

Vincent Munoz ([00:03](#)):

I think what we need to do is explain how our principles of free speech, free inquiry will help serve the cause of justice.

Betty Friedan ([00:13](#)):

The First Amendment, the constitutional freedom of speech and freedom of conscience, that is the bulwark of our democracy.

Bettina Aptheker ([00:21](#)):

There was a passion in what was being said, affirming what people considered a sacred constitutional right, freedom of speech and freedom of association.

Michelle Deutchman ([00:35](#)):

From the UC National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement, this is SpeechMatters, a podcast about expression, engagement, and democratic learning in higher education. I'm Michelle Deutchman, the Center's executive director and your host. Welcome to episode four. Today we're going to hear from Secretary John King Jr., the former United States Secretary of Education. And a longtime national leader in education policy, about some of the challenges facing colleges and universities from staggering costs to significant opportunity gaps for low income and minority students. King's distinguished career has taken him from high school Social Studies teacher to his current role as president of the Education Trust.

Michelle Deutchman ([01:15](#)):

But first: Class Notes, a look at what's making headlines. Students across the country have been organizing and protesting in response to the leaked Supreme Court draft opinion in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. The leaked draft decision suggests that *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 case that safeguards the constitutional right to abortion will be overturned.

Michelle Deutchman ([01:37](#)):

It has been a long time since we have seen this many students on campus protesting in person. Earlier this month, students from more than 20 universities across the country participated in reproductive freedom protest walkouts. Undergraduate campuses across University of California, coordinated a UC rally for *Roe* that included participation from hundreds of students. Those angered and concerned by this potential civil rights setback are not the only ones being vocal, however. Anti-choice groups have also mobilized, including Harvard's Right to Life group, which organized a counter demonstration to the campus rally for abortion rights.

Michelle Deutchman ([02:13](#)):

In the continued battle over state legislative efforts to control teaching and discourse on campus, Oklahoma's governor signed into law, a statute that will establish a committee within the Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education, to monitor the state of free speech on college campuses, respond to complaints and provide recommendations. Proponents argue that this will safeguard speech on campus while detractors claim the committee is a distraction for more pressing issues and a further evidence of how higher education has become upon in the culture wars. The law goes into effect on November 1st, and we will follow the committee's work with interest.

Michelle Deutchman ([02:55](#)):

Our guest today is former Secretary of Education and Maryland gubernatorial candidate, John B. King Jr. Secretary King is the president of the Education Trust, a national nonprofit organization that seeks to identify and close educational opportunity and achievement gaps. King served as 10th US Secretary of Education under the Obama Administration. Prior to that role, he carried out the duties of Deputy Secretary overseeing policies and programs related to P-12 education, English learners, special education, innovation and agency operations. King joined the department following his post as New York State Education Commissioner. He began his career as a high school Social Studies teacher and middle school principal. I'm also proud to share that Secretary King has been a member of the center's national advisory board since the center's founding in 2017.

Michelle Deutchman ([03:47](#)):

Thank you so much for joining us today, Secretary King.

John B. King Jr ([03:50](#)):

Excited for the conversation.

Michelle Deutchman ([03:52](#)):

So, before we jump into discussing the numerous challenges that higher education is currently facing, I'm hopeful that you can talk a little bit about what led you to become an educator in the first place.

John B. King Jr ([04:04](#)):

Sure. Well really for me, it started with my experience as a kid. Both my parents were educators. My mom was a teacher and school counselor. My dad was a teacher and administrator. But they both passed away when I was little. My mom, when I was eight, and my dad when I was 12. And in the period when it was just my dad and me, my dad was struggling with Alzheimer's. But nobody knew, and it was just the two of us in the house. And it was really scary. I didn't know what my father would be like from one night to the next. Some nights he'd talk to me, some nights he wouldn't say a word. Some nights he'd be sad, angry, even violent.

