being. Of where does that fit in the tool kit.

RENEE DIRESTA: When people say fact checking they probably mean a few different things. We some of the things we talk.

EBONEE RICE: You are reading an article and open another tab to check whatever it is you're reading. Check it against other things. Maybe not checking article but you see something online and you want to verify it. We also talk about reverse image searching which allows you to take an image and see if at that image has been somewhere else online so you can see if the image is manipulated and how many version exist.

There is an infographic we have called 4 ways to sanitize your news feeds and offers 4 ways it's mainly for social media. But 4 ways to tell if something is false that you're seeing online or not. And it only takes a few second so when we talk about fact checking we are just talking about like a quick check before you, before you share something and the first step actually in the check is to not act on your emotions. And there's so much information we see that manipulates our emotions and it's sometimes intended to do that because it preys on our identities. You see something and you become inflamed and you share or comment or perpetuate a message that way not be true because there was something that was rolled up and you need to do that. When we talk about fact checking we

talk about reading the comments. A lot of times people have already done it and posted the real article. People are so quick sometimes online you don't even have to do it.

Just stop the spread of misinformation because we recognize that each of us are like somebody's we have an audience with somebody. If you're sharing information over text message. Online what have you. There are there is a trusted circle of people to trust and listen to you doing a quick check it takes seconds and it's beneficial and really helps more than we know.

DAVID GREENE: Alice, I want to ask you you've written and studied how QAnon followers evaluate. What can we learn from that about the challenges we face trying to elevate quality news sources if that's one tool to combat disinformation.

ALICE MARWICK: Yeah, so I think this goes straight to the heart of what Ebonee was talking about because so QAnon as some people probably know it's a sort of conspiracy theory that holds there's that sort of like, elite of people that are Satanic child eating pedophiles. And that that he believe and unfortunately, it has much broader uptake than you might think and increasingly large percentage of Americans believe this and there's actually some evidence that this belief is actually being pushed by foreign adversaries. They don't tend to trust traditional politics. It's really something that is an antidemocratic theory fundamentally.

And as a result we can't really just write off everyone who believes in QAnon as people who are gullible or people who are silly. This is a problem we have to tackle. And part of that is understanding the problem. And so myself and one of my graduate students we spent about a year hanging around a QAnon spaces and watching what QAnon people do when they are coming up with the theories, and when they are evaluating things and what we found really surprised us. Because these are folks who think of themselves as critical thinkers. They believe that they're practicing media literacy. They spent a lot of time talking about the importance of citing sources and the importance of doing their own research and in some ways those who the kind of things I encourage my students to do.

So what is happening here? How are these people able to believe in conspiracy theories completely false while believing they are doing research? And the answer to that is that what they think of as doing research isn't what I would think of as doing research or what you know Renee or Ebonee or David would think of. They don't recognize

traditional journalism. Say the New York Times or CNN or NPR. They think that these news sources are not factual. They believe that this is part of an elite lying to them so anything that is sort of reported by these traditional media sources they think of as false.

So they're going to sort of reject anything out of hand. That the traditional media puts in front of them. So as a result they are research is more about making connections and connections the dots. It's almost like a game. Like they are trying to excavate a pit of knowledge. What you see is a lot of QAnon people they put together databases and they will go through records. Or Wikipedia or linked in or they'll you know try to trays the dots between people who invested in other people's companies and the things that they see as evidentiary are not what you or I would think of as evidentiary. And then they're building on a house of cards.

They're starting with a shaky foundation and building those theories on top of them. But what this points to is it's not a simple for these folks as saying well here is the actual fact right or here are a New York Times article about this thing you're concerned about because they're just not going to believe these things. So one of our challenges as researchers is how to we reach people like that and if you have people in your lives who have gone down these rabbit holes you know how difficult it is to sort of turn people back once they've gone down the pathways worker they are believing things completely different than what the mainstream media is telling us.

One thing we are working on is trying to think about how do we work with people with these extreme belief systems because tools like fact checking that work on most people will not necessarily be as effective in those communities and unfortunate I don't have a solution for this the problem. But it is something that I think is really worthwhile and very worth thinking about.

DAVID GREENE: René I want to turn to you. There's a bunch of questions in the chat about how this is putting a lot of burden on users to try and sort through this information and the especially you no the context of COVID. And public health information and it changing all the time, and I know you've got into this area by really looking at vaccine disinformation. So I wonder if you can briefly respond to people what are the what are the tools. What's a person who wants to get accurate information or wants to educate friend with accurate education public health information and COVID vaccine information. What are they

do to.

