

TRANSCRIPT FOR EPISODE 36: I DON'T THINK I HAVE THE OPTION TO REMAIN SILENT

Christine Becker: Welcome to a very special Episode of Cinema Journal Presents Aca-Media.

Michael Kackman: I'm Michael Kackman.

Becker: I'm Christine Becker, and we are in special times right now.

Kackman: Oh, yes. Special.

Becker: Very special. And we, in fact, wanted to try to do an episode that responded to some of the very special things happening around us right now.

Kackman: [0:00:32] Yeah. So, we talked to a few colleagues who have been observing and participating in our unique media environment.

Becker: Special, unique – all of these words are applying. And especially -

Kackman: Unprecedented.

Becker: Unprecedented, yeah. Confusing, dizzying. Also -

Kackman: [Vertigence].

Becker: [0:01:00] [Laughter] I have to look that word up, but I think we'll add a definition on that to our website for you. Yeah. But we – especially around the inauguration, I noticed a post put up by Carol Vernallis, who is one of our interview subjects, that she wanted to kind of gather up almost ephemera of what people were hearing, what people were saying, and encourage scholars to produce material, try to capture what was going on with the inauguration, and the protests afterwards. And that's kind of where the idea for this episode came. So, what you're going to hear is, first of all I do a brief interview with

Carol Vernallis, to get some of her initial thoughts on what prompted her to want to call for a lot of this material, and in fact, she's going to be leading an SCMS forum in late March. SCMS coming up, very exciting. And then I sought out media - study scholars - who I had seen basically be active in the Trump era, either protesting or organizing in some way, or creating public scholarship.

[0:01:55] And so, that's what you're going to hear – interviews from Jorie Lagerwey, Chuck Tryon, Amanda Ann Klein, and Jason Ruiz. Talking about being active in the Trump era. And then, for your additional listening pleasure, we asked people to record audio at the Women's March, town hall protests – kind of anything where there was interesting audio going on of people chanting and talking about their rights and so forth. And so, those are going to be our interstitials.

[0:02:20] So you'll hear media studies academics talking about what they're passionate about right now. And these are, admittedly all, in effect, anti-Trump commentaries - this is an unapologetic, progressively focused episode, so you've been warned about that. And I'd in fact be happy to hear – be very intrigued to hear from, you know, what conservatives are thinking at this time. But our scope right now – the people we interviewed - are all progressive activists. So, that who we talked to.

Kackman: [0:02:51] Yeah, so what we've done here is tried to create a – back in the biz, we used to call a word picture.

Becker: Word picture. All right.

Kackman: Let's create a word picture of January 21, and the days that followed.

Becker: Indeed.

[Music]

Becker: [0:03:14] Carol Vernallis is a research affiliate at Stanford University. She is the author of "Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context", from Columbia University Press in 2004.

And in 2013, Oxford University Press published her book “Unruly Media: YouTube, Music, Video, and the New Digital Cinema”, which takes into account a new media landscape that is driven by intensified audio-visual relations. She has recently published an analysis of Beyoncé’s “Lemonade” at Film Criticism, and participated in a text-based discussion of “Lemonade” with Lisa Perrott and Holly Rogers at Film International.

[0:03:47] In a flow piece from October, titled “Audio Visuality in the Media Swirl: Campaign 2016”, Vernallis questioned why there was so little rich musical or audio-visual content tied to the election. She has since encouraged academics to try to further analyze and make sense of the audio-visual landscape around us in the Trump era. Especially as we see common shared interests being fragmented politically. Since even before the election, you’d been active in trying to encourage scholars to generate work tied to what you call protecting the commons, or protecting our shared resources, in the name of the public interest, so what has motivated you to undertake this politically-minded effort, and what do you hope to accomplish with it?

Carol Vernallis: [0:04:22] It’s been brewing inside me for a long time. As an academic, I believe it’s poor to support one candidate over another, but the attacks to the commons – Islamophobia, environmental degradation, assaults on the poor and journalists, and so on, are just not acceptable. I had been doing a good bit of politically-engaged writing, and I’ve done that for many years.

[0:04:46] I like to claim that my close analyses of music videos, YouTube clips, and films always attempt this. I have a piece in my “Unruly Media” book with Oxford about campaign materials in 2008. Like will.i.am’s music video “Yes We Can”, and that’s a stunningly beautiful clip. And that attends both to the music and the image and to gesture. And I’d like to say that that’s really where I’m going with my research is, how fine gesture communicates at kind of a micro-level that we don’t yet have tools to analyze.

[0:05:21] So anyway, “Tracks on the Trail” asked me to cover this election, and probably the piece I’m most proud of is the piece I wrote on Beyoncé’s “Lemonade”. And a shout-out to Beyoncé and Parkwood, and her directors. I think it’s one of the most political pieces of our time, and one of the greatest works of

our century, so... What I would most like to see is a [unintelligible], inter-disciplinary online journal that would be picked up in the academic data bases.

[0:05:57] It might be called "Our Commons." And I think we need to start with Facebook pages and Twitter sites based on topic. So, we're not just talking to ourselves. These would have to be non-partisan. They can't be seen as in one camp or another. But I really think we, as academics, should be reaching out across the aisle to form unusual alliances. I hope we can speak to people outside of our communities. I'm up for, if anybody can organize it, to do town hall Skypes, or to be sent out to communities.

[0:06:29] And I don't know why progressives aren't reaching out to academics with money supporting such projects. Academics aren't skilled enough at responding quickly to writing, you know, through a moment, and then we don't write in kind of a fleet, punchy way that can make the big "Atlantic", "Salon", "The Conversation", the "New York Times". But if you give us a little bit more time, we really can respond to the commons and that's really my goal.

Becker: [0:07:03] Great. And looking forward now, on the first evening of the SCMS Conference in Chicago, which will be March 22, you're leading a special activist forum entitled "Collective Action in 2017: Responding to Hate, Disenfranchisement, and the Loss of the Commons". So, what can SCMS members expect from this forum? What do you hope comes out of it?

Vernallis: Well, we have some leading scholars in the field speaking on the topic, and they come from several disciplines - black studies, LGBTQ, class, the environment, women's studies, Latinx - each of them will only speak for 10 minutes, because we want to hear from the floor. A call will go out very shortly, asking people to post work they're doing to protect the commons. And I'm hoping to present these as PowerPoints or pdfs, but it will allow people to start thinking about different approaches all of us are taking.

[0:07:03] And I haven't heard about such a forum before. SMES is a huge organization, so it will be a chance to get the word out very quickly.

Becker: We'll post on our website the contact information for that, so people know where to send their materials to you for participation in that forum.

Vernallis: Thank you. Thanks, Chris.

[Recording from Women's March plays]

America Ferrara: [0:08:27] Good morning. My name is America Ferrara. And I am deeply honored to march with you today as the chair of the Artists' Table as a woman, and as a proud first generation American, born to Honduran immigrants. It's been a heart-breaking time to be both a woman and an immigrant in this country.

[0:09:04] Our dignity, our character, our rights, have all been under attack. And the platform of hate and division assumed power yesterday. But the President is not America. His cabinet is not America. Congress is not America. We are America.

[Crowd chants "I want my choice. Her rights, her choice"]

[Recording from Women's March in Amsterdam]

Bill Kirkpatrick: [0:10:02] So, can you tell me about your sign?

Respondent 1: Well, it says [Meer Zonder Mannen], which means "More without men". The first part of the sentence says [More son] because we – it's a joke. From the 80's. From feminists in the 80's.

Kirkpatrick: Oh, okay. I get it. So, why are you hear today?

Respondent 1: [0:10:29] Just to show solidarity with women all around the world. That feel maybe a little bit – maybe afraid when a man like Donald Trump can become President. Our politics we also have Geert Wilders, which is also a politician that uses hate speech and, I guess, white supremacist ideals.

