

TOT 10-8-20 Transcript

Confronting Legacies of Health Disparities

00:01 Carlos Mariscal

Hello world. Welcome to Thought on Tap. Your monthly news, views, and brews brought to you by the Core Humanities program, and Laughing Planet, and the College of Liberal Arts in the University of Nevada, Reno. My name is Carlos Mariscal. I'm an assistant professor in the department of philosophy and co-creator of Thought on Tap. This is the first event of our third season which will be held entirely online.

00:26 Carlos Mariscal

Our theme this season is legacies. Our first year's theme was the "role of humanities," and the role of last year was "future visions of." So, this fall/this year, we're talking about legacies, and this fall we will be "confronting legacies"-

00:39 Carlos Mariscal

confronting legacies of health disparities, voter suppression, and policing and violence. In the spring, we will return to some of these topics and discuss them in the context of "building legacies." So, we will be building legacies of equity and education, health and healing, activism and social justice, and economic empowerment. We are now available on Zoom and YouTube.

01:09 Carlos Mariscal

Our YouTube channel is [thoughtontap.com/channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...). This event is broadcast live on [thoughtontap.com/youtube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...). So, if any of your friends and family want to watch, but don't have Zoom installed, they can just go there to watch us now.

01:32 Carlos Mariscal

Tonight, we have an excellent discussion ready for you all. We will spend the first 30 minutes discussing the topic with our panelists at around 6:10pm pacific time. We will switch to questions from the audience, which you can actually type now. So, if you type the questions in now, we will be able to sort them and answer them live as is needed.

01:57 Carlos Mariscal

Our behind the scenes moderator Katherine Fusco will order them based on what we've covered and hopefully we will have a full discussion beyond that. And then we will wrap up with our final thoughts so before we get to discussion with a panelist and before we get to the audience questions,

02:17 Carlos Mariscal

I want to set the stage. Our topic tonight is confronting legacies of health disparities. You probably don't need to be reminded, but we are in the middle of a pandemic. There are more than 215,000 dead in the United States and over a million dead around the world. There are 4 million active cases in the United

States and another 5 million around the world, but this pandemic like all other health climate and natural disasters issues does not affect us all equally.

02:48 Carlos Mariscal

It affects us across a variety of dimensions. And so I thought I'd set the scene by talking about some of these aspects, right. So, it affects us according to income, not adjusting for other factors, people with higher incomes tend to live longer than people with lower incomes. The widest difference is among men in the 99th percentile versus the bottom 1st percentile, where the difference is 14.6 years of life expectancy.

03:17 Carlos Mariscal

There's well-known disparities between age and disability, and mental health issues, issues with military service...across more than 400 studies, military veterans have had been found to be at risk of greater mental and physical health - especially when accounting for gender, race, and distance from VA facilities. Distance turns out to be an issue that we don't think about very often, but according to the CDC, compared to urban areas, all major causes of death occur at greater rates in rural communities.

03:56 Carlos Mariscal

They have greater rates of mental, behavioral and developmental disorders, infant mortality, suicide, and drug addiction. So there's income, age, military service, disability, mental health, rural/urban. Prison status. As of July, it turns out that incarcerated state and federal prisoners had five and a half times the rate of Covid-19 infections. Even those detained across the border have -

04:26 Carlos Mariscal

there was an ICE whistleblower in the past month that reported mass sterilization of detainees and in some facilities there's been coronavirus outbreaks. One facility, in particular, at Alanto had one in five detainees being infected with this disease. There are many disparities across sexuality and gender as well. So, men are a little bit higher risk of infection and death from Covid-19.

04:58 Carlos Mariscal

They also have a five-year lower life expectancy than their female counterparts, more likely to report drug and alcohol use, more likely to be uninsured, and commit suicide. Women on the other hand tend to be diagnosed with depression and anxiety, are more likely to be victims of violence, and the biggest issue - even accounting for all of these - the hardest to get rid of is the disparities in health outcomes according to race.

05:25 Carlos Mariscal

These inequities in health care are particularly bad for African-American and Native populations. African-Americans are 30 more likely to die prematurely from heart disease and twice as likely to die prematurely from a stroke at the homicide rate that is double the rest of the population. The Native population has by far the highest suicide and unintentional injury rate. All of these disparities are serious and deserve to be addressed.

05:56 Carlos Mariscal

And in any of these, it could be that the actual causes are due to a number of factors that perhaps we haven't considered or perhaps the interplay between these factors matters. To disentangle and to understand the complex connections between these issues is a difficult task, but luckily tonight we have a panel of experts that will help us grapple with some of these issues.

06:24 Carlos Mariscal

I've carefully selected this panel across theory, practice, and public communication in the hopes of developing a deeper understanding of the issues at stake. So, let's meet them in alphabetical order. I'd like to introduce Françoise Baylis, who is a university research professor specializing in bioethics, a member of the Order of Canada and the Order of Nova Scotia, she's a founder of the Impact Ethics blog, a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and a fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. In 2017 she was awarded the Canadian Bioethics Society Lifetime Achievement Award. Welcome Françoise.

07:06 Carlos Mariscal

Our next uh panelist is Caleb S. Cage. He's a Covid-19 Response Director, former head of the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Advisor, the former Assistant Vice Chancellor for Workforce Development and Community Colleges in the System of Higher Education, the former Executive Director of the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, and the founder of Nevada's Green Zone Initiative, and Director of Military and Veterans Policy. Welcome Caleb.

07:37 Carlos Mariscal

And our final panelist is Kathleen Masterson. She's a Reynolds Professor of Science Communication, she is a Peabody and Edward R. Murrow award-winning multimedia journalist who's worked in NPR's daily science and health news desk as a digital producer and editor. Her work has spanned environment, agriculture, the Affordable Care Act, industrial chemicals, and many other topics. Welcome Kath.