RENEE DIRESTA: Yeah, it's a big challenge. It's a nuanced challenge. First what Alice was referring to the question of who do you trust? That is such a fundamental core challenge, that's bigger than media and social media, that's really a kind of a fundamental social issue which is there's astonishing lack of trust in immediate enthusiasm it's grown over time. A lack of truce in institutions institutional authorities and what's remarkable as Ebonee said. We are in a transitional moment. I hesitate to say that because I think there's always the risk that like you've forgotten history but when you look at major pivotal moments in collective sense making how people tomorrow together and make determines there are moment of upheaval punctuated throughout history that follow significant technological shifts.

If a technological shift changing the way people receive information and communicate and leads to a period of reorienting. In this case the question is what are the levers to help with that? There's education. Media literacy. There's policy and the roles that regulators and ways we think about what how information should move perhaps or you know should be curated is another way of describing that.

The levers are regulatory, but platforms can rethink and come up with more reliable mechanisms for curating right. To help decide you know what is surface. Is it just is a ... or engagement above he was always necessarily producing the informed community of people? But one of the areas where there's real challenge is as you said with COVID antivaccine information is very very very old. Goes back to the 1800's. The inoculation against small pox. The idea there are antievacuators is not now. What's interesting is the way in which the ecosystem privileges anything with high engagement and amplifies those points of view. Know one is arguing they need to be removed. That's something we've started to see a little bit more action on now in the context of COVID but one of the key questions has been can we simply not amplify it or surface it. It's there but you have to look for it as oppose it had on recommendation engine.

The other area this is a challenge with COVID is COVID is an example of an evolving body of knowledge where we don't know was accurate so that's particularly by people interested in further eroding confidence in media as the expert just didn't know. As if that means that the experts have failed or faltered. COVID has been interesting in

that the experts have had to evolve their communication about a disease as they understand the disease. And so we have people who are expecting information to move at the speed of the Internet where every time you hope twitter you would see something new about COVID how it was transmitted and what cures would work. I'm sure you remember doom scrolling about a year ago trying to figure out what is going on.

But information actual reputable information about the modality of new disease doesn't happen at the speed with which we refresh our twitter feed so you have a gap. you have opportunity for people to come and provide knowledge that may not actually be reputable but you've got a 50% chance. Maybe you get lucky and you are the guy at that says the thing that does turn out to be true. Of does that mean you have become an expert that you know people should look to for health information? No it actually doesn't. And so there's some real interesting questions about how do we think about authority? And it's intersection was ex per his or institutions and expertise and do we move forward a model where we as a society recognize we have this kind of time horizon gap between the information that we see.

And the repute ability or you know reinforced validity of the information as coming through a scientific process. This transitional period as we trying to come into new ways of making sense of facts and the age of mass....

DAVID GREENE: I want to make sure we have time to I want to move the conversation to particularly how this apply in the university environmental and on campus so I'm wondering what do you do each of you see as the university's role in the battle against disinformation, and maybe what are the particular difficulties where the universities environmental need to be particularly active in addressing disinformation. Ing who wants to go first on that one?

ALICE MARWICK: One of the things we are concerned with right now especially with the name of this conference is SpeechMatters is the fact that universities are increasingly becoming an area where these battles over disinformation are taking place. A lot of this has to do with the classroom. One of the things that we are really concerned with is that there's this sort of idea right now that professors who are spreading who write about or research about certain topics or caught in the cross fires of sort of harassment campaigns online, a lot of those are around disinformation like they will talk about they will

take a professor's comments out of context or they'll accuse a professor of doing something or other with research, and then there's movement to have students take their professor's lectures and put them online, make them susceptible to criticism from outside forces.

Or in the worse cases talking about junior researchers like graduate students or untenured professors or adjunct faculty attracted for research that might be controversial or might have a political component to it.

What we see is universities are generally not very good at dealing with those types of things. If you have a graduate student getting attacked online because they are doing a project on something and they are department is getting a bunch of phone calls or complaints, a lot of the time a university does not really understand these might be an organized harassment campaign and the student might not have done anything wrong and often it's just they tell the student like, take get off the Internet or keep a lower profile or something like that.

So some of the thing we we about is in the information really sort of overlaps with these harassment campaigns and professors get caught in the crossfire. We believe universities need to support their faculty especially their vulnerable faculty like graduate students and adjuncts and they also need to understand that the classroom needs to be a space of intellectual exploration. It's not about indoctrinating students but it is about professors professors have to be the ability to discuss things like critical race theory or white privilege without worrying that their lectures about are going to get taped on put on the Internet and criticized. So right now I think that there's a lot that we are seeing sort of the beginning of a lot of those battles play out in educational spaces. And it's definitely something to kind of keep an eye on and watch out for in the future.

