

Edited Transcript
Chicago Tribune Contributing Columnist Laura Washington Interviewing
Journalists Shia Kapos and Craig Dellimore
On the November 5, 2024 Presidential Election

At The Cliff Dwellers
October 23, 2024

Introduction by Eve Moran of The Cliff Dwellers: Good evening. My name is Eva Moran and I'm a past club president here. Welcome to The Cliff Dwellers. We're a warm community of artists and art lovers. It's easy to become a member and be part of our good fellowship. Know that during the weekday noon hour we frequently gather at the Members' Table. At the specially marked place we lunch, tell stories and exchange ideas on a wide range of topics. During the evenings our journalist series aims to bring about a similar experience.

In honor of club founder Hamlin Garland, a poet and novelist, John McDermott, a past club president and founder of the Chicago Reporter, and our distinguished lake member Roger Ebert, a brilliant journalist, critic and Pulitzer Prize winner, these programs celebrate the art of journalism. They importantly inform us on today's stories.

Today's topic is the upcoming November 5th election. This is a critical moment on both the local and national fronts, for as we all know, elections make history. Today we're excited to spotlight Laura Washington, a master of igniting deep and interesting conversation. Washington is a Chicago Tribune contributing columnist and political analyst for ABC 7 Chicago.

She brings us more than two decades of experience as a multimedia journalist who covers local and national politics, race and social justice. Today, Washington will engage with and help us welcome noted journalists Shia Kapos: and Craig Dellimore: to the club. The conversation is sure to be hot, stimulating and informative. I'm not going to waste another minute. Please help me welcome Laura Washington to begin tonight's program.

Introduction of Shia Kapos and Craig Dellimore by Laura Washington: Thanks so much. It's really an honor to be here with you all again tonight and particularly an honor, as Eve said, this is a journalist series. I can't think of two more respected and accomplished and wise journalists in Chicago or anywhere else and my friends up here on the stage and so I'm delighted and thank you very much for joining us tonight. We're going to get hot. I want to start with some brief introductions and we're going to get into, I know you all want to hear about presidential politics of course, but we want to talk about not just that but local politics as well and we're going to have time for Q & A from you in the room so there's things you're thinking about that we don't cover. Please join in later.

Shia Kapos: is a reporter for Politico and author of Politico's Illinois Playbook which is the indispensable morning newsletter covering Illinois government politics. Prior to joining Politico she wrote the popular taking names column for the Chicago Sun Times and before that at Crain's Chicago Business. She's also had stints at Deal Reporter and the Salt Lake Tribune. Her career has been built on breaking news and landing sit-down interviews with notable names and personalities. She's

covered billionaires on the rise and lawmakers' precipitous falls and all the territory in between. Welcome Shia. Thank you.

Craig Dellimore: is the political editor for News Radio WBBM which is a post he has held since 2001. He first joined the station in 1983 after several years with the Associated Press Radio Network in Washington DC. During his time at WBBM Craig held a variety of jobs including anchor, managing editor, legislative correspondent and suburban bureau chief. Craig has covered several national political conventions for WBBM. The year 2008 proved to be one of the most historic political years he's ever experienced, he has said. Well, I don't know. Maybe this is my topic. I think this year is good to talk to you. Okay. Craig has won awards for his work from the Illinois Associated Press, the Chicago Society of Professional Journalists and more.

LAURA WASHINGTON: Welcome. Thank you. So, I have to say you might guess that probably this room is pretty blue tonight. Maybe not just blue because of where they lean politically but also some of them might be feeling a little bit blue because of the tone and tenor of the campaign. And I think a lot of people are here tonight to hear obviously what you guys think about that. My sense and what you hear a lot of the media is that the momentum seems to be in the last two weeks has shifted away from Kamala Harris more toward Donald Trump. So, I just want to ask, start off with maybe with you Shia. Do you think that's real if that's what's happening or not and what does it mean?

SHIA KAPOS: I don't know if it's happening or not because she's going out on the road a lot more. He seems to be strategic in making news where he goes maybe not as frequently but you know he makes big news wherever he goes because he says outlandish things and that makes headlines and that draws a lot of talk and chatter. The polling shows them so close it's hard for me to say that he's gaining momentum, but he is you know the guy getting all the headlines right now. Seems as though the polls are close, but he's been inching. He's closing the gap. Yes he's closing the gap considering that she was what six points ahead maybe after? Yeah, and Wisconsin I think she might be one point ahead and one hole I saw. So yeah, I don't know what's going to happen.

I think what we're seeing is again as she says we are seeing the results of what kind of press coverage, how we in the media are handling it. We still cover Donald Trump like a story and not as much like a candidate and that gives him more play, more visibility but the kinds of things that he's been saying in the last couple of weeks you know I in fact someone commented there on the radio that usually what you do in the last two weeks of a campaign are you're very cautious. You concentrate on bringing the undecided and my goodness how can people actually be undecided in this state. I don't believe that I mean I don't believe people are really undecided but what he is doing is saying even more outrageous things.

So, what he's doing is he is boring down at MAGA, at his people and turning this into what I think it will be which is a turnout fight. That he's going to try and get as many of his people to come out no matter what. And Kamala Harris is reaching out. She emphasizes Republicans who are dissatisfied. I mean the road trip with Cheney was an example of that. Which of these strategies is the wisest? Well we're going to find out on the election night or maybe not even on election night but I think

that's the idea that these are all tactics. Everything you're seeing is a tactic at this point. I mean the last two weeks of the election even Elon Musk is going to give a million dollars away. Is it illegal? Almost certainly but it's two weeks before the election. They can't do anything about it right now. By the time they could stop him the election will be over. So it's all tactics.

SHIA KAPOS: It's the same with the Arnold Palmer penis remark. That wasn't just a slip of the tongue. It was a way to energize white male voters who might not go out and vote and think that that's funny or somehow grabs their, you know, grabs their tin.