[0:10:58] I think also, when it comes to equal pay, we still have a long way to go. Yeah, so I think we can always do better.

[Crowd chants "If you're nasty and you know it, and you really want to show it, clap your hands".]

Kirkpatrick: [0:11:29] Can you just tell us a little bit about why you're here today, and your thoughts as you're marching along?

Respondent 2: Well, I think I came for two reasons. I think I came for me, because I love this idea of us around the world having this global presence. And I think being an American expat, sometimes you feel a bit disconnected, and the idea that there are friends and family that I have marching in the U.S., marching in D.C., and I'm able to connect with them remotely, makes me feel like I'm sort of part of the helping to contribute to the solution.

[0:12:00] And then the other reason is my daughter, because she's 10, and this is the first time that she's been able to kind of, been aware of what's going on, and why did we elect this person who doesn't really represent what the people that I know believe are important. So, I wanted her to be able to come and understand that if things are happening that you don't feel are right, you have a way to participate and to speak up.

Respondent 3: Yeah. I mean, I feel all of that – especially as an American expat, feeling removed from the centralized movement. If I was still in the U.S., I would definitely be at the march in D.C.

[0:12:32] But feeling removed and feeling like a stand needs to be taken still in the Netherlands, and I really want folks in the U.S. to see this is an international movement, and we are outraged globally, and that there is solidarity and support from all sides of the world. And we don't have to be American, and we don't have to, you know, all agree on everything, to take a stand against one thing that we can all agree is horrifying. So yeah, I'm happy to be here and I'm happy it was organized.

[Back to studio]

Becker: [0:13:00] Amanda Ann Klein is an associate professor at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, where she teaches courses in Film History, Theory, and Aesthetics. She published the book “American Film Cycles” through University of Texas Press in 2011, and recently co-edited “Cycles, Sequels, Spinoffs, Remakes and Reboots” through UT Press in 2016. She’s also written free-lance for sites like the “New Yorker” and the “Atlantic”, and last month was awarded ECU’s “Five Year Research and Creative Activity Award”.

[0:13:29] Amanda, I first wanted to talk about the women’s march, because you attended that in D.C., and you brought your 10-year-old daughter along with you too. So, I’m curious what that experience was like, and from multiple perspectives. So, you were a citizen attending a march; you were a mother there; and a media studies scholar – so, what was that experience like?

Amanda Ann Klein: We talked a lot about the election in our house, because my daughter is 10 and my son just turned seven, so – you know, they understand the world, and we always have the news on in our house, so you know, either – speak of the devil, there’s one, yelling in the background.

[0:14:01] So yeah, we listen to the news a lot, and you know, they generally tune it out, but some stuff comes in, and in particular, you know, what really stood out to them was the Trump coverage. Because it’s sort of hard to ignore. Like, that’s something, obviously, even a small child can kind of understand and be like wow, what that guy is saying is bad. Is that guy running for President? You know, so they were pretty invested. And you know the one thing, the whole time, that my husband and I were saying to them was “well don’t worry. Donald Trump is not going to win.” It will be fine; it will be fine.

[0:14:30] And it was pretty rough on the day after the election, telling my kids that, you know, Hillary lost. And my son was like “you’re kidding. You’re kidding.” So, it was pretty upsetting to them. And so, when I said to my daughter you know, I’m going to go to this march because you know, I think they started organizing it like a few days after the election, and yeah, she was like oh, can I come? And I’m like yeah, absolutely.

[0:14:58] So yeah, so that's why I brought her – because she asked. I would never have dragged her to that. And she had been to other protests. She actually enjoys protests, and likes making protest signs. She's good at slogans. So yeah, it was great to go with her, absolutely. So, the other thing I think that was really great about it is that initially, we were going to go in just small groups, a group of friends were going to, you know, get in one car, or maybe caravan.

[0:15:29] And then more and more people kept kind of popping up in our city, saying that wanted to go. So, my friend who is a great organizer – she's a nurse in real life, but her other great skill is, she's an amazing organizer and rallier. So, she ended up getting three chartered buses to leave from our city. I was surprised how much went into it. I did not help with this at all. But she did it, and it was amazing. And she got – so, we ended up going, 165 people went. And we were able sponsor seats for college students so they could go for free.

[0:16:01] And we all wore the same scarf, you know, she bought [felts] in bulk and like, cut strips for everyone. It was pretty – it was amazing. And I think that experience was - what made it even better for me, was to go with my city. You know, we're this little group of people in this state that went for Trump and you know, the news got involved and they were like taking video and they interviewed my daughter and you know, this guy got on and said this horrible stuff about my kid.

[0:16:35] Like “oh that kid doesn't know what he's talking about”, so he like mis-gendered my kid on purpose, because she has short hair. And it was just really, truly terrible. But I thought you know, I'm glad that guy read this, because he's seeing that his neighbors went to D.C. Like, his neighbors were that pissed off. And so, I know a lot of people say like, oh well, it was just a bunch of women with knit caps and blah blah blah” – but you know, I do think it made a difference. Precisely because it was people who never protest.

[0:17:04] You know, these are people who have had enough. People who have never had a reason to protest, and they're getting up, and they're waking up at 3:30 in the morning, getting on a bus, in the cold, walking around D.C., because they're pissed off. You know? So, it made me – that's what I took away from it. I was like yes, good. Look at all these people. And it was just every kind of person. You know, you

had the usual people who go to protests, but it was unlike anything I have ever seen at a protest. I've never seen anything like it.

Becker: [0:17:31] And to your point, it seems like there has been a continued momentum from that. Because after that, there are people saying well, this is great, but will this sustain anything and will this lead to actual action on behalf of people. So, I'm curious about, from your perspective, what – you're now back in your everyday life, teaching and so forth - and so what, from then woman's march, are you taking forward as you move forward?

Klein: [0:17:54] Well, the first thing I would say to that is, I think we have this tendency to kind of, especially on the left, we're just really cynical and we kind of shit on everything. And I think any time any person is getting involved, whether it's at the last minute or they've been there for 10 years marching, welcome them in, you know? Everybody who wants to do something, good for them. That's the first thing. And then the second thing is I am seeing momentum.

[0:18:24] I know at least in my city, we're doing something called The Huddles, which is where you kind of find a group – this was kind of recommended by the women's march organizers, and I thought it was a great tip. You find your friends, and you say hey, what's something we can all do together that will have an impact? And it's something like every 10 people can move a thousand votes, I think in a city, or is it 10,000 votes? Maybe it's 10,000. Don't quote me on that. But, it's amazing, and it's true.

[0:18:52] At the local level, you can have an actual impact on what happens with a small group of people. So, the woman who organized our march, we had a meet-up last week actually, at a Unitarian Church, and we probably had 50, maybe more, show up. And we just talked about – it's very loose. It's just like, what are you people interested in? How can you make that happen? What can you do? And so, stuff is happening. We're having a town hall next week. A colleague of mine organized it.

[0:19:22] People have been going to City Council - there was just something that got thrown out. They were going to build something on, you know, this green space that everyone uses, and now they're not.

So, I'm seeing, and it's only been, you know, what, a month? And I've seen people who have just never done anything before, who are like all right, what can I do? Give me something to do.

Becker: And you've seen this, as you said, the Trump part of this is only, we're a month in, but this has been going on in effect for years in North Carolina, with GOP politics and progressive pushback.

[0:19:55] So, do you have any thoughts on that? Kind of what you've seen locally compared to what has become national? Because, it seems like a lot of North Carolina protests have become almost a model on the national level.

Klein: Yeah, I mean, absolutely. All of this, I think the only reason why people in North Carolina aren't more shocked by all of this – and believe me, we're shocked – but we have been dealing with this on a much smaller level for – geez, since 2010, probably. So yes, I can't believe it's been seven years. Yeah.

