Welcome to Civil Discourse. This podcast will use government documents to illuminate the workings of the American Government and offer contexts around the effects of government agencies in your everyday life. Now your hosts, Nia Rodgers, Public Affairs Librarian and Dr. John Aughenbaugh, Political Science Professor.

Hey, Augchie.

Good morning to you. How are you?

I'm a little fired up.

What has exorcised you?

I am fired up about this Iowa caucus thing. You know what? I'm fired up about lots of things because this week, we have the impeachment has wrapped up and we said we weren't going to talk about it till it wrapped up, but I don't want to talk about right now because I want to talk about Iowa. I also want talk at some point about Coronavirus, but I think we had talked about maybe finding a guest to come help us to talk about that. So we'll do that at some point. But Iowa, how can something as relatively simple as, "Hey, you-all, let's get together at my house and talk about who we're going to vote for" turn into the monkeyness that has happened now?

Yeah.

They’re not even sure what the count is. We we're four days on. For anybody who doesn't know, we're recording on Thursday, the 6th of February.

Yes.

This thing should have been in the pocket at least two days ago.

Sure.

It's still dragging out. We're not even quite sure what's going on. What on Earth? Explain to me why I should care about the Iowa caucus and what the heck went wrong with it?

Okay.

Discuss.

Isn't that what you always do in big tests?

Yes.
Tell me about the US government. Discuss. Whatever. How did it go this wrong, first of all.

Write an essay on, how was the world created? You have 45 minutes, enjoy.

Exactly.

Then you're just quoting Genesis over that one or Darwin.

I have 40 sets of eyes staring the holes through my head. "He said, enjoy? What's wrong with that man." So the first thing is, let's take a step back. What went on in Iowa?

What was supposed to go on?

So for our listeners, we are now starting the presidential election, if you will, season in earnest.

Right. This is the part where we all begin to argue in real serious depth about the pros and cons of each candidate.

Because basically, what's going on for the last year, year-and-a-half is, what scholars call the invisible primary season.

Is that whether you can get money, whether you can get support, whether you can have a decent infrastructure? Didn't Kamala Harris struggle with infrastructure problems?

Sure.

Stuff like that. You start funding those things out. So is this like the pre-game?

Yes, it's comes pretty like the pre-game. So we're now into the nomination process in earnest. For both political parties, but especially this year, the Democratic Party because the Republican Party or the issues maybe the incumbent president is running for re-election. The last time we actually saw an incumbent president have a nomination challenge was was back in 1980 when Senator Ted Kennedy, a Democratic senator from Massachusetts, actually challenged the incumbent President Jimmy Carter for the Democratic Party nomination.

That doesn't usually happen there because you're supposed to get lined behind your guy.

Yeah, because the president is viewed as the head of the party.

Whether you like it or not.

That's right.

Okay.
So the Democratic Party's nomination process began on Tuesday in Iowa. A question I know you have and my students frequently ask me is, "Well, why does it start in Iowa?"

Yeah, Iowa. Uber representative of the rest of the nation if the rest of the nation were flat, full of corn, mostly rural, and quite white.

Yes.

She said with so some bitterness. Turns out I'm more bitter about this than I noticed.

Yes. There's a fair amount of sarcasm there in your voice.

I mean, I don't get it.

I'm not the brightest apple in the barrel, but sometimes I bob to the surface. I'm picking up some sarcasm here. A little bit of bitterness.

I'm not a good person sometimes. But yeah, why Iowa?

Well, in part, Iowa starts both political parties nomination process and this goes back to the reforms of the early 1970s, late 1960s. So this is probably a little bit more history than you wanted but after the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

Otherwise known as a giant fracas.

Yes.

Involving protesting, and cops, and Billy clubs.

Yes, which was held in Chicago. Mayor Daley, a Democratic mayor who controlled the city of Chicago for decades, his response to the protesters, many young people who had a problem with the Vietnam War who also wanted the party elites to have a less of a role in picking the party's presidential candidate. His response to them protesting was to basically round them up, arrest them, and if you were unwilling to go peacefully, many of them got hit, beat by the cops.

Yeah, and there's a film of that.

Yes.

If anybody is interested in looking, there are films not only about that, but just like on YouTube, there are clips. Because the news crews were there filming that. It was done openly. It was not a "I will drag you off to the side and do this." It was "I will do this in front of everybody."
Yeah, the political parties national conventions during presidential years now are very scripted. Back then they weren't. So it wasn't like the Democratic Party was hoping to go ahead and have these protests, and have the Chicago Police respond as they did. It was a black eye for the Democratic Party.

For Chicago.

Yes.

I mean, pretty nobody came out of that looking good.