John B. King Jr ([04:47](#)):

And it was a really lonely and difficult period. And the thing that saved me was school. School was the one place in my life that was safe and supportive and nurturing. And I was blessed to have a series of public school teachers who made school a place where I could be a kid when I wasn't able to be a kid at home. And that really drove me in my career choice, and I really became a teacher to try to do for other kids what teachers did for me. And have always been very focused on equity issues because I realize for some of our students, they are facing incredible challenges outside of the classroom, and school really can be lifesaving.

Michelle Deutchman ([05:37](#)):

Thank you for sharing that. I think you might be the first guest to basically move me to tears. That was a very touching and vulnerable thing to share. And I think it's amazing that what you took from that experience was devote your own life to education. Which is interesting to juxtapose that story with my next question, which has to do with a lot of public opinion polls indicating that a lot of Americans question the value of a liberal college education. And I'm curious if you would say that this is a newer

development, or did you face similar naysayers during your time as secretary for the Obama Administration? And I guess in addition to whether this is sort of new or newer, what is your response to these doubters?

John B. King Jr ([06:20](#)):

Yeah, it's such an important issue. I worry a lot about the challenge of declining public confidence in higher education. It certainly began, I think even before the Obama Administration, but has accelerated in recent years, particularly driven by some media voices who ironically themselves went to college, graduated from college, but have been particularly hostile to higher education, I think really for sometimes partisan political advantage. At the end of the day, what I always share with students and their families is that a post-secondary degree remains one of the best paths available in American society to the middle class. And we know that folks who have graduated from college, and that might be an associate's degree, it might be a bachelor's degree, it might be more than that. But folks who've had that higher education experience are more likely to get a good job in our 21st century economy. They are less likely to experience depression.

John B. King Jr ([07:36](#)):

They are likely to have better health outcomes. They are less likely to rely on government assistance. They are more likely to vote. And, there's good evidence that over your lifetime, you earn a million more dollars as a result of having a college degree. So lots of reasons that college is a good thing. Now, there may be folks who choose a career path directly out of high school. And certainly, if they have a post-secondary credential that is career connected, that can lead to a good middle class income. But, it may be that later in their lives, they might choose to pursue higher education in order to move into management or to move into a leadership role in their union, that kind of thing. So, it's important that we prepare all of our K-12 students to have the choice about college and it's important that we keep college affordable and accessible for students.

Michelle Deutchman ([08:39](#)):

Absolutely. And there's been so much coverage and discussion and debate about loan forgiveness right now and all of these issues that you're talking about, in terms of the increased cost. On that note while you were in the Obama Administration, would you say that some of the challenges that you faced then were actually different in terms of what was going on, or were they largely iterations of the same challenges that we face now? And maybe how would you articulate some of those similarities and differences?

John B. King Jr ([09:09](#)):

Sure. Well, certainly the challenge of cost of higher education was one we thought a lot about. And this is a multi decade problem. If you go back to 1980. In 1980, the Pell Grant program, the primary federal assistance for low income students going to college, the Pell Grant program covered a larger share of students and was about 80% of the cost of public higher education. Today, sadly, Pell Grant covers less than a third of the cost of a public higher education degree. So, we've seen diminish purchasing power for the Pell Grant. We tried in the Obama Administration to increase Pell and we were successful in nudging the Pell amount up, but not nearly enough to make up for the loss purchasing power. And we've seen states disinvest from public higher education, over multiple decades. And as states put less money into public higher institutions, they then rely much more on student tuition, including out-of-state tuition.

John B. King Jr ([10:21](#)):

And so the burden of the cost of college has really moved to students and families through the form of debt. And we've got more than 1.8 trillion of higher ed debt today. That is tens of millions of Americans who are saddled with debt that's going to take them years to pay off. And really struggling to make the choice, to get married, to have a kid, to start a business, to change jobs because of that debt hanging over them. So that problem was a problem we grappled with. We didn't make enough progress in raising the Pell Grant. We tried to put in place income based repayment, I would say that did not produce the more manageable debt experience that we hoped. So, we have a national challenge now around student debt, and I'm hopeful that the Biden Administration will take action to cancel debt for borrowers to free them from that burden.

