
Stephen Pasqualina

00:01

Ok, Hello everybody and welcome to Thought on Tap. Thank you for coming. This is your monthly news views and brews as we say about on tap. Brought to you by the core humanities program and the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Nevada, Reno. My name is Stephen Pasqualina, I'm a postdoctoral scholar and humanities and one of the co-organizers for Thought on Tap. This is our second season. If you're new to Thought on Tap I'd like to welcome you. And if you're returning of course, thanks for coming back.

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We're a public engagement series that brings together diverse faculty, staff, students and community members for important conversations around timely topics such as today's topic. We host events on the second Thursday of every month during the fall and spring semesters, and we hope that you'll join us again in December and come back in the spring. Our theme for this academic year is legacies broadly so in the fall. We quote unquote confronting legacies. First we confronted legacies of health disparities in October.

001:08

Today we're confronting legacies of voter suppression and in December of policing and violence in the spring will be building legacies legacies of equity in education of health and healing activism and social justice and economic empowerment. We're now available on YouTube on our channel so on tap. com slash YouTube. Tonight our program will run from 530 to 630 we'll wrap things up a little bit before 630 to say thanks and give you some details on a survey, that'll come up after the session in your email.

01:41

I'll start things off tonight with an introduction to our topic, and then I'll introduce our illustrious panelists, and I'll post some initial questions to get the conversation started. We hope that you'll contribute to the conversation in the q and a box at the bottom of your screen. You're welcome to ask questions of the panelists will filter those will sort through them and post those to the panel and kind of what those generate some of the conversations that I'm.

02:11

So now on tonight's topic let's kind of get into that a little bit very brief introduction confronting legacies of voter suppression. So, as you likely know this is an all to timely topic, first because this is the 100 year anniversary of the passing of the 19th Amendment, which marked the victory of suffragists who had long thoughts who enfranchised women across the US. And secondly, as you might know if you've been watching the news. We're living through a national election, that is thankfully over, but just won't seem to die.

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I knew when we planned this session on voter suppression right around the election that we were going to get into, you know, kind of hot topic a little bit of turmoil, around the election, but I

could not have predicted exactly the shape that this topic would take this November.

03:02

Before we get into the present I want to zoom out right we're talking about legacies this year so or this semester so legacies of voter suppression. In many ways you can think of the history of us democracy through just the history of voting rights, right and the first US presidential election in 1789, roughly 6% of the US population was legally allowed to vote. And over time barriers to the ballot have included property race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age and criminal history.

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There's been progress in all these regards today around 75% of the population is legally eligible to vote. And this is a significant increase, but I think that that increase might suggest that voter suppression, is you know a thing of the past belong to the dustbin of history. But this year's elections I think certainly have demonstrated that equal voting rights are still not available to all US citizens, and that the topic of voter suppression requires renewed attention and clarity and I'm hoping that this session, helps in that regard.

04:06

One question on my mind for tonight's session, maybe we'll kind of get there, indirectly by the end of the session. What exactly is voter suppression? Is it something with your parameters that we could easily define or is the fuzzier term that you just kind of know when you see the most obvious form of voter suppression, like I mentioned is legally mandated banishment from the ballot box right constitutional denials of the ballot or legal denials, but legal reforms, alone, have not sufficiently solves the problem of access to the ballot as witness in this falls absurdly long lines at polling places in Georgia in Texas Ohio and other states, many voters reporting waiting in line, five to eight hours, they were voters in Georgia who reported waiting over 10 hours just to cast a ballot.

04:59

The problem of long voting lines disproportionately affects non white and low income neighborhoods with fewer and fewer polling places than more affluent and predominantly white neighborhoods, which have average wait times of around half as long as predominantly black and white and Latin-X neighborhoods. For many Native Americans, especially those living on reservations. Voting poses tremendous challenges, especially this year with the pandemic and

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I'll just give one example. In the Navajo Nation most homes are in rural areas, without street names or addresses. And for many Navajo mailing and a ballot requires traveling around 140 miles round trip to reach the nearest polling place or the nearest post office rather the lack of a residential address for various reasons, disenfranchises voters who are unable to match an address with voter rolls and voters without addresses often don't receive election mail in time if at all.

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Just to give you a sense of the disparities in Arizona, alone, the city of Scottsdale is about 184 square miles and has 12 post offices, the Navajo Nation is over 27,000 square miles, and has just 26 post offices total that's larger than the state of West Virginia, which has over 650 post offices, so you can see just in terms of access to mailing.

06:19

There's structural inequalities that shape who has access to the balance, who doesn't. So you can see here in some of the topics I've laid out there's a spectrum of voter suppression from legal denials of citizenship and voting rights to structural dynamics that present all but insurmountable hurdles to the ballot box. The critique of voter suppression historically has come from the left, and from the disempowered who have been denied voting rights.

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But lately we've seen it also also from the highest office in the land. The President just on Monday, tweeted that polls in Michigan and Wisconsin, were tantamount to voter suppression because they suggested that Joe Biden had a larger lead than he actually did what's kind of interesting and bizarre about that claim is that votes have been historically suppressed by conservatives to counter alleged voter fraud, which by the way has never been shown to create any significant scale in the US.