LAURA WASHINGTON: It's funny and maybe it appeals to white males but he can't get elected with just white males. Even if they turn down and vote. Both he and Kamala are trying to get those voters and I think that's a tactic that he's using to get their attention. So are we not talking about issues anymore because I know one of the complaints earlier on is especially about Kamala Harris. She said she wasn't talking enough about the economy and she wasn't talking enough about her record and what she would do that would be different from Biden. If the issues have gone out the window at this point because it's just all about, you know, revving up the base and getting your own people to show up.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: I'm going to say no, but it depends on which candidate you're talking about. If it's Kamala Harris, the analysis that you're going to see on television, whether it's MSNBC, Fox, or, you know, the channels that play it straight. It's going to be about what she said. It's going to be about her policies. Yeah, there'll be horse race stuff. But who picks apart Donald Trump's policies? No, it's how many lies did he tell? What outrageous thing did he say?

So, like I said, you know, right at the outset, they're being covered differently. And that's a factor. I think that's something that actually is going to play into the results to some degree, how much I don't know. But we've never seen a campaign like this before. So, if they're just talking about the crazy things he says and not talking about his policies, is that good for him or bad for him? That's good for him. Why? Because, you know, every time he has said something about tariffs, economic experts have said, "Even if they work, they make the goods more expensive for the people buying them."

And people, you kind of hear that said every time he makes the statement about tariffs, but are people listening? And if they are, it's bad for him. So, if we didn't cover the tariffs, we didn't cover what he said about the tariffs, we're covering something outrageous. I was going to say favor, but it's not my favor. It's the exact opposite of this campaign, is go to voters and say, "What about when Donald Trump says this?" And that's a lie. And he goes, "Oh, I don't believe that, but I'm going for it." Right. Okay. What do you do with that? What do you do with, "No, I don't believe anything he says, but I'm going to vote for it."

LAURA WASHINGTON: So, the Hitler stuff and some of the things he has said very recently, which, you know, he's going to stick his enemies, he's going to stick the government on his enemies if he's elected. Is your sense that that stuff just bounces off people because people just don't, they think he just stops?

SHIA KAPOS: Yeah, the Hitler stuff happened when he was president, and Kelly, his long, well, the longest chief of staff I think they had, reiterated it to the New York Times that Trump talked about Hitler. And going back to the 90s, there were stories about Ivana and his wife talking about how he had a Hitler book by the side of his bed. So, we've known that Hitler is something that's in his, you know, he admires him somehow. Yet, it goes, I don't know why people aren't bothered by it, except they know it's Donald Trump so they don't care. I mean, we've had candidates here who have referred to Hitler in passing, and that has, like, ruined their campaigns. You know, we've seen that across the country when somebody mentions Hitler. We know that you don't talk about Hitler, yet somehow Trump is able to talk about it, and nobody's bothered. Not only does he talk about it, he says he admires him. He admires him, yeah. Right? People say he doesn't mean it. Well, that's the point they were making earlier, yeah. This is just talk, and this is just Trump being Trump.

Yeah, I mean... Yeah, I don't get how that is. I've been doing these Q&A's with national figures around the country, and I just interviewed the Milwaukee mayor who said, you know, some of the outrageous things that Trump says, you know, Reagan couldn't have gone away with it. Bush, Obama, nobody could have gotten away with it. But for some reason, Trump is able to say these things, and people are just numbed by it. That's the phrase he kept using. They're numb, and so it just is out there. We have normalized in some ways a campaign where people cannot tell the truth all the time.

This is something that has bothered me, all campaigns, and I sincerely believe we have not yet learned how to deal with campaigns that are run on this basis. But back when we were covering real politics in the old days, you know, was fact-checking a thing? No, if a candidate said something that was a lie, first off, it was rare, and it had to be corrected, you know, along the way. But if you caught a candidate in a lie, that was a big deal, and they had to apologize for it. Right. It could ruin their campaign. Right. But if you tell lies every day, and I'm not saying it's just Donald Trump. I'm serious. It doesn't matter which side it is. But if people repeat lies every day to the point where people just ignore it, either they think we all, everyone lies, so what? Or it just no longer has the gravity that it used to have.

And I don't know how you successfully cover, as a journalist, a campaign where the very facts that you're reporting are endowed, where you can undermine people, because that undermines people's confidence in the words that we say, the words that they say, in the systems of government. And the information that we're conveying. They don't believe any of the facts. They're real facts. And they know that he's been convicted of 34 felonies, but how many people just believed that was a trumped-up system, even though it was a jury trial? You know? Right.

Well, I think of that Springfield, Ohio case. We know that it's not a jury. Yet it keeps perpetuating again and again as being repeated by J.D. Vance. I'm not sure Trump is repeating it lately, but J.D. Vance has repeated it. And in our stories, we keep saying, which has been disproven. You keep adding that line, but, you know, making time. And I think even more harmful, FEMA, the lies about FEMA, that's material of a problem where people are not seeking aid because they think it's not there. It's, you know, it is just something that we should be able to address. And we have reported on it. Yeah. And people shrug, and they go, oh, that's just him. That's when you realize nobody reads everything we write. [laughter] Shock it. So, we touched on the turnout.

LAURA WASHINGTON: So, who, you talked about the white guys who wants to turnout. What does each side, who does each side need to turnout with the most constituencies that will make the difference on election day?

Well, I think suburban women are still important folks to bring out for Democrats, especially on the abortion issue.

And I think men, whether they're young black men, young white men, they're an important component for both sides. Right now, what I'm hearing, because I'm talking to a lot of people in Wisconsin, is that, you know, Kamala Harris's teams on the ground now, they are focused on Democrats who might not have voted yet. They're not trying to get people who are Republican or who are on the fence. They are strictly focusing on Democrats who haven't voted, so they can get them, you know, it's that turnout issue. They want to get them to the polls. And it's hard to get to the Trump voters, but I imagine they're doing the same thing.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: Yeah. I think it's, at least for the Republicans, obviously they want to get the core of the base out. But along the way, we had a news conference here in downtown Chicago that was the Republican Party of Illinois and their, you know, Salvi's... Was it Kathy Salvi's... Kathy Salvi's news conference. She's the head of the party. Yeah, she is the chair of the Republican Party.

And the candidates that they have locally, specifically countywide candidates. And the tactic that they are using is, and I'm quoting this, "Turn the sound on your television off." You know, when you see Donald Trump, just turn the sound off, but make sure you go out and vote for him. Now, when you're the chair of the Republican Party, and you're saying, "Just don't listen to him." It's, but you have to have, he needs to get your vote. And people are cheering that. That is, you're going after people who are voting their pocketbooks, voting their morals.