[0:20:23] Because I moved here 10 years ago, and it was actually kind of a progressive-ish state, like purple, it went for Obama in 2008. Definitely a good university system. And then in 2010, you know, you have those midterm elections. Our legislature is a lot of Tea Party and just people who are really invested in cutting back government. And so, we felt it first, in the public education system, in the 17 universities that are under the UNC umbrella.

[0:20:56] And you know, these were once top-notch universities. But like, we've been losing people for you know, almost seven years now, because they don't make enough money; they're not being retained. And in addition to that of course, as you know, we've been national news on voter restriction, on - HB2 is obviously a big one. So, they're basically becoming isolationists and yeah, so, there has been a pushback, and I think it started in 2013, which was the Moral Mondays protest, which was a grass roots movement.

[0:21:27] William Barber is a reverend. I believe he's the President of the North Carolina NAACP. And he kind of was sort of I guess the leader you would say. But it's really broad. And I think that's where the useful model comes in. Because it's – you have, you know, people who are religious, and that's why

they're involved in social justice. But then you have fast food workers, you have migrant workers. You have home health care workers. You have adjuncts. So, you have people from all these different walks of life that I think normally haven't been really connecting with each other much.

[0:22:02] And we're all out there feeling the same effects of the same garbage. And so, we're fighting the same fights. So, it's been really successful. And I mean look, we got Roy Cooper. We got a freaking Democratic Governor, in a state that went for Trump, and I think this is the first time in, I don't know how long, where an incumbent did not win. So, you know, I think there's something there. And I think it's been effective, precisely because it's been broad-based.

[0:22:29] You know, that's what the left is going to have to do. Just the way the right did, right? I mean, I think North Carolina is a good model. I think it's something people should look to, because the organizing is working. And I feel like I've learned so much over the last few years, about how to kind of get involved and rally people and what's effective. And it's just been nice, you know? It helps you sleep at night, at least.

Becker: [0:22:55] Let me ask about another local issue for you then, because you are one of the organizers of the next Consoling Passions conference, which will take place at ECU in late July. And when it was first announced it was going to be at ECU, there were some CP regulars who expressed concerns about traveling to North Carolina, home of the odious HB2 bill. And so, I'm intrigued by the fact that you guys decided to basically tackle that head-on and dedicate the conference to celebrating the power of critical gender studies.

[0:23:20] And then here I'm reading from your materials – “offering local resistance to the anti-LGBTQI legislation in North Carolina and elsewhere, as a way of making CP a venue for engaging and analyzing the impact of this legislation, as well as a space of resistance.” So, can you fill us in more on that decision to, again, kind of address this head on, and the actual benefit then you see coming from having CP in North Carolina this year?

Klein: First of all, the first thing that happened is that, when we agreed to host the conference, it was much earlier than I think usually these things are kind of planned out. But we agreed in early 2015 - I guess March - kind of informally, to host it. And I think that was right around the time that the bill actually came out.

[0:24:02] And there was so much pushback. I mean, it was a swift pushback against HB2. I mean, so much outrage; there were protests, there were immediate kind of campaigns against it, and we thought oh, this conference is going to be in over two years. I mean, it was well over two years away. We're like, there's no way this bill is going to last. We also knew there was an election coming up. So, nobody was really, like we weren't concerned early on. Then as we kind of got closer we thought hmm, wow, this is kind of staying - but again, the election hadn't happened yet.

[0:24:35] But then our [call for] papers went out. And that's when people kind of start paying attention to where Consoling Passions is. You know, when the call for papers goes out. And that's when the board, I think, started to hear a lot of "hey what's going on? Why is this in North Carolina? Haven't you guys heard about HB2? So the board, you know, they had a lot of conversations, and then they kind of passed it back to us and said look, you have different options, you know: we can cancel it; we can move it to another city, or you can still have it, but you need to tell us why you think - whichever of these decisions you decide on, tell us why you think that and then we'll decide, based on what you say.

[0:25:13] And basically, we felt like it was pretty late in the game to change location. And start over. So, it really came down to a choice of should we have Consoling Passions in 2017 or should it be cancelled? And just do it the next year. There was no kind of middle ground on what else could be done with the conference. And we said well, rather than cancel it, our feeling was there were a lot of boycotts already. I don't know if you were following but basically PayPal, Lion's Gate, Deutsche Bank, Bruce Springsteen, the NCAA - it was crazy.

[0:25:48] Something like five billion dollars a year worth of stuff that were just not - you know, it was crazy, crazy boycotts. So, we thought if our legislature is digging in its heels with actual money being taken away, then they are probably not going to care, and in fact would prefer, if we don't have this

gender-focused, liberal conference. So, we're like, what would actually be more effective at standing up to this bill? And we decided, for us, it would be to have it.

[0:26:22] Because, you know, I have trans-gender students. I have students who have come out to me, and have not come publicly because they are terrified. Because they live in North Carolina. And I thought, think about how this conference would be for those students living in North Carolina to be like look, this is in your state, we're talking about gender, we're talking about these critical issues in gender and representation, so we just thought that would have a better impact than not having it. That it would make a statement.

[0:26:50] And then in addition to that, we are bringing in some roundtables. We're going to have brown bag discussions at lunch about HB2. We're going to do one with local politicians and other people in the community. Kind of how it has impacted us locally. And then we're going to bring in some scholars, who talk about rhetoric and kind of, you know, around the signage and kind of public discourses. So, kind of an academic perspective. And then we're going to have a fundraiser, which is going to support local LGBT organizations in Greenville.

[0:27:23] So, our hope is that by having this conference, we're going to reinforce and strengthen the pushback to HB2. Having said that, I completely empathize and understand the Consoling Passions members who either can't come because their state has banned travel and they don't have the funding; people who are legitimately afraid; and people who are standing in solidarity with them. I totally understand, and I hope that they also know, that this is done in solidarity, and not as a way to say oh, we're going to have this conference anyway, because that's...

[0:27:58] I mean, we were very disgusted. We, you know, our university has pushed back hard against this. Nobody here is happy about HB2. But having said that, I think that this conference is actually going to be a great way to kind of show Greenville's pushback against this, so we're excited.

Becker: Well, I think there's also something very meaningful, because it's also the – is it the 25th anniversary of Consoling Passions?

[0:28:28] And of course, Consoling Passions was formed out of feeling like voices were being marginalized, and to give a space for amplifying those voices. So, to me, there's something quite profound about this 25th anniversary being something that's doing a version of that, essentially.

Klein: Yeah. I mean, that's what we're hoping. The plenary is going to be with some of the founders of Consoling Passions, and they're going to have a discussion about the history, and why it was founded. But then the keynote is someone local. She's a folklorist; she does, she calls it Afro-Carolinian Folklore and Documentary, basically.

[0:28:59] And so she's going to talk about her experiences growing up here, and kind of the gender and sexual politics of when she was a kid. Seeing, you know – I forget how she described it – the black men in her community in sequin dresses on Saturday night. So, you know, just kind of the history of trans lives in our communities. So, it's sort of like we're trying to link up the present of the local conference with the broad, vast history of Consoling Passions and all these different universities. So, that's the goal.

Becker: [0:29:30] Just some final words, and I'm wondering if you have any words of inspiration for the media scholars who are listening about how we can mobilize the unique skills we have as media scholars in this political landscape?

Klein: I mean, the only thing I would say – and this is something that, you know, that I've heard a lot of other people saying, is that I think the best thing you can do is do what you have the time and the skills to do, you know? Whatever your skill set is, or things that you enjoy doing, find a way to harness that. If you're a good organizer, you know, volunteer to organize emails.

[0:30:03] If you like writing press releases; if you like talking to people. Maybe go door to door. Even just simple stuff, I think, like connecting with your community. Talking to people you don't normally talk to. Finding out about their lives. Finding out what you can help them with. Especially I think with academics. Because we don't always connect with our cities. Because we kind of see them as, you know, the place where the university is, you know? And you may be moving, so you don't always get invested.