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So it's especially strange to think about Trump's version of voter suppression, is that it coexists with a claim to voter fraud when usually these claims have been at odds. Right voter fraud has been a rationale for suppressing votes historically. So with all the chaos of the present minds. I'd like to think about what to make of the past and present a voter suppression and of what voter suppression means or ought to mean to us today, And I'll turn to our illustrious panel to help us think through these issues and let me introduce them first.

07:57

We'll start with Dr Precious Hall, who's a tenured professor of political science at Truckee Meadows Community College here in Reno, Nevada, where she has taught since 2012. She hails from Baltimore, Maryland, having completed her undergraduate studies at high point University in North Carolina, and graduate studies at Georgia State University in Atlanta, in the fields of American Government and Politics political behavior and political theory.

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Through her lens of research she has investigated minority politicians in the post Obama government and the rhetoric and style of campaigns used by African American politicians and the notion of a post racial society. Presently her research focuses on how African American politicians, continue to relate to the majority electorate, and how the majority electorate's attitude shift in regards to racial considerations in 2018 she was nominated for the Reno Gazette Journals TMCC faculty Excellence in Teaching Award. Let's welcome Precious.

Dr. Precious Hall

08:52

Thank you.

Stephen Pasqualina

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Natalie Van Hoozer is a freelance multimedia journalist and translator based in Reno. She reports in both English and Spanish for KUNR public radio, the NPR member station, which serves Northerner data, and part of Northern California.

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Since the pandemic started she has reported on public health education, immigration, and most recently the 2020 general election. She was also the US ambassador for December media, a Spanish language media nonprofit dedicated to supporting Spanish language media entrepreneurs. She graduated from you in our in 2018 with a bachelor's degree in journalism and Spanish. Welcome to Natalie.

Natalie Van Hoozer

09:33

Thanks so much.

Stephen Pasqualina

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Dr. Greta de Jong is a professor in the Department of History at the University of Nevada, Reno. Her research focuses on the connections between race and class, and the ways that African Americans have fought for economic, as well as political rights from the end of reconstruction through the 21st century. Her most recent book is *You Can't Eat Freedom: Southerners and Social Justice after the Civil Rights Movement*, published by University of North Carolina Press in 2016. She's currently working on a study of school desegregation in Boston. in the 1970s, welcome Dr. Greta de Jong, thanks for joining us.

Dr. Greta de Jong

10:13

Thank you, hello everybody.

Stephen Pasqualina

10:15

So, to get the conversation started I thought I would rewind, think about the history of voter suppression and maybe start by posing a question to Greta, though certainly Precious and

Natalie, feel free to chime in on. Greta you've written on voter suppression tactics in the south.

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Throughout the 20th century, and could you talk to us a bit about how African American votes have been suppressed after the passing of the 15th amendment in 1870, which promise that no one could be denied voting rights based on according to the language of the amendment race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Could you talk to us a little bit about how some questions has happened for African Americans posts 15th amendment.

Dr. Greta de Jong

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So the post Civil War era the area code reconstruction, was when the 13th amendment was passed and that opened up a lot of political participation by African American men and the South who voted and very high numbers and were elected to political office and African Americans helped to elect more progressive republican dominated state governments in the south.

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During that period and that late 1860s and 1870s. And just as a reminder in the 19th century republican Party was the party of abolition and supported black civil rights and the Democratic Party scolded slavery and white supremacy so the the election of these republican governance was really good black African Americans and also the poor whites and this as well they passed a lot of legislation that was in the interest of working people and poor people, they created the first public schools in the south, and things like that.

12:01

And this upset a lot of white Southerners who did not think that African Americans should be participating in politics and particularly upset. The wealthy plantation owners who were used to running everything in the south and didn't like the reforms that these new republican governments were implementing so they mobilize to regain control of their state governments in the south using intimidation and violence.

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And this was the era when the first Ku Klux Klan emerged and really kind of operated as kind of a paramilitary terrorist wing of the Democratic Party threatening people, beating people up murdering their political opponents really surprised, like directly suppressing voter participation by African Americans and also what republicans is now.

12:59

Eventually all the southern state governments because of those tactics came back home to Democratic Party control, and then the 1880s and 1890s they were able to pass legislation and to prevent African Americans, and also pull it people often from 13 so it's things like literacy tests and poll taxes and residency requirements disqualifying people.

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If they've committed minor crimes, these kinds of things. Now, because of the 15th amendment they couldn't directly disenfranchise people on the basis of race but they targeted things that they associated with African Americans, it was really fast paced and partly what they were trying to do was just to prevent poor people more generally from participating in politics.

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And the removal of African Americans from politics in the south allowed for the construction of the Jim Crow system, which segregated and exploited and oppressed African Americans in that region for the next half century. And so then that all lasted until 1965 when the Voting Rights Act was passed in the voting rights act out a lot of those restrictive eligibility requirements, and allowed visual registrar's to go down to the south and register African Americans in the south.