08:04 Carlos Mariscal

Okay so to start off I wanted to ask a general question of all the panelists. I discussed a bunch of - a lot of- systemic issues and it seems in the context of this pandemic where there's been a systemic failing from the top to the bottom in a lot of respects, lack of a clear plan communication, and misinformation, and citizens simply not complying with mass quarters. I wanted to start off with a question of whose responsibility is it to address Covid-19 and health disparities in general, and I don't know if Françoise would like to start off?

08:50 Françoise Baylis

Well I mean I'd like to say up front I think the responsibility rests with all of us. I think that's one of the core things that we need to understand with a pandemic. This isn't an individual problem. This isn't even- you know- a problem for a family, a community, a university. A pandemic is global, and I think that one of the things we need to understand there is that means we have to take responsibility for our

actions. Not only in the ways that they may have impact on our health, but in terms of the ways in which they may or may not have an impact on the health of others. And I think that's why you're hearing - you know - a number of directives having to do with the kinds of things that people can take responsibility for that will help everyone and so that's why you hear about masking.

09:38 Françoise Baylis

It's not just to protect you. In fact, we're not so sure it will protect you so much as it will protect others. And that's why you hear comments about you know working towards a vaccine that again it's not just about protecting you, it's about protecting others by you know over time getting to herd immunity. So, I think the main thing for us to appreciate at the beginning is this isn't somebody else's responsibility. It's everybody's individual responsibility for the benefit of the collective.

10:05 Carlos Mariscal

Excellent, thank you. Caleb, you were involved in orchestrating and organizing some of these extremely difficult tasks, right? To try to get something like this under control. I wonder if you have thoughts on responsibility in in that context.

10:27 Caleb Cage

Responsibility in the context of uh an emergency management response - um and and i i i i'm stammering a little bit here, because I can't disagree at all with what Dr. Baylis said before. But putting that into an emergency management or emergency response context, I think is important. But first, thank you for the opportunity to be here. It's a - it's an honor and a pleasure, and I hope I look forward to hearing from my colleagues here as well. You know emergency management - it really does - it fits within a - in the united states anyway - it fits within a national paradigm uh wherein the federal government is supposed to provide the strategic level of uh support and resources, policy doctrine, those sorts of things...

11:18 Caleb Cage

and then the state would coordinate the support, and then the local governments would be would provide primary - the frontline execution - of whatever that plan would be. That's all very nice on charts and in written doctrine. In reality, I think what we have is what must be endearing a pandemic nothing short of all of the above working towards the same goal. And you all are probably much more aware and attuned to these things than I am, but yesterday I saw the editorial from the New England Journal of Medicine,

12:04 Caleb Cage

which surprised me in its very direct approach. But calling out the lack of federal coordination and consistency in strategic support that I think that structure requires. I think we can see some of that at the different states trying different things as well and a lot of local communities that are frankly just doing everything they can to support their residents, and visitors, and any others who may be there.

12:35 Caleb Cage

So from an emergency management structure, this has validated the model, but also reinforced the fact that, in order for that model to work, we really all do have to be rowing in the same direction and putting any sort of petty concerns aside and focused on really the lives of our- you know- fellow citizens, residents, and people.

13:03 Carlos Mariscal

That sounds - I mean - that sounds great. And to me, I agree. I think rowing together is a difficult task if everybody even has the values in order, but I think there's an issue about communication as well that I'd like to maybe turn to Kath about. How do you think the press is doing with respect to communicating some of these issues about mask wearing, about vaccines, etc.?

13:31 Kathleen Masterson

Yeah. I've been pretty impressed in general with media coverage in the sense of being accurate about the science, trying to dispel rumors, and frankly I think our country is in a really divided time and this pandemic has brought out all those divisions. And the liberals and conservatives have both found their own rallying cries here. So, the media is kind of trying to work its hardest to cover - you know - not miss voices, but also be super clear about what the accurate science is and that's always a challenge.

14:05 Kathleen Masterson

For one thing that's been particularly challenging for media in this pandemic is: how do you cover when someone is lying? And I use that word very carefully because the media's job is to say "oh we fact check and this is not true," but the word lying implies intent, and so there's been a really big debate among journalists - do we use that word or do we just sort of say so and so stated this and that is not true? And so actually the media has really had a grappling kind of big decisions to make during this pandemic

14:35 Kathleen Masterson

about how to convey to the public that this information is not true. Because once you have it coming out of a talking head, coming out of a reporter's mouth saying so-and-so said this, or you know the president said, "she feels better now. All's good covid's not a big deal," it's a huge challenge, because to people who follow this it's sort of clear to us what's happening. But there's a lot of people who aren't so sure who maybe only tune into the media occasionally, so I would say that's one of the really fascinating challenges in covid. The media knows how to do messaging. We, especially specialists, know how to cover science and health. But covering when we have really mixed messages coming from politicians has been more of a challenge.

15:17 Carlos Mariscal

Yeah. No that seems like it's an issue that is particularly difficult to address. So, we have a particularly interesting question from the Q&A that perhaps I can just jump into. Why is the pandemic described as a Chinese virus - promoting nationalistic conflict, or the plague of the snobs - promoting class warfare, or the urban virus - promoting conflict between town and country? So, perhaps does anybody have any thoughts on that?

16:00 Kathleen Masterson

I don't know if I can speak entirely to that, but I know NPR did a really nice piece on how they name viruses. And there's actually an international committee and they work incredibly hard to choose a name that is not regional specific, because initially when these viruses break they often are - like Spanish Flu - they're tied to their country that they were at least first diagnosed in. And so there's been a real effort by international medical community and then the media to follow that to call this Covid-19. To say that it's from the, you know, SARS CoV-1-2 virus.