[0:30:29] But I think, you know, really investing in your city. And making it better, and getting to know your community; going to meetings – I think that’s the best way. Or running for office. [Laughter]

Becker: There you go. Academics need to take over the world.

Klein: I mean, I would be happy with that.

[Recording now moves to town hall meeting in North Carolina]

Female speaker: Hi, I’m [unintelligible] protestor. I’m a constituent. I’m Dr. Khalid Ananda, an OB/GYN from Kerry. And my question, Senator, is that our state senators say they want to protect women and children. Rather than organizing bathrooms, can you tell us how you actually might help protect women and children?

[Applause]

[Back to studio]

Becker: [0:31:11] Chuck Tryon is an Associate Professor at Fayetteville State University in North Carolina. He recently appeared on the Aca-Media podcast, just before the election, discussing his 2016 book from Rutledge entitled “Political TV.” So, Chuck, you attended the Women’s March in Washington, D.C. the day after the inauguration. I’m curious as to what motivated you to want to be a part of that, and especially as a man - of course it was a Women’s March - but what made you want to be there?

Chuck Tryon: [0:31:37] A lot of it is my wife motivated me to go. But, more crucially, to be honest, you know, like most of us in our field, I consider myself to be a very strong feminist and to want to support women’s equality, which I thought was a big part of what the march was about. You know, my wife, our grandchild, whom we have custody of, you know – I want her in particular to grow up in a world where women get equal pay for equal work.

[0:32:03] Where the kinds of comments that Trump made during the campaign are intolerable and where that isn't seen as something that can just be swept under the rug. You know, I want all of those kinds of things, but also, I thought the Women's March was at least in part, this first moment of expression of opposition to Trump's policies on immigration, on so many different issues.

[0:32:31] So, all of those things kind of made it really important for me to go. You know, having watched also the Tea Party movement as a tactical force, I felt having millions of people, a day after inauguration day, on the streets of Washington saying no, this is not right, that that was important.

Becker: [0:32:52] And then what were your impressions of that experience? And I'm curious both as a person, as a citizen who was where, but then also as a media-savvy scholar. Things that you found kind of profound or affecting about that experience.

Tryon: One of the most affecting things was, we traveled to the march with my wife of course, and her best friend, and her best friend's mom. And her best friend's mom came of age in the late 50's, early 60's, during that kind of wave of feminism involving Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, and you know, seeing a large collective of women taking power and claiming power was incredibly moving for her.

[0:33:36] And you know, she was able to kind of link it back to those earlier waves of feminism. And so, it was deeply meaningful for her, and I wish I had recorded an audio interview with her. It was one of those spontaneous conversations. But, so seeing it in that historical context was both personally moving, and you know, in some ways linked to my own studies of feminism as a scholar. You know, one thing that stood out for me as a pop culture media scholar of course, was the way in which pop culture itself has continued to be mobilized in political speech and in political performance.

[0:34:16] And obviously, a reclaiming of Carrie Fisher's comments and linking up the women's march to the resistance was something. And there were hundreds of signs, probably, that evoked Carrie Fisher's memory and so those kinds of things were meaningful as, you know, I think this movement is primed to articulate itself as an opposing force to Trumpism.

Becker: [0:34:41] Yeah. I also want to get your local perspective. Because you are based in North Carolina, and a lot of – or at least it strikes me – a lot of what we’re seeing happening on a national scale, in terms of conservative politics and progressive pushback, we saw that previously. You know, Wisconsin, North Carolina have seen this kind of politics and protest and for a number of years now. And especially progressives in North Carolina, with the Moral Mondays movement, have really created an impact. So, I’m curious about what you see about any parallels, or what it’s been like watching what you’ve seen in North Carolina locally, compared to what you see going on nationally?

Tryon: [0:35:14] You know, one thing that I certainly fear is that the actions that have been taking place by the Koch brothers and the North Carolina equivalent to that, Art Pope, that our states have been incubators for some of those ideas now being brought forth on a national level. And so, having seen what happened in North Carolina, I’m all too aware of the urgency of resisting some of these policies, and some of these practices.

[0:35:42] You know, I think that Reverend Barber, the leader of the Moral Monday movement here in North Carolina, has helped to foster this really effective model. And you know, I’m very appreciative of the fact that he grounds it in this idea of morality and justice. And you know, I think it’s a very powerful message that resonates with a lot of people. You know, there’s another part of me that wishes that North Carolina wasn’t ground zero for this. The poster that someone created that just every day resonated with me was one that said “Stop making North Carolina the subject of the Daily Show.”

[0:36:19] You know, I kind of feel like that’s sort of the story of our state for the last five or six years now, it feels like. But you know, I think that perhaps less visible than Reverend Barber, there has sort of been an underground network of different progressive groups that have very quietly cultivated a number of members and created kind of a network that can collaborate on actions when new legislation comes up.

Becker: [0:36:50] And you yourself are active in this. So, you have been – I’ve seen on Twitter you’ve been writing scripts for people to call their representatives, giving people help with what to say. You’ve also – I saw you attended a town hall where your representative wasn’t there, but it was to make a point

about accountability for these politicians. So, what would you say about the payoff of your personal efforts, then? What are you trying to do personally and politically with the activism you're getting involved in?

Tryon: [0:37:16] So, just to be clear, I actually co-organized the town hall.

Becker: Oh, great.

Tryon: I'm still planning some kind of op-ed on this. Or an article. And the opening line would be "It all started on Facebook Messenger", because four or five of us, including my wife, were communicating on Facebook Messenger about what we could do. And, you know, originally, the group that we were in was the kind of state chapter of Pantsuit Nation. And then when Pantsuit Nation began to coalesce into an institution, we kind of didn't want that exactly.

[0:37:49] So, we created our own group and eventually, kind of poached onto the Indivisible Group. So, initially Andrea, my wife, and I were talking and she said well we need to call this rep; we need to call this Senator; we need to get people to do it. And she said, you know Chuck, why don't you write a script? And so, that was probably a couple weeks after the election. And then basically every day since then I have either written or recycled scripts for our group, and I'm involved in two different groups.

[0:38:18] One has about 13,000 members, and one had about 15 hundred members, that's more focused on just, the Raleigh Research Triangle area. That was something that I think really created a sense of community. You know, we have now a few people who are very active in our group, who may have been active elsewhere but, again, the network building, the community building has been phenomenal. I think the town hall, as another example, one of the other members of our admin team, Artie and I, were chatting on Facebook around 4:00 on Friday of last week.

[0:38:52] And we were talking about the fact that the Senate was in recess, and we kind of were expressing regret about not holding a town hall, and then five minutes later, we're planning it. Calling

reps, you know, and calling venues and publicizing it, and we had it ready by Wednesday. And it was basically the four of us planning it, and we were able to get 20 volunteers to help. It was really amazing.

[0:39:19] I mean, I walked in the literally sold-out room – there were about 50 to a hundred people who couldn't get in. And it just shows, I think, again how passionate people are about resisting Trumpism, and how much people are looking for ways of fighting back. And so, it was really meaningful to see that many people come out for something they didn't even know about until one or two days prior.

Becker: [0:39:46] Yeah, that's amazing how a handful of people can put together something. And especially, as you say, people are looking for something. And so, if a couple of people take the lead, you'll have a lot more people to then follow and take advantage of that.

Tryon: [unintelligible] is an event planner, and so she was able to do things like get the venue, and another organizer just volunteered to call the reps, and with my writing background, I wrote the press release and contacted the media and did those sorts of things.

[0:40:16] And so, you know, everything just kind of fell into place beautifully. And then, as it was happening, and we had people reach out to us and volunteer, so it was, again, just very exciting.

Becker: And then I presume you had your George Soros liaison to set up all the paychecks that were coming from George Soros for all your activities?

Tryon: Right, and then the transportation coordinator to bus in all those outside agitators from all those other states. So, it was pretty amazing. We were able to get all four local TV stations out, and I think, if I remember correctly, all of them did at least one story among our group.