But the result for both political parties was opening up the nomination process to, if you will, more of the voters within their parties. So in 1972 the Democratic Party decided to go have voters in the nomination process, have a greater influence on who the party actually picked to represent it in the presidential election. What they tried to do was to come up with a schedule of when the states primaries or caucuses would actually occur. Because the Iowa caucus process is so elaborate, and we're going to attempt to explain it. But we'll probably do a very poor job because even those who were involved in it usually don't explain it all that well as we've seen the last couple days.

You've seen lots of people out they're trying to explain what happened and it still sounds.

Just like a mess.

Yeah.

Like, is anybody in charge here?

Yeah.

Okay.

It did make me wonder that.

So because the Iowa caucus process is so long, the thinking was, well, we'll start with Iowa, ease into the nominating process, and then we'll move on to other states.

New Hampshire is next then South Carolina.

New Hampshire.

I think is early and it may not be next, but it's one of the earlier.

The first four, Iowa, New Hampshire, then I think Nevada, then South Carolina. That brings us to the end of February. Then you have in early March what's called Super Tuesday.
That's one Super Tuesday I was going to ask you

Yeah.

That's like 8,000 states at once, except we don't have that many. But it's a big number, isn't it? Something like 10 or 12 or whatever.

Yeah, a large number of states, and they tend to respond to your criticism of starting with Iowa, more representative of not only voters in the Democratic party, but also just of the American populace. I mean, one of the major criticisms of those first four states, and again it's largely historical. I mean, these states have had this place in the order for decades. If the Democratic National Committee went ahead and said, or the Republican National Committee went in and said, "Okay, now we're going to go and change the order a whole bunch of people in those first four states will get really upset." But nevertheless, okay, remember.

Sorry, I shouldn't like that,

I should be more respectful of their pain and suffering.

Okay.

Except the part of me is, well, if you're going to do it this badly, you don't get to go first.

Okay.

Somebody who's better organized should go first so that we can say, well, then we'll do it like they did it. I mean, really if they all go like this, this is just going to be one giant big old mess. That's not-

But they probably won't go this badly because-

Well, because how could, okay I'm [inaudible].

Stop. So a good way to think about what goes on at a caucus is to first explain what goes on in a party primary election, which is easier to explain, and then we'll use this our straw person person as a point of comparison.

Let me ask you a question separate from this first, if allow.

Yeah.

So let's just say that for some reason Republicans wanted to change from Iowa being first to South Carolina being first or whatever, would Democrats also have to change?

No.
So they don't get together and decide.

No.

I mean, they don't get together and decide much. But I didn't know whether they decided.

But typically the political parties in the states come to an agreement on when.

Okay.

Because I mean, let's face it.

It's complicated to hold both. I mean, it's complicated to do polling places [inaudible]

At two different times.

At two different times. Okay

Yes.

So in the States they would work that out.

I mean, administratively most within state government would just go ahead and say, okay, we can't have it on two separate dates.

You will have to pick.

Yeah

Need to work it out

Yeah. We're going to have a primary election on this particular date.

Okay.

So in a primary election, much like a general election, the voters in a state will go to vote on who will represent a particular political party in the fall general election. Now, some states actually force you to identify which party you're affiliated with and thus that's the party primary you can vote in. In Virginia, you don't have to identify with a particular political party. So for instance, when Virginia has their primary next month, if you're a Republican voter, you could still go ahead and participate in the Democratic party primary, which does provide, if you will, interesting incentives in regards to-

Because you could pick a ringer.
Yes.

But you could pick a person who you knew.

Yes.

Would not be palatable to the vast majority of Americans. You could pick [inaudible]

Or the vast majority of the voters in the state.

Let's just say Mickey Mouse is on the [inaudible] Disney, you could actually vote for, hoping that would be the candidate.

Yeah.

That's dastardly, isn't it?

So for instance, back in 2016, I know a number of my friends who tend to affiliate with the Democratic Party, and both parties, neither party had an incumbent. They actually voted in Republican Party primary, and they voted for who they thought would be the least likely candidate to win a majority of Virginia's votes in the fall. I was like, "Okay. Well, you can do it because it's not prohibited by law" But in a primary you are basically picking your favorite candidate and you got one choice.

I'm just going to say, can I just say that ethically that's gray. That's very gray.

[inaudible] I mean-

I know politics game, politics whatever

Could you vote in more than one primary?

No.

Okay.

No. You just vote once.

Okay.

Yeah. There is the old joke Chicago years ago, vote early vote often.

But there are held at the same time.
Yes.

So you would have to pick a person.

Okay.

I'm just saying. So that's clearing that up for any listeners, who think you might get two votes.

No.

In the primary process. Obviously, you don't get in the full election ever.

