MAPPING RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE AND SHIFTS IN THE OVERLAPPING CONSENSUS:
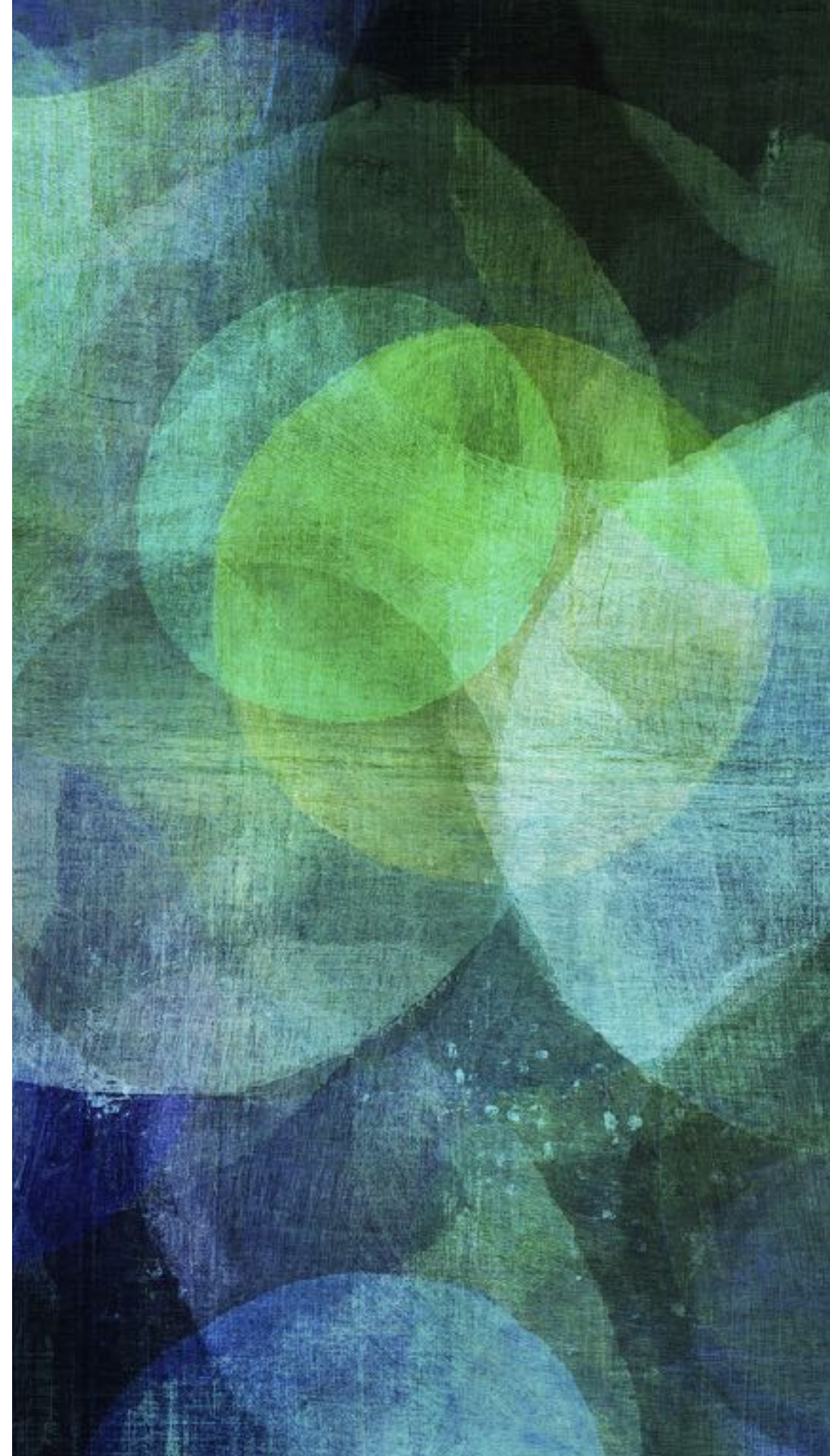
SLAVERY, ABOLITION, AND CIVIL RIGHTS

THE QUESTION

What's the appropriate role of "non-public" reasons in the political discourse of a pluralistic liberal democratic society?

One answer is that, unless those offering such "non-public" reasons for the policies they advocate can *also* offer reasons that are widely shared, they *don't* have an appropriate place.