[0:40:50] So the count, according to someone who is advising us, was like 400,000 people probably saw a news story about us at one time or another. So, one small conversation that kind of rippled out to something much bigger.

Becker: As a final question, what would you suggest then that media studies scholars specifically can bring to the table in the Trump era? As you said, you just kind of listed off – you know, you can write really well, so you can do this - what skills do you think basically Aca-Media listeners can mobilize this political landscape?

Tryon: [0:41:21] Again we all are, hopefully, affective communicators, between being in classrooms where we speak to our students. We're writing articles and things like that. And bringing our expertise to those conversations, I think is one of the main things we can do. And being attentive to that, you know, other things I think we can do is helping t translate relatively complex ideas about the media or about advertising and so on and so forth, to people who may not fully understand it.

[0:41:54] You know, one example was – and I saw that you retweeted this – there was an article “Big Data and the Role of the Mercer Family on the 2016 Election”, and their behind-the-scenes role also with Brexit. And being attentive to that, communicating those ideas to others, and kind of that awareness role. But right now, I mean, my main impulse is toward organizing toward, you know, keeping people involved.

[0:42:24] And you know, part of what I do is the call scripts. Part of it is daily pep talks in the Facebook group as well. I think especially after the DeVos nomination and vote, there were a lot of people who were very disheartened. And so, you know, also finding ways to keep people mobilized. And those are the skills that I've been using, and I think individual personalities may vary somewhat, but it was – you know, it's then interesting to find myself doing things I never thought I would have done before.

[0:42:56] But it's been also somewhat seamless, in terms of drawing from the skills I've cultivated for 20 years as a media scholar.

[Recording location moves to undefined protest meeting]

Female Speaker 1: Hello. [unintelligible] Peace and blessings to everyone. Thank you so much for being here tonight. I will be the moderator, as Hasan stated, for the evening, and I'm the Advocacy and Civic Engagement specialist with Take on Hate, which is a program of access. Unfortunately, we are not here tonight together under the best circumstances.

[0:43:29] We have seen campaign promises made from the 45th President put into place. Our communities of color have been impacted long before the 45h President. But now it has intensified and it's far more dangerous. I know many of you are very worried about the new executive orders, and what it will mean for our families and for our loved ones. I am worried too, as a Somali-American.

[0:43:58] Our communities have been affected by [unintelligible] programs and now, we have intensified issues around travel with this ban, as Somalia is one of the countries that is banned. We are here tonight, however, to build together, and equip each person in our community with the knowledge and resources need to out-organize and strategize this administration.

[Applause]

Male Speaker: [0:44:28] "I know what the law has done to my brother. And now, narrowly, he survived it. This is a crime of which I accuse my country and my countrymen. And for which neither I nor history will ever forgive them. They have destroyed, or are destroying, hundreds of thousands of lives, and do not know it and do not want to know it." That's James Baldwin from "The Fire Next Time", written in 1964, reflecting on American apartheid, Jim Crow and anti-black racism.

[0:44:56] These words from James Baldwin scrawled through my mind as I held the phone in my ears only hours after the Muslim ban was signed into law. The voice of a mother who spoke the very language of my mother was on the other side of the line. She told me about her son who shared my name, who shared my faith, and was roughly my same age. "My son is stuck", she said. He was a visa holder from

Yemen, denied entering, detained in a New York City airport. Her anxiety spiraled into tears, climaxing with the question: when will he come home? When will he come home.”

[0:45:27] [Lonely], miles away from home, incarcerated at an airport, he was in fact, worlds away. When will he come home? The weight of her words were crushing, and days later, they still haunt me. She could have very well been my own mother. And her son, [Khalid], my own brother. Or in some divine reordering of fate, and time, I could have been the man detained. A son estranged from his mother whose only crime was his faith in his country of origin. Yemen, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, or Libya. The seven states banned from entering.

Female Voice 2: [unintelligible] ...in the media. We always talk about Islamophobia, but we never talk about anti-blackness. We may not realize it, but two of those countries are East African. And we have – a high number are African immigrants, who are deported at higher rates, you know. And...

Female 3: And we never get support, right?

Female Voice 2: Right. We never get support, you know, and I see a lot of people in this room – a lot of people who are in this room, but how many would show up to a Black Lives Matter protest?

[Applause]

Female Voice 2: [0:46:42] ...support, but when it comes down to it really, we have – I’m not going to give a number, but black Muslims in this community, as a – you know, black Muslim, Sudanese-American woman, you know, who is, kind of like – targeted all aspects of my identity. You know, like what is, you know, what is the support for that, you know? Those people who fall in the cracks.

[0:47:10] You know, African immigrants who aren’t supported. Who are Muslim, but are not really looked at you know, as a part of that. And what about, you know, queer and trans Muslims, because they do exist, and they do [drowned by applause]. So, Islamophobia and xenophobia, but anti-blackness really needs to be addressed. And unless it’s addressed, those people are not protected.

[0:47:40] And no matter what we do – and I love that it’s being touched on here and there – but it’s not, it should be a bigger topic of conversation.

Female Voice 3: Absolutely. As the only black person on the stage, I’m going to answer that. And –

[Applause]

Female Voice 3: ...that is a part of censoring our voices, right? Like never happens. I love you Fatima. I’m sending love from here. I know that must not have been easy. Fatima and I used to work together. Awesome.

Female Voice 2: And, I also currently work in refugee resettlement, so I’m kind of like in the middle of a storm.

[Applause]

Becker: [0:48:20] Jorie Lagerwey is a lecturer at University College in Dublin, Ireland. She is the author of “Post-Feminist Celebrity and Motherhood: Brand Mom”, published in 2016 from Routledge. Along with Kelly DeLoria and Taylor Nygaard, she recently launched a website called “Decoding Media”, which is a project dedicated to critical media literacy. Jorie, you first told me about your motivation to start what ended up being the Decoding Media website, and you said you were just, quote, trying to figure out how to be proactive in the face of the Trump Presidency.

[0:48:46] So, I wonder if you could tell us a little bit more about that; about what drove you to put that motivation into action, and to use your academic background to try to reach the public?

Jorie Lagerwey: I was motivated to use my academic background because it’s all that I have. And reaching the public seems to be the sort of second essential component to this idea of critical media literacy right now.

[0:49:14] Because so much of the press, in the wake of the election, was about this completely divided nation and the frustration that the left could never possibly understand the right, and the working class could never possibly be understood by the horrible coastal elites. And so, yeah, my hope is that there can be something to be offered to a wider public than the, frankly, relatively elite students who sit in most of our classrooms.

[0:49:45] Or maybe I shouldn't say most; in the classrooms I've taught in, I've taught mostly relatively elite students. And still do.

Becker: So, you have just created the Decoding Media website, and there's a handful of blogposts up there. And I'm just reading from the, you know, "About" page – it says "we understand teaching is part of being active participants in our communities. We believe critical media literacy, knowing how to read, interpret, critique images, audio, and rhetoric, as well as understanding how to put them in context is an absolutely essential skill."

[0:50:13] So, I want to ask about then, how do you envision decoding media doing that? What intervention is it going to offer? What are the larger goals and strategies you see coming from this site?

Lagerwey: Well, the goal is to have a kind of list of key words, key concepts – things that keep arising in the political news with assumptions that everyone know what we're talking about. And that everyone has the same definitions and understandings of what those concepts mean.

[0:50:43] And so, ideally, a post on Decoding Media will define and explain those kinds of terms. And the ideal is that it would be for a completely general audience. I always think of like, my mom, right? So, someone who is very interested, educated, but has never taken a media studies class in her life, and could be easily persuaded by her liberal bubble, or whatever bubble you fall into.

[0:51:19] And so, I would love for this to be a tool that people use in classrooms. Sure, in universities, but in secondary schools, I would love for it to be something that, you know, my mom and other peoples' mom's read and use. As for strategies, at the minute, my primary strategy is frantically emailing

everyone I know who is an educator, and begging them to write for me. So, if you're listening and you would like to write for me, please let me know.