Again, primary elections in even the caucuses, the nomination process for both political parties to pick their presidential candidate is much more open than it was pre 1968, and certainly, pre 20th century, pre 1900s. Because before the 1900s, basically a party's presidential nominee would be picked by party elites at conventions, typically behind closed doors.

Smoky rooms with whiskey.

Right.

Where they, I assume, worked out deals.

Sure.

We'll put you forward but you need to give us this thing.

That's where you get a lot of the patronage jobs, swapping, appointment, promises etc.

Give me this and I'll make you the Secretary of Energy. Well, except back then it didn't exist.

One of the classic ones was in 1952 at the Republican Party National Convention. After a handful of votes, no candidate had received a majority of the delegates at the Republican Party National Convention. So the Eisenhower Campaign reached out to the Earl Warren Campaign, and Earl Warren was the Governor of California and said-

Wait, Judge Warren?

Before he became Chief Justice, he was Governor of California, and before that he was Attorney General of California. So the Eisenhower Campaign said to the Warren Campaign, "Governor Warren, you're coming in like fifth and sixth every time we do a vote. You're not going to win. What would it take for you to release your delegates and have them vote for General Eisenhower?" The Warren Campaign said, "Okay. You got to promise that first vacancy on the Supreme Court, Governor Warren gets the nomination," and that was the deal. The Warren delegates went ahead and cast their votes for

Yes. In the infamous New York headline.

Wait, no. It wasn't Dewey, it was Adlai Stevenson, Senator from Illinois. He beat Adlai Stevenson. In fact twice, right? '52 and '56. So Eisenhower becomes President, first vacancy on the Supreme Court, and so being the Chief Justice position, and because he made that deal, he had to give it Earl Warren. Warren gets on the court and basically leads the Civil Rights Revolution on the United States Supreme Court. So Eisenhower after his two terms are up in an infamous press interview, was asked, "What were your biggest regrets or mistakes as President?" He said, "I have two and both of them are sitting on the Supreme Court," and he mentioned Earl Warren and William Brennan.

So we're moving away.

Yeah. We have gotten a field. Because we haven't gotten to the nomination process. Right now, we're picking a candidate to go forward but that's different than the people who go vote at the Convention.

Yes.

But they don't have to represent the State.

Yeah, they do.


Let's say Bernie Sanders.

Bernie Sanders.

So when they get to the Democratic Conventions, at least in the initial votes, the delegates from Virginia have to vote for Bernie Sanders.

The delegates from the Democratic Party?

Yes.

Is that something like we talked about the Electoral College where those people are chosen by the party for party service and that kind of thing, and sent to represent, they have to in the first vote, vote for Bernie.

Yes.
But then if he doesn't get multiple votes, if he doesn't get a certain number of votes, and he eventually releases his delegates, they can vote for whomever?

Yeah.

So your primary vote could conceivably still not go that way if that person can't marshal enough support.

Yeah. Because the way they do the nominations.

This is very indirect.

But the way they do the nominations, post 1968 is a candidate in a party needs to get a majority of the delegates to be the nominee. So that basically takes it out of the hands of the party elites. So if you have a candidate who wins a majority of the delegates, then you don't have to worry about delegates from States being freed up, and the eighth or ninth or tenth vote. Most of the times, post 1972, we already know who the nominee is going to be for a particular political party before they even get to the Convention.

Really, because they've got enough delegates committed.

Yeah. So think about in 2016.

So it's like Electoral College?

Yeah.

You've got enough electoral votes.

Then you don't have to worry about Electoral College members deciding to go ahead and being faithless as we have discussed.

So primaries are just votes.

It's just voting.

It's just straight up like you go to the election, you vote, it's tallied.

Yes.

Why wouldn't Iowa do that?

Well, Iowa like many small, when I say small I am talking about population, small rural states in the United States has a culture or history of small group politics.
We get together at Aughe’s house, and we are eating pizza and drinking beer and talking about politics.

Or the county courthouse or the convention hall.

Or the school gym.

The school gym or church basement, a church hall. They pride themselves on politics being local.

Very grassroots.

Yeah. The basic idea behind the Iowa Caucus is, and they have, how many precincts? What is it? 160 something precincts. I did a whole bunch of research on this and I can't remember. There were 1,678 different caucus locations on Tuesday. So let’s just say for instance, using your hypothetical, we’re in Richmond and we’re going to do a caucus, and everybody gets together at Aughe’s house, which by the way is not big enough for that purpose. But let's work with this here

Let’s pretend you live out in Maymont in one of the really, really big houses. You have 10,000 square feet.

Then I have a gigantic backyard. So even if there's overflow, you guys can just hang out in the backyard.

That's right. We'll do barbecue.

Yeah. I'll put up a tent and everything will be just lovely.

Your neighbors will be really happy because all the cars will be parked.