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But even after the Voting Rights Act was passed, it was still a lot of disincentives to African American to vote, there was still a lot of family economically dependent on white employers who often would fire them always pick them from their homes if they were registered to vote.

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After the Voting Rights Act. There were all kinds of ways that the state and local governments found to get around the Voting Rights Act things like beta rain congressional districts gerrymandering basically, to make it happen black candidates to get elected. They restricted bad places and hours of polling places. Made it had at the people to register to vote. They closed calling places in predominantly black neighborhoods and counties.

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Some in some places they converted elected political offices to appointed officers so that you wouldn't even have a chance to elect someone in those offices. So, all kinds of ways to discourage people from voting, whereas previously it was the democrats who are most interested in voter suppression. It's now more often, Republicans because of the party realignment that was caused by the Democratic Party support for black civil rights from the 1960s right.

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So that causes a lot of white voters to switch patties, whereas African Americans have pretty reliably voted for the democrats and they become democrats most reliable voting constituency and so it's in the Republican parties and tries to discourage them from voting so in the late 20th century and up until today it's mostly being republican state legislatures and the republican party has been trying to discourage people from voting

Stephen Pasqualina

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That is really a tremendous condensed history of a lot of complex dynamics that work. Thank you for that.

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Unless anybody wants to chime in, I had a question for Precious maybe kind of transitioning into the question of African American disenfranchisement to I know Christmas use some of your work has it been about roadblocks for young people seeking to participate in elections, could you tell us a little bit about what factors have contributed to depressing voter turnout among young people.

Dr. Precious Hall

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Okay, sure. I think one of the first things that we have to acknowledge is when it comes to the youth vote in depends on which organization you look at and some define between 18 and 25 some 18 to 29 or less for the sake of this conversation say, under 30. I think the youth, get a bad rap in the sense that will since they're typically the lowest percentage the lowest, lowest age group in terms of going to turn out that they're very apathetic or they just don't care.

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And that's not the reality of what's happening in our country. For those of us who are over the age of 30. Think about how much transition we went through in our lives between the ages of 18 and 30 that encompasses graduating from high school, moving away from home, potentially going away to college potentially having children getting married, etc. It is a time of a lot of instability, and that instability, coupled with the fact that we do not have uninformed voter registration in this country is one of the biggest barriers that we see.

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So you know so many people will say well, but don't we register students to vote in high school. Most High Schools actually do that. But will we don't take into account is if we teach them how to be able to engage in absentee voting, how to get a absentee ballot, or do we even teach them that they have to go in the county in which they are registered in many people don't understand that especially young voters.

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In addition, if I am 18 years old and new to this process. Maybe I know that in my state, I have to be registered to go at least 45 days prior to the election but in some states, it's 30 days. Some individuals think that they can do same day voter registration. So it's very confusing, particularly when you're looking to do it as a young person for the first time.

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So that's one of the major things that we have to acknowledge is, it's just a big time of transition. And because there's no universal system of registration and you have to be registered to vote where you are, you have to be registered where you are.

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That's a big hurdle. The second hurdle that we have to understand and this sort of correlates with wealth. We are one of the few democracies in which you're voting is not a national holiday. So who's more likely to have to go to school on Election Day, young people who is more likely to have those hourly wage jobs where if they literally don't go to work, they don't get paid, young people, and it's easy for us who are big settled a bit older bit comfortable financially to say well, they can't lose their job if they go vote.

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But even though that may be true if I'm a young person and I'm responsible for paying bills and I have to make a choice between losing out on one to two hours of pay and going to vote. We really in an economic and logical sense, can't blame that person for choosing to stay at work, choosing to work if they have over time, which means that they aren't able to vote, we see that in terms of voter suppression, what has happened in a few states.

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They don't allow early voting in some states are making it increasingly difficult to engage in early voting. When we think about young people as well, particularly in a university setting. If a young person goes away to college, they live on campus but there's no polling location close to campus, and that campus doesn't offer shuttles to be able to go and vote and that that student doesn't have a car.

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It makes it more difficult. We've seen stories in the past few years, particularly I'm going to point out the state of Texas here on this one, where we've seen a laws deliberately limiting the number of polling places and polling locations. For example, I was reading an article not too long ago, The University of Texas at Austin has over 40,000 students that attend.

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And all they were only allowed to have two polling locations, well with 40,000 students to polling locations, there hours in line to go vote. Well, as a student my primary job is to go to class, and to do well. I can't necessarily afford to spend 567 hours waiting to go and vote.

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So, what we see is not suppression deliberately targeted towards young people, but we see adverse effects on young people with the tactics that currently exists.

Stephen Pasqualina

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That's actually and I think that that's an important topic to kind of circulate throughout our discussion the unintended consequences of some policies that are maybe not intentionally imagined as forms of voter suppression but that the effects of suppressing votes.