16:34 Kathleen Masterson

In terms of the name choices, I think those tend to be, you know, other names tend to be perpetuated by people with a political agenda for sure. And I know we've seen that with the president. I believe actually there was some media note this week that since he's had covid, he at least referred to it a few times as coronavirus, but that's actually incredibly new from all the coverage that I've seen. So that would be my best guess though. I must admit I hadn't heard the urban virus one, so can't speak-

17:01 Carlos Mariscal

Yeah, I hadn't either. It reminds me of the the Spanish Flu, which you talked about is, even at that time it was the only nation that was reporting the totals honestly. There's some evidence that perhaps it started in the United States and spread elsewhere. But on this topic of attacking nationalities or racial or ethnic groups, I'd like to perhaps pose a question to Françoise. So, this pandemic has seen some clear differences in rates of infection due to employment, poverty, institutionalization - I talked about a couple of them at the beginning. So, when you look at this issue what role do you think racism plays in Covid-19 infection, access, and treatment?

17:51 Françoise Baylis

Well I think one of the things that has happened is that when confronted with all the consequences of the pandemic, we've actually exacerbated problems that were already there before. So, it's not that this has created these new problems, it's that we've had a number of social problems, and now they're really coming home to roost. That's not a very good analogy. There's a better one that a colleague told me of which, I thought was really good. It really kind of builds on your comment earlier about what happens if we're not all rowing in the same direction or sort of with the same goal,

18:27 Françoise Baylis

and the comment there was we're all in the same storm, but we're not all in the same boat. I think that's really very powerful, because what it does is it speaks to what we have in common, which is a particular problem. But then it speaks to the fact that we have different resources available to us to bring to that problem. And so one of the things that I think is really clear is, in society there have always been people who are privileged. You know. All of us participating in this call in some way are very privileged, because we have access to a computer, we have the time, and the resources to have this conversation.

19:03 Françoise Baylis

But think about people who don't have those kinds of resources. People who have jobs that are not computer-facing jobs. People whose living depends on being out in an environment which may be a very

risky environment. So, you know, we've lived through a time now we started calling our essential workers people who are working in grocery stores. That wasn't a thought before that they were essential workers, but we need to have food on the table, and we don't have to run the same risks as do certain people.

19:33 Françoise Baylis

And then, you know, very often these are people in lower wage situations and there are people who can't afford to not go to work. That means they're people who can't afford to not put themselves in certain kinds of risky environments. I think, you know, one of the things that we see then is that often those jobs are correlated with people in certain racial and ethnic clusters or groups. Certainly, in our context we see people who work in meatpacking plants that have proven to be very much at risk. We see people that have come up from Caribbean Islands, because they're the pickers, so they're working in agriculture for us and in that context, again, those have turned out to be an at-risk environment.

20:17 Françoise Baylis

We have people that are doing home care work, you know, attendance in nursing homes, etc. Again, often low-paid workers of particular ethnic backgrounds who are in at-risk situations. So, I think the thing to take away is that these are not new problems these are not new disparities, but then we have this massive health challenge come along, and the people who are most vulnerable and most at risk are these same people who've already had certain kinds of challenges that we haven't responded to, and now the consequences of that are just really dire but visible.

20:51 Françoise Baylis

So, it's not to say that the consequences weren't bad before, but now we see people who are dying in in great numbers, and I think, you know, for many of us it's sort of, you know, shocking, because we've not really thought about some of the consequences of the ways in which we've structured our lives.

21:06 Carlos Mariscal

Yeah I- I mean it's one of these things that just keeps getting hammered at home to us every time. So, Françoise for those of you that don't know is joining us from Nova Scotia, if that's right. I looked up the statistics of Washoe county, which is where I am right now, compared to Nova Scotia, and we have something like 10 times the incidences that that you have and something like three times as many deaths as well.

21:37 Françoise Baylis

Well, let me share the numbers with you and just put them in context. So, I'm in a province. So, Canada has 10 provinces. I'm in one of the very small provinces and one of the very poor provinces. Our total population is about a million people, and we have zero community spread. We have three active cases. One is in an ICU, okay. The other two active cases are people who traveled, came back, and went into quarantine. So, they actually were following the rules and that's why we haven't had any community spread even from that. So, that's pretty striking when you hear a million people and three cases. But one of the things I think is really important is that we have willingly or not so willingly, depending on how

you think about democracy and how decision-making works with government, our freedom is very seriously constrained.

22:25 Françoise Baylis

You know, what do I mean by that? Well, if you leave the province and go outside of what's called the "Atlantic bubble" - so if I even go to see my father, who lives in Montreal (in another province) - when I come home, I automatically have to go into 14 day quarantine. When our students came back to university, every single student, and the students outside the "Atlantic Bubble" uh totaled about 5 000 students – every single one of those students went into 14 day quarantine. And every single one of those students had to have three covid tests during the 14 day quarantine. So, I mean these were rules put in by the government, and some people would see them as extremely draconian, but the net result is we're living a life that's by comparison to other parts of the world quite normal we can walk around

23:14 Françoise Baylis

and we do so with masks but believing that, you know, we're relatively safe. And so that's been a really interesting kind of experiment which really shows what you have to give up in order to secure health.

23:29 Carlos Mariscal

So maybe we'll turn this to Caleb. I was traveling around Nevada this past week, and I stopped, I put on my mask, and I went into a convenience store to pump gasoline, and I was the only one. Like there are some places where they don't even pretend to be following some of these issues. And so I wonder- I mean that must be frustrating, but it must also be concerning. And so, I guess I'm wondering what - bringing it back to Nevada - what populations, what areas, what concerns you about the Covid-19 outbreak in Nevada?