And you know what? I think you have to take into account, and that maybe that's one of the problems the Democrats have, of not necessarily acknowledging that there can be moral reasons for, you know, even the moral reasons for, you know, fighting immigration. And acknowledge that there are people who may have a point. And so you don't want to shove them aside. You may want to sit down at the table with them and talk about it. But that's, they are going after the people who are quietly feeling, "But he is saying he's doing the things that we want." And those are the people they want to turn out for. The Democrats, it is, again, their core, the people more on the left, and the centrist people.

Now they are going after the Republicans who are looking at Donald Trump and going, "Oh, no, not again." But we don't know how many of those there are. I mean, we're going to find out. And that's, I mean, you know, is Cheney going to actually bring those people in? The list, Cheney's in the world, which are all the generals, the cabinet members that Kamala Harris has brought out from the Republican Party. The challenge that Republican elected officials have is they may not agree with Donald Trump, but they know to do their jobs, they will have a better chance of getting things done if the guy at the top of the ticket is Donald Trump, because he can help them. And it must be very frustrating to some of those folks who don't agree with Donald Trump, but know, you know, I'm a

Republican, and the only way I'm going to get things done is if he's in the White House. So, you know, I guess they hold their nose.

LAURA WASHINGTON: So, talk a little bit about, let's talk a little bit about Kamala Harris, and I think there's a sort of, what I'm hearing in terms of the analysis and the conversation here in Nashville, there's a hope and there's a fear about her. The hope is that Democrats have a superior ground game. You're always hearing about they had the ground game. They paid for it. She had a billion dollars to spread across the country. Right. And the Republicans general don't necessarily have as good of a ground game, and Trump's campaign has not really been organized that way. So that's a hope. And then the fear for Kamala Harris is there's still always people out there that are saying, I don't really know her. I'm really not, I'm not sure what she stands for. And also the whole issue of it appears as though her support in the base, particularly among African American men and Latino men is slipping. Comment on that hope and that fear and how legitimate you think those are.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: I think the fear is legitimate. I think the fear is, you know, when it comes to Latino men and women. The problem is, is that the Democrats have disappointed a lot of the people in their base along the way and those chickens are coming home to roost this year. The mic, you know, the migrant crisis has put pressure on a number of communities where African American people were living in disinvested neighborhoods and have been promised all along that we're going to do things in your neighborhoods. And those promises have sometimes, especially when the times have been rough, had to be put aside for a while, except that those times keep coming. And so now people are making legitimate arguments that the Democrats failed us. And so we need to do something else. They have not gone the extra step and said, no, wait a minute, what are you Republicans going to do for us? And all the Republicans are saying, we're going to do better. Well, it's also what the Democrats were saying all along, but the Republicans haven't failed yet because they haven't even tried. So I think that's one problem. You're seeing that there are a lot of Latinos who are not any happier with the what they see is the flood of migration. And it's not it's no longer first office, no longer a flood. It's a trickle here. And also say, but wait a minute, we had to wait 10 years to get in. So it's not fair. So that dissatisfaction is there and it is legitimate. It has to be dealt with.

SHIA KAPOS: And Kamala hasn't had a strong enough answer, I think, on some of that. And maybe it's because somebody told me, you know, she is a lawyer, so she's more measured about how she speaks. And that might come across in how she campaigns. She's not going to just shout out crazy stuff to get elected. She's more thoughtful and maybe too careful because she's a lawyer. I don't know. So it doesn't resonate with people as strongly, I think. And I will. Somebody has to put it out there. And the other factor, the other fear factor is the thing that nobody has been talking about in this campaign.

And that is the fact that she is a black woman. And I mean, remember how many people that we, you know, 20, oh, eight, how many people would flat out tell you, I wouldn't vote for a black man. And, you know, even if I'm a black reporter, they would tell me they wouldn't vote for a black man. So when he got elected. When he got elected, exactly. So it's not the overwhelming majority. It's not even a majority.

The question is, are all the little things that are out there enough to slow the momentum? I'm not sure they are. I think the problem is underground. It was underground in 2016. The anger that people, frankly white people, felt in 2016. You know, yeah. Yes. And just being left behind, you know, being the forgotten people. And they blamed her for that. Right. That bubbled up. Well, you know, it's come back. But I think that there are people now underground who really feel that we can't let this happen again. You know, January 6th can't happen again. It will be detrimental, I think, to the Democratic Party if Kamala loses. Because will the Democratic Party ever put a woman in that position again? They will have lost twice. So then the only chances of a woman getting into the White House will be if the Republicans do it. Because I feel like Democrats will be too scared to put a woman at the top of the table again. And what about, just to touch on the ground game, is it true you think that she has a big advantage there? And could that make a difference on November 5th?

I know she has a huge ground game that's better than Trump's in Wisconsin. I presume it's the same way in other places, just because she has so much money. And the Democrats have been better about actually knocking on doors. Trump's enlisted Elon Musk's pad to do part of the ground game. And they are, you know, somebody described it as like young frat boys. And they explained it as, imagine you said you were going to deliver dinner to your grandmother.

And you might take a casserole over if you're doing the ground game as a Democrat. But Elon Musk's young group gets a bag of McDonald's and throws it at the front door. So it's a little bit far fetched. But the point is that they aren't actually knocking on doors and spending time talking to people the way the Democrats are. Whether it helps, I don't know. Wisconsin is a big, wide state with lots of rural people, rural communities. I don't know if they're reaching all those folks.

We spent the weekend in Wisconsin and did a lot of driving through. And I would say we saw slightly more Trump signs than we did Harris ball signs. But we saw almost as many Harris ball signs as we saw Trump signs. So, you know, even in the rural areas. And you could even go through some farm areas where one farm has a big Trump display. But then two more farms have Harris ball signs up. So, which is why it's a valor. It's a valor, I say. It's super close. Yeah, it is super close. But, you know, it's going to be a long night.

LAURA WASHINGTON: That was another question I had. So are we going to know that night? Are we going to know who's going to be the next president at night?