Dr. Precious Hall

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A final thing I forgot to mention voter ID laws, so this also correlates with wealth, too, if I am someone who doesn't have a lot of money, that means that I might, I'm not going to be a typical, you were as soon as I turned 16 or 17 I'm going to be able to go and get my driver's license or go and get an ID, it will take me longer to establish those things for myself and I live in a place that doesn't accept a student ID, many states don't you have to have a valid government ID.

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That also means that I might miss out on my opportunity to vote. And again, that's not something that's targeted specifically specifically towards young people but we see those adverse effects.

Stephen Pasqualina

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Absolutely. Thank you, Precious. I have a question for Natalie and thank you all in the audience by the way we're getting your questions. These are really excellent questions when it gets to them right after this question I posed to Natalie about some of her journalism.

23:17

Natalie you've reported on language access barriers for voters, and I'm curious to hear you speak about what you found in your reporting about how language that language access affects voters especially here in Nevada.

Natalie Van Hoozer

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Right. And thank you for that context setting up this discussion so well. Professor John and Hall, and to give a little bit of context about what I've been working on for as a bilingual reporter at Q and our public radio which is our NPR affiliate station for Northern Nevada, the stories we do an English air on the radio and then we do a Spanish version which includes audio and text which goes online so my work has covered that looking at the elections and as well.

24:02

We also did an online in Spanish Facebook Live event to answer questions about the voting process so some of the information I have has been informed through those type of engagement events too. And so a lot of my work for this election was talking to first time voters and the people that I ended up talking to were people who are first time voters because they had just become citizens one story I did which you can find this work to on the KUNR on our website. If you go to the staff and search me all these stories related to voting are under my name.

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And so, one family in northern Nevada. Just all became citizens. Well, the the parents and the older daughter who I spoke to became citizens this year, and then the younger brother turned 18 so there are different reasons that this family was voting for the first time, and figuring out how to do it together and so their interview is a nice anecdote to explain some of these language access barriers that we see and the parents they understand English and, but they still prefer to really understand things in Spanish that's the language that's comfortable for their family.

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And so as they were figuring out this whole process together. Their children primarily their daughter would look up these topics, which are complicated enough to understand on your ballot in English, and then try to figure out what they were saying and you know common speak, and then explain that to her parents in Spanish,

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and so that was kind of the process they did and that was after they figured out how to do registration and things like that and to get to that point that she said they used a lot of social media from different nonprofits in the area putting out different you know Instagram stories and things like that, they gave them the steps to go register and things.

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So they navigated all that in English and then they were figuring out how to fill out their ballot in Spanish. But if we're looking more widely other languages to the ballot in Nevada are provided in both English and Spanish. And then if you go to vote at a polling location those kiosks the ballot to fill out your about There are also in Spanish, but those are the only two languages that are available.

26:20

So that's one thing that you see right right off the bat is that even in Spanish. It's hard enough to figure out what to do, let alone, if you're trying to vote and your dominant in a language that is an English to do our events like our engagement event I reached out to the, the registrar's office the for voter registration here in Northern Nevada for Washoe County, and they said if people had questions in Spanish, they do have some bilingual staff in Spanish and English and you can go down to the registrar's office and ask questions that way.

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But when we're talking about things like access like like professors de Jong and Hall's mentioned, being able to go do something like that under normal circumstances takes a certain amount of flexibility and time to be able to take out to go get those types of questions answered. And then we've seen everything, get that much more complicated, with the pandemic too, with people who are not able to go in person to a location like that and get questions answered.

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So mail ballot voting has proved to be something that's been useful to the people I interviewed as first time voters in regards to language, they were able to sit down at home and research it and fill it out together and ask their friends and their, their family members in whatever language made sense to them how to do it and so I know they said that really helped them be comfortable voting for the first time this election and that they hope they have that option going forward.

Stephen Pasqualina

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Excellent yeah I mean these are really practical concerns that people are facing. Which brings me to some of the questions that our audience has been asking I want to synthesize a couple of them.

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So a couple of the audience members have asked versions of hearing you all speak about what voting reforms can actually be established that seem feasible, they seem doable, that we could address a lot of these concerns that could help combat voter suppression.

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That could address a lot of these concerns that could help combat voter suppression for the various groups that we've been discussing young people African Americans.

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You know, foreign language speakers or non English speakers. So, I'd be curious to see how each of you would respond to the question of what reforms could actually be executed. That would address some of these issues.

Dr. Precious Hall

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I can start us off on that a few that many, not many a few states are adopting but that are simple reforms, things like automatic registration. Things such as same day registration. So, once the dust settles on this election. It'll be particularly interesting to see if in Nevada, that automatic registration has made a difference.

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This was the first election that we had some automatic registration begin and was voted in, so it'll be curious once the dust, I learned about him was in the news for various reasons. Last week so once the dust settles on all of that it'll be interesting to see if that potentially had any sort of effect, but automatic registration is a simple reform, same day voter registration is a simple reform.