24:13 Caleb Cage

Um, so what concerns me I think is it – you – you sort of teed it up nicely and Dr. Baylis comment is a nice counter example. But I think it's exactly that. It's you know, what are the populations? These are exactly the populations we're talking about this evening. These are groups that - everything that Françoise just went through - as far as the different groups that work in jobs and can't afford to miss a day of work and that sort of thing, and often

24:46 Caleb Cage

live with larger groups in a single home, in multi-generational homes, and those sorts of things as well. So, you have the potential to – for one person to get sick and spread it within their home environment as well. Those sorts of things are troubling. I think our – where we see it – the spread of course is where our population areas are, and that's Washoe county- where you and I live, and Clark county, and in Southern Nevada- where Las Vegas is, because that's where person-to-person contact is. And

25:20 Caleb Cage

that's how this virus spreads. I think one of the things that does - that I do find challenging is resistance to the idea of wearing masks, again, for other people, resistance to the idea of self willingly self-quarantining or self-isolating if you've traveled in a way where you may have gotten sick, or if you have

gotten sick, or even getting a test. We're seeing testing rates in the state of Nevada decline as well from, you know, what people are

25:56 Caleb Cage

referring to as covid fatigue and those sorts of things, and I don't want to minimize any of that. This has been hard physically, emotionally, economically for everyone across the state and around the world. But as was noted a moment ago, those are the sorts of things that you can do on the front end to have a return to something close to normalcy more quickly. If, again, you're willing to work together collectively. And that does have a messaging component, and when you have leaders at different levels across the nation saying different things about whether this- whether the virus is real, whether masks are effective whether, any of those things, it does undermine efforts very much at a- at a state level and certainly at the local level, where a lot of the really important work is going on.

26:52 Carlos Mariscal

Yeah so, I mean- I guess this brings me to communication again. Maybe I'll bring Kath into this before we return to the audience early. So, I teach a course called Science Technology in Society. I teach a lot of courses and in in this one in particular, I spend a month working on the concept of health - just try to present it. Or a month on climate change. A month on space. And even then I feel like I don't fully address everything.

27:27 Carlos Mariscal

Sometimes in communicating these issues to the public, current issues, mass pandemic issues, you have maybe just eight column inches or a short three minute clip or something. How do you present such complex topics, like public health, to audiences?

27:49 Kathleen Masterson

Well it's certainly tricky. And one thing I teach a course for scientists on how to [inaudible] and I break a lot of hearts when I say you only get one main idea. Am I cutting out there? Sorry. I said that you only get one main idea, because that's really our job as journalists, as communicators, to boil it down. If someone only takes away one thing from this, standard NPR story's only about three and a half minutes, what is it going to be? And numbers don't reach people, right?

28:16 Kathleen Masterson

They're important, we have to include them in our stories, but nobody really cares about numbers. If I said that you know this car burned this many, made this big of a carbon footprint this year, no one would have any idea what that meant. So, instead we really try to choose examples of how someone has been impacted. And I think this is sort of obvious to people who read the news that we do this all the time, but reading a story about a man who chose to go to a barbecue and brought home covid and killed his mother is gonna sit with you for weeks, whereas reading another update saying we're now at - honestly - I'm not up to date on the numbers - this many covid cases is going to be more of that - I hadn't heard the word - but more that covid fatigue. So, the media works really hard to do a balance of

28:58 Kathleen Masterson

personal stories, showing the impact, looking at what people who are making that tough choice that, “oh I really need money, so I have to go back to my bartending job, but I have asthma and I’m scared um that this could really harm me. So, journalists work really really hard at finding that, “what’s the one idea that I want to take home here,” and, “how do I do it in this story” and luckily we get a lot of chances to kind of have multiple ideas over the weeks, but that’s-

29:25 Kathleen Masterson

it really takes frankly- you kind of do like a PhD thesis on the complexity of the topic and you walk out and say “what’s one thing I can share with the public?” You really can’t share it all.

29:36 Carlos Mariscal

Yeah, no I mean I ran into that when I was trying to set this up. I thought- and I may have leaned too far into the statistics rather than the stories -because the stories tell the story. So, I want to turn this to the audience, because there’s a lot of open questions and these are all great. And I want to start with a question from Muhammad Shamim: why does some part of society not take the pandemic seriously? What flaw does this reveal about society today, and is there a way to fix it?

30:09 Carlos Mariscal

I guess this might uh be for any of you. Right. I think about it as polarization.

30:18 Françoise Baylis

I’ll throw out an idea and I think that you know we’ve lived in the last little while at least, in the western world, with this belief that the most important thing is autonomy. The most important thing is self-determination. And we’ve really put this up, you know, on a pedestal. And in the context of doing that, forgotten about all of the other things that are important, in terms of core values, beliefs, and principles.

30:45 Françoise Baylis

And I guess, you know, what I want to say back is that we are not atoms bouncing about in the world individually. We are all part of communities. Sometimes very small communities, like families. Sometimes broader communities, like you know, friendships, social clubs, religious groups, etc. But anything you do has a knock on effect to other people, and I think, until we can get people to remember that your actions have consequences for people other than yourself, that you can then begin to think about it. But I have to say, I mean, I have seen the images that I’m sure some of you have seen, you know with people putting on the mask and then cutting out a big hole as if to make a statement. And it’s like,

31:21 Françoise Baylis

what are you trying to say? You know, and I guess I really do think about it in those terms. What are you trying to say? Are you trying to tell me that you have the right to kill people? Is that what your message is? Because you’re going to walk around and spew, you know, onto anybody. I mean what are you trying to say? That I’m big and important, and I know more than anybody else in the world, so when somebody

with authority and knowledge and background says that this is good for protecting people, you somehow know more?

31:45 Françoise Baylis

And I think that's a part of the problem. It's like I can't get an answer to that, which seems a reasonable question. And so I think I really fall back on the idea that somehow it's become so ingrained that you have the right to personal freedom and liberty, that you have forgotten about something else called solidarity and commitment to the collectivity. And I think that's the moment in time that we're at -we have a chance to learn something, and the question is, will we learn it?