SHIA KAPOS: Well, some states like Wisconsin doesn't start counting their mail-in ballots until election day. Which might have been fine 20 years ago. But now more people, including Republicans, are mailing in ballots. So that means they are going to be, they will have a lot of ballots to be counting that day. And so, like my editors said, you better get, because they are sending me to Wisconsin, they are like, you better get two nights hotel, not one, to stay there. Because we don't know when it will be called.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: And the mail-in ballots remember have a time, I forgot what the time is to come in. But it's a matter, there's days after, has to be postmarked by election day. But they can come

in, I forgot how many it's, I don't think it's 14. It's like, it's a number of days afterwards. It was five days in 2020, I think, before they called it, right? And then, you know, we could go back to your 2008, and it was 35 days? I can't remember what that was. And that's only in the states where it's close, obviously. And let's face it, we're all speculating right now.

And, you know, I'm one of those people who believes that the pollsters still haven't caught up with how to deal with the fact that those of us whose only phones, and there aren't more of us, not me, but more people every day whose only phone is mobile, who don't answer any number that you don't recognize. So there are some people who aren't simply being reached. I think that goes to a lot of Trump supporters, which is why the polling was wrong in 2016 and 2022. But then my sister insists that we are not considering the Swifties either.

They are not getting those polling phone calls, so maybe there will be some on the other side. I don't know. Yeah. So anything can happen. But I think if I had to bet, I would bet that we will be, it will be at least a day before we know, certainly the early hours in the morning. Yeah. But on the other hand, we can see a bar. I mean, if everybody's been quiet and keeping things to themselves or they go into the booth. But look at 2022. I mean, people were very surprised that Democrats did as well as they did because the polling said otherwise. And the economy is different since then.

LAURA WASHINGTON: Well, and it's just as likely to be contested.

SHIA KAPOS: Well, yes. Yeah.

LAURA WASHINGTON: So the lawyers are all lined up on both sides or is this mainly Trump's side?

SHIA KAPOS: Both sides probably, but really Trump's team is I mean, Trump's team is already in court filing.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: So, yeah, it is going to be probably contested. But I don't know that it. Let's pray it doesn't get as ugly as it did before, but it could. And frankly, it could get ugly on both sides. I mean, what if Donald Trump wins? I mean, how many people are going to be furious if he wins and get something as wrong? So there's this thing called the famous thing called the October surprise. And we're getting pretty, pretty late into October now. Do you think there's still time for an October surprise? Well, I thought the Hitler thing yesterday was an October surprise, but maybe it's not. I don't know. There will be many. Yeah, I don't think there's anything that's we've already shown that things can be thrown into the hopper and completely ignored. And then either on either side, frankly, I mean, you know, they're eating the dogs. That was meant to her to her. So there are going to be other things. But I think people now are so used to outrageous that they just throw up their hands and we ask another thing.

SHIA KAPOS: Well, and Trump won in 2016 and wasn't the grabber by the, you know, four days before the election. Yeah. Yeah. And he still. So even if we have an October surprise, it may not really impact the race. Yeah. I know Hillary Clinton will say the call me what Comey did was the

October. Yeah. So so she was one of the things that you notice you interview a lot of big shots and influencer types. And I'm wondering you mentioned Swifties, Taylor Swift, Chaney.

There are a lot of big names that have come up on both sides of the aisle in this campaign. Is there one influencer or one important person that you think might make a difference or move some votes? I don't know. I mean, you've got Obama really out there for Kamala in a big way. I mean, he's if you watch social media, he is all over the place for her.

But then you've got Elon Musk for Trump. And I just interviewed John Federman, who said he thinks that Musk is a very smart and strategic person to put up there. Not that he supports it, obviously. He's a Democrat, but he thought that that was very concerning for Democrats that Elon Musk was out there. What makes it why? Because he's somebody that regular folks are interested in. They want to hear him. They know how smart he is. You know, and that.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: I think that billionaires have become the new royalty for we in the United States. That's our royalty. These flashy billionaires. So the Elon Musk and frankly, we've got one here too. Or a few here. Yeah, we know one of them. One of them switched sides and went to Florida. Yeah. But let's face it. Everybody saw that that rocket booster come back down in Atlanta. The man's a genius or he's got a bunch of geniuses working for him. And that's and that's people get impressed by that. So, yeah, these are the these are the new influencers. That's our new, you know, the new people with wearing the crowns are the ones with all the money, which is kind of sad that that's that that's how we're going to value people. But there we are. And that's, you know, we we have to hope that our children are looking at other things besides how much money somebody else.

LAURA WASHINGTON: So there's more than a presidential election on November 5th statewide elections. We have congressional elections, county elections. So talk to us a little bit about a couple two or three which elections you see are most key and most interesting in Illinois.

SHIA KAPOS: I'm watching Eric Sorensen's race. I expect that he will win. He is. He is a congressman in the 17th district where Cheri Bustos had that position for a number of years and now he has the position reconfigured a little bit. For redistricting. But he has a challenger, a Republican challenger, who is a judge who calls himself Judge Joe McGraw. So you almost think it's on all of his advertising. So you think judge might be his name. It's called McGraw. He's a former judge and Republicans are throwing a lot of money and, you know, support behind that. I think Eric Sorensen will still win, but, you know, I don't know. So that's what I'm watching. I think that's the closest of all the congressional races.

And then the school board races. I had to tell my editor in Washington, D.C., that I'm paying attention to school board races and she was like, what? You know? And if you've been following that, you know, because I think that will be very telling about the power of the Chicago Teachers Union, which in turn affects the mayor. I think it'll just be an interesting look at how the progressive movement in the city is playing out based on those elections.

LAURA WASHINGTON: Any sense yet of how, where things are headed in terms of? There's a lot of money being spent on both sides.

There's a lot of money on both sides. I expect because the CTU is more organized that they'll be fine, but they're playing dirty in a few races, you know, accusing long time. I'm going to write a story about how the CTU is splitting the Democratic Party here and down. You know, they're sending out mailers against fellow long time Democrats, Democrats running for the school board, accusing them of being Trumpy. And, you know, that's kind of dirty politics, but, you know, that's what we do, I guess. Welcome to this era.

LAURA WASHINGTON: What are you looking at?

CRAIG DELLIMORE: I'm not looking at many of them. I'm not really looking. I'll be watching Shia's coverage on the election, somewhere it's at, but there are 17 members of the Illinois delegation, 15 of them are Democrats and the Democrats, 14 are Democrats. And they're mostly secure. So that's I'm watching. Don't forget, we will have a new state's attorney in Cook County. I think that that the Democrat Burke is going to win. But the Republicans have put a lot of money and energy behind Bob Fioretti. Fioretti has not won an election since he got redistricted out of the city council.