No, I guess it would be mostly your neighbors because it would be your precinct.

That's right. They would be coming on over and hanging out.

Which would be great, they could walk over.

If they were Democrats or, hey, if it's Republicans, then hey, then all the Republicans show up at a house. What you do is you do a first round of voting, and I kid you not, there’s video of this. You go to corners of a room.

Like you've been scolded. You go to that corner.

In some cases they actually put up those, not whiteboard, but white poster board sheets, Sanders, Warren. So if you want to support Sanders, you go to the Sanders corner. You want to support Warren, you go to the Warren corner. You support Mayor Pete, you go to the Mayor Pete corner, etc. That's the first round. What they do at each of these locations, there’s usually a viability threshold. If you support a
candidate that doesn't achieve typically somewhere around 15 percent, then you're free for the second round to go to one of the other, if you will, corners. This is what's unusual about the caucus. Your second choice can become extremely important. Because if your first choice doesn't meet the viability standard at your location, you're a free agent. Which means the supporters for Bernie Sanders might go ahead and say, "Hey Nia, you liked Steyer, but Steyer didn't make the cut off. You come here."

Here's what we have in common. Here are the things you'd like about us.

So you come with us.

You come with us. Then Elizabeth Warren says, "You know, but you also like this thing and we have cupcakes on our side of the room or whatever." I'm assuming it doesn't actually involve cupcakes. I'm assuming that it involves ideas. That you start trying to convince, if you like that person, our person also thinks those things or would support those ideas or at least not trash those ideas. So you might eventually, I could see where-

We're more simpatico with you Nia.

Than you're thinking, come over.

Than the Klobuchar campaign, so you come here. Here is where it all blew up in Iowa. It's at that stage between the first round where the locations were supposed to report to the precincts and then the precincts were supposed to report to the state Democratic offices using an app.

Yeah, that they hadn't really been all that well tested apparently.

Yeah, they hadn't vetted it all that well. That's when, if you will, the first problems arose because some locations results weren't getting submitted to the precincts, or the precincts who were supposed to be reporting to the state Democratic officials, those results were not getting, if you will, reported. But then this is all supposed to take place at night, so almost immediately the locations move to the second round. But the first round results weren't being recorded or there were irregularities, which is an adjective-

Which is tech for this app is crap.

Or with voting, you never want to hear irregularities.

Irregularities.

With any kind of election, you never want to hear irregularities because at that point you might as well just go ahead and send out messages to social media.

Saying this is rigged.
Insert conspiracy theory now.

Exactly. It was lizard people. The fortunate thing, I think though, is it wasn't, but the actual work done that night was being done on paper. There were people who were walking around with clipboards counting the people standing next to the Warren poster and the people standing next to the Biden poster and the people standing next to the Bernie poster, and they were writing all that down so that they had a written record. So there is actually a written record. Then what they were doing was putting it into the app and then trying to submit it. Then there were problems with the app. So there is actually a paper ballot. So if they hadn't messed with the app and they had just done it-

Like they have done it-
Like they have for-
For decades.
Then they'd have been fine.
They would have been fine.
They would have been able to call it in at the end of the night and say, "Precinct 1,672 reports whatever." Then they would report out however many votes for the various, how many rounds do they do? Do they do it till everybody gets a 15 percent?
No. Typically after two rounds, all the unviable candidates have been-
Are gone.
Gone.
Then you have viability ranked by number?
That's right.
So they could have and then they could all have gone home and we would actually know what's going on.
Sure.
But instead-
As it is, we're recording on a Thursday. What day is it? On the 6th, and not all the precincts have reported.
Yes, like 91 percent or 92 percent, it's a lot.

Yeah.

It's a pretty good idea of what's going to happen.

Ask Florida how important that last 8 percent is in figuring out who won the freaking election.

Yes, I can see the 2000 presidential election.

Exactly. So let's not act like that couldn't tip the scale depending on how big that group is.

How big that group is, and students ask me those-

But I still don't understand how you can get something like that wrong. You have a piece of paper, you have a pencil, you've done this a few times before, I don't know.

Okay, but you've got-

So let's take this app that we don't know how it works, and do it on the most important night of the primary season.

Yeah, because it's the start.

Because it's the one that's most reported, this is the one that everybody salivates over.

Yeah.

All the news media standing around watching, everything standing around watching.

All the candidates spend months, if not years.

In Iowa were trying to-

Yes. Because you want to get a good start, and you and I have talked about this. The importance of Iowa doesn't lie in how representative it is of Democratic Party voters or the overall population in the United States, it cannot make that claim. The importance is because it is the first if you will, data point in the nomination process, it sends a rather clear message as to who's doing well at the onset. In part, that reflects how the media usually covers elections or campaigns.

