Unity Campfire #2\_ Bret Weinstein with John Wood Jr. and Nat...

Sat, 10/9 12:41PM • 2:41:41

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

people, unity, agree, feel, joe biden, folks, party, question, point, fact, thought, vote, politics, conversation, dnc, good, biden, political, trump, person

**SPEAKERS**

Moderator, Nate Boyer, Bret, John Wood Jr.

**Bret** 00:19

Hey folks, welcome to our second unity 2020 campfire, I have two very special guests, I will introduce them in a moment. At first though, I want to tell you a little bit about the structure of what we're going to do. This evening, we have a tool called democracy AI that we are going to use to allow you to give us feedback on what we're saying and what you might like us to discuss. Some of you have already interacted with that tool. If you are not able to log into the tool, because you were after the first 1000 people to log in, you can dialogue about our discussion at choose unity, the hashtag is choose unity. I believe the campfire will also be live tweeted at that hashtag. So you can get into the conversation that way. And we will be looking at that in order to see what might be visible there. All right, the democracy AI tool is going to be used for one question upfront, and that it's going to be more or less quiet for the first hour of discussion, we will use it in the second part of the discussion in order to source information from you all. So the question that we would like you to answer is, can you identify and tell us about the moment at which you realized that drastic action of the sort that unity 2020 represents might be necessary in order to rescue the republic? So while you are answering that question, if you're logged into democracy AI, let me tell you a little bit about unity 2020 for that fraction of our audience that knows nothing about it, and then tell you a little bit about what campfire means and why we chose that as a metaphor. Unity 2020 is a plan to recapture the White House on behalf of the American public. In short, we plan to draft two candidates one from the left and one from the right under the agreement that they would govern as a team and make decisions by consensus. The person who runs at the top of the ticket will be chosen by a coin flip after four years, the positions would reverse and the President would run in the vice presidential spot and vice versa. And this would go on until one party had inhabited the Office of President twice and was therefore ineligible for another term, at which point someone else would be drafted into their spot, or until the American public saw fit to do something else. All right. So that's the basic plan. It is designed to avoid the danger of spoiling the election by having a consensus government of left and right This will tend to drain both the major parties of power rather than empower one and disempower the other. The reason we've chosen campfire as a metaphor to discuss this is that human beings have long faced difficult problems that they did not have the solution for. During the day, people would typically be out hunting, gathering farming. And at night as their eyes were no longer so useful. out and about, they would gather around the campfire or the hearth and they would talk to each other about what problems they faced and what solutions might be available to them. And it is the bringing together of different minds with different experience different expertise that has allowed human beings to conquer so many niches. All right. Now without further ado, let me introduce our guests for this evening. On the I believe it is going to be the left part of your screen. You have Nate Boyer, Nate barmer Boyer is a US Army Special Forces greenbrae. He is a former footballer for the Seattle Seahawks. He is co founder of merging vets and players and he is also the Colin Kaepernick. Knee whisperer. Have I got all that right? You got it? Correct. All right. Excellent. And on the right side of your screen, you have john wood, Jr. JOHN wood, Jr. is a former nominee for Congress. And he is the National Ambassador for the organization. braver angels. All right. Welcome to you both.

**John Wood Jr.** 04:28

It's great to be here. It's good to see red. Good to see you, Nick.

**Nate Boyer** 04:32

Okay, john. Thank you, Brian. Good to be here.

**Bret** 04:34

So, as we launch into this, I would actually ask you both. If there's a moment at which you realized that the standard tools that we are typically handed in our democracy might not be sufficient to to steer our course. This is roughly the question we've asked others to answer and I'm curious whether you each can identify a moment in your past when when that became clear to you.