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Getting rid of voter ID laws is a reform, but if you're insisting on having voter ID laws, providing free government issued IDs, would be a simple reform as well. It's unfair to have one and not the other because it becomes the equivalent of having to pay a fee in order to vote, and it's

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easy for us who have IDs who have bank accounts to say well it's easy to get an idea where everybody has one but the reality is we actually have upwards of almost 12% of the population that lives and

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exists without a valid form of government ID, and when we talk about reforms, we have to think about reforms, not just for us as individuals, but for the least of these, those who aren't where we are, where things could become a bit tougher but automatic registration same day voter registration. I'm in favor of making voting, a national holiday, as well. those are things that could easily be done.

Stephen Pasqualina

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That actually addresses another one of our questions. Do you all recommend that election day be a national holiday maybe roll it into your responses Greta and Natalie.

Dr. Greta de Jong

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I'm always in favor of more holidays. Election Day is a natural holiday it should be something that is celebrated and that is fun and people, you know should be able to relax on election day and go and vote and then watch the results coming.

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I think this election has shown that Malin Dallas has Natalie was talking about, and also early voting which has been in some states for a while and which were actually really central to Barack Obama's victory in 2008 of those massively increase voter turnout.

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You know, because it's not all compressed on that one day and the lines can be shorter and people can plan to go and vote. And when it suits them. And I have any I became a citizen and 2016. So I tell my story. Okay with citizen. In May of 2016, and then November 2016 America broke my heart.

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So I finally voted in voted 2016 and midterms in 2018 and this year but every time I've been so grateful to be in Nevada which which does have, you know, an ethos or at least recently, encouraging people to vote and so I found it very easy and not much time at all to go and vote

and I just wish it was like that for everyone in every state.

Natalie Van Hoozer

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Right. And related to that. also going back to mail mail ballots the, just the people I spoke to all did early voting and mail ballot voting So that to me gave me a sense of the fact that those two things are really useful with helping people. And the fact that mail ballots are a way that people can vote when they have time to around their work schedule making an election day holiday would also speak to that same need.

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So I know with the people I spoke to yes that that would definitely be something that would be extremely useful. As far as other types of reforms that could help if we're thinking about language access, what you've been with my research should be able to do things like our online engagement invention in Spanish helping people figure out how to register and then vote and how to do that with the different pandemic regulations we have in place.

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Even the information that was available in Spanish was not necessarily easy to find and it was, it was provided on pages that you had to navigate to an English in order to get there so I think.

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Additional thought about how to present information in Spanish would help a large portion of our population, and then having information available in languages, aside from Spanish would definitely require more funding as far as to get information and election materials in those languages as well.

Stephen Pasqualina

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That's great. Thank you. One of the questions from audience members Rapheal Cohen, a question posed for Precious especially but I'd be curious to hear all of your response to this one as well.

34:00

Why is early voting not established in all 50 states it seems like such an easy decision to make to avoid Election Day issues. So why are some states blocking the stability and maybe more broadly, what motivates forms of voter suppression, like who, who decides or why would they decide which we want to put up roadblocks to building.

Dr. Precious Hall

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Okay so, first and foremost, I'll start off using the constitution so the constitution specifies, we have a members if you're using an older women, you can't deny the rights of all based on color previous condition of servitude.

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So basically you're a citizen, 18 or older, you get to vote in this country or you're eligible to vote in this country. The Constitution also prescribes when elections, when general elections take place they take place.

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In November, the first Tuesday in November, after the first Monday every two years. But the constitution also said that the time, place, and manner of elections are left to the individual states. So, each state gets to decide what time the place in the manner. As long as people are allowed to vote in November.

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Everything else is left to the states to decide. So that's the constitutional foundation for why it differs and we don't have one national law, but to get to the deeper question of why some states choose.

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To make it easier to engage in early voting or registration etc In some states don't. If I were a conspiracy theorist, which I'm not but if I were the answer to that question would be, we have to look at who benefits and keeping a narrow scope for who actually shows up to vote.

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So what studies and statistics actually show us is that early voting and mail in ballots are used more by Democrats, Republicans, typically vote, more, the day of the election. Now if you ask why that is, we have to look at everything else that we said we also have to have a conversation about wealth in the disparity of wealth in our country.

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If there are a lot of individuals who have not achieved a certain status of wealth but they're registered as Democrats, the more options, the better meaning if I don't have to miss work to go whoa I don't have to miss school, I can plan it around all the other obligations that I have going on. It works better for me.

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But if I am a certain job status, a certain wealth class. It doesn't matter to me that voting is Tuesday in the sort of in the middle of my week, I can take the time to go vote. So I'll use myself as an example. I'm a US citizen I've been able to go to multiple elections. This was the first election that I exercise my options to do a mailing valid and take it in person.

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I am typically me I studied political science. I am somebody I'd like to get I get up at 7am on election day I go to the polls first thing like that, that's, I like to do that if it takes me hours and it's never By the way, taking me longer than two hours to vote, the longest that ever took me to vote on Election Day was in 2008, when Barack Obama, I was living in Atlanta and Barack Obama was it was his first

37:35

election, but it's never taken me long to do so but this year for various reasons, I exercise my right to do that. But I'm all I've had the luxury to be able to, if I will to go into work Wait, and do that in order to vote no questions asked no consequences because I have a certain level of

38:02

education that's granted me a certain career that allows me to do that. We don't have a majority of people, particularly look at sort of the Democratic Party and just in wealth structures which well. Demographics belong to that party, but not a majority don't have the ability to be able to do that.