And that candidate and that campaign.

Because if I recall, Trump did not win Iowa.
No, Ted Cruz did.

So Iowa doesn't necessarily predict the election.

No, Iowa is actually not all that good at predicting who will be the nominee for the party, or who might actually even win in the general election. So what is it? Bush 2 and Obama won Iowa, but most of the party's nominees since 1972, I think it's most, Iowa did not go for them.

Right.

But because the media reports it like a horse race, think about what we've seen in the media since the results have actually been reported. So Mayor Pete did better than expected.

Biden did worse than expected.

That's right. Elizabeth Warren is third, and I already saw this morning that she has pulled some TV advertising in Nevada, in South Carolina, because some of her fundraising has not gone well since the early reports coming out of Iowa.

Right, and I'm sure that Buttigieg's got a bump.

Got a bump, yeah.

Because he did report well. So in some ways I don't like it in part because-

It sets the agenda if you will of-

Right, which I'm not a huge fan of.

I would like them all... but then I want campaign finance reform, which is an entirely different podcast episode. But I think if everybody only had a certain amount of money and you just couldn't run over that, if we just gave you a million dollars and said go, and we gave it to every viable candidate, I think we'd have a much more interesting election.

Yeah. On that particular issue-

Because I'm not a fan of money as a first amendment right, and I know you are.

Voting behavior election scholars are predicting that this year's presidential election will be the most expensive in our country's history.

Until the next one.

Well, probably until the next one.
But we haven't had a presidential candidate from either political party take public monies in decade, or in a couple of decades now.

Yeah, because there's a limit on it.

Yes. Because if you take public money, then you basically go ahead and say, "I will only independently raise a certain amount of money," so you end up limiting yourself.

Right.

That's why for instance somebody like Mike Bloomberg is basically going ahead and saying, "Okay, whatever I'm worth, I'm outside the process.

Did he even receive in the caucus?

No. He's focusing on Super Tuesday.

Is he? Well, it's a big day. Wait, let me back up. So you have the Iowa caucus.

Yeah.

Theoretically, it's decided relatively quickly, she said with some bitterness. Then a side note, Trump handily won the Republican Iowa caucus. Did he?

Yeah, he did.

I think there's somebody running against him, but it wasn't-

Yeah, former Massachusetts Governor William Weld.

But he didn't-

He won I think one delegate.

Yeah. So Iowa went overwhelmingly for Trump, the Republicans.

There's this precinct in New Hampshire, not the entire state's results, but their results are often predictive. I can't remember which one it is, but it's the one that does it at midnight, it's the one that does it first or whatever.

Yeah.
It's like the first, but there's like 10 people in the town, which is fascinating to me that 10 people could be actually a predictor.

You get a representative sample according to polling experts, it could be these few instead.

Yeah, we tell people in academic research, "Don't ever believe a poll with only 10 people in it." But anyway, so you get these first four, you've dealt with the first four, and theoretically now you have a pretty good idea of the pecking order. After the first four, the people at the very bottom will start to drop out, right?

Yeah.

Because that's part of what you do, and then Super Tuesday we see another winnowing.

Yeah.

Isn't after Super Tuesday is a really big time when you get a lot of people going, "Never mind, this isn't going to work."

Yes, because at that point and I can't remember the exact percentage, you're not talking about a majority of the delegates until the national conventions decide it after Super Tuesday. But you're talking about a significant percentage, and usually at that point those who want to donate money or work on campaigns, they'll go ahead and say, "Well, you weren't in the top three for instance of Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, and South Carolina. We're jumping ship." But then after Super Tuesday, it usually narrows down to a couple of folks. In 2016 with the Republican Party, I think it narrowed down to maybe four, which was-

Because they had approximately 400,000 people running at the beginning. I mean, dude, they couldn't all fit on one stage,

just like the Democrats this time had a 1 point 21 or 22 people declared or something.

Yeah. The Republican Party at its apex in regards to number of people in 2016 had 24.

Yeah. That's insane.

That is insane. Okay.

That's a party that's disorganized in some ways, at least to me. Although, I like it better than a party that says, "We're only running one guy because we, the elite, wealthy lever-pullers have decided it's going to be this person and you the voters are going to like it or lump it." So if I had to choose between the two, I'd rather have the 24 than the person chosen for me and then rammed down my throat.
You've identified one of the most essential tensions in the current presidential nominating process for both political parties.

Aren't I clever?

Okay. Which is...

I didn't know I was doing that.

Well, post-1968, many party-faithful wanted a more open democratic process. On the other hand, as some scholars point out, you run the risk then of perhaps a person winning the nomination who has very little chance of winning the general election.

Or who's bonkers.

Who is bonkers.

Or who is extremely charismatic but not...

A demagogue.