John B. King Jr ([11:23](#)):

We also were grappling with the completion challenge in the Obama Administration. We were trying to invest in programs that improve college completion, particularly for first generation students, low income students, students of color. There are some great examples around the country, places like Georgia State that have largely closed racial gaps in graduation rates. Programs like CUNY ASAP, where they've doubled completion in community colleges. But it is still a problem that many students start and don't finish, particularly low income students, particularly students of color. And despite our investments, we have not, as a country, scaled the interventions we now work to improve completion. Unfortunately, the challenges in the sector remain. We made progress in some places, but there's a lot more work to do.

Michelle Deutchman ([12:18](#)):

There's so much work to do generally, but I'm really happy you at least highlighted a couple of the success stories, in terms of particular institutions, because I feel like we hear those stories so infrequently. And of course, on top of all of these already existing and challenges that are being magnified as time passes and as administrations change, of course there's been the pandemic. And I was wondering if you could speak to how the pandemic has affected or exacerbated the opportunity gaps that are already disproportionately affecting, as you said, students from low income families and students of color.

John B. King Jr ([12:53](#)):

Yeah. The pandemic has been a disaster on so many levels. But certainly, we see that for many low income students, they didn't have reliable internet access. So the move to virtual learning was incredibly difficult. For many low income families, COVID produced an economic disaster that caused students to leave school. So, we've certainly seen drops in enrollment, particularly at our community colleges, that are really worrisome. We saw students struggling to complete their coursework through their virtual and blended learning setting. And we saw, in some cases, a worsening of the problem of students not completing, particularly students of color and low income students. So, all of that is very scary. The federal government certainly made an effort to try to get funding to higher ed institutions, to help mitigate some of the harm of the COVID period.

John B. King Jr ([13:56](#)):

But it wasn't enough. And I think it's going to take us a while to get back to pre COVID enrollment levels, particularly in community colleges. And there are some folks for whom their education was disrupted, and it's going to be really difficult to get them back on track to college completion. My hope is that

institutions, particularly those that serve the most vulnerable students are being really creative about how to make it easier for folks to come back to school who may have some credits and no degree.

John B. King Jr ([14:32](#)):

The other thing I'd mentioned that I think COVID has put into sharper relief is just how vulnerable students are to all the other challenges in their lives, outside of academics. Childcare, many places childcare facilities had to shut down because of COVID and then that means parents can't get to school or to work. We already had significant food insecurity and housing insecurity issues for college students before COVID. Those were all exacerbated by economic toll of COVID. So this, to me, is a moment where we should be thinking about how do we dramatically increase the Pell Grant, how do we dramatically increase investment in the institutions that disproportionately serve low income students and students of color, our community colleges, our HBCUs, our HSIs. We should see this, I believe, as a new deal moment for our country, where we say, how do we tackle our biggest systemic challenges so that we have the well educated workforce we need to succeed in the 21st century?

Michelle Deutchman ([15:46](#)):

Absolutely. I think it's a challenge that's going to be posed on many levels. And in fact, I sort of have a two part question. You were talking about that you're hoping that institutions are going to be innovative in the way that they can make it easier for students to come back and complete. Many of our listeners are administrators and faculty at higher education institutions across the country. And I'm wondering if you have any thoughts that you can share about what individuals in these roles could be doing to help address some of the problems. I think sometimes they feel so big and so systematic people are always asking, what can I do? And so there's that piece. And then of course, I'm also interested to hear what the education trust is doing. So, take those in whatever order you want.

John B. King Jr ([16:31](#)):

Sure, sure. Well, look, I think this is a moment to really take a hard look at the data and to try to understand who's been most harmed by this COVID period, setting institutional goals around the diversity of the student body, the diversity of the students who complete, making sure that institutions are having serious conversations about how they improve the graduation rate for black students, for Latino students, for first generation students. Making sure that admissions offices in selective institutions are challenging themselves to create a student body that looks like the country. Institutional leaders looking at their faculty diversity. Because we know that when students see themselves reflected on their faculty, they are likely to have better outcomes and more likely to have richer academic environments. Certainly institutions should be learning from their peers that are succeeding, closing gaps.