**John Wood Jr.** 05:03

So that's that's really interesting question when when did we? When did I have the sense that something was broken in politics? I mean, for me, it's weird because I feel like I can go all the way back to my childhood in the 1990s. And I can remember even at that time, people saying, Washington is broken, just look at this impeachment situation, like the effort to impeach Bill Clinton back during the Monica Lewinsky scandal. And I remember at that time, people sort of lamenting the fact that communication between the parties and between the American people even had started to decline in some, some radical way. And you were seeing that in the dysfunction in government. And I think that that was true back then. But you know, those are still like, that's, those are the good old days, looking back at it from now in terms of people's ability to get along and reason together and work together, whether in Congress or just in, in mainstream America, right. But yeah, but I had an inkling even back then, as a kid that something was souring the water a little bit. And that feeling has only grown over the course of really my entire life, and certainly my adulthood and just kind of observing politics. And, you know, the way we've done it for a while now.

**Bret** 06:30

That's a great answer. When we come back to the discussion, I want to talk about this sense that it has only gotten clear over time, I think it's an important one. But Nate, do you have a moment you can identify?

**Nate Boyer** 06:43

Yeah, you know, I'm a little, probably a lot greener, when it comes to this conversation. And my, I guess the amount of attention is paid to the system itself and democracy as it stands and how it operates or in operates in our country, often, and for me, it really didn't wasn't something I focus a lot of attention on until 2016. And it wasn't just the election in that year that had a great deal do about it. But it was more of a personal situation. With you know, the the beginning of the anthem protests in the NFL, started by Colin Kaepernick. And I shouldn't call them anthem protests, because they weren't a protest of the national anthem, but yet a protest during the national anthem, bring light to social injustice and issues with police brutality and lack of accountability. When officers are not doing what they're supposed to be doing. And you know, I, I served for 10 years I was in I was in Iraq, I was in Afghanistan. I always thought of it, as you know what I'm fighting for the American people. My involvement in politics, and even really voting is important, because no matter what, I'm going to serve the people and I'll let them decide, and I'll just do the job, you know, I'll do what I'm asked to do for my country. And so I'd never really, I've never really thought about that thought about all this until until that kneeling. Because I because after the military is when I played football, and I can tell you in a football locker room, in the military, and in a team room, the amount of diversity and different thought and beliefs and backgrounds, socio economic, whatever you want to call it, are very broad. We're as diverse as they come and both of those fields. Yeah, because we go through stuff together challenging stuff. And I'm not compared to going to war to playing sport. But no playing college football playing the NFL, there are a lot of sacrifice that has to go into that as well to be elite, just a different type of sacrifice. So when we rise above all our differences, when it's time to play the game, when it's time to go to battle, we fight for one another, the man on our left and right woman on our left and right, and we would do anything for them, we would take a bullet for them. We don't even always like them or agree with everything you think and believe, but we know they would do the same for us. And that is what's dramatically lost in our country. You know, as far as guests that love for one another and acceptance of differences and still be able to work together. So when I was seeing when I was seeing this happening with the election, and then when Colin started sitting on the bench and protesting it became widely politicized and it became a once again, an act or a situation that was taken both by The Democratic Party in the republican party and used as a tool to prove their point approve Why? You know why they are the more Righteous Party or the better party. And then, you know, we've seen that obviously, more recently with COVID. And whatever it is, it doesn't matter. Everything is politicized. And it's like is it it's going to be taken to the left, or to the right, strong opinions about it. So my real understanding of how broken things were and how disgusting things were, in my opinion, were was through that situation, because I wrote call on an open letter ended up meeting with him. And it was through our discussion, or conversation, which was a pretty open minded one for both of us. We didn't agree on a lot. But we listened to one another is that's where the decision for him to take a knee alongside his teammates versus sitting on the bench isolated came from. And I thought that was pretty powerful. I thought that was actually a good example of maybe how government in some ways should work. When we have these situations, like compromises are made, but everyone still feels empowered. And like they're, they have a part in this. So it's a very long winded answer to your question, but I think it lays a bit of background. And for me, it's really just been the last four years that I've even really been paying attention, which is kind of embarrassing, but everything happens on our own time, I guess, you know?