LAURA WASHINGTON: But he's gotten the endorsement of Jesse Jackson.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: What do you mean? He's actually doing a good campaign, I think. He's working with all of the campaigns he's done lately. I think he's done a good job. This is the most successful of his campaigns. I sent you a note sheet about the Jesse Jackson endorsement. Yeah, you did. I think he is being more strategic and running like a real, I don't want to say, he doesn't come off as a gadfly. He comes off as a real authentic candidate, and that will help him probably. He is a civil rights lawyer.

And so some of this is because of the work that he has done for people in the African American community, frankly. So I think that's where. And he is, frankly, since he lost his seat on the city council, Bob Fioretti has been working hard to build support from as many quarters as he can. And he has kept his name out there. He has kept his campaign, what small organization he has going. So that's one.

You'll get a new circuit court clerk. So, you'll get a new county clerk. So there are some of those elections, but school board, I think, is the underappreciated phenomenon. Chicago is unique in the state in having an appointed school board. So, this is historic, the first time that anyone is going to be elected to a Chicago school board.

That is a shifting of power that people have been waiting eons for. And it'll only be a partial shift. And the way it'll work is that there are 10 districts in Chicago. 10 people will be elected. The mayor will appoint 10 others also from each district. And in fact, they break the district up into two. So if one person is elected from district A, then somebody has to be elected from district 1A, and

somebody has to be appointed from district 1B. It's complicated, and that's one of the problems of this election. It's complicated.

There are a bunch of people running. Most of them are not stars. There are a few stars, people who you've heard of before.

But people have to actually do research. Do your homework.

LAURA WASHINGTON: Any recommendations about where to find information on school? And the judges, too.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: There's a ton of judges on the board. And the judges go to the bar associations. In fact, we actually voted on Monday because my wife wanted to--we were driving back, and she said, "Hey, why don't we stop since the voting started today?" And she said, "I've already looked at the bar association ratings, so I know all of our judges should be retained." And it's mostly retention, Alex. Go to the bar associations. For the school board candidates, most of the--both the Triv and the Sun Times have questionnaires. My favorite place is Chalkbeat. I think they do a wonderful job, and in fact-- They do a great job. Chalkbeat is a website that becomes education issues.

LAURA WASHINGTON: Yes. And they are great people.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: In fact, I am going to do the lazy thing for my own program on school board elections this weekend, as I call Becky Vevea who's the bureau chief at Chalkbeat and say, "Can you come on the show with me for half an hour and tell me everything we need to know?" She's a former city honor partner. Yes. She's remarkably good. Go to Chalkbeat and look at their—

LAURA WASHINGTON: Can you spell that?

CRAIG DELLIMORE: Like Chalk on the blackboard, C-H-A-L-K-B-E-A-T. And go to their website. But if you look at a newspaper website, you'll find their-- Chalk Beat is one word. Mostly what you'll see are questionnaires, asking them three questions or two questions, and just read, actually read what they say. In most cases, you don't have-- there's one district that has a ton of candidates. Wait, which one is it? The fourth has like six, I think. Yes. That is it. And then the fourth has six, and there are two well-known people in it.

One of them is the rapper, Che "Rhymefest" Smith. And then Karin Norington-Reaves. Who ran for Congress as a Democrat, and CTU has an ad calling her "Kokie." Yeah, the CTU ads are for everybody that they don't like. And it basically says, "Such and such is going to take a page right out of Trump's Project 2025, and going to do all these bad things." Not true in any of the cases, but there you go.

LAURA WASHINGTON: Welcome to the politics of this season. Right, and I would also, for the judges, I would also suggest Injustice Watch, which is a great news website that

covers the criminal justice system, or the justice system in general. They have this really comprehensive election guide where they describe each candidate and their background and any controversial issues that they've been involved in.

SHIA KAPOS: I think, yeah, and they have one story about a judge that they recommend not voting for. I mean, I don't know what their goal list is, but there's one that they did a full story on. Who was it? I don't remember.

LAURA WASHINGTON: But if you go to their website, the story is up along with their very young, traditional voting guide, Injustice Watch. So, we're going to move to questions, because I'm sure you all have a lot of really smart ones. But before, just one more question. Any predictions? Either Shia or Michael?

SHIA KAPOS: I think it's going to be really close and contentious, like Craig said, to the end, like where they'll be in court. So, you know, people wonder if there will be another January 6th kind of moment. I personally think because Trump is not in power, he won't have the same ability to bring people like that to Washington if that were to happen. Yeah, I am on the fence on this one. I think Kamala Harris wins. From your lips.

Yeah, but I think it's going to be a very long night. And, you know, I want to bet 2016, and I didn't want to. But I had said that there's an anger in the country that people aren't seeing, that there are some people who think that they've passed over, whether justified or unjustified. And that that's going to come up and bite people. And it was true. On the local front, I think that O'Neill Burke becomes the new state's attorney. But if Trump does, if Trump carries and wins, I think he already gets closer. If his voters come out, I think he already gets closer.

Well, I think the other unknown, I think you brought up earlier is Kamala Harris being a black woman. How many people said that Mike Foster, people either aren't telling the truth to the pollsters or... It's the reason why she has not mentioned her race once. Except, yeah, and gender.

Exactly. She's not saying women should vote for me. Or I'm going to be the first woman. She's not said that. Okay, you want to take this? I think it may be possible. Are you aware that we got the done? Oh! Hi, my question is not really about the election. My question is about your role as journalists. I know what it feels like as an attorney, seeing some of the things that has happened with the Supreme Court and having our opinions on what's going on, not just with the Supreme Court, but with other courts.

I'd like to hear what you think about your field of journalism, where it stands now, and what 2016 and the current election and all the rest of that has done to the field and what your hopes are for the future. Any questions? Well, as a reporter on the ground, it is noticeably... You feel the vitriol when you are a journalist, covering somebody who talks about attacking journalists. I mean, you feel it's a little bit scary. People are yelling at you. People are not trusting of you. They don't want to talk to you. It's noticeable. I've never experienced that before, really, the past four years. I don't know if it was like that eight years ago, but the past four years have been like that. So it's harder to do the job. And I find myself really having to talk to people about how I'm going to interview you, and I'm going

to tape record, and then I'm going to call you and make sure you're comfortable with exactly this quote, and really making sure that they feel comfortable, that the way I'm going to present it is in an honest way, which is always the way I've done it, but now I feel like I have to help people along more because they feel so distrusting of the media.