We've talked about that.

With the electoral college.

That was to prevent Mr. Hitler from becoming president of the United States.

So you have this tension, and it's a tension that gets played out with some regularity every four years. I mean, think about this, Nia, in 2008, before the primary election process, the nominating process began, most commentators, most scholars believe that Hillary Clinton would easily win the Democratic Party nomination for president. Former First Lady, Senator from New York, and her main opposition was a first-term Senator from Illinois, Barack Obama. Not only did she have more experience, but the party elites had all lined up behind Hillary because she had done something that is extremely important to political parties. When she was First Lady and when she became senator, she would do a whole bunch of fundraising events for other members of her party. So other members of her party owed her big time. That's one of the ways that you ingratiate yourself within a political party, right?

She also did a fair bit of legislation that was same thing, building that basis, people who owe you favors.

I'm electable, and if I am elected, I will work across the aisle and, we'll do get stuff done. But Barack Obama won Iowa, and the game was on.

He had a heck of a grassroots game. He just had passion. People supported him passionately.
He revolutionized fundraising among presidential candidate.

Yeah. Was it a five dollar or $10? His average was some really small amount, but it was a huge number of people.

Online.

Yeah.

Okay.

That's what you get when you have young whippersnappers working in your campaign. They would say, "You know, sir, we could we could set up a PayPal account or whatever."

You and I had been critical of how technology failed the Iowa caucuses and the Democratic Party.

Yes. You're admirably less bitter about it than I am.

Okay. On the other hand, we have a couple new generations of Americans who would never think of writing a check and send it in by mail for a candidate that they support.

A check? What is this thing you speak of, check? I do not know this word.

They do all their shopping online.

They buy everything with their phones.

Or PayPal accounts, etc. His campaign tapped into that. But because he won Iowa, a whole bunch of people who may not have liked Senator Clinton or who wanted a change, we don't need another Clinton running for president, all of a sudden they had a viable alternative.

He's also extremely intelligent.

Young.

Incredibly handsome, a beautiful family, well-spoken.

African-American.

Well, knowledgeable about all kinds of things he'd studied up on and a lot of stuff that he didn't study in law school but he studied up on all that. He was that guy.

Okay. All of that, and he was African-American.
Right.

Significant, if you will, variable for many Democratic Party voters, and for that matter, many moderates or independents who ended up voting for Barack Obama.

Although, I could argue the other side to be civil about our discourse. I could argue the other side that she's female, and that appealed to a lot of people. But I think unfortunately for her, Me Too hadn't happened yet. Me Too would have pushed her in a different direction if it had been 10 years earlier.

Well, and she also is for many in the Me Too movement symbolic of why the Me Too movement was necessary.

That's true because she didn't intervene. There were things that she said about some of the women.

She didn't call out her husband. For many Me Too movement, she is viewed as an enabler.

Yeah. It's a viable argument.

So you have a situation where this tension for the political parties. I mean, there are critics other Republican Party nomination process in 2016. The criticism is this. Their process was too democratic - that the party elites should have closed the gates.

Shutdown some of that number.

Shutdown some of that number and shutdown somebody who ended up being the party nominee, Donald Trump, who just a few short years earlier wasn't even a member of the Republican Party.

Right, and who for a lot of them does not represent their fundamental plank values and still doesn't to this day. I can see why there are people who in the party would be very irritated by the process and saying, "We should not have left that up to the popular vote," because at his fundamental core, Donald Trump is conservative, but I don't know that he's Republican. Those two things are different. I could see where they would be irritated by that.

Or different kind of conservative.

I mean, for the longest time, you and I discussed this in different fora, the Republican Party was noted for being fiscally prudent.

Yes. Well, not right now theoretically.

Not right now. So there's a really good book and I'm using it in my Crisis of Democracy class called How Democracies Die. These two political scientists who have studied how democracies around the world have died and make the argument that historically, political parties have served democratic, if you will, nation states or regimes in this way. They are gatekeepers. They keep out demagogues, authoritarian
figures, etc. As they pointed out, on one hand, we should cherish, relish the reforms of the nominating processes for both political parties post 1968. More democracy. On the other hand, however.

This is what you get with more democracy.

That is the potential downfall, right? I mean, think about it in these terms. A fair assessment in 2008 of the general election contest between Barack Obama and John McCain, was if you were thinking about somebody who had longer service, more experience, you would have picked John McCain. The Democratic Party should have never picked Barack Obama, and in the past, he wouldn't have been picked. He wouldn't have been picked because he was African-American, he was too young, and it wasn't his time.

Right. He hadn't put in his dues.

Dues, that's right.

He hadn't paid his dues. Because up until I assume 68-ish, you really had to play ball for a long time, or you had to be a General in World War II. I mean, you had to do something.