**Bret** 11:21

Yeah, well, it's actually it's a fascinating answer. For one thing, we have a lot of political dysfunction in this country. But for folks in the military, when decisions get politicized, it results in people, you know, dying. And so it really raises the stakes, interesting that your awakening occurred after your service, if I understand your answer correctly. So if I want to actually put these two answers together, though, because there's something quite resonant for me and what you said, Nate about the politicization of everything. And it really is this this is the opposite of patriotism is to politicize things where in fact, the American public has an interest and it's not being served, because the parties are busy catering to special interests that fuel them. And what they have us doing instead, is fighting over symbolism, which is both a distraction from what's real and very destructive. But if we then look at what john said, john said that the sense of how off things were was clear back in the Clinton administration, which I agree, I think, in some ways, that's where part of this really began. But that it has only gotten worse over time, and that even the dysfunction around the Clinton years looks team at this point. And so what I'm constantly facing is the suggestion. Unity 2020 is a really good idea. But we can't do it. Now. What we're facing is too important. And really the important recognition is the one that john made, which is, it only gets worse, because it only gets worse, as bad as you think this is that's an argument to do it now rather than to wait, because doing it under even worse circumstances, and many people don't believe that's possible. But boy, is it that will be even harder.

**John Wood Jr.** 13:22

Yep. Yeah, I mean, if I can just sort of throw something, something onto that, first of all, mate, I appreciate. I appreciate your analogy about what it is like, of course, to serve in the military, but also what it's like to play on a team and the fact that that sense of common purpose, it allows us to bridge divides in the name of a shared interest, right, in the name of the fact that there is something in common that we are striving towards, even if we're coming from different places. And, Brett, to tie that to unity 2020 here really quickly, you know, the thing that excites me about what it is you're what it is you're doing here is the fact that I see it as being about more than just, you know, whatever candidates you might be able to get involved in rally round. And that obviously has to do with the need to, to shift. You know, the status quo in DC folks believes in that strongly. But it but you couldn't have excitement building around an alternative way of engaging an election in this context, unless you also have movement towards an alternative way of just sort of kind of animating our civic culture really right. How is it that we relate to each other as human beings in America now? I think we want to see political movements that are based on this idea that you have human beings on different sides of the spectrum. And so, you know, the way you humanize, you know, cat permits. Political demonstration, I get the sense that maybe you don't agree entirely with the way cap analyzes things, right. But you do what I consider to be the best patriotic thing, what we call patriotic empathy, it braver angels, which is sort of showing your love for your country by extending understanding to your fellow American. And so the thing that was inspiring about say Andrew Yang's political campaign, for instance, is that, you know, he was running with sort of a left wing policy agenda, he was saying a lot of things that me as a more conservative minded individual, I'm a bit skeptical of. But what came through loud and clear. And Yang's campaign, just for instance, was this recognition of the basic dignity of folks who exist across the spectrum, not just regardless of race, but regardless of partisan affiliation, and philosophy and so forth. And so it seems to me that unity 2020 springs from that kind of need for a shift in the culture in the spirit of our politics, as much as it springs from a desire to kind of sort of shift the way we're engaging the mechanisms of politics. And so I think that you need both if we're going to usher Usher for the type of change that we want to see in political society today. So

**Nate Boyer** 15:59

yeah, I mean, I agree, I think, you know, how binary we are right now, as a people as a, as a country as Americans, or at least how we say how binary we see is, is what hurts the most because you know, we've lost our individualism we don't we don't feel as though we can speak our minds because we're because we're constantly being judged and attacked. About our what you stay in stand for, just get attacked us get attacked, there's just so much anger and hatred and like, it's, it's, it doesn't feel it doesn't it's not fun, like, no one wants to live in this in this world, where we're walking on eggshells constantly. No one wants to do that. But it's turning into you know, and it's, it's, we tell our kids, you know, that money doesn't buy you happiness, don't judge people, you know, never, never judge a book by its cover, whatever it is, we tell them, we tell them this, these things, but we don't live them. We don't believe them. You know, and, and I don't think that's everybody. But that's the voices we're hearing. That's who's getting the microphone, right? So it seems like probably a lot more people than it actually is.