32:14 Kathleen Masterson

And a piggyback point on that, and I 100% agree with Dr. Baylis, I think maybe it's tied into it- maybe it's slightly separate- but especially in America, I think we have an over reliance on technological fixes. If we look at climate change, and geoengineering, and "oh we're going to invent better this"

32:29 Kathleen Masterson

[Inaudible]

32:32 Kathleen Masterson

Rather than reduce our energy use, we'd rather, you know, spend millions on some fancy thing, not that we're even doing that yet. And I think this, we've seen [inaudible] in covid. Rather than I change my individual behaviors, I'm gonna wait for a vaccine, I'm gonna wait for a technology fix, and that's of course the people who at least believe it's a problem. And I think that plays- that's part of that American, or maybe western attitude, of, you know, not my problem. I shouldn't have to change my behavior as a part of this, and I wish I could say where that came from. And I'm not a history buff, but I've certainly seen that pattern in our country.

33:06 Caleb Cage

I would just like to add to that if I can. I agree with the previous two comments, and then- and ever since Kathleen's last comment, I'm trying to narrow everything I say down to one big idea, and I'll probably fail. But if I did have one big idea, it would be I think we're actually- this this may be too big of an idea, but I think we're actually living in, culturally, pretty revolutionary times right now, where- and then talking about the united states- where globalization and all of these these things that are changing the nature of the world, or have changed the nature of the world, have put the status quo, the way we normally do things and expect things to be, on notice that change is coming. And

33:53 Caleb Cage

so, there's a battle over what "next" looks like. Whether we know that or not. And some people say this is the, you know, the heart and soul of what it means to be America, or American, and those sorts of things going forward. And I think that the polarization that you mentioned in the question really gets down to, you know, I think the word is overused, but the tribal nature of ideas, and identities, and how we align with those in this country. And I think, as humans, very often has basically said I want to follow this identity, and therefore this is what I need to know about. This is what I need to believe about this

virus and act accordingly, right? By cutting a hole out of a mask in order to be defiant, or simply not following the rules, or yelling at me as I'm walking down the street wearing a mask. And those sorts of things which happen.

34:54 Caleb Cage

So, I really do think this is a moment of transformation globally, and this is how we're experiencing it here in the United States. And because of that, I'm hopeful for where we'll be 10 years from now.

35:07 Carlos Mariscal

There's a thread that I want to unify between everything that you said here. So, the technology connecting us in new ways, people expecting technology to solve problems, and technology forming groups. So, one of the questions that you asked, Françoise, was why aren't these people caring about their community? I think that is true if we take their community to be their countrymen - the people that they live next to - but if they take their group to be this- a political affiliation, or something else, maybe what they're doing is just showing that they don't care about other groups.

35:54 Carlos Mariscal

I've also started getting concerned recently about this idea, like, I- you know- I'm trained as a philosopher, and I'm trained to think that people give ideas, and they give arguments for what they believe, and they act according to reason. And I've started getting worried that sometimes people act, and speak, and behave in ways that aren't factive- that are just emotional. They're not trying to like make a statement that could be addressed or checked. They're just showing their emotional group identity, and they're not actually considering the consequences. It's not even about facts or not, it's about showing group loyalty. I don't know if you have thoughts on that.

36:37 Françoise Baylis

Well, I think you're saying something really important here, and I think what I'd like to shine a light on is the fact that the groupings are actually shifting depending on what the issue is at the moment, you know, in time. So, sometimes the group is, you know, people like myself who are living in a nursing home who see themselves as at risk in a very particular kind of way. Sometimes the group is people who live in this geographical area which is now really under pressure, let's say New York City at one point in time. Sometime the group is the country and it's like, "we're gonna make sure we buy enough vaccine for all of us and to heck with the rest of the world," right.

37:16 Françoise Baylis

And so what's happening is if you think about that- that actually overlaps with the point I made before which is we're not atoms. We're not actually individuals bouncing around in the world. We are deeply connected, and we are in these kinds of different overlapping concentric circles. So, you know, I'm part of the group of women, but I'm also part of the group of university professors. I'm also part of the group of Canadians, and the groupings can go on, and I think what's happening here is that when the stress, and the pressure, and the confrontation comes- people get to move around within the groups to try to defend whatever is their sort of core intuition at the time, or their emotive response at the time, or where they can or can't see affiliations.

37:54 Françoise Baylis

And so, you know what I'm worried about, globally, is the fact that what's undergirding, I think a lot of this, is still a deep commitment to something like competition rather than collaboration. And I think that's why you can sort of see people- sort of like well you're not one of me, you're one of them, so we don't agree, so we don't talk. And I think the overarching thing is, how did we allow something like this to become politicized in multiple ways, right? So, not just between, you know, two big political parties, but really around the world. How is it that we haven't been able to come together under the WHO and do things for the globe and understand that the one community we're all part of is the community of humans?

38:34 Françoise Baylis

And we still haven't done that yet. So, I'm hopeful that you're right, Carlos, and that we'll get there, but right now, we just seem to keep moving between different groups to sort of look after self-interest.

38:44 Carlos Mariscal

So, this brings me to uh Jillian Zoutiki's, I'm sorry if I mispronounce your name, question which seems like a good follow-up here connecting to the previous conversation. Was it inevitable that a pandemic like the coronavirus would be politicized, or is it unique to this era of American politics?

39:07 Caleb Cage

I don't know that it is inevitable, and I don't- I'm trying to think through this answer as I'm speaking. I don't know that it's- it was inevitable. I think that it was inevitable during this time of American politics, that it would be politicized, because everything can be politicized and is politicized. But I think that it ties- to tie it to your previous question about uh emotionalism versus logic and uh those sorts of things that-that- you know, the way I was raised, or at least, you know, raised in the home of a formal logician who was very logical. And that was the way I thought the world worked as well.

39:55 Caleb Cage

But this really is kind of the thesis of Jonathan Haidt, the righteous mind, right? That humans really are emotional beings first and rational second. And therefore, we have to speak to the emotional side in order to build groups around ideas that matter and those sorts of things. And I think right now we are so fragmented. We are so group identified. And I think Françoise's point was great about how those are very fluid things that can change as far as group identity is concerned. Right now, because of global pressures that are causing uncertainty, that this identity is the one thing that we pursue to have some sense of security in.