[0:51:52] But, I'm not sure how to move forward. I'm not sure how to reach that audience. That's something that I'm still definitely working on, and worrying more, at this point, about how to build a sustainable project and once that feels that there is enough content there, and enough sustainability there, try to be more proactive about getting it out and making sure people find it, and hopefully use it.

Becker: [0:52:21] Yeah, because it feels like there's two separate challenges there. Number one, getting the ongoing content, and then number two, getting it out to people. And it seems like number one is the initial challenge, right? You have to have the content there to bring people to it. So, thinking of an Aca-Media listener there, thinking like well, I know something about fake news. I could write up a post. Is that what you're hoping? That people just sort of feel like they've got some expertise in something and could write up a post for you?

Lagerwey: [0:52:42] Yeah. Essentially, I've got a document. If someone contacts me and says they would like to write a post, I've got, you know contributor guidelines that I'll send you. And there's a long list of potential topics on there, but you can pitch me anything you like that seems important and relevant. The key thing is that I'm trying to get all posts to use a single case study from current events, so that there can be a central image or video or something similar that serves as, sort of, this is how you read and understand this topic.

[0:53:19] Serves as your case study to get at the key concept. And it's still – I'm a little precious about it, so I will edit work with anyone who writes a piece, and make sure it's up to the quality and everything. And the tone most of all, that it's reaching a properly general audience and doesn't shade too much into the academic, which can be really challenging for people accustomed to writing academically.

Becker: [0:53:46] And this does seem like something that, to me, is really within the wheelhouse of something Media Studies can offer to this political landscape. Because we know how to break down and interpret images and explain things. Certainly, there is that notion of some of us have to learn how to

write for a more general public, but the mode of this project is, to me, write within what media studies could be doing, should be doing.

Lagerwey: [0:54:12] Absolutely. I mean, we're all teachers. And so, we should be trying to teach as many people as we possibly can. And that's one of the other things that made me want to try and do something more public is that, you know, there are 40 students in most of my classes. And that's not very many, so this is directly in our wheelhouse and we should all be well able to take a concept, break it down, and teach people how to read images and understand the news, basically.

Becker: [0:54:42] The other thing I like about this is, it gives someone a goal. Because I've had this emotional problem since November ninth, I guess it was – the day after the election – where I have these wild swings of emotion from feeling completely irrelevant, and especially in terms of the fact, like so much of what I teach, I feel like I'm seeing just like, no impact of that in terms of, you know, how people are utilizing the media and so forth. And yet on the other hand, then that tells me like, what I'm doing is absolutely critical.

[0:55:11] So, I wonder if you've had similar emotional swings, and how you then – I mean, is this part of this project? Are you trying to kind of funnel that emotion into something productive?

Lagerwey: Absolutely. It's just really challenging, to feel useful. And I have gone to the protests, but there have been, there have been sister protests here in Dublin, but I hate protesting. It really challenges my introversion and my real distaste of shouting in public.

[0:55:42] But I do that anyway, but this is something that, to use your word, is completely in my wheelhouse. So, it's something that I can do that seems like it has value and is a way to channel energy. And to feel like there's a direct intervention. I feel like the work that we do, especially in our writing, is really important, but the audience is so limited to you know – fill the next essay that you write that appears in whatever academic journal. But it's hard, sometimes, to see the intervention that you're having in the real world.

[0:56:17] And so, I don't expect to see an intervention. Maybe not see the results, but you know, if I at least know that people might be reading what is being collected and published up there, that is, yeah, a way to feel slightly more useful.

Becker: And you mention you're in Dublin, so I wanted to ask you a question from that perspective. You're an American living in Dublin, watching you know, from across an ocean as all these things are happening in the United States. So I'm curious, first of all, about that perspective, your perspective as someone who isn't here watching these things happen here.

[0:56:47] And then secondly, I'm curious about what you're hearing from the Irish people around you, about what they think of what's happening. And it's a fascinating time, because it's all happening then to the east and north of them, with Brexit, as well. So, two questions in one there: number one; your perspective; and then what you're hearing from the people around you.

Lagerwey: [0:57:05] Yeah. Living elsewhere at the minute contributes to those wild emotional swings that you were talking about. Immediately after the election, I – for at least a week, I fully intended to quit my job and move home. And I have friends in D.C. who have a large basement and I think they would let me live there. And you know, it felt like I needed to work. And I worked very briefly in politics before I went to grad school, and I was like, well, this is the time you go back.

[0:57:36] I came to my senses and I didn't do that. But being away is challenging right now. There have been a lot of people, because I know a lot of Americans who live abroad – not necessarily in Ireland, but all over the place – and a lot of them have said things like “thank goodness I'm not home right now”, or “I'm just so glad not to live there.” And I've never wanted to go home more, you know, than in the immediate wake of the election.

[0:58:06] So yeah, I mean that evens out. And it's probably easier because – just emotionally easier to be distant, because you don't feel the day to day – you read about it, but you don't sort of feel it around you. And then the other question, about what do I hear from my Irish friends, it's grim. Ireland is stuck in

the middle, as you said, between Brexit and Trump, and we're a small country, and we feel very much the effects of those things. Every single conversation I have involves Trump.

[0:58:41] I will never meet a new person for the next four years who doesn't hear my accent and that's the exact first thing they want to talk about. They're horrified, I think universally. I'm going to go ahead and make that sweeping generalization. I've yet to meet an Irish person who's not horrified. And they want to crack jokes, and I'm not emotionally ready for the joke cracking. So, we have very serious conversations, or I just, you know, sit in a corner and quietly weep while the Irish people around me talk about Trump.

Becker: [0:59:14] Right. But you also must be a little bit yearning for home. Because there's just, you know, simply a different cultural sensibility in Ireland than in America. And so, you're reacting one way, they're reacting another way, and that's got to be a little difficult.

Lagerwey: Mm-hmm. For sure, it was the – I woke up – I went to bed before any returns were in, and so I woke up on the ninth and checked my phone straightaway and saw the results and I mean, and I think it's the closest to a panic attack I've ever come.

[0:59:43] I just – it was awful, it was such a shock. And I went straight to teach that morning, you know, within about two hours from the time I woke up and saw the news and then consumed every piece of news I could find, and then went into my classroom. And I told them – they wanted to crack jokes, and I told them that I was not ready, and we were not talking about Trump that day, and that we could talk at length, but not that day.

[1:00:13] And so it is definitely sort of a different sensibility. I sought out, not necessarily Americans, but I sought out American studies scholars who are friends of mine, in the wake, like “you know what I'm talking about, right? You have the context.” Yeah, so those are the people I chose to hang out with for a while.

Becker: So, we'll put all the information about Decoding Media, and your contact information, on our website, so anyone who is hopefully inspired to write some stuff for your website will be able to get in touch with you.

Lagerwey: [1:00:40] Brilliant. Thank you.

[Chanting on street: "We need a leader; not a creepy tweeter." Followed by singing.]

[1:01:22] [Chant: We will not go away; welcome to your first day]

Becker: [1:01:45] Jason Ruiz is Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Notre Dame, where he is Affiliated Faculty with the Program in Gender Studies and the Institute for Latino Studies. He teaches courses in Latino Studies, Race and Representation, Border Studies, and Popular Culture. Ruiz' research focuses on American perceptions of Mexico and Latin America, with emphases on race, cultural and economic imperialism, [tourism], gender, and sexuality.

[1:02:08] His first book, "Americans in the Treasure House: Travel to Porfirian Mexico and the Culture Politics of Empire" was published by the University of Texas Press in 2014. And he's now at work on a second book; "Searching for Mañana", which examines American enclaves in Latin America from the turn of the twentieth century to the present. So, you've been very active, especially in local protest rallies, which I've stood side by side with you. And you've even helped to spearhead one yourself, the day after Trump's Muslim travel ban was announced.