**John Wood Jr.** 17:15

There was the sign that I used to see, when I was in elementary school, I think my one of my teachers, or maybe my principal had a sign up in her office that said everything I ever needed to know I learned in kindergarten, and being pretty close to kindergarten at the time. But back then I sort of thought there's no way that's true. Otherwise, why not? Let me leave school now I'm in the second grade, I should be done with this. But as an adult, you come to see what that means that the things that we teach our kids are the values and the virtues and the lessons that are most important to sort of formulating character, right, and showing them how to treat other people in the world if you want to be treated a certain way. And that's just that's sort of just the starting point of wisdom in life from a certain vantage point. And yet, it is precisely that basic sort of thing, you know, the components of interpersonal decency applied to civic and social life, right? That we've lost, everybody is so smart, everybody has so much information, we have so many facts and figures available to us at the and our phones and our and our equipment and our keyboards. And yet, we've lost a lot of that basic sense of, you know, the interplay of, of decency and dignity as being kind of backdrop to a society that works. And so yeah, man, I feel like we need to get back to things that are fundamental.

**Bret** 18:36

I think we also, you know, I mean, it's implicit in what you both have said, but there is a certain joy and intrigue in meeting people who aren't like you, people with whom you know, that you disagree about important things, but discovering that they are very human, and very relatable, sometimes, surprisingly, so. And what we've gotten to is a phase in our national dialogue in which the basis to discover that is being stamped out. In other words, all of the middle ground positions are being declared criminal, such that you can only inhabit these characters at the extreme. And what it what it does is it really literally dehumanizes others in each of our eyes. And it makes it you know, I think people are just walking around with suspicion of each other that frankly, I don't think characterized us, even, you know, a few years ago, you could meet somebody, and there was awareness that you wouldn't agree, but that did not make them inhuman to you. And now, the slightest hint that somebody might be skeptical of some position that you're certain of is enough to tell you they are the enemy, and that, you know, not only are they mistaken, but that they're really up to no good and this you know, it's just not right. The fact is, there are bad people out there, but it's not common to run into them. You know, Sometimes you do, and it can mess things up. But in general, you meet somebody and they're decent, and they're trying to figure it out. And they are probably proceeding from different data, maybe different values, but they're not. They're not bad. So the assumption that they are is just incredibly destructive.

**John Wood Jr.** 20:19

Right? I was at politican, which is a rebrand doesn't know, it's a convention out here in Los Angeles, I guess they didn't have they couldn't have this year, because, you know, nobody can do anything this year, in physical space, but it's a convention where folks come from all across the political spectrum to just have a carnival about politics. Right. And so, you know, you walk down a hallway, you see Newt Gingrich, you see, you know, David Frum, you see, you know, Michael Steele, folks from MSNBC, CNN, so on so forth. I met this woman at a, it was a satellite broadcast of Edward Snowden live, speaking from his exile, just talking about, you know, the problems of the surveillance state, why he did what he did, and sort of analyzing, you know, sort of the trajectory of American foreign policy and the way in which, you know, the security apparatus is a threat to our freedoms. And, you know, listening to Snowden, I heard him say, you know, maybe some things I disagree with, but a lot of things I totally agreed with. And when the conversation was done, when the event was done, I'm falling out with other folks. And this was not long after I ran for Congress. So this is 2015. I just been elected vice chairman of the Republican Party in LA County. And there's a woman there, who I just struck up a conversation with talking about what Snowden had talked about, we shared opinions, we connected, you know, we agreed on a wide range of things. And then she said something like, Oh, so you know, what brings you here? I said, Oh, I said, well, actually is first of all, my name is john, good to meet you. I'm actually a vice chairman for the Republican Party of Los Angeles County. And I said that as we were shaking hands, and she said, Oh, she said, That's disgusting. And she sort of took her hand back from me. And she said, Have a nice day, though. And she walked off. And I was like, Oh, yeah, it's like a shot to the gut, you know, wasn't the first time I mean, you know, ran against Maxine Waters, all that wasn't the first time. And, you know, I should say, having worked for Obama's campaign before that, as a Democrat, got mistreated by some Republicans, for sure. So it wasn't like these things hadn't happened to me before. But when you're in the middle of really connecting with another human being, and you get that, you know, it's tough and, but I have to imagine that this is an individual who's been receiving a certain kind of pejorative storyline just streamed into her brain over and over and over again, 24 hours a day for however long, to the point to where she can hardly even see my humanity, even though we are connecting on this level, because the label just obliterates it. And yet, to your point, Breton, every time I get into an Uber, you know, and I meet somebody who's either like, you know, burning bro, or I'm in the south, and I'm talking to somebody who, you know, might have a Mega Cab sitting in the sitting in the passenger seat or whatever, even like a confederate flag and the bumper sticker like I can, I can always find, if I just take a little bit of time to look for it. Something that shows me like this is this is a decent person at heart, or this is somebody with some redeemable value, and usually have a great time talking these folks wherever I might happen to find them. But it's tough because the system as it stands, puts us behind the eight ball and finding that humanity. So