So that's concerning. So when you... The people you're talking about, are those just regular people, or are those... More high-profile, but when I went to a Trump rally, and I'm interviewing people, and they were, "Ugh, I don't want to talk to a reporter," and then they might start talking, and then I'll repeat. So you're saying, you know, "You support Trump for this reason. I'm going to quote you that way," and try to get them to understand what I'm doing in a really basic way, hoping that they trust me so I can get the story out. It's a little bit of hand-holding along the way, which is different.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: And now for me, I think of it as two levels. One, I guess because of my time in this city, in this area, I've built up a reputation for being fair to people on all sides, and I believe you can be... You don't have to be objective. I think objective is not a valid goal, because, you know, let's face it, a black man who grew up in New York is going to see things differently than a white woman of Greek ancestry. But fair, you do have to be.

And so I approach people with the idea that when I'm talking to them, that unless there's something really bizarre about them, their views must have some validity. You have to at least talk to them as if they're people with value. And as long as you treat people like that, I think that's fine. I feel less hostility this time than I did back in 2016. 2016 was scary. I mean, no, people really were threatening reporters. But as for the industry, my fear is for the industry. There are more people now doing what we do than ever before. I'm not making money at it, but because of the Internet, because of social media, more people have access to that.

But I think it dilutes the power of our craft, because so many more people are doing it, and people don't know, and maybe can't tell, which outlets are worth believing, and because of this undercutting of our institutions and the truth, where the truth is, I have my truth and you have your truth. No, that's not how it works. Because of that, I think people are less inclined to believe anything we do. And so that's distressing to me.

SHIA KAPOS: Yeah, I just, I'm glad you went on on that, because there are a lot of people who think they do what we do. They think that they are reporting, they think that they are giving information, but they are not doing it in a journalistic way, following all the rules that Craig and I follow to make sure we're being fair. You know, doing it the way we're supposed to, so that readers trust us, and that you know what we are producing, that you can believe what we have in print or on the air. So people put information out there, and they call it a scoop, or they call it, you know, they call it, like it's news, but they aren't journalists, so you've got to be careful about where you get the news, I think.

LAURA WASHINGTON: That's always been the case. I would just quickly add that as a columnist who writes about politics all the time, and particularly about race, I found this last eight years to be really corrosive and difficult, you know, particularly in terms of the response

I get to my columns. There's just a lot of hate out there, there's a lot of anger out there. And it's amazing what, you know, you hear what Donald Trump says on the stump. It's amazing what people will say to you, email, you know, in writing with their names. And, you know, it's not only is there misinformation, but there's people who are just not really interested in engaging in facts, in arguments, they just want to be angry. And so that's the experience I have.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: I just want to jump in on that because you just pointed out something that has been bothering me. That's something that the social media has allowed people to, even if it's not anonymous, just to be able to do it without getting punched in the face. But the amount of vile stuff that, for example, my station will post a story about something that Mayor Johnson said, the amount of racist, sick, vile comments that will follow that, and it would be, it can be the most innocuous story. But people will say things, you know, that you're just like, seriously, what decade is this? And it's still out there.

I mean, you know, there's still people who use the N word, polite conversation, otherwise people like conversational. Yeah. You have a question? Oh, yeah. No, no, I understand. Okay. I have a question. How do you feel the balance between the fear that is underlying that you think is bubbling up but it's not necessarily a parent versus the fear of Project 2025, which doesn't seem to have quite the public journalistic import that I would think you might have. And how do you balance that in your evaluation of the country's. The problem is that Project 2025 is so massive that it's hard for people to grasp it now anyone who watched the Democratic Convention. It was a magnificent job that they did. I mean, both come both conventions put on good shows, but whoever planned for the response to 2025 where you just take it in chunks, small chunks, and that people can understand, but I don't think people see it as a threat and besides that, the former president insists that he has nothing to do with it, even though half all of its staff are people who work for him, almost all of his staff are people who work for him, and that is things that at some point, in most cases he has said you want to do. So, but people, as long as you keep saying the lie over and over again, people are going to believe it. That's right. Some of us.

Audience Member: That's right. Thank you. Thank you. I have sort of a two-part question. First of all, she I hope for you each night you will give us a little preview of tomorrow's trivia question so we can. But secondly, I feel like we are at a flex/crisis point for young men in America, black, white, Hispanic. Where do we go from here because I think that their lack of understanding what their position is, is having a big impact on our culture and on the election.

LAURA WASHINGTON: Well, that's, that's a, that's a tall order. Maybe Shia would like to answer. No, no, I'm going to give this to Shia. But, but I, I think we are acknowledging the problem more than we used to. I think men themselves are acknowledging and maybe that's one of the few places where so many stuff you throw a lot of places where social media can do some good and I think that's where people are talking more about that, where women are also asserting themselves and being more open about both appreciating and demanding more of a man I think we need to demand more of our young men and teach young men more. But I think that is happening more. And I just have to hope that we're heading in the right direction on that. I mean, I guess we're in a crisis point,

but knowing you're in a crisis point is the first step for getting out of it. And I don't think it's just young men I think young people do not read what's going on in the world. Do they read newspapers, no. Do they read playbooks. Sometimes maybe. I mean I have an 18-year old and I, I know that he gets a lot of his news from people who post on Twitter and TikTok or, you know, Instagram. And some of it's okay. It's like, you know, little digestible bits of information, but that's all it is, you know, that what you know it's like sit, would you sit down and read the story please read it from top to bottom. Do you understand. So, until they figure out that they have to do that to know what's going on in the world.

Audience Member: You compare polls today versus polls four years ago or eight years ago, do you think polls are more reliable or less reliable. Regardless of whether you think they're more reliable or less reliable. Why do you think that people are paying so much attention to them, especially I think tend to think that polls are less reliable.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: People think that polls are less reliable and the people the pollsters tell us that they're just as reliable or more reliable. Of course they would. Yeah, of course. Exactly. It's just the kind of thing, you know, but, but people love polls because it gives you the sense of a horse race. And people like to like to know who's, you know, who's on the winning side.