John B. King Jr ([17:35](#)):

I mentioned the CUNY ASAP program and the work that Georgia State has done. There's a lot to learn from those institutions and a lot that could be replicated in terms of improving student advising, providing just in time financial assistance for students who are struggling economically so that they are able to stay in school.

John B. King Jr ([18:00](#)):

There are system wide changes like we're seeing in Florida and California, where folks are changing how we think about remediation and moving towards co-requisite models so that students are able to make

progress towards a degree, even as they're addressing academic gaps. There's, I think, a lot of work that to be done on the equity front. At Ed Trust, we are also very focused on how do we push institutions to address climate issues? Are they creating campus climates that are supportive and welcoming for students of color and for first generation students? Are they taking action on some of the very frightening trends we're seeing around hate crimes against Asian Americans? Are they standing up for safe and supportive environments for LGBTQ students? At Ed Trust, we see our role as sharing the data and then pushing the sector forward. And the data are worrisome. We see that black and Latino students are significantly underrepresented in our flagship institutions and in our public higher education institutions, generally. We have a lot of work to do to truly produce an equitable higher education sector.

Michelle Deutchman ([19:27](#)):

I love what you said about the data. And my job previous to the center, I had a mentor who always would say that data should be what's driving policy. So, I'm glad that you're pointing us in that direction. And I think you really helped me transition us to talking about some of these climate issues, which as a center for engagement and expression, a lot of what we're dealing with are things that are related to climate on campus. And I'm sure that you're familiar with this narrative that has really developed in the last three to five years, that there's an alleged expression problem on college and university campuses. And that students, particularly those who have conservative perspectives, don't feel comfortable sharing their viewpoints. And I'm curious what you make of these assertions, which have in some cases been made very loudly in certain outlets? And do you actually believe that higher education remains a place where sharing an exploration of diversity of ideas still occurs?

John B. King Jr ([20:26](#)):

Yeah. I'm actually much more hopeful than what you might take away from cable news conversations of these issues. I teach at University of Maryland, College Park. I teach an education policy course. I talk with my students a lot about their college experience. And I think higher ed campuses remain places of really robust intellectual discourse. I think most faculty members are trying very hard to challenge their students to think critically, to engage with challenging, complex ideas, to share perspectives from their own experience, but also to listen carefully to the perspectives of their classmates. So, there's a lot that's going very well on college campuses throughout the country.

John B. King Jr ([21:16](#)):

I think there's more work to be done across our institutions, helping students prepare for participation in civic life. I think it's really important for a well-rounded college experience to include engaging with the great debate over many centuries about the nature of the good life and the nature of the good society. I think it's important for students to read Plato, to read King's Letter from Birmingham Jail, to engage with those ideas. There's more work to be done, to have students reflect on their community and their role in their community. And that's not a liberal idea or a conservative idea, that's part of what a good education should do, is challenge you to think about how is our society organized, what are the choices we're making, to look at the data for your community, whether it's the community where you grow up or the community where your higher ed institution is located and grappling with the reality of inequity in our society. And grappling with what we should do about that grappling with the big public problems that we are dealing with, whether it's the impact of climate change or how we recover from COVID.

John B. King Jr ([22:44](#)):

These big questions, we should be encouraging students to think hard about those big questions and to tackle them from diverse perspectives, to think about what is the conservative economic argument for what the government should be doing in this moment of recovery? What is the liberal economic argument? And if we do that, if we're intentional about exposing students to these great debates, I think we graduate students who are better prepared to be good citizens. And to me, that's fundamental to the mission of higher ed institutions.