RENEE DIRESTA: I see this problem as distinct from disinformation and I think one of the the things that's happening is we are trying to figure out how do we engage in collective sense making. How do we have conversations with hard issues. How do we facilitate open dialogue? And as somebody at a university the debate and the push back and the of discussing ideas is something that is so critical. So critical to the spirit of inquiry. And one of the things that I think is happening is that as harassment on the Internet I think is a has become such a concern because the impacts can be profound so you can see the there but more the grace of God go I moments. It has



potentially chilling effects on how people speak and engage because they are afraid somebody is going to screen shot a comment, audio record it of the post to twitter try it get them fired. Such a broad spectrum much it's a like a scalp for a scalp. There's a concern that has rendered the ability to have those conversations it has really limited them because of the concerns that is going to happen.

I don't see it so much in issue of disinformation. As an issue of trust and safety and social media writ large. These 2 things get blended because of the fact that often times they all get kind of lumped under content moderation of the way the mechanism and means by which you moderate an authentic network or a coordinated disinformation campaign is separate and distinct from the way that you would moderate your run of the mill harassment. The run of the mill harassment does figure into disinformation campaigns as a tactic at times but it is also sort of a separate and distinct problem and I think there's a little bit of a blending of these 2 things together in a way that when there's actually some separation there.

DAVID GREENE: Ebonee, what do you see as the university's role in the battle against disinformation.

EBONEE RICE: Yeah, you know I don't know if I have a strong argument there. We mainly work at the upper elementary through 12 level. But even still there are a few educators that we work with who teach freshman courses and so on and so forth but we kind of see the intervention happening way before the university level. Yet and still though I think that what we are kind of agreeing on is that there has to be some in the intervention made and particularly in... that's where free thought is encouraged or should be encouraged that's where to Alices point intellectual curiosity happens and so our goal is that students are really learning how to think, and aren't of course being indoctrinated but learning how to understand these very very complex things on their own. And so our hope is it that that happens before they get thank you the higher education levels so that way by that time hopefully there's some fostering of really collaborative engaging conversation that is don't lead to any type of harmful things on behalf of the educators and the university or the students.

DAVID GREENE: I am wondering if any of you thought does the university have a role in directing debate? I mean if you have an environment of open inquiry and you have students at a point developmentally where they're starting

to question, you know conventional thinking, and may want to challenge majority views. What is how does the university sort of balance those interests in wanting to prevent the spread of harmful information or even itself being a vector of harmful information with the value of encouraging open inquiry and the healthy skepticism and you know, and the challenge to conventional views the student want to challenge. Anybody have any great ideas.

EBONEE RICE: I'll share something I think is important. So in recently in the last few months released a lesson on conspiratorial thinking, and again it's for middle and high school students but the point is it really kind of goes into the history of conspiratorial thinking and talks about an analyzes kind of how certain conspiracies came to be. It doesn't focus on specific conspiracies but hovers over the point that conspiratorial thinking isn't new and there are a lot of things that certain lines of thinking we see, manifesting are building upon it's just coming into a kind of coming into fruition in if a way we've never seen before. I think 2020 was the perfect storm for this so we see in ha new way.

One thing I appreciated is how students can see and understand the historical context as it relates to a lot of the things they are seeing today and I think when you understand that, when you can balance what you're seeing now based on the historical context of certain themes ideal injuries you can have healthy skepticism and question things in a way that's productive and healthy. University level that K through 12 level those are the perfect environment to foster that type of information sharing. That type of collaboration and understanding. And so I think when really important thing is really understanding and explaining the history of not just conspiratorial thinking but the history of miss and disinformation and the themes we are talking about and then I think students will start to have a more healthy understanding and appreciation for a lot of the themes that we are talking about today. Because they will have kind of the historical context to really ground these conversations.

ALICE MARWICK: I teach at the oldest public university in the United States in North Carolina which is a purple state. It's got so many of the diversity that makes America interesting and my students come from a huge variety of backgrounds, and communities and political beliefs. And my job as an educator is not to be didactic it is it's to give them it the tools to learn in today's complicated media environment and to understand just

because they see something on instagram doesn't mean it's any that it's any more valid than something that they might have seen on a supermarket tabloid 25 years ago.