MY COUNTER CLAIM

We need "non-public" reasons to solve some problems we can't solve otherwise.
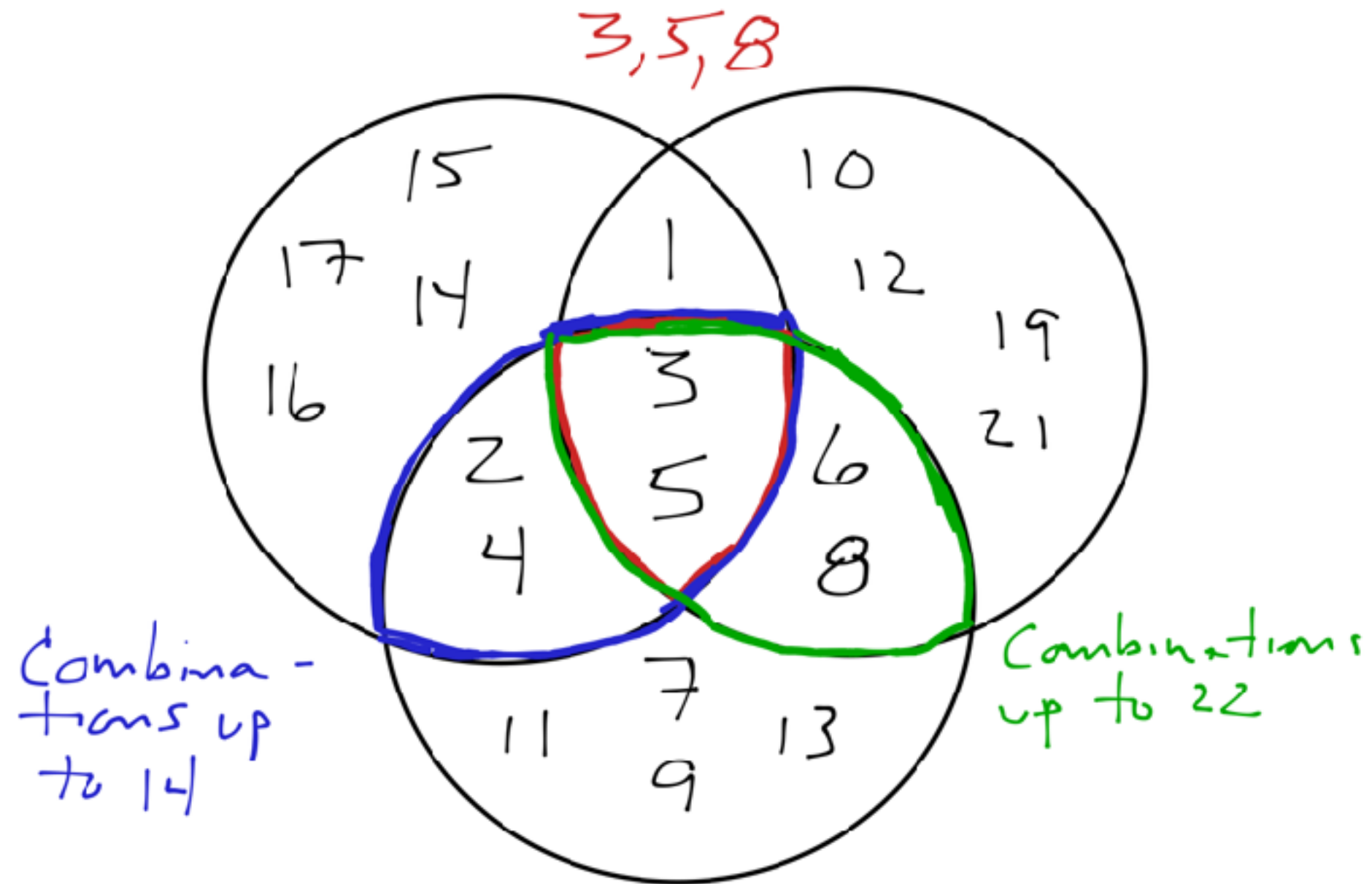

Why?

"

I remember talking to my dad about [the subjunctive] and because he's a non-native speaker of English, he didn't quite grasp all the nuances of the subjunctive. I'd say, Dad, listen - you can say, if it hadn't rained, we would've gone to the beach. And my dad's response - that's stupid.

-Phuc Tran

MAKING THIS MORE CONCRETE

In previous work, I've traced the development of conceptions of justice (a pool of shared reasons) in the U.S. from debate around the Fair Employment Practices Commission in 1946 to the adoption of the Civil Rights Act of 1965. There, we see a shift from

A. separate but equal

to

B. the idea that true equality requires integration.

Making that shift required the introduction of "non-public" reasons into political discourse.

WHAT I WANT TO DO

Expand on the previous work, looking at discourse around abolition and emancipation, and perhaps updating the previous work as well.

There are new resources available that weren't when I did the earlier project, most notably:

➤ The Chronicling America project

➤ A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation

These resources make possible research that I couldn't really do before.

ADDING VISUALS