38:21

So to answer the question we have to look at who benefits from narrowing the voter pool, who benefits from fewer people being able to vote. And we will land on one particular party.

Stephen Pasqualina

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Greta or Natalie, I wonder if you want to respond to the question of what motivates voter suppression or, or why not make early voting available for everybody.

Dr. Greta de Jong

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Yeah, I think, I mean there are definitely people who don't want everyone to vote, even today and historically, the motivation has been. They were debate that the Constitutional Convention about the expanse of democracy that should be allowed in the constitution was set up in ways that limited the amount of democracy and both in choosing a national leaders.

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And so it's, you know, it comes down to this fear of property owners that the non-property owners who are always the majority.

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are gonna elect people to office who will take away from the property and organize and try to redistribute well animal equitable way and I think that's been the constant motivation, through, through this nation's history and I think is still motivates, some of the people who are trying to

limit voting today.

Natalie Van Hoozer

40:03

Oh yeah, just to add quickly on just the idea of like the unintentional voter suppression as well a lot of what I saw, wasn't even deliberate attempts of suppressing people's right to vote but as far as like language access.

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It was just that things were not laid out in a way that people could could easily get to and and those kinds of things would would be solved by taking the time to you know have a test group and see if it worked for people so part of it too is just seeing what works for users.

Stephen Pasqualina

40:36

Absolutely. I think a lot of the structures that we're talking about assume a certain identity or set of identities that these, you know systems are designed for right so ballots written in labyrinthine legally use right or obviously designed for native English speakers who are highly educated.

40:54

A question from AJ Matthew. I'd be curious to know if any of you have insights on this because I don't really, um, could there be a way for people to vote online with that raise security issues that seems like a democratizing. You know way of solving all these voting issues.

Dr. Greta de Jong

41:14

I think there may be security issues but I know from experience that it's possible because that's how I have in the New Zealand elections, and for years I was just franchise in both places. I think New Zealand and the US and now I'm a dual citizen and they can vote in both places.

41:33

My country of origin and tears so I did actually vote. I allow people overseas to vote online. I don't think they allow it for everyone I think maybe you know get really complicated and raise a lot of security issues but it was very easy all I need to download my voting papers and fill them out, get someone to witness me signing them and then I just uploaded them to the site. So it's possible.

Natalie Van Hoozer

42:01

Yeah, and I just wanted to add to that also it only with my personal experience I was supposed

to be in Argentina during these general elections so I got all set up to vote, you know as a US citizen overseas and Nevada did implement an online voting system.

42:19

This year I believe was the first year, in addition to being able to scan in paper ballots to the registrar voters office they have an online system that they're working on using for voters overseas so it's definitely something that is being worked on at least for those absentee voters.

Dr. Precious Hall

42:37

Yeah. Theoretically is definitely possible um the issue that everybody that most people bring up are the security issues and how do we and it's a couple of issues in terms of security, how do we ensure that the person that says they're voting online is actually them, how do we protect ourselves from outside foreign influences or even inside hackers who just want to have fun on the day of election.

43:02

And how do we do it on a large scale so there are military service members who are allowed to vote online there are people out of the country not everyone but in special circumstances that are allowed to vote online, but that small scale compared to when we look at presidential elections we're talking upwards of more than you know 100 million people who would be looking to use technically the same system.

43:26

So you do have the security issues, but then also to in order to do it you would have to be willing to give up your anonymity, in terms of not just that you wrote it but who you voted for our people are comfortable with that are they not, but the main points that people bring up are the security issues and how do we translate, you know, yes, we have a small number who doing now, but how do we make that available.

43:51

And we would still have to do both mobile voting, or online voting, and in person voting because again we have to think about those who don't have access to these to this same technology.

Stephen Pasqualina

12:36:30

Absolutely doesn't solve the problem the six ability, completely to that that question of accessibility we've touched on this a little bit but we have a question from Rachel McGrath who asks, How are the number of polling stations in a certain location determined and why are they so limited in certain locations. Is there a way to solve the issue of long lines or crowded polling places.

Dr. Precious Hall

44:35

Well again so each state does determine literally the location of polling places and you know, that's the constitution time place and manner restrictions, you know, here's the without going, making my answer too long.

44:54

The unfortunate reality is that there are ways to challenge polling locations but it mainly involves going through the court and has to be housed under equitable access, i.e. the 14th amendment.

45:08

So, is it fair that for some people they can bear quarter of a mile or half a mile from their nearest polling location, and for others, they're 10 or 15 miles, it becomes an equitable issue, but also on top of that, the

45:23

people who are most impacted our soul tend to be the ones who don't have the resources to be able to go through the litigation to challenge the issues, and remember when we look at our legal system here it's not just that a group can come in and say this is unfair and we're going to, you know, sue or take us to court.