I really love working with undergrads but when you're 19 or 20 you know you are at your most like fiery. Like idealistic. When I was very obnoxious. I thought I knew everything and my political beliefs were 100% and I disagree with a lot of the things I thought back then. But we have to meet the students where they are. It's not about saying oh our he so wrong. How do you think that? Hike your whole family. No that's going to turn people off. To doesn't open minds. You have to sort of encourage them to think like think historically. Think contextually. Like bring the life experiences and the intellectual rigor that really good universities encourage in their students. So I think it's about having empathy for students every having and understanding of diversity and an understanding of their experiences, and trying to as a professor maintain your open mind right. To not be closed off to learning from your students or from understanding that you know they are coming from a different point of view than you are. And that the best way to reach them is to meet them there

EBONEE RICE: So I think what Alice said was important. Particularly on the kind of circling around the idea of cultural competency in this conversation because I think by the time you get to especially like the college level, there are things that you've learned not just from the media but from your families. From your parents. From whoever raised you and reared you and you will an of that you bring to the classroom and to wherever spaces that you intern. It's important to approach this work with the level of cultural competency and not to rid every conspiracy theory off as well that's just crazy because there are a lot of historical and valid reasons why certain communities en masse blessed certain things over other things and there's very good reasons for that so I think allowing students to understand like the full broader picture of something and letting them make you up their own minds and not hiding what is once done that's harmful and now kind of led to something that is just really hard to reverse now. Is very difficult and allowing students to wrestle with that and allowing universities to wrestle with that and educators to wrestle with that tension so that students can kind of draw their own conclusions and come up with their own ideas.

DAVID GREENE: We have time for one last question and I am

going to ask a hard one everybody it's within that I have myself too because most of my career as a public interest lawyer I've done for 20 years, I've represented journalists, and but most of the journalists I represent aren't affiliated with major news organizations because they used to be able to pay lawyers. So I've he done a lot of work with independent journalists and journalists operating and nondemocratic societies and a lot of the metrics that get used in terms of assessing quality journalism or trying to elevate some sources you can have a human rights implication of disadvantaging journalists to don't for example have the privilege of being able to put real names on work. So some of the fact checking models one of the things that he had excavated a journalist was do they have a pseudonym. So we had a question in the chat is there a risk I can of honoring traditional or mainstream media that imposes an orthodoxy. Is this new and innovative thinking. Does this is a human rights dimension for journalists operating in societies where there is not an institute where the institutional media is actually government controlled media. And that the only independent media is those that operates outside that system. That's a really hard last question. But I will let you try and answer it.

RENEE DIRESTA: I think there have been a couple there's couple of things I think related to how we process media and process emerging media in particular. This is kind of an on going debate on social platforms because again many of them rely on the infrastructure of social networks for independent journalism because it provides things we need the means of production that are otherwise outside the reach ability of many small organizations. One thing we've seen is actually attempts to label state media. In countries where there is strong state media component even if it doesn't have the state media obviously named in the country of origin named in the publication there's movement to help educate people about educate about where the content is coming from.

For independent journalism there is a storied history in the U.S. of pseudonym writing and speech and I don't think this is where the idea that necessarily it is not de facto in authentic to be using a pseudonym. One area that is interesting that is emerging now is the sense of kind of persistent pseudonymity. There's kind of continuity there. We see this for users particularly users in parts of the world where they are potentially penalized for speech in serious ways. So is there something to kind

of follow that thread over time? Establishing an idea, identity not necessarily tied to a true name but a sustained series of engagements over time perhaps.

And then I think on the subject of do we run the risk of recreating the manufacturer of consent by only surfacing the mainstream media? Of course I don't know anybody is arguing that that is a system that we should want to go back to. I think that social media has allowed for this proliferation of voices and for the proliferation of speech particularly in places you're describing where they are highly filtered or controlled media. It has provided an opportunity for these new publications to emerge. I think that the question of how social media should cure eight those is an open question. I think that there are ways to evaluate whether a journalist is pseudonym or not is the content accurate. Is the consent does it meet other criteria one would establish as being reputable or authentic and using other signals versus solely a person's name deciding how to think about how to weight that content across the amplification programs the platforms are using.

ALICE MARWICK: I am going to have to jump in. I hate to end this conversation it clearly to be the subject of the entire conference but I really want to extend my gratitude to all of you to are.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: For such a thoughtful discussion and so insightful, and as a lawyer I already was so happy we didn't talk about the law. So I'm going to thank you. And we are going to move onto have a little video coming up where we are going to focus on our fellows program. Many of you know that our fellows program is one of the cornerstones of the work that the center does. Of the and in light of world events this class has been completely virtual. This however has not precluding them forming a cohort on accomplishing the research goals. They are a truly incredible group and while I wish all of you could interact with them. I'm glad we have the opportunity to showcase them and their work in this video.

(Video on).

SPEAKER: That are interested in tackling challenging and timely issues pertaining to expression, academic freedom and campus life. Our third class is an exceptional group of individuals representing students, professors law enforcement, policy makers and senior administrators. Their research centers on complex topics such as student activism. Student leader information networks. Targeted harassment of faculty and the relationship between students and campus law enforcement. And while the past year has

been difficult in so many ways they've continued to engage with members of their campus communities and have found a new and inspired ways to move their research forward. We are excited to present work to you early this Summer. But in the meantime let's hear what they are doing to safeguard and encourage the free exchange of ideas while ensuring the at values of equity and inclusion.