40:45 Carlos Mariscal

Yeah, I keep thinking about the inevitability of the group identity. There's something that I think would be a good follow-up here from Raphael Cohen, who says, why would you say Americans are so stubborn when it comes to nationwide policies or even statewide policies? I think this follows both Françoise's and Caleb's points of: is there a possibility that dates back to early American culture? Is it a growing trend resulting from political polarity?

41:19 Carlos Mariscal

I think it might- I mean, I think it's all of them from my perspective. I think that we've been in this ongoing trend of polarization since at least the late 1960s, where our civil debates got incorporated into our political debates, and it just made the country more and more polarized. But I guess the question is like, why are we so stubborn? Is it the individualism that Françoise, you were talking about? Is it- is it something else?

41:54 Carlos Mariscal

Is it- it doesn't seem unique to the United States. It seems individualism is western, rather than the United States, so why is the United States so particularly stubborn?

42:07 Françoise Baylis

Well, I'd like to ask a question building on that, because for me this is actually a really interesting question. Where, as a Canadian, looking at the United States, I mean, like, you're our neighbors to the south, and we care about you. And I have to say, my country's general perspective is: how could you have nearly, you know, more than 200,000 dead and not understand that you're doing something wrong? And that just seems to me- it's not even that it's just a number and a big number- it's a number, when you put it in a global context, you have to know you're out of whack with the world.

42:41 Françoise Baylis

And so there is a part of, you know, and I think I'm not speaking for the world here, but I am speaking for people who are outside the country, who just actually really can't understand how you've become so fractured, that you can't come together around a crisis that really affects all of you. It affects all of us too.

42:57 Françoise Baylis

I'm, you know, I'm not saying that, you know, it's just one country's problem, but I think it's an interesting thing. So, I mean for us, the number actually really does matter. It seems really big, and frightening, and threatening.

43:10 Carlos Mariscal

Yeah, I think about a number like that and conversations that I had earlier in the year with people that were denying coronavirus altogether and saying, "oh these people are claiming that it's going to get to 100,000. They're over exaggerating." And then, as the numbers kept creeping up, they kept increasing the number where it would be unacceptable, right? "They said it was going to be 2 million, but it's only 200,000, therefore we're doing well." And I'm trying to think about what I could have said at that time to some of these people. And I think there's an anonymous attendee that phrased this question well,

43:49 Carlos Mariscal

that maybe I'll ask to kath. How do we talk to our friends and family members who don't want to follow the CDC guidelines by, for example, wearing a mask?

43:57 Kathleen Masterson

It's interesting. I was thinking, as everyone was discussing how much of this is a new phenomenon, and did a little reading on 1918. And the government then tried to brand mask wearing as a patriotic thing to do and had some success there, but there were still altercations. And I don't know how accurate the reporting is on this, but supposedly even- some person fired in an altercation over- killed- shot, fired, and killed over an altercation over wearing a mask.

44:24 Kathleen Masterson

So, that just leads me to think a lot about our country's founding, as sort of you know, some extreme religious groups from England were some of the early colonizers of this country and, maybe it's because I'm from Massachusetts, but I can't help think that plays a small role. But to your point about, mess- sorry, can- you were asking me about messaging and masks?

44:46 Carlos Mariscal

About how to talk to somebody who denies, or who- yeah

44:47 Kathleen Masterson

Honestly, it's difficult, I mean, I have divisions in my own family, extended family, over many things, not specifically coronavirus, but it's really challenging. And I have to come back to this idea, and it's hard to do. It actually- it takes kind of thinking like a politician, but actually sort of prepping some talking points beyond just numbers, because you can argue back and forth about what the numbers mean. But I- again I, think we're human beings.

45:15 Kathleen Masterson

I actually really think we're emotional first, and I don't think there's much question there. You can ask any behavioral economist how people behave, and we've known for a long time we don't make rational choices. Most of us don't. But I think coming back to those stories, and rather than saying there- both sides have turned to chastising. "You're not wearing a mask. You're a terrible person. You don't care about anyone." I mean, we know, any of us who've had little kids, know that's not going to work. So, chastising is out. But really, just talking to someone and saying, "oh, you know, I know someone in my community whose mother died in a nursing home. It's really too bad our leadership hasn't been able to prioritize getting or testing right away. We might have been able if we'd done contact tracing when we had so few cases early on [inaudible]...

46:01 Kathleen Masterson

...uh been able to really limit this before coming to a point where, now we- everybody's exhausted and yet now is when we probably should be quarantining in the most extreme way in a lot of communities." So, I think really bringing up those personal examples- it's hard for someone to argue over how you're really sad and traumatized that you lost your grandmother. And so again, I know that's sort of a media tool, but I think it can be effective in having those conversations with our family as well to talk about. Well- and I- you know, you

46:30 Kathleen Masterson

wouldn't go into a nursing home without wearing a mask. Maybe if you work with the elderly [inaudible]

46:38 Kathleen Masterson

...I'm just trying to draw some of these parallels to ways that people care about their own family. But again, you have to have that trust built in if you're speaking with a family member. If you're speaking with a stranger on the street, it's a lot harder.

46:50 Carlos Mariscal

I mean I think that all sounds right, and I think the pathos is the way to do it. That's how I always think of when I talk to people I disagree with. I say- one of my sayings from the very first episode of Thought on Tap was- you will never convince somebody of anything on the day that you argue with them. So, that's not the point of an argument. It should just be to like present an alternative and then later, when they're mulling it over in bed, like days later, they might come to your side. But, so zooming out, perhaps to the level of emergency response. Because, I think that the individual conversation is one thing, and then the conversation that you have to have when you're talking to the public at large, or the public in particular- I want to turn to a question from an anonymous attendee that's been upvoted quite a bit.