Yeah, you had to demonstrate to the party elites that you were faithful to the party, right? When you think about it in '76, I mean, Jimmy Carter really benefited from the changes in both parties nominating processes, because Jimmy Carter was an unknown governor from Georgia. He actually didn't win the Iowa caucuses. But, I think he came in like, what was it? Second or third, or maybe third or fourth, and it shocked everybody. Because, nobody knew who Jimmy Carter was. But it gave him a platform. It allowed him to go to people with money in the Democratic Party and say, "Hey, I'm different. I'm not part of that mess in DC that brought us into the Vietnam War, and I certainly wasn't part of Watergate. I'm different."

They all say that.

Okay. They all say it. But in this particular case, because the nominating process was more democratic, all of a sudden somebody like a Jimmy Carter was a viable alternative choice. So one of the difficulties right now for the Democratic Party after 2016 is think about all those Bernie Sanders supporters who claimed that the Democratic party's nominating process was rigged.

Right, and there was a lot of bitterness.

A lot of bitterness.

From that, from the Bernie supporters. They really believed that the election was stolen from him, or the nomination was stolen from him, and he didn't have a decent chance to attempt to defeat Trump, which he should have been given.

No, he didn't have a decent chance to defeat Hillary Clinton.
No, they think he would have been the nominee.

Okay, but that's fine. But again, their initial criticism, Nia, was.

Sure, that he was handicapped in any run with against her.

Against Clinton.

But there are plenty of people within the Democratic party who are saying, can we have somebody who, a short time ago was not a member of the Democratic Party actually represent the Democratic Party in a presidential election.

Right. Well, and doesn't Mike Bloomberg suffer from something similar here he was a Republican.

Oh my goodness, yes.

So that is a concern for the party faithful.

Sure.

If you are all of a sudden walking and going there, "No, I've been a democrat this whole time." You are like, "No, we'd been standing here the whole time and you weren't with us till just now," or whatever. That's an interesting...

That's an interesting dilemma for the party.

I mean, think about this. There are Bernie Sanders supporters who say, the reason why Hillary Clinton didn't win in 2016 is that many of us got turned off on the Democratic Party, and we decided just not to vote in November. That's particularly an issue for the Democratic Party, because the Democratic Party's, if you will, main advantage numerically, is that demographically, more people should vote for the Democratic Party. There they are members of groups who typically vote the Democratic Party. But we also know historically, Democrats are more likely to, and we talked about this last week.

Republicans fall in line, and Democrats fall in love.

Well, that's right.

If the they're not in love, they'll walk away or like what.

Again, now can you see why a state like Iowa will with a caucus, with a system that is so unusual, even though it only generates one percent of the delegates at either political parties National Convention can have a huge influence on what plays out the rest of the year.
Because now, people are going to make funding decisions based on this, they're going to make voting decisions based on this. Because they want. First of all, everybody wants to back a winner.

Sure.

Nobody wants to pick the losing guy.

Yeah.

Later, they don't want to admit they voted for the loser, because that's just not what we do. Or they make excuses. "Well, I mean, I didn't have a choice. I was being beaten to death." Come on. You voted for this person because you voted for this person and get over it. But I also I'm a little frustrated. See, I'm ratcheting down. I'm calming down, because I'm having this pleasant conversation with you.

So maybe I'm the calming effect, where you were.

Maybe the only time in your life you've had a calming effect though?

I do believe that before we started recording this episode, you accused me of firing you up.

That's true, you did.

Because you said, you look feisty. I'm like, "Yeah, I'm feeling feisty," and here's why I'm feeling feisty. Here's what I'm feisty. Now I see I'm getting feisty again, is I am concerned that currently, the media's obsession with flash is like. Okay, now let me back up. So what got reported was, owal was a big mess, and nobody knows anything, and it's practically on fire as a state, right? That's what got reported in the media. The reality is that by tomorrow it will be settled. But are they going to come back and say, "Turns out it's boring but this are these are the results." It was more interesting when it was on fire. I'm a little worried that we're moving to a place in our political discussions where we only want to talk about things that are on fire. We don't talk about things that aren't on fire. I don't know how to explain what I mean, except the functions of government work 99.5 percent of the time. But that's not what gets attention, and people mistake the things they see on Twitter and the things they see on Facebook for actual information. I'm a little concerned that people will go, with the message they're carrying away is Iowa was a big giant mess/ the Democratic party is a big giant mess/ I'm not going to pay as much attention to it. Do you think that's a viable concern, or do you think that?

No, it is a concern. Political scientists who study politics and media. There are numerous studies that show that the media tends to focus on what's wrong in government or how government processes don't work or how government officials screwed up. Instead of, when's the last time you received a news flash on your phone or popped up on your laptop, or if you still watch the news on the TV.