OTHER SPEAKER: My project called documented students at the university of California system free speech... and political engagement. Aims to up left and elevate undocumented students voices through research and advocacy with the goal time prove and create policies and practices to better serve and protect undocumented students and the free speech.

OTHER SPEAKER: So the primary goal that I'm trying to achieve with my fellows project which is focussed on using social media data to identify basically discrepancies or asymmetries with respect to how good the information users are receiving from their social media feeds, is and how that varies by political orientations.

OTHER SPEAKER: My project examines the relationship between black administrators and black student activists on college campuses. This project came out of another student activism project I'm working on when I was interviewing folks for that project it became clear that black administrators had a particular experience when it came to activism especially activism related to race, and in which there are interaction.

OTHER SPEAKER: My project is about institutional values and how schools like university of California can promote it's values while respecting the first amendment rights and academic freedom rights of those within the institution that might not share the same values.

OTHER SPEAKER: My fellowship project is... Nazi March through Illinois that occurred almost 50 years ago. The March was a real clash between the values of free speech, and those of the tolerance and safety of a community. They had the highest incidents of holocaust survivors in the United States at the time. The curriculum is designed to get students to participate and engage on first amendment issues and understand the different perspectives of both the community. The ACLU. The judges as well as the producter groups of people in and around the Chicago area. And the press as they all played a role in the controversial of the.

OTHER SPEAKER: One of the cool things about our collective project and our coming together to work on this is that you

know ALI has a good understanding of the use of force and I come from if a student affairs background.

OTHER SPEAKER: One of our goals is to understand the frequent conflict that occurs between student protesters on campus law enforcement and we are doing that by answering our research questions.

SPEAKER: My project is called tweets threats and sensor them. Campus resources to help support faculty through incidence of targeted harassment. There are 2 main project goals. First I'm conducting an interviews with... members of the public. This could be harassment from individuals or harassment that's organized by groups of people who are organizations. Through these interviews I am examining incidents of and interesting the potential silencing and self censorship of these experiences.

SPEAKER: My fellowship project has to do with the tensions between free speech, and diversity equity and inclusion efforts on college and university campuses. And in particular I am trying to get in touch with chief diversity officers to understand how they sort of deal with these tensions, in particular what kinds of issues do they face. And what kinds of strategies have they used to try to deal with these things.

OTHER SPEAKER: So the inspiration for my project came from a conference panel I was on last year. We were talking about free speech in it the classroom, and, of course, in the conversation the topic of socalled self censorship came up and... of course could reflect a problem mat dynamic in a classroom but at the same time don't we want students to moderate speech sometimes. Don't we all stop ourselves from saying things that might be further full or offensive, and hopefully frequently and I would see some podium in the audience nodding and clearly following what I was saying and some folks just reacting in horror. And this made me realize we really need a much more complex way of thinking about how students actually think about their own and others speech in the classroom.

OTHER SPEAKER: The relationship between media and what constitutes our common understanding is more important than ever. Campusbased activism is certainly a part of the media discourse so for the past couple of years I have I am working with college to develop a measure focussing on campus organizers implement their particular interests or ambitions through different types of organizing and activism.

OTHER SPEAKER: Keep an eye out for the release of the 2020, 2021 class of fellows research followed by a seer I

was interactive fellows in the field digital workshop.  
 SPEAKER: Learn more at free speech center.university of  
 California.EDU.

(Video off)

OTHER SPEAKER: Each year.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: If that video piqued your interest  
 feel free to reach out to the center fellows we will be  
 announcing the 2021, 2022 class of fellows in the coming  
 weeks. And speaking of fellows. (Please stand by)

KEITH WITTINGTON. ..rally around this common interest.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: I love there's something encouraging  
 coming out of the conference but before we get into the  
 nature of the issue and the details about AFA let's go to  
 the basics which is what is academic freedom and also how  
 would you distinguish it from freedom of speech because  
 sometimes people are confused by those dinner circles and  
 the when and how and if they overlap.

KEITH WITTINGTON: There's certainly some overlap and in my  
 back I didn't spend as much time as I should have on  
 distinguishing between the 2 things. Because they are  
 somewhat different and they rest on somewhat different kind  
 of considerations. They have different drivers and  
 different limitations associated with them. So  
 traditionally speaking in the United States we think of  
 academic freedom as resting in 3 basic buckets.