Frankly, sometimes having a candidate lose momentum means believe me there are people on the Harris side who are happy to report polls that show that she's slipping because that might motivate your voters to come out. So there's just all kinds of things that you can do with polling. But really, it depends on the pollsters. There are some who try really hard to be reliable and then there are others who are kind of hacks who will give the poll deal the candidates what they want to hear. And how do you know which, which is which you don't. Not always. Yeah. Yeah. What'd you say, Don? Oh, yeah. Don, Don Rose points out correctly that 538 does rate the polls.

LAURA WASHINGTON: Don, Don, the great Don Rose. I'm sure you all know him. A master of mini campaign. So, yay. Is anybody in the back that we need to give balance to this side. On that side.

Audience Member. I just have a quick one. Shirley Chisholm used to say that she had experienced more discrimination as a woman than she ever did as a black person. If the votes that I read are correct about it. So, are you concerned that the country is not ready for the woman. I can't believe it would be the case. A lot of things have happened but I still can't believe what happened. Are you concerned that that's a bigger factor maybe than race in this election.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: I think it is at least as big a factor, if not more of a factor. And quick aside, I lived in Shirley Chisholm Shirley Chisholm's building in Washington DC for a couple of years. She lives in an apartment in the southwest of Washington. But anyway, I actually covered her in New York. But I think it is something that some people, this is another one of those hidden things. Are guys going to come out and say I wouldn't vote for a woman. Not if you live anywhere near one.

So, no that's something that you're going to, that's a game time decision where you go into the booth. But I think that's at least as important a factor as race. That's why no one is talking about it. The fact that we're afraid to talk about it tells you how important it is. Yeah, I agree. I mean maybe that's why there are people that are still undecided because really they're afraid to vote for a woman or a black woman.

Audience Member. Hi. I'm trying to be diplomatic here. Don't be. I need to be a little diplomatic because I should probably only ask one question. First of all, polls don't elect people. Two, posters are in business to make money. Three, since 2015 when Trump at the media deal where he's coming down as a candidate after his candidacy. In my humble opinion, the day before, major media, particularly print media and online media were lamenting how they weren't making money. Trump comes down an escalator and all bets are off. They're making money hand over fist with salacious hand lines, with salacious articles, everything that comes every time it's listened to, they're reporting on it. And then we have the element of reporting on elections, which affect people's lives as if it is all horse race.

So my question, and I have two questions. One, and this is rhetorical, when does media account for the push, the support, the free advertising, the free just attention that has been given to Donald Trump since 2015? One, and two, when does the media, where is the media's responsibility to be country coming? To report in a way to inform as opposed to to delay and to make money?

SHIA KAPOS: You know, there was a lot of introspection by media companies after Trump won in 2016 because media, I think there was a recognition that nobody thought he would win. So a lot of media covered him as a personality, not as a hard news candidate. And then he did win and everybody had to rethink how they treated him or how they informed people about him. And I think the media has improved a lot. I think we do give people the information that they want. And when you're doing what you want to do, it just means you have to go to the right media outlets to get that. Not everybody's doing it. Some people are, you know, doing his misinformation without giving context.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: So, I think, first off, as far as the coverage that the former president is getting, I think we have to recognize and accept the fact that he was president of the United States. And so he is, whether it's deserving, but he is entitled to be covered as much as any other candidate. We are fact checking him at all times.

My lament was that we're doing it so much that people now shrug it off. That it's, yeah, OK, we're eliding it, OK. And that's it. It's how it's being received. We can't, you know, it's not like, you know, the old Saturday Night Live news for the hard of hearing. Where are we going? Did you hear us? We said he lied. He lied. That's not going to make any difference.

Well, in fact, we've been attacked and ridiculed and admonished for fact checking. And then there's the argument, well, why don't you fact check when you're interviewing him, when 60 Minutes is

interviewing him, why don't you call him on every lie or not call him. 60 Minutes, he did do an interview there. But you can't do that in real time as a reporter because you'll never get through the interview. And then you get into an argument about who, but you can, after the fact, write a story and say, this is what he said and this is the reality. And I think the media's gotten much better doing that than they did the first time around.

Audience Member: I have a question on what I think is a major unreported story, and I'd like to know why. You have so many Trump, I'd say that the reason they're voting for Trump is because he's a businessman and because of the economy. You have New York Times just came out with a book that talked about how such a terrible businessman he was. And you also have the NBC producer just came out and talked about how the whole apprentice show was a farce and he was a terrible businessman. And he filed bankruptcy six times during the time that the show was going on. And it doesn't seem like the press has really gone to the mega supporters and showed that to them and really reported the story. So I'd like to get your response on that.

That happened during the 2016 campaign. And so, you know, it's one of those lawyers would say, you know, asked and answered that that was a major story in 2016. But now he's been president of the United States. You know, you have to cover him as a former president. He's, you know, he's I mean, he's hawking Bibles and tennis shoes and, you know, and people were reporting that and people were saying how horrible it is. Well, so much so, some of the supporters in my room. Yeah. And it's not it's not doing anything.

Plus, not to be nitpicky. You are saying reporting that The New York Times and NBC reported this. I mean, the media is reporting that it's out there. I mean, you're saying you want us to keep saying the same thing over and over. You're not taking it to the MAGA people. You're telling you're telling the I can't make a man a person. I mean, what am I going to do? It's out there. It's out there.

And again, this gets back to your points earlier. You have to be diligent about where you're getting your news from. And if the MAGA people don't want to read The New York Times or they don't want to consume the information where the real facts are, you can't force feed it to them. Yeah. Unfortunately, we people believe only what they already believe. That's the problem. Yeah. Yeah.

Audience Member: I don't know. This might piggyback what you just brought up. And one of the things that kind of irritates me as a receiver of the news is and you will hear an interview with a Trump supporter. Why are you voting for Trump? One or two answers the economy or his policies. But I rarely hear the follow up question. That's what I feel is missing. Which policy is it that you are most in favor of? Give me two. They can't they don't come up with it. When the few times that it's been asked, they don't come up with it. And then so I guess it's not really a question, but it's more like this is what I'm hoping for. I have been hoping for.

And the other thing is just a comment and mentioned the Republicans in Congress that have no moral compass anymore.

SHIA KAPOS: I didn't say that.

Audience Member. No, I'm saying that. You said Republicans and I'm saying that people know who I'm talking about.