What's that?
Okay. Where the scroll went ahead and reported, "Hey, the government did the following really well today."

Right, old people got their checks and fishermen got their licenses. We always come back to that but, or this Caucus ran really well and wasn't a problem at all.

At the end of the day, Iowa found out that this particular app didn't work. But otherwise-

Their process went like it usually does.

In terms of the democratic party's nominating process. So next week we have New Hampshire.

Hey, New Hampshire, do it better.

Do it better.

Or at least don't tell anybody till you fixed it.

Or how about this, think about how I just said it. So next week we have New Hampshire. That's what's supposed to happen, right?

Right. Some barring a comet from outer space hitting the planet before then.

Even if there's a huge snowstorm over the weekend, which New Hampshire might get soaked with, a whole bunch of snow this weekend.

But they know how to go out in the snow.

But again, that's my point.

They've done that before.

It's New Hampshire in February.

They'll be surprised if there isn't four feet of snow, and they have to fight through.

Then the next is Nevada. So Nevadan's are going to have to go vote when it's really warm out. I think they're sort of used to that by now, right?

Right.

This is the process.
People shouldn't mistake what they see on Twitter and Facebook for what they see in legitimate media. Because legitimate media has standards for what they will report or focus on.

I try to tell my students this all the time. I'm like, "Guys, you got to stop following Twitter. You've got to back away from social media." I said let some of these stories breath because normally will be beneficial for you, which is what a lot of studies are showing. The less time you got your face glued to your phone or your laptop the better your life, your health actually is. But if you step away and let a story breathe, then you can reflect upon it, and democracy at its core is messy. We don't necessarily need to go ahead and need to make it messier you know what I'm saying?

Right.

Okay. It's messy because democracy forces us to interact with other people, try to decide what is majority will, how do we protect minority rights? What are the institutions supposed to do versus what do they do in reality? This is all messy stuff.

What do I really believe at my core when it comes down to brass tacks and I have to vote?

Yeah.

Whose name am I going to put my check on list?

That's heavy decision to make.

Perhaps taking a step back, being reflective, perhaps talking to other people, like people who don't think like you, don't have your choices, wouldn't be a bad thing.

Right. Floating in the room and listening to what everybody has to say might give you a better idea of what you can and can't tolerate.

Sure.

Where your lines are.

Yeah.

I am a little concerned that I was use of the app is a harbinger of bad apps to come. I am a little worried about that.

I got to admit I'm getting to a point to where with what happened.

There ought not be an app for that.
With the evidence of hacking that occurred in 2016, the fact that internet voting according to technology experts, is still wholly unreliable without integrity. The more I think about it, the more I think that the country should go back to paper ballots. Not punch guards, because we saw what it kind of fiasco that could be, and yes, voting would take a hell of a lot longer but at the same time, you already have your redundant backup. It's a piece of paper.

Yeah. I completely agree.

I'm turning into a Luddite I when it comes to this.

Oh my God, it is.

I use the computer all day long.

So do I.

I do research online, I'm that person, and we make a podcast. We do these things, but there are some things that I just think oh, this should be in paper. This should be in paper because then there wouldn't be this question of. I'm glad there's a paper backup for this.

Sure.

Because otherwise we'd be a real mess not understanding what or I would have to do it over. They'd have to have a do over which would be another mess. I think maybe the app thing, I'm thinking that it's unlikely that the Russians will sneak into the room, take your piece of paper and change the numbers on it. I could be wrong because they might just infiltrate at the district level, but I think that's unlikely. Why make it easier for people to jack with your election?

Yeah. There are some transactions that should be done in person.

You should get married in person, and you should get divorced in person.

You should have to own both of those things.

You should vote in person, you should give birth in person. You should probably die in person.

If you are borrowing a whole bunch of money or somebody's paying you a bunch of money for services rendered, I'm sure of thinking that should be done in person. Look across the table, the room and say, okay, are you sure about this? Yeah, I'm sure.

When you sell your soul to the devil, you should do that in person. That shouldn't be an app in your phone. That would be hilarious, but terrifying. But I guess people would just do it. They will be even thinking about it. They would agree the terms.
You can't take that back right?

There are some things you don't get a do over.

This isn't playing billiards with your friends, "Hey, can I have a do over?" No, you just cast your vote, and it's now somewhere in a technology stream.

Good luck.

As I'm over here shrugging my shoulders and using both of my hands. It somewhere.

Yeah. I should be able to point to it on a piece of paper.

Okay, so now that the geezers are done with their podcast, shall we talk impeachment?

Yeah. Next week.

Yeah.

Yes.

Okay.

Yeah.

All right. I'll talk to you then.

All right. Bye Nia.

Bye.

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