In particular in the 1940 American association of  
 university professors report and lots of universities in  
 the United States have wound up adopting and integrating  
 into their own governing documents. So in one bucket is a  
 pretext of faculty to do the research. The adult ought to  
 have the freedom to publish without the university  
 censoring the content. Faculty have a right to teach and  
 they ought it be able to do so without undue restrictions  
 from again universities administers. But that comes along  
 with certain kinds of limitations associated with. So  
 faculty are expected to stick to the actual content of the  
 course and not bring in unnecessary and irrelevant content  
 to a particular class, and use the captive audience of the  
 students to convey unrelated messages.

Faculty are expected to convey professionally  
 competent knowledge so that you are not viewing things that  
 you're discipline as a whole would hold as false  
 information but conveying to your students as if it's true.  
 And so that freedom and the classroom also comes with  
 certain kinds of professional limitations on the basis of  
 it so we don't think that have as an lectern and the  
 classroom as a free speech forum where you can say whatever



you want to as a faculty member. .

The third bucket is what they characterize as extra mural or intra mural speech about matters of general public concern where it looks the most closely like free speech construed. It's simply a right to be able to speak out on things that matter to you that might matter to the general public and voice your own opinion. In that regard and those may well be opinions that have nothing to do with your own expertise. You're not speaking on the basis of your academic expertise. You're speaking on the basis often of your own personal views like any other private individual. In America and so on that dimension things actually do start looking like the free speech dimension. . We lose sight of important aspects of the difference FC we blur what's happening on social media with what's happening in the classroom or in people's scholarship

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: That's helpful. Thank you. To get back on one of our poll questions. Why do you feel like we're hearing so much more about academic freedom and do you think it's under siege in a different way than it has been you know since 1940 or since the 1915 AAUP declaration was an instituted.

KEITH WITTINGTON: I think always want to caution people not to imagine there's ever a golden age where academic freedom or free speech on campus was protected. It's a longterm challenge to both understand these principles adequately. Implement them appropriately and defend them from threats and there's often threats to faculty being able to to pursue what they are doing. The was precisely in order to try to improve the situation. Which was then quite bad. We struggled throughout the 20th this sent Troy expand academic freedom and have often been successful so it's important to try to salvage what we gain and preserve it moving forward. And part of what's changed around universities now is I think the rise in the Internet and social media that faculty are much more visible. Students are more advisable to the general public.

On the one hand that means the general public is more easily exposed to the unfiltered views of faculty which are not always pretty and can generate controversy. It's easier to know what is what happens and campuses. One feature is every time there's protest suddenly the whole world is potentially aware of it. And that can really skew our perception of what is actually happening on campuses. How bad the situation is. It gives people the wrong impression about what university life is actually like as a consequence. And that can lead to some backlash against

campus that is can be troubling. Now we are seeing backlash from politicians who were unhappy what they think are happening on college campuses. Sometimes their view is not necessarily as well informed. One worry we have is this dramatic poly satisfactory occurring in general in society. This seems to be having specific consequences for academia. We are now in a situation where Republican leaning voters are much more distrustful of higher education than they were answer ooh few years ago whereas democrats are supportive of higher education. That's not a sustainable situation in the long run.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: Absolutely not and I imagine some of these course forces were a significant part of what led you and other colleagues to form the freedom alliance. I was hoping you could tell us about AFA and how it's distinct from a longstanding...

KEITH WITTINGTON: The other organizations occupying this space that are doing important work. I think the problem is nomination ways is that the volume of cases is so severe and the threats we are facing now are so daunting that we really need as many voices as possible. I have come to view this as an all hands on deck that for many of us me included had other intellectual projects we wanted to be spending our time on but I think that this is essential to what universities are going to look like down the road. And it's important then to try to do what we can to improve that situation. That means in part the faculty themselves need to be speaking out. You can't rely on outside interest groups to take all the lead. So an organization like the foundation for individual rights and education does a tremendous job but it's not a faculty driven organization and I think faculty have to give their own voices to these issues.

The AUP did a critical work throughout the 20th century and building into the protections on university campuses. But they are limit is to what resources that organization has available to it to continue defend these principles in all circumstances. I think one thing we have now is a good legacy of these earlier fights in that university documents sometimes statutes. Sometimes judicial opinions related to first amendment protections are favorable to academic freedom and free speech issues on campus and so in many ways the challenge phases now it how do we successfully implement those and get university to actually live up to commitments rather than having the early fights necessary to even get the commitments made in the first instance.