45:45

You actually have to have at least one person who's been disproportionately impacted and sometimes it's hard to find a person who's willing to be the face of a lawsuit to get these things settled, so it's possible but it's not easy. And that's how unfortunately these people get away with these things because the ones who are disproportionately impacted have the least resources to fight against what's happening.

Stephen Pasqualina

46:16

Absolutely, so we keep coming back to this question of resources and, you know, limited voting rights I know from are limited polling places in more impoverished areas, they're closed down for economic reasons extensively.

46:29

I think there's probably some other motivations, or four governors decided to close on polling places, but the the obvious one of the services we can reduce the number of polling locations and that save some money.

46:40

I wanted to address a question from Ruthie Meadows who asks a controversial question about the electoral college I thought this would be something that might have come up earlier, but

there's a lot of talk over the past few years about eliminating the electoral college because of its complex kind of intersection with voting suppression.

47:02

So Ruthie puts the question this way, how does the fight for access reforms such as automatic registration, multilingual polls and or that question just went away. Hold on let me recover it. Here we go. Okay.

47:18

How does the fight for access to traumas such as an automatic registration multilingual polls and or a national holiday relate in your opinion to a broader push for eliminating the electoral college and do these face similar or different political barriers.

47:33

And maybe we could start with Greta on that question and be curious to hear what you think about the electoral college and its contributions of voter suppression.

Dr. Greta de Jong

47:41

Yeah, sorry, I think it was my fault that the question when I, I realized I haven't had the option of typing an answer to a question so I typed the link and paste the link.

47:54

So the link had to do with an initiative called national popular vote, which is trying to get state legislatures to pass legislation agreeing that they would have a lot there electoral college votes to whoever was the winner of the popular but regardless of who won their own state, and it would takes effect when a certain number of states, adding up to 270 electoral college votes sign on.

48:17

That was just kind of in relation to the electoral college which is. I mean it is it's an it's one of the anti democratic aspects of the Constitution and it was deliberately designed that way to insulate the presidency from the popular vote by, you know, putting this intermediate step in there and avoiding electoral college votes to each day. I'm sorry was the question that I answer it at all.

Stephen Pasqualina

48:53

It was muted sorry, new to zoom Ruthie was asking a question I think about the relationship between these different efforts right like multilingual polls, making Election Day and national holiday automatic registration. How is that kind of related to the Electoral College, do you see a relation?

Dr. Greta de Jong

49:10

Yeah, I think they're all part of this kind broader push to make the elections more democratic and to encourage participation because one way in which the electoral college suppresses the vote, is that if you live in a solidly red state or a solidly blue state, why bother voting right because the point is is going to help you. So, that is a disincentive to many people to participate.

Stephen Pasqualina

49:33

Going off of that question. We have a question here about not a systemic issue, necessarily, but the question of cynicism or pessimism when it comes to voting. I've read that one of the ways in which voter suppression manifests beyond just the long lines that we've seen is that the people that we in those long lines are discouraged from trying to vote again. And they often withdraw from the electoral process.

49:58

So what would you say to voters who feel that their votes don't matter, or that, you know, taking off of work one day, that's really not worth it because it's inconsequential my one vote in this sea of many boats in my state.

Natalie Van Hoozer

50:12

Yeah, I could jump in there so with the first time voters eyes have to obviously the big question was, well, why are you voting now and for them part of it was the citizenship piece but also they were voting for their, their friends and their family who don't have the ability to vote, many of them undocumented so I think things like that can help motivate people even if part of them does think well I don't know how much good my one vote will do.

50:42

I know it's also easier in Nevada and especially in Washoe County if you explain the idea of being a swing county and a swing state to people that can help motivate them in our area. But more generally speaking, I think voting for other people who can't. It was a big motivator.

Stephen Pasqualina

51:04

Precious, did you want to chime in on that question, I'd be curious to hear what you think about this question, especially with young people and you were saying, you know, the questions of do I take a day off of work when I could actually earn wages that day.

Dr. Precious Hall

51:16

You know it's definitely a hard choice for many people and I am someone who I will always say that I'm, you know, I'm not gonna lie and say, Well, you know, elections I've ever come down to one single vote.

51:34

But elections have been closing our definition of close, we were seeing it now, you know, has been a few thousand. But what I always like to tell my students is, is it absolutely true that your wonderful is not going to make a difference in the election.

51:49

Yes, but it's also equally true that it becomes a cumulative effect. Meaning, if you're the one person who thinks my one vote doesn't matter so I'm going to stay home on election day. And then, I'm the one person, and then there are 10 million other people who think they're the one person.

52:09

That's the cumulative effect. And that's the issue so yes everybody should vote. Every, every vote does count, it doesn't matter in the cumulative sense, but statistically it's true that one vote and the whole as opposed to just a singular one. And that's what a lot of people don't consider one versus the one times 10 million. Yes, that makes a difference.