[1:02:37] So, what has driven you to want to stand alongside people in a local community, and especially over issues that are, you know – concerns about national events? What do you see as the payoff personally, politically, for being outside, standing among people in a local community?

Jason Ruiz: I would say grief, anger. So, it's – my reaction to the November election was visceral and emotional, like a lot of people. So, I think I decided that - to get involved in any way that I possibly could.

[1:03:06] In reference to the Muslim travel ban protest that happened a few weeks back, some friends and I were looking for ways to get out on the street and sort of express our dissatisfaction, our grief over that turn of events. So, we had the choice; we could drive down to Chicago, Indianapolis, somewhere in Michigan, or we could see if there would be a local interest in putting something like that together.

[1:03:35] To our amazement, there totally was. We posted a Facebook event at 11:30 that morning, to say some of us are going to get together at 3:30 to hold up signs, to, you know, stand in solidarity with the national movement. But from a local perspective. So, 400 people showed up with a few hours' notice. I think that expresses or reflects the fact that we weren't alone. The four of us who got together, you know, on Facebook Messenger that morning, were not alone in feeling like, we have to do something local in response to this really dire turn of national events.

Becker: [1:04:14] Yeah, and that meant a lot to me, because I woke up that morning and checked my Facebook and saw that this was happening, and I thought I have to be there. And especially to kind of feel like you were part of something. I missed the D.C. march and regretted that, after, you know – it would have been an incredible undertaking and it was a busy weekend and all that, but I think I was almost jealous of the people there, especially that notion of feeling like you were part of something and where people were doing something.

[1:04:38] And so I was really grateful to have that to attend that day and feel like – and especially that it was something that was very powerful locally, and it wasn't just Notre Dame professors; it was people from the community and kids, and that, the kind of range of people that was there was very gratifying.

Ruiz: I don't think we would have been able to do what we did in response to the Muslim travel ban and the wall, because it was really about both of them, without the Women's March. You know, me going to the Women's March locally, also totally jealous of the people who got into a van, drove to D.C., or jumped on a plane.

[1:05:11] I think that really set a precedent to make us feel like there is an audience here for this. There are other people. We are not alone. You know, everyone who lives in a college town talks about

town/gown divides – we felt like South Bend and Notre Dame are not separate; a lot of us who work here also live in this community. And there’s a whole lot of other people who were on the same page politically with us. So, I don’t begrudge anyone who went to D.C. – I would’ve if I could’ve – but I also think we don’t have to go to D.C.

[1:05:45] There’s local partnerships, and there’s local allegiances, or coalitions to be made here.

Becker: Yeah, and I think a really important area where you’ve been a leading voice on this campus, that is part of a very important national movement, is in support of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program, and in calling for Notre Dame’s President to declare this a Sanctuary Campus for undocumented students. He has declined to that, so that’s one issue, but I wonder if you could speak to why this is a vital issue, and what avenues of protest and support you see as really important and most valuable to this issue for undocumented students in particular, going forward.

Ruiz: [1:06:22] I’m so glad you’re asking. I think anyone who works at a college or university should be interested in what happens when DACA goes away. What happens if DACA ends? Which many of us are predicting. We work with a population of students who are undocumented. At Notre Dame, just to cite one example, that’s about 50 students. There’s hundreds of students – thousands of students – in the UC system, for example, so, Notre Dame is not a major draw for undocumented students.

[1:06:51] But, we have some very, very fine undocumented students, and many of whom have taken a personal risk to be public about their undocumented status. So, I would stress first and foremost, that everyone who works on a college campus should care about the issue. How I came to this is actually a surprise to me. Because I think before November ninth, I didn’t know what a Sanctuary Campus was. I’ll be totally honest.

[1:07:18] I think I would have been sympathetic; I would have signed any petition in support of undocumented students prior to that day. But two things happened: I got in touch with a student of mine who came out to our class the previous semester as undocumented himself, and that was a life-changing,

career-changing experience for me. Because I thought that student had so much bravery and so much guts, to talk about their experience.

[1:07:51] How they possibly accessed a place like Notre Dame with that type of obstacle in front of them. The second thing is that I honestly explored my own family history. I had suspected that my grandfather was an undocumented immigrant from Mexico, and did some investigating. I made some phone calls. You know, everyone has that like aunt who is really into family history? I called her. I talked with my dad.

[1:08:19] I talked and I discovered that my grandfather, [Endo Lessio], had migrated to the United States in the twenties from Mexico, crossed the border – a very different border then, obviously – but had never become a documented person and lived until the eighties.

[1:08:34] So he spent the vast majority of his life as an undocumented person. So, I thought, with my student and with my own family history, I thought I couldn't not get involved, so I started exploring and researching issues around campus sanctuaries and learning all that I possibly could about the issue. Reading and writing about it as well.

[1:08:55] One other thing about, you know, the Sanctuary Campus: you mentioned that Father Jenkins has declined to call Notre Dame a Sanctuary Campus; I'm actually okay with that. I think I got a lot of press requests, you know, following that announcement. I'm actually fine with that. I think I personally was not pushing for the word sanctuary. I call it a Sanctuary Campus because I think that's an umbrella term that covers a lot of different ground.

[1:09:23] Some people are very adamant that's got to be called a Sanctuary Campus; I'm a little bit more flexible on that. I think Father Jenkins is installing or negotiating a lot of the things that we asked for when we're asking for a Sanctuary Campus. But the reason why I will keep fight for a Sanctuary Campus is this: because some time in December – so about a month after I became active in the discussion about campus sanctuary, an administrator cornered me in the Main Building – I happen to teach in the Main Building – and they said this.

[1:09:57] He sort of put his arm around me and said “You know what? I’ve seen that you’re involved with the Campus Sanctuary movement, and it’s not going to happen. Father Jenkins is not going to use the s-word, because it comes with all these legal ramifications. It’s going to make students targets, according to the logic. So, he’s not going to declare it a Sanctuary Campus. But you have to keep the pressure on. Because without a number of faculty members, students, and staff pushing for something called sanctuary, he’s not incentivized to act on it and to keep working toward making this campus safer for undocumented students.

[1:10:38] So, that administrator telling me to keep the pressure on really kept me going, and said - he didn’t use the word sanctuary, but that’s only part of what we’re asking for. We’re really asking first and foremost, to make campus safe for students who are undocumented. Even in a post-DACA world.

Becker: Mm-hmm. And one component to everything you’re talking about is the notion that, as professors, we’re more than just teachers in the classroom, and we have a responsibility to even be advocates for our students, and I think especially for those who are particularly vulnerable in any realm, but in the context of this conversation, under the Trump administration’s policies.

[1:11:18] So, what would you say to, then, the professors who are listening, about what can we do? What actions can we take along those lines to ensure that our support for all of our students – but particularly perhaps our most vulnerable ones – don’t just end at the classroom door?

Ruiz: I’m so glad that you’re asking this question, but I’m also torn. If you’re a professor of biology, if you’re a professor of you know, medieval history, is it your responsibility to lead students on contemporary issues; on forming the next generation of student activists; of alumni who are activist?

[1:11:52] I don’t know. I’m really torn on that. I feel like, in my area of research, which is about how and why we represent Latinos and Latin America the way we do, I don’t think I have the option to remain silent on the issue. I think it would be really disingenuous of me to go teach Latinos in America in Film, as I will teach this afternoon, and to act like media constructions of Latinos and latinidad are disconnected from politics.

[1:12:21] We're looking at a hundred years of film history, and looking at every shred of filmic evidence that we work with, as cultural evidence; as reflections of a culture that sees Latinos either as [assimilable] into the U.S. body politic, as threatening to the United States, as perpetual outsiders, as aliens. Sometimes as sexual or desirous objects. I don't think I could teach a hundred years of that and say films reflect history and cultural politics and electoral politics, but in 2017 it's a different story, and you know, these films don't matter, you know?