Michelle Deutchman ([23:20](#)):

I guess it's not a surprise that you and I agree both on the hopeful piece of this and on the importance of being a good citizen. And I guess my follow up for you is I think civic engagement, democratic learning, citizenship can mean a lot of different things to different people. And I'm curious if you could sort of just share a little bit about what would it mean for someone to come out of a college or university, being prepared to engage as a citizen?

John B. King Jr ([23:47](#)):

I love this question as a former high school social studies and civics teacher. Look, I think about it in three buckets. One is, there's a set of things you should know. I think an educated citizen should know how a bill becomes a law, should know what's in the Bill of Rights, should understand how local government, state government and the federal government interact, should understand the principles that have been the subject of debate throughout American history, about the nature of democracy, the nature of equality. There's some things you should know. There's some things you should be able to do. You should be able to write a letter to the editor that conveys your opinion about a difficult community issue with a clear thesis and clear presentation of evidence to support your argument. You should be able to participate in public discourse, whether that's testifying before your city council or county council, or sitting with a group of folks with whom you might disagree and having a real discussion about the nature of your disagreement and identify areas of commonality and areas of difference.

John B. King Jr ([25:08](#)):

So there's a skill set to citizenship that I think colleges are particularly well positioned to cultivate because you really can build those skills, that muscle for civic participation in the college classroom. And then there's the application side. I wish more colleges were doing more to create opportunities for their students to engage in community service, to do public service internships, whether it's during the school year or in the summer. There are certainly some institutions that have made big investments there, but to my mind, not enough because we really want part of the college experience, I think, to be engaging in the community, practicing citizenship. I think if we do those things, again, not with any sort of partisan bend, but really with a goal of preparing students for the weighty responsibility to carry our democracy forward, that will serve our higher admission well.

Michelle Deutchman ([26:12](#)):

That was a really clear and helpful way of organizing the buckets and sort of what you know, what you do, skills and then how you apply those skills. I think there are, in this case, unfortunately, maybe too many opportunities to be applying these skills, especially as we see state houses across the country passing legislation, much of it I'll note is I think unconstitutional, that's dictating what can and can't be taught and discussed in K through 12 and college classrooms. It's divisive concepts, don't say gay, critical race theory, as well as targeting libraries and the books that are permitted and prevented from being on

shelves. And I'm curious if you could share your thoughts on how this moment compares to, were there similar moments like this throughout your career? What do you think is driving this? I'll start with that.

John B. King Jr ([27:01](#)):

It's shocking, still, to see efforts to ban books. It is shocking to see efforts to erase the humanity of some of our fellow citizens. It is shocking to see folks attack teaching the truth of our history. I think that there's an element of it that is about partisan advantage and trying to create faux controversies in order to generate political advantage. There's certainly part of it that is social media, allowing rumors and problematic anecdotes to turn into kind of a overreaction. There are a number of factors that are driving this. I think we have to return to first principles and say a role for educational institutions, K-12 and higher ed, is teaching the truth about our history, and that's going to mean some things that are hard. I'm talking to you from Silver Spring, Maryland, where I live. It's about 25 miles from where my great-grandfather was enslaved, in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

John B. King Jr ([28:21](#)):

The property where my great-grandfather was enslaved is actually still owned by a family that are a direct line descendants of the family that enslaved my family. And over the last couple of years, we've gotten to be friends and built a relationship, and I've gotten to spend time on the property. They've actually maintained the property just as it was in the 1860s, same main house that was built in the 1700s and the cabin that my great-grandfather and his family lived in as enslaved people, still standing on the property. So I've been able to stand inside of that cabin. And when I do, I really contemplate two things. One, the intense intimacy and cruelty of the institution of slavery. That cabin is not 30 feet from the main house. These were two families living in the same physical space, one owning the other. That's real. That happened.