47:43 Carlos Mariscal

It says: the idea of freedom always seems to be the biggest factor when coming to make decisions to laws and restrictions. How could we convince those to give up some of their freedoms in order to help? And then...and question this one away...how would you in order to help others? Or that it is even possible in a place that puts freedom on such a high pedestal domestically like the U.S.? So, these conflicting values it seems like we always talk about freedom like something that Françoise has said before. But I want to turn it to Caleb. Like, how do you convince people that they should care about other things as well?

48:23 Caleb Cage

That is uh that is a great question. And I think it's a- I think it's a cultural challenge. And I think the other speakers here have spoken about how we put the idea of individual liberty on a pedestal, and I'll say I'm one who by my nature- in a lot of ways- I do not like people telling me what to do. And I do not like conventional wisdom winning the day when I can think for myself, thank you very much. Those sorts of those sorts of thoughts, I think, are pretty typical.

49:00 Caleb Cage

However, I think over the last 15 years, I have gone from this idea of really focusing exclusively on that to- I like the Adam analogy that Françoise used earlier- that our individual liberty has impacts on others, right? The famous Robert Nozick analogy of the right to swing my fist into your nose, I think was Nozick who said that. But, you know, that's really not the practical way of how societies and communities work. One of the things that I've been focusing on, from an academic perspective, but from a practitioner perspective over the last few years, is this idea of disaster resilience or crisis resilience. And it's a paradigm shift from the emergency management concept, because

50:04 Caleb Cage

that top down, federally supported, state managed, locally executed structure is completely turned on its head. And this idea of resilience recognizes both the individuality, but also the importance of community, and bottom-up responses, and recovery efforts going forward. So, I could- I will- you can just put me in my own room, and I'll talk to myself for an hour and a half about- why- how fascinating I think disaster resilience is, but to me, that is what we have to go to as a society to get away from this idea of risk management- top-down risk management- and more towards the human costs and the human relations that are associated with these things.

50:55 Françoise Baylis

And if I can jump in here. One of the things that's interesting is work has been done in sociology and anthropology comparing Canadians and Americans. What are our similarities? What are our differences? Because we're very close. We share a lot in terms of culture, whether that's around food, music, things like that. But one of the things that was really striking, and this is, you know, not my work it's someone else's, was reframing it as one of the problems or, not one of the problems, one of the differences between Canadians and Americans is we're both committed to freedom.

51:24 Françoise Baylis

The difference is one commitment is freedom "to" and the other commitment is freedom "from". And so, the example then given is, you want the freedom to be able to play your music until two in the morning, and I want the freedom to not have to listen to you playing your music until two in the morning. You want your freedom to walk in, you know, without a mask, and I want freedom from you walking in and infecting me, you know. And so, one of the things that, you know, maybe we stand a chance is if we just explain freedom in ways that people can understand.

51:54 Françoise Baylis

You're gaining something from the constraint. The constraint is temporary, but the payoff is big, which is part with what I was trying to share with sort of the local experience here. There are very serious constraints on my freedom, and yet as a result, I have more freedom, you know, in terms of, not just movement, but movement with sort of less stress, because of feeling less at risk. And so, I think that you know there's a way in which we need to kind of figure out how can you reframe things so that you actually understand you're getting something that you value. It's just happening in a different temporal space or time. Temple, time – I didn't say that very well.

52:32 Carlos Mariscal

No, that was great. So, maybe we're saying some things that I think maybe will help us guide toward the end in a positive note. I think a topic like this can- it can be very easy to get bogged down and saddened by some issues. I want to turn to a question from Jocelyn Barboza, who says: do you have faith in society to think as a collective moving forward into the future? And hopefully it'll be a positive answer and if not, maybe we can explore that as well. Kath, do you want to?

53:13 Kathleen Masterson

I was thinking what Dr. Baylis was getting at, and I completely agree. It really sort of is that we need a reframing, and I was going to say, even rebranding. I mean we don't really talk about the public good anymore as a country. Even politicians, who are known to, you know, speak eloquently sometimes, or they used to, and we don't really talk about that. We think of things done for the public good as a sacrifice, and I think that's a huge branding and framing issue, and if we thought about the public good- I mean, even if you think about covering the environment,

53:44 Kathleen Masterson

[inaudible]

53:48 Kathleen Masterson

You'd not be able to drive x kind of car that I want to. Whereas if we framed it as, you know, these are sort of benefits to myself down the road. And whether we can do that or not, I don't know in terms of if we can make that shift as a country. But I don't think it's so far off that- so far- so long ago that we did work that way. So, I don't know. I have a colleague who's a brilliant crisis communicator and sort of PR guy, and I think if anyone could sort of rebrand it and reframe things, he could. So, if he can do it, I feel like it's possible. But I actually really do think the language we use matters, and we just sort of keep harping on this idea of, "I don't want to make a

54:26 Kathleen Masterson

sacrifice. I don't want to make a sacrifice for you." Whereas if maybe I would make a sacrifice for myself, maybe I would make a sacrifice for my grandkids. And if we refer [inaudible] of the public good, I actually think small language steps can take us in that direction.

54:47

[inaudible]

54:54 Caleb Cage

I assume you were talking about Todd. I would say, I think we are in for some hard times going forward. In the near term. Not just with the pandemic, but I think that there's going to be continued social unrest and all kinds of reasons why I believe that. I don't think those are narrowly held views. I would say that I do have faith in the long run that this is sort of a- this is a crucible, if you will. This is something that is providing adversity to our nation that is going to force us to become stronger to get through to the other side. And that may be my naivete, but I do believe that there is hope for the future, and there- we'll figure out how to mess that up later as well.