[1:13:02] Or Latinos have achieved some sort of equality and are therefore, you know, we can approach these apolitically. So, I think it's a personal choice, of course. Obviously, and no one is charged with being a scholar-activist-teacher. But I think it's my choice. And I think that tenure helps with that.

Becker: Yeah, that's a very important point, right? And also, that notion of the institutional structures in place, like tenure being one of them, that allow us to speak out.

Ruiz: [1:13:35] The first thing I did as part of the Campus Sanctuary movement locally, was to just help write a petition. I was extremely proud that 36 hundred people signed it within 24 hours. Students, alumni, staff, faculty – I got lots of emails from untenured faculty members saying “I'm with you, I would love to support this, I don't feel comfortable adding my name to this.” And I can't begrudge them that. I mean, that's scary.

[1:14:02] I remember, that was only a few years ago for me. Feeling like, how public can I be about, you know, my personal politics? I think post-tenure, it's so much easier for me to say “Well, I don't think they're going to fire me for this op-ed, or for this signature on a petition. I don't think they can; I don't think they want to. So, I'm going to go ahead and make a public voice.” You mentioned to me earlier that one of your other interviewees said she's not a protestor, she doesn't feel likes she's yellor – I can relate to that so much.

[1:14:33] You know, that was me. I went to every protest, but I was always that person who, like in college, in graduate school, after those periods of my life, I was the person sort of sitting on the sidelines like, pretending to text or something so that I wouldn't be called upon to raise my voice. I've had to

change and sort of I think grow a little bit into having a bigger mouth in all of this. You know, the Muslim ban protest and the wall protest that we went to, you know people said okay, “you have to say something. You’ve helped assemble people here, so...”

[1:15:07] They sort of pushed me onto the stage. But I don’t know. I think it has inspired me to both raise my voice, both metaphorically and to also like, literally raise my voice on the street. Everything after the November election has done that for me.

Becker: One last question, because we just got news a couple hours ago that we have learned the Notre Dame commencement speaker is going to be Mike Pence. And for those who don’t know, Notre Dame’s tradition is, the year we have a new President, after the inauguration, that President is invited to come give the commencement address.

[1:15:35] So there’s been a lot of talk over the last few months, would that invitation be extended to Donald Trump which, for many of us, would be problematic in many ways. Well, it wasn’t. It was extended – or at least as far as we know, it was extended to Mike Pence, which raises its own set of issues. So, I have two questions: first of all, if you have any response to that; and then secondly, the larger question of, you know, we represent Notre Dame, and these kinds of things represent our institution, and we can push back against them or support them, but we’re in a position to be kind of related in some way to the institution. So, I’m curious is you have any thoughts about that.

Ruiz: [1:16:05] Well, to the first question, the news is fresh, and I am mortified. You know, I didn’t think for a second that the administration would invite Trump to speak at commencement. And - there was a protest last week, for example - or earlier this week, excuse me. Students protesting in front of the Main Building, saying do not invite President Trump. I didn’t think it would happen, although I’m glad they were out there.

[1:16:32] So I think the choice to bring Pence is pretty cynical on the part of the administration. It feels to me like kind of a cynically-minded compromise. Like, we have to keep this tradition alive, although there’s lots of old timers around here who can tell you that it’s actually not a tradition. That there have

been many, many exceptions, including Bill Clinton because of pro-choice reasons, who were not invited at all. So, I don't think the President had to invite the national president or the vice president.

[1:17:03] I don't think he had to, but I think it was a shocking choice for me. People are, you know, saying "Well, it's not surprising." I'm shocked. I'm really stunned that they would do that. I think because it does feel like a bit of a slap in the face to those of us who have been saying please do not invite Trump to be our commencement speaker. But I also think, if you look at Pence's record in Indiana, it's stunning when you think about so-called religious protections that really denied gay people like myself some rights.

[1:17:36] Or attempted to deny recognition of our rights and our relationships. I think when I look at a governor who was so phobic about things like sex and drugs that we saw an HIV outbreak in rural Indiana, because they cut a needle-exchange program. An HIV outbreak is scandalous in 2015, 2016 when it was happening. And to me there's a lack of accountability there that I find just really galling.

Becker: [1:18:09] Mm-hmm. And then that larger question about, like, we represent Notre Dame and you know, there's things the university does that we are very supportive of that we aren't supportive of; what kind of position do you feel that puts us in?

Ruiz: I mean, I would love to have a town hall forum with like, a hundred progressive faculty members to discuss that honestly. Because, I am super-proud to work at Notre Dame. I mean, you have got to understand: I grew up an hour from here, in an all-Catholic community. I went to Catholic school. I didn't know that there was a school more majestic or prestigious than Notre Dame growing up.

[1:18:44] I never would have gotten in here for undergrad, but I am super-proud to work here. It means – my career here, at Notre Dame – means everything to me. I think that's exactly why I'll keep on agitating. To make it a better place, and to reflect, you know, my values. I don't think it's my employer's responsibility to reflect every value or political opinion I have. But I also don't think they can expect me to stay quiet when they make decisions that I find not truly reflective of the values that so many of us buy into and profess on a daily basis in the classroom and outside of it.

[Music]

Kackman: [1:19:37] So who knows? 2013 might turn out to be a year worth documenting.

Becker: Certainly. I think this was fascinating to, first of all, talk to all those folks. I really appreciate the time they gave me and the passionate work they've put in. And then hearing the voices of passionate people. It is inspiring. These are difficult times and challenging times, but you know, hearing what people are trying to do, and especially trying to help other people, and figure out what we can do, what our role can be in making this world a better place as best we can, is as much as we can do in 2017.

[1:20:10] Hopefully, these will give us some inspiring voices in our word picture, to move forward.

Kackman: Yeah. And regardless of where you fall on multiple political spectrums, spectra, it seems pretty clear that our relationships to our various publics, to the media that we use in engaging with those publics, is not ever going to be really quite the same again. And so, it seems worth taking the time to stop and register what's happening around us, right?

[1:20:43] And witness and observe and continue to talk about it.

Becker: Right. I think that's an important take-away of these interviews. Listening to what has inspired these people and what their concerns are going forward. I think that's important material to consider.

Kackman: We would like to particularly thank all of those who contributed materials for this little word picture.

Becker: And specifically, the audio interstitials. You heard the chanting and so forth. Those were gathered from the following folks: Jen Proctor, Melissa Dinsman, Chuck Tryon, Stephanie Brown, Joel Neville Anderson, and our very own Bill Kirkpatrick.

Kackman: [1:21:17] And I added a few bits from an event ii went to with a million of my closest friends in Washington, D.C.

Becker: Yeah, and some of the other spaces you heard then, that was from Washington, D.C., Michigan, North Carolina, Chicago, and Amsterdam. And Bill Kirkpatrick was in Amsterdam.

Kackman: Thank you so much for listening.

Becker: And thank you so much for those you gave their time to talk to me. So, Carol Vernallis, Jorie Lagerwey, Chuck Tryon, Amanda Ann Klein, and Jason Ruiz. And we'll see you at SCMS.

Kackman: [1:21:46] Giddy-up. Aca-Media is produced with the support of ISLA at the University of Notre Dame, as well as the Department of Communication at Denison University.

Becker: And we couldn't do this without the support, both rhetorical and financial, from SCNS.

Kackman: We are grateful to the help of our collaborators Bill Kirkpatrick, Todd Thompson, Joel Neville Anderson, and Stephanie Brown.

Becker: And special thanks to Todd for this episode. He put together a lot of pieces and made it all sound great and flow, so thank you so much as always, Todd Thompson.

Kackman: [1:22:16] Looking forward to spring.

Becker: Oh, please bring spring. Sunshine.

Kackman: Green grass.

Becker: The Cubs.

[Music plays until end]