John B. King Jr ([29:16](#)):

It is also true that the history of slavery, of segregation, of redlining, has an impact on today's reality. It is just a fundamental truth that our gaps in health and wealth in our criminal justice system are tied in part to that history. But it is also true, and this is the other thing I contemplate standing inside of that cabin, it's also true that in my family, we went, in three generations from enslaved in that cabin, to serving in the cabinet of the first black president. That's a powerful statement about what progress is possible. And I think our college students, our K-12 students, are strong enough to both be exposed to where we've fallen short of democratic principles and the progress that we've made. So we've got to stand up for, I believe, teaching the truth of our history and I believe most, the vast majority really of Americans, agree that we should be teaching the truth of our history.

John B. King Jr ([30:23](#)):

I also think the vast majority of Americans would say it's important for students to read books by diverse authors to get to see the world from different perspectives through the books they read, through the poetry they're exposed to. So, I do worry about the trend of state legislatures passing these deeply problematic laws. I worry about the chilling effect on teachers, as well as higher education faculty. But, I believe deeply that the vast majority of Americans want a broader conversation about our history and a broader conversation about our society. And so we're in a bad moment, but I remain hopeful about the future.

Michelle Deutchman ([31:16](#)):



I have to say, the way that you are able to connect your personal life and personal life history to your careers and to the greater issues that democracy is facing is really quite inspirational. And I love that we're leaping off of a place now where we're talking about progress and hope. And as we move away from state legislatures, I'd like to go back to the federal government and lots of attention on what's happening at individual state levels. But what about the federal level? What other things should the Biden Administration be focused on as related to higher education?

John B. King Jr ([31:58](#)):

Certainly, tackling these issues around cost. I think that's both canceling existing debt, as well as fixing the financing of higher education going forward. To me, that means at least doubling the Pell Grant, it means a state federal partnership to invest in the completion supports that are so critical for low income students and first generation students. We really could achieve debt-free college in the United States. If we had the political will. I hope the federal government will act on that. I also think there's a role for the secretary to use the bully pulpit, if you will, to talk about the importance of higher education's role in civic education. I'm sure Secretary Cardona is being careful because you don't want it to seem partisan. But I think the secretary of education is like the surgeon general of education, it's the nation's leading educator.

John B. King Jr ([33:06](#)):

And so for him to use the bully pulpit to talk about the kind of rigorous debate that should be happening on our college campuses to visit places where students are engaged in public service work, while in college, getting to really engage with the community, that would be quite valuable, I think, sending a message about the civic mission of higher education.

John B. King Jr ([33:34](#)):

I also think there's a role for the federal government in civil rights protection. That means making sure that campuses are free from discrimination against students based on their sex or gender identity. Means making sure campuses are free from discrimination against LGBTQ students, it means making sure that campuses are free from discrimination against black and Latino students and Asian American students and Jewish students. There's a need for rigorous civil rights protection and enforcement by the federal government. There's a long list of things that the federal government could be doing. I think the Biden Administration is trying on a lot of these fronts and sometimes unfortunately, Congress has not been a sufficiently willing partner.

Michelle Deutchman ([34:28](#)):

That was very generous of you to put it that way. You covered quite a wide swath of issues and priorities. And as someone who right now is running to run a state, I'm wondering if you have certain priorities that are similar or different potentially from Maryland, if you are successful in the fall. And if you want to talk a little bit about that as well.

John B. King Jr ([34:52](#)):

Sure. I think public higher education is so critical to the long term health of our economy and democracy, here in Maryland and it's true for every state. We've got an incredible system in the University of Maryland. We have flagship at College Park, we've got incredible work that's happening at University of Maryland, Baltimore County. We've got four HBCUs that have been doing amazing work for generations as an engine of social mobility. So making sure that we invest in public higher education,

that we keep public higher ed affordable, I've talked in the campaign about freezing tuition across the University of Maryland system, making community colleges or the first two years at an HBCU in our state tuition free, increasing the tax credit for folks who are struggling with student debt. Those kind of pocketbook issues are critical.

John B. King Jr ([35:54](#)):

We also, I think, need to invest in higher ed as a powerful driver of economic opportunity. We could be preparing the workforce we need for all the thousands of open cyber security jobs in the DC Metro region, through our public higher ed institutions. We could be training folks for the new green economy and renewable energy through our public higher education institutions.