It's true we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that the nature of faculty work is changing dramatically. Has been changing dramatically over time in ways that tend to undermine these principles and so while all universities professors and teaching research positions should be enjoying academic freedom it's part of the principle commitment is they have academic freedom the practical realities depend if they are on tenured faculty and whether or not contingent faculty are extraordinarily vulnerable to campus administrators who turn against them. To outside forces or forces on campus to turn against them in speech controversies and so while senior faculty are vulnerable as well. Contingent faculty are in a difficult situation and in the long run as an AUP has been advocating since the beginning of the 20th century if you you want to make academic freedom protections meaningful part of that has to be including tenure protections to make it harder for universities to fire people when they find themselves in midst of speech controversies

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: I know AFA is young but you did issue a statement supporting a law professor at UCSD to published a controversial post. And then they were calls for his termination and the dean of the law school promised there will be a review. I was hoping you could tell us about the facts and the process which which you and AFA members decided to get involved, and then how you responded.

KEITH WITTINGTON: This is a case after law professor at the university of San Diego. Law school and he is not a member of the AFA. He's part of our commitment is an organization it is those who are members of the organization we have a real commitment to making sure we come to their defense if they find themselves in controversy. Our hope is to be growing the organization to bring people on board. But our resources keeps us from living up to the promise of fulling filling those commitments to people if they find themselves in the controversies.

In his case it was a controversy. It is a blog post. But in other cases it's some social media post. But the concern is similar in both instances. Classic example of extra mural speech. In his case it was making a public commentary about the behavior of the Chinese government relative to the beginnings ever the outbreak of the pandemic and he quoted a Wall Street journal article raising questions about how the Chinese government responded and whether or not the Chinese government was responsible for artificial predation of the virus and had a

brief statement expressing his own views on it. In which he included a point that we shouldn't I forgot how he what the initial phrasing us what but we shouldn't be misled by Chinese cock swaddle. It was that prays phrasing that got him in trouble. It was regarded ones hate speech. I think it was clearly about the Chinese government. He's later emphasized he was talking about the Chinese government in particular. But as is frequent literature case this led to student complaints in his case that led to the university of wanting to investigate.

The university has characterized this as a kind of harassment claim. And I think if faculty are vulnerable for a single blog post commenting to internal university sanction on the claim that somehow that can be harassing of students are come pause the ability for faculty to speak out is severely limited. We see universities going to dog this over and over again everybody it's critical we call them out when they do it. And critical we point out to universities their own internal policies and commitments universities of San Diego has a set of free speech commitments that clearly protect the speech in this context. And it's crucial to making the universities actually live up to that. San Diego has not done so.

We are hopeful they will and we are doing a we can to put pressure on them to help professor Smith in this case to navigate the process and come to a better conclusion.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: Thanks. One of the questions in the Q and A piggybacks on this. What do you say about faculty members using social media to self promote tweet with the scholarship and use the same accounts to post or opinions about favorite Starbucks drink. Put another way should professors be more careful how they use social media. Should they have separate accounts personal and professional.

KEITH WITTINGTON: Certainly I'm typical in this record. I use my twitter account both to convey things related to my scholarly work and both in terms of directly promoting my scholarship but also talking about matters I have some expertise in and trying to convey to at that time public when it's relevant and already the latest move the and talk about politics. That's a natural way of using social media. It's completely appropriate. We want faculty to be engaged with the world more generally and one virtue of social media is it does provide the opportunity for faculty to be responding in realtime to on going events that includes being able to share expertise that's relevant to

the events. So there's really upside to having faculty involved in these kinds of things but if it's very easy to complaining about faculty. They find themselves involved in controversial topics. And people push back against that. And they will wind up reducing the relevance of academia to the wider social world because we bottle you the expertise of academics and not allow them to try to share it and elaborate on apply it. To particular context.

But in order to take advantage of that we have to be tolerant of the fact or sometimes if they post controversial or inflammatory things. That's the nature of these things along with the nature of the social media as a mode of communication and a topics under discussion and these contexts and it's very hard to I think draw a firm line between the things we might think of as controversial or inflammatory on the things that actually relate close think to people's actual expertise scan scholarship on the other. We need to have very broad protections for that. The AUP has always emphasized we should have an aspiration and the when they are contributing to public debates or elevate the conversation not trying to drag it council to convey things that are truthful. I those are important aspirations. We ought to as academics try to help enlighten the population not just contribute to the heat of polarized political debates.

At the same time, I don't think we want to regard that as condition by which faculty are allowed to participate on social media. That becomes, can easily become a weapon ton used in faculty and sometimes is by university administers who want to say well you weren't up holding high enough academic standards on now we are going to sanction you nor if. So it is important we recognize the aspirations and ideals much it's what we hope academics can do. Much we don't want to empower administers to sanction faculty if they don't live up.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: In Florida a bill that duals survey believes and a public college university in order to make sure there's ideological diversity and identify who recently introducing legislation that would bar instruction on divisive concepts so I'm interested what your thoughts are on the idea of trying to legislate academic freedom and due expect that AFA will get involved with legislative advocacy.