55:56 Françoise Baylis

I guess my contribution would be to say, a lot of my work has been about trying to get people to pull back from whatever the presenting problem is, so that we can really sort of understand big picture. What is it that we need to do to be able to get ourselves through whatever the current, you know, controversy or problem is? And I think for me, this is a real opportunity for us to ask ourselves questions

around trust and respect. I think that's what's happened over time is that we don't trust each other. So, I don't trust that you're actually acting in my best interest. I don't trust that you're giving me good advice. I don't trust the advice that

56:30 Françoise Baylis

you're giving me. I don't trust that if I constrain my behavior for the benefit of all, that you'll also be constraining yourselves for the benefit of all. So, I think it's a real problem with trust. And I, for me, those are connected up- that's connected up with respect, right? I don't trust you because I don't respect you. And I think that that's a real problem, and we need to understand why it is we think we shouldn't listen to people that we disagree with. Why it is we think that we know what's right. And there's a really,

56:55 Françoise Baylis

I think, a core problem there. And I think if we could address those kinds of basic things, I would like to believe that all the rest will follow from that. Because if you care about somebody, you're not going to try to hurt them. It's when you have lost the ability to care, because you don't think other people care for you. And I do think and, you know, it almost takes us really right back to the beginning about the people who are really vulnerable, and have been vulnerable for a very long time, and who are worse off now than they were before, and they think, "well you didn't

57:24 Françoise Baylis

care about me before, and you're not looking like you care about me now, so why are you asking me to care about anybody else." And so, I think we can get to a better place in response to the question, and I would encourage us not to think in the sort of the moment, but really to pull back and say, "big picture. What do we need to do so that we actually care more for each other?" It's basic things, like kindness. How can we want to be more kind to each other?

57:50 Carlos Mariscal

There's almost an interpretation of that last thing that you said of, to build a community, you have to be a community, which I don't know, maybe I'll make that my main idea. So, I actually like, Kath, you had a wonderful phrasing- framing earlier that I want to steal as our final prompt to all of you. And that is if you have one main idea to leave our audience with. One main thing that you just want to communicate- maybe it's summarizing everything you've said, maybe it's something that you just wanted to get off your chest that you didn't get a chance to say- what would that main idea be? And who wants to start?

58:35 Caleb Cage

I'll go first. I'll jump in. I would say that my main idea- what I've thought a lot about lately- is of course two parts. That is, this covid-19 pandemic, the coronavirus pandemic, that we're experiencing is very much real, and deadly, and serious. And at the same time, we are more resilient as people and as communities and societies than we are acting right now and can make it through this. Not very succinct, but the best time to-

59:14 Carlos Mariscal

No, that's great. Kath or Françoise?

59:21 Françoise Baylis

Okay, oh I think I would say- oh sorry

59:25 Carlos Mariscal

Oh sorry. Uh, Françoise, yes.

59:29 Françoise Baylis

I think I was just gonna offer up that, I think we're at a moment in time where we're being shown something very starkly. And I think we do have the resources to respond with a view to building a better world. And by that, I mean a lot of the conversation around the coronavirus is like you know when can we get back to normal? And I guess, for me, the big picture message would be to say normal wasn't so great for a lot of people. And so maybe we don't want to get back to the past. We actually want to build a better future, and it's in moments of crises, that we can actually do wonderful things in terms of innovation.

60:06 Françoise Baylis

And I think that what we need to do is to be thinking structurally and, in terms of broad socioeconomic challenges, how we're going to make this a better world. So yeah, we have a crisis before us and it's an opportunity to change things. We're not racing, or we shouldn't be racing back to the past, we should be racing to the future.

60:25 Carlos Mariscal

Okay.

60:28 Kathleen Masterson

I just wanted to play on something Dr. Baylis mentioned earlier. Just this idea that we've lost a lot of trust in each other and the government. And a point I thought about in prepping for this panel, is that the media has really become such strongholds on the coast. And as we're facing financial challenges and newspapers are collapsing, we're really missing a lot of local media and people who are reporting from, places rather than just parachuting in and saying, "I'm going to go to the Navajo Nation for three days and report on how they're handling covid."

60:57 Kathleen Masterson

And so, this is very media specific, but I actually think my main idea would be- I think the media needs to reestablish those roots and really have reporters based in real communities across this country. I think we all saw in the 2016 election that maybe a lot of people weren't shocked at the way the vote went, but the media was. And I think that was a big wake-up call to the media that we're missing a lot of voices across this country in covering stories. And I'm biased because I've lived in a lot of rural areas as a reporter. So, I'm biased. But I think that that's a really important part of reestablishing trust.

61:31 Kathleen Masterson

We're seeing these huge divisions. And it's true, the media really is reporting from cities, and they're doing a good job when they're doing that, but we need more than that. We need better storytelling and we need better representation of everything- from socioeconomic, to class, to race, and I don't just mean going to visit those people. I mean we need the media to be more diverse in those ways as well. So, maybe a little off the covid topic, but that's my takeaway on the what we can do better as media.

62:01 Carlos Mariscal

That's great, no. And I think I want to second everything that everybody has said. That's been wonderful. You guys have been such a great panel. So, I want to begin my thanks with thanking the Thought on Tap committee, including Daniel Enrique Perez, Caitlyn Earley, Meradith Oda, Callum Ingram, Stephen Pasqualina. Special thanks to Bretton Rodriguez and a special thanks to Program Chair, Katherine Fusco, for help with this particular event. I want to thank Debra Moddelmog, Lisa McDonald, Chris Stancil, and an unknown, but almost certainly essential, undergraduate student or two.

62:32 Carlos Mariscal

I want to thank our partner, Laughing Planet, and I want to thank our panelists, Françoise Baylis, Caleb Cage, and Kathleen Masterson. But most of all, I want to thank you for joining us on this new season and on a new platform. There is a survey available now that would tell you- for you to let us know what you thought of this evening. And so, on behalf of Thought on Tap, I'm Carlos Mariscal. Thank you and good night.