John B. King Jr ([36:19](#)):

So I am eager to make sure that higher ed is partnering with the business community to build programs that give folks access to economic opportunity and that help us drive our economy forward. We also have the opportunity to leverage some of the research that's happening at both our public and private institutions. We have Johns Hopkins as well as the University of Maryland system, places where great research is happening that could be commercialized and turned into the next great small business that becomes a big business. I'm hopeful that we can also seed a real innovation economy, particularly in life sciences, where we've got really strong institutions in the state. We've got FDA and NIH here in the state. So, I see higher education as a critical part of the role of state government and of a governor.

Michelle Deutchman ([37:18](#)):

Thank you for that. This conversation has made me wish, when we're talking about higher education, that I'd taken a lot more economics because you're looking at these issues through a lot of different lenses, and I think the economic one is maybe one that I don't always look through. And it's very interesting to hear it presented, especially as we talk about it, vis a vis, challenges to democracy and so forth. And of course, that's sort of the theme of what the UC Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement does is to explore these issues of expression and engagement in democratic learning and how higher education fits into all of that.

Michelle Deutchman ([37:54](#)):

And so I always ask podcast guests, if there's one thing, or could be more than one thing that people can do today to advance civic engagement or expression in higher education, what would you send people away with, something that feels sort of doable?

John B. King Jr ([38:13](#)):

At the end of the day, I really think education comes down to the teacher or professor and the students, their relationship and the work in which they are engaged. That's the heart of the educational model. And I think at every campus, we should be looking for every opportunity to invite students into the great conversation, if you will, about the nature of the good life and the good society and drawing out their perspectives based on their diverse, personal experiences, based on their intellectual experiences. But I hope, whether it's in a science course where you're talking about the ethics of genetic research, or if it's in a philosophy course where you're grappling with the implications of Plato's cave or in a history course where you're talking about the impact of colonialism on developing countries around the world and their evolving relationship with Europe, there's just so many opportunities for rich conversation that draws out diverse viewpoints.

John B. King Jr ([39:44](#)):

But is grounded in a common understanding of the facts, the data, the truth of our history, but then help students prepare for rich conversation with their neighbors and fellow citizens about how we move forward, what the right thing to do is, what the ethical thing to do is. And I hope that every higher ed administrator will see their role as helping to foster those kinds of rich conversations and that every higher ed faculty member will see that as a part of their teaching responsibility.

Michelle Deutchman ([40:20](#)):

I think that's a great answer because in some ways, it's something that everybody who's listening to this does every day, which is engage in conversations and those conversations might happen in a campus classroom or in the quad or in the dorm or online. But you're talking about us giving intentionality and thought as we have these conversations and try to figure out the truth and the best way to move forward. So, thanks for that advice. I hope that people will be inspired by it to think a little bit more than they might have, had they not listened today. And I'm incredibly grateful to you, as I'm sure our listeners are, for not just taking the time from the campaign, but for really sharing deeply about who you are and what education means to you.

John B. King Jr ([41:11](#)):

Thank you so much for the conversation and for the work that you're doing every day to help us really strengthen the health of our democracy.

Michelle Deutchman ([41:20](#)):

Yeah. Like you said, you plant the seeds and you hope they flourish. So, I think that we should end today on this moment of hopefulness that we look to the future and we see positive progress.

John B. King Jr ([41:32](#)):

Absolutely. Thanks so much.

Michelle Deutchman ([41:37](#)):

In two weeks, we'll be joined by two experts. Elizabeth Niehaus, Associate Professor educational Educational Administration University of Nebraska–Lincoln, and Sean Stevens, Senior Research Fellow, Polling and Analytics at the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. Sean and Beth have both conducted research about the topic of student self censorship, if, how often and why it occurs in college and university classrooms. They will share their different perspectives on this much discussed topic. See you then.