KEITH WITTINGTON: I don't expect we will be involved in legislative advocacy directly and anything I have to say certainly reflects my own personal opinions and not the institutional position of the organization but it's I think

a lot of these bills are problematic in what we are trying to do. I'm sometimes sympathetic with aspects. I do think universities have not been good with intellectual diversity with perspectives on academics from from faculty in particular. So and I am sympathetic to efforts to try to do a better job on that front.

On the other hand, I would much prefer that be solved in house by university and faculty acting on their own and this is a bit of a warning if universities don't do a better job of taking care of matters we shouldn't be surprised if politicians find themselves wanting to get involved.

This measure is not a very good one. Not only do I think in general the politicians are not the right people to be trying to micromanage universities. This particular proposal of trying to survey faculty about attitudes and make mandates about how as Florida is doing and make mandates about how they ought to adjust the faculty composition and response to that.

Authorizing students to film faculty lectures to call them out if the students think the faculty are engaging in politics in the classroom for example, are all troubling for how universities operate on how faculty can conduct themselves generally, and it's not a good tool even for addressing the problem which is a serious one.

Some of these other proposals are effectively trying to gut tenure. Make it easier to fire faculty but certainly is not encouraging. This effort is micromanage what the content of research and teaching is going to look like such as the banning from pursuing controversial topics cuts to the heart of what it is universities are trying to do. So for example over the last couple of years I taught a class at Princeton called constitutional difficulties in the age of trump. It is all about constitutional problems that owe raise during the trump administration that had larger implications.

The nature of the class is it's controversial and involves controversial subject matters and topics. You know I may/may not have done the best job possible. I tried hard. But you can easily imagine if you have some legislature looking over my shoulder trying to assess. Are you doing a good in enough job or being excessively controversial the result is I wouldn't try to teach the class. And as a consequence I would not be trying to do what I was trying to do which is allow students to get a more sophisticated understanding of the kind of constitutional problems over the last # 4 years and

thinking about presidential pour. And you want universities to be doing exactly that. But if you have students filming me in the classroom trying to could that.

If you have legislatures saying I can't be teaching controversial material, and they are going to be the ones assessing whether or not it's controversial. That is extraordinarily chilling about what we can effectively do as faculty.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: Right and that would be a deep irony. Chilling of free speech. In an attempt to encourage it.

KEITH WITTINGTON: I would hope that's not what we are doing but the way some bills are designed you do wonder if that's not the goal.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: I think that's a very valid point. There is one other very essential question that's come up which is whether or not you have a full set of Harry Potter books on your shelf. If you have a full set that's something you should be proud of.

KEITH WITTINGTON: They are my daughter's. I have never read Harry Potter. I'm a Tolkein guy.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: Really fast, something sort of thinking about going back to campus. Being on campus physically. As we are thinking about academic freedom is there any kind of one or two things you think the folks today you know should be keeping in mind. What do you see kind of as you look ahead.

KEITH WITTINGTON: Well I mean one thing that's coming back is it's likely we are going to have a lot more protests on campus. We have been in a period where there's a lot of social unrest and protest activity more broadly. In the middle of the context of the pandemic it's also true universities has been shut down for the most part and students haven't been around. I think students are going to have the same desire to engage in the protest activity that's been occurring. Universities should be prepared. Universities have long been a home for protest activities of sorts and we want to make space for that.

We shouldn't be surprised. If we don't see a fair amount of that activity we should be tolerant of it. Obviously there are limitations and rules. We don't want that to be disruptive. But I do expect we are going to see protests on campus and getting a lot of political backlash to protests on campus it's goes to heighten the tensions where people look at university campuses and think. I don't like what's going on there. And really it would be a good idea if somebody else came in and intervened in shut down the stuff I don't like.

EXEC DIR DEUTCHMAN: Listen, I really appreciate your taking not only your time but time from your class to join us. I look forward to continuing the conversation and wish you all the best and you plunge in this area. It's hard to believe. Time flies when you're having fun. Hopefully everyone has enjoyed themselves. Wooer at the close of on really what I think was a thought provoking day and if you enjoyed today's programing and you would like to support the work of the center you can make a donation threw through our website. If you're interested in supporting or sponsoring our 2022 speech matters conference or any other programing of on yours please reach out to me directly. I hope all of you will be joining us tomorrow.

Keith, without knowing it gave a perfect plug. We are going to be starting the day talking to 5 leading activist and hearing from the cochairs of the center as board. As well as from experts on democratic learning and engagement, tune in same time. Same place. Same link. 10AM, PST and 1PM EST. See you then. Thanks so much.