SHIA KAPOS: There are a lot of good Republicans.

Audience Member. No, but I'm saying the ones the ones that are supporting Trump distastefully because that would be against thermal compass of what they think is right. Because of their of what they can get out of it going forward. And the only the only point I want to make is there are a lot of Democrats in 2010 when the Affordable Care Act came up that knew that doing the right thing was going to cost them their seat. And they did it. So is so we have history of people doing the right thing. Adam Kinzinger and Elizabeth Cheney. And now they're out. Yeah. Yes. Yes. But what I'm saying is not to give the rest of them a pass. And I feel that that's what comes across a lot.

SHIA KAPOS: I think there are two in Congress. The Republicans that support Trump. There are some who support him, but they don't speak the rhetoric that he speaks. So you might not be sure that they're actually Trump supporters. And then there are some like Adam Gates in Florida who does speak that way. So, you know, he's a you know but but if you look at even even some of the Republicans here in Illinois, they don't talk in a Trump way. But they vote. They voted with him 98 percent of the time.

Audience Member: To what you said. I noticed that many. I noticed that many commercials for local senators in Illinois, the congressional in the state of Illinois, they don't identify themselves as Republicans. There's no identity given, which I think is a very interesting strategy like, you know, there seems to be an agreement about that, you know, and even the Democrats. There are some Democrats that don't identify as Democrats, which I just find that interesting.

SHIA KAPOS: You're right. Sometimes when I look online for to find out not in Illinois, because I know who they all are. If I'm looking for candidates in other states. I can't see it on their website.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: Yeah, I think that is that is a trend and it's not just among Republicans. You know, it would be fun to say that the Republicans all want to disassociate themselves from the party, but it's not just them. I think this goes back to one of the other bro minds that you hear all the time. All politics are local. When you are getting down below the national level, it's the person. And you and you run as that person. I think, you know, it's a high profile person like I live out in Naperville.

Lauren Underwood identifies as a Democrat and her literature is blue. But she's one of the few. But but she does. Yeah.

Bill Foster is the scientist. And I'm not saying he's ashamed of being a Democrat. It's just that he is running as himself and not identically leaning on the party for support. It's just that Lauren is a surrogate. She's actually going around the country because she's so popular. But Foster is popular, too. But he has a different track that he's going. It's just he's just trying to take anybody in that will. Well, that's my politics. Yeah, exactly. We don't want to divide. I mean, although this isn't you know, this isn't your father's DuPage County. The DuPage County board is now majority Democrat. So we have time for one more.

Audience Member: If Trump wins, how do you think that's going to affect the next election for president? How much will he be able to demolish the Democratic system?

LAURA WASHINGTON: Well, it certainly would be good for JB Pritzker to be seen who has presidential ambitions and what would not be able to be determined. Harris Harris one would not be able to run for.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: Yeah, I think there's too much time between when when that happens and where things go. And, you know, did any of us think January six was going to happen? So you don't you don't know what's going to happen or how things are going to play out legally.

Audience Member: And whether he has the whole Congress.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: Yes. Exactly. The congressional elections are going to make it to.

Audience Member: As people on the ground that are bound by, you know, this bow would be as objective as possible. What do you what is your gut feel about these Republicans that may be from generations of Republicans that are financial Republicans, let's say. That are willing at during this election and 2016 elections. Sacrifice possibly sacrifice some policies. Values even fundamental values that some of us can't even imagine sacrificing. Do you think that they really believe that Trump is a puppet and won't have control over certain things like like abortion and things that seem. A lot more. Fundamentally important to just human.

LAURA WASHINGTON: So your question is basically longtime Republicans who seem to be willing to sacrifice their values to support him because maybe because tax tax reasons financial reasons. Are they really believe that he is not to be this.

Audience Member. Right. He says he's the one. He says it. So yeah. Do they but they don't really believe that is what you're saying. I'm guessing they don't really believe that the president has the kind of power.

SHIA KAPOS: Somebody told me during the Republican Convention and I think it's true. The MAGA is now the Republican Party. MAGA is the base. If Trump wins MAGA is the party and all those older Republicans the Reagan Republican or the Bush Republican. They will be in the minority. And you're already seeing that here in Illinois. Durkin who are some of the other Republicans Jim Edgar Jim Edgar should be revered. He was a good governor, but he is ignored because he's not a

major Republican. And you know I just think if Trump wins MAGA will rule. Maybe they rule anyway. And it'll just take a while for that other the older Republican you're talking about to ever come back again in a forceful way.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: I think that if Trump wins I think you're going to see an angry underground within the Republican Party. I think the Kinzingers and the Cheney's will be trying to find a space for themselves. And let's face it Illinois Republicans are different from mostly different from Republicans in other parts of the country. The fact that chain Liz Cheney talked about pro you know about understanding people who want choice in cases. And maybe we need to talk about where there are more cases where women have that choice. That shows that you know people are thinking maybe we can come together but it's going to be an underground movement.

Audience Member: I've been out of the country for a couple of weeks but I came home and what struck me is that the Times is taking two or three pages a day about writing about this election. I mean I've never seen a newspaper so incredibly worried carrying lying to give information as those articles are about how dangerous Trump really is. And I love journalists. Tell me how you feel about that. Are they taking to be the risk stating all those columns and printing them or is that a good thing to do.

CRAIG DELLIMORE: I don't think it is. I don't think of it as a risk. I think I mean you know there are people complaining that we're not doing enough. You know so we've had complaints in here that the journalists aren't doing enough. The stakes couldn't be higher in this election. It is going to say everything that you can say about the direction of this country by the results that we see in this election. You're going to know more about this country than we know today one way or the other. So yes it is important that we as journalists tell you as much as we can so that people can make that decision. But then you have to sit back and watch what people do once they have that information and then figure out where we go once we know what we're really dealing with because it won't be a secret anymore.

SHIA KAPOS: I'm sure this room might disagree but democracy did not end in the country. So maybe it'll be a horrific four years but and hopefully democracy won't end again if you were to win. All the everything worked the way it was supposed to even though it was a difficult time to get where we are now.

LAURA WASHINGTON: That was a good, hopeful note to end on.

[This transcript relies on mechanical translation and, except for minor corrections for names and misspellings, should be regarded as subordinate to the audio on the video as to the party speaking]