Stephen Pasqualina

52:36

That question that I had going into this conversation was about the role of education and journalism in promoting democracy so to Precious's point about, you know, your one vote doesn't matter but if you think of yourself as you know an ethical subject that's a model for all other subjects in the nation that you share.

52:56

You should vote based on that principle. How do we effectively communicate that kind of, you know, democratic ethos, either through journalism or through education in the classroom.

Natalie Van Hoozer

53:07

I can talk to the journalism part of it I think what I've really noticed with this election and I started you my working on published pieces related to it months before the election to speak to that educational component and I think much like news literacy is something that we see that many people need and being able to determine what's what's, you know, accurate and what's not and what's coming from vetted sources.

53:34

It's the same thing with voting literacy to knowing what sources, you should consult and which ones are reputable, and who to ask for. When you have questions and so there have been different journalism organizations with initiatives to help with those types of things even pro public has a Spanish language newsletter, and they've been publishing so quite a few different Spanish language resources like voting guides in it.

54:00

And that's what we've been trying to do to at the local level with our Facebook Live event to answer questions in Spanish and different organizations like the Nevada independent have a Spanish section where they had explainers on the ballot questions and things like that so I think it's coming down to that educational and that literacy component and that journalism organizations need to spend just as much time explaining the process to people as they do explaining the results.

54:28

So, that comes down to at the beginning you know telling people how to register and how this can all impact the outcome.

Stephen Pasqualina

54:42

Maybe, since we're low on time I want to shift, I'd love to hear a Precious and to speak about that that issue of education as well but to get that other audience questions. We have a question about convicted those convicted of felonies, should they be allowed to vote I know there was a law passed in Florida. Recently, that I forget if it overturned the law that determined that ex cons could not vote or not.

55:05

But that's one of the ways in which you know one's legal status as shapes their access to the polls so I wonder about this question of should one's status as an ex felon or not determine voting rights.

Dr. Greta de Jong

55:24

Well the felony disenfranchisement is a, a major form of depression. The case in Florida. So that was Florida is one of the states at ban people convicted of felonies for life from voting so even when they finish the sentences is still not allowed to vote in 2018 voters are Florida by 65% growth an amendment to restore balance voting voting rights.

55:54

And then the state legislature stepped in and passed legislation forcing those people to pay all their fees and court fine like fines and court fees and all of that which some of them you know

added up to thousands of dollars so potentially 1.4 million gallons could have had the voting rights restored and reality on the 300,000 were able to pay the fees and fines into registered to vote.

56:19

And this has been, you know, this is combined with the disproportionate policing of black communities and mass incarceration has landed disproportionate number of African Americans in prison, where they can't go.

56:33

A lot of those prisons are located in predominantly white rural areas where those prisoners count in the population counts for those counties, but they're not allowed to vote and this is just another way in which you know those white Americans get more representation in Congress, because of that.

Dr. Precious Hall

56:53

I'll add my opinions to that. I absolutely believe that convicted felon should gain the right should maintain their right to vote, they're still citizens and when we talk about rate of recidivism if we don't incorporate them fully back into society, society, how can we expect them to want to try to do anything differently than what they've done before.

57:16

I am also and this is controversial I'm a proponent of allowing them to vote while in prison. But the reason I am a proponent of that is because of what Professor, Professor John just pointed out in their talent is part of the population for representation for where they are, they should be able to vote where they are. until we change that, I will not change my particular stance on that because we can't use them in one sense, and then disenfranchise them.

57:43

And another that just gives another separate demographic more power to be able to suppress people's voices, so I'm in favor of those outside of jail who served their time voting and I'm in favor of those who are currently serving time to continue to be able to vote.

Stephen Pasqualina

58:03

You can see that the representation issue it's an extension of the three fifths copper mines right which overrepresented slave holding states, without giving enslaved African Americans the right to vote, we are wrapping up on time.

58:17

Sadly I wish we could continue to talk about this important topic, but I have to close things up.

Thank you all in the audience for your tremendous questions and I want to thank the third on tap committee, including Britain Rodriguez and cross meniscal genuine repairs, Meredith Oda Catherine Fusco and Calum Ingram. Special thanks to Caitlin Earley for helping to plan tonight's panel, and for managing the q and a.

58:41

I want to thank Deborah Modelmog, Lisa McDonald and the College of Liberal Arts, as well as Chris Stancil and Richie Bednarski for their support for tonight's event. Thank you to our partners, Laughing Planet, Nevada humanities and KWNK. And I want to thank our fantastic panelists, of course Precious Hall, Natalie Van Hoozer and Greta De Yong.

59:00

Most of all I want to thank you all in the audience, especially those of you who reached out and asked questions that was tremendous conversation driven by your really engaging and thoughtful questions so thank you.

59:10

Once the session ends you'll receive a survey in your email, we'd love to hear your feedback on tonight's event we use that feedback to plan future events. Thank you all for for coming. Really appreciate it and take care. Have a great night.

Dr. Precious Hall

59:28

Thank you.

Natalie Van Hoozer

59:29

Thank you very much.

Dr. Greta de Jong

59:30

Thanks everyone.