**Nate Boyer** 23:37

I think a lot of people regardless of which side left to right, or just the A lot of it's an identity crisis in themselves and identity issue in themselves, like, they want to, they want to feel like they belong to something, you know, and maybe they feel like they don't and so, for them, it's a lot easier to accept and adopt all of these ideas or values or whatever, and completely disregard kind of hate the other side of them, because it makes them a part of something that gives them a team, you know, that and we're a country obsessed with winning. It's not a bad thing. Like that's why we're very successful. We're innovators, you know, where we lead the world in a lot of things. But we struggle in a lot of other things because of that, because we're so focused on that victory and Dean right and like proving our point, and like just that, that we all see it and we see it in sports, of course. You know, we see it in any kind of race with another country to be the first at something and to be the best and we see it within our own communities. Just that pride, you know, we have we have a big issue with ego and being wrong. It hurts you know, when you feel like man, maybe I was wrong, and so no one wants to ever concede that. It's just to death. They will fight argue? And you know, have a Yeah, but answer for every single little thing, even when it's like, seems so ridiculous that what you're talking about. And I just, I always play not always I often play devil's advocate, with everyone with someone from a specific side No, because I can see the value as you suppose you mentioned the value of people and some of the opinions and reasons as to why they feel like they feel, you know, I mean, if you do, you're born into a certain situation, typically you adopt a lot of those devalues of your environment, you know, you mean we're products of our environment. And by I was born in the Middle East and I learned this, you know, from spending time over there, it was hard for me to understand how someone could maybe be radicalized like that, but spend time over there and see the quality of life or the lack of quality of life, lack of options, and somebody shows up at your door with a golden ticket to take care of your family. And that means sacrificing your life for what you think is a righteous cause. And you're going to go to heaven, and it's the right thing to do, might take some other people with you, but your good outweighs the bad in your mind. You're gonna do that thing, you know, or you're there, it's easier to understand why people do that thing. And I think that we we have those issues here on a social level and the same in the same way. And it's I don't know it's it's tough to combat, it's tough to argue with people like that, or to even have a conversation often when people like that because they think you're nuts pretty reconsidering the human nature of somebody with a different opinion.

**John Wood Jr.** 26:48

Well, if I can shameless, go ahead, I was just gonna say if I can find him shamelessly plug the work that I do, Natan, the work that we do at braver angels, so I'm afraid but he doesn't know braver angels is the organization for which I'm a spokesperson. It's the largest grassroots group in America, a bipartisan group working on political depolarization. And, you know, we've got a wide range of programs and activities that we do that bring people into debate in a constructive fashion, bring people into dialogue. But one way or another, it's all about at the end of the day, giving folks a window into the actual sorts of experiences, that people from across the political divide have as a means of kind of, you know, understanding the roots of their perspective, right. And so Brad, I know that you're well familiar with the work of Jonathan Hite and this idea that, you know, our rational minds are far from being just kind of autonomous sort of surveyors have an objective truth more like kind of spokespersons for our emotional and our moral intuitions, right? sort of understand that about people, you understand that, by and large, our perspectives on political reality have something to do something's been through or learned or taken in from our environment, other folks, there's a lot more room for compassion, I think and understanding and patience with people, when you get a window into just kind of what that what that process looks like for another, another individual, you know, and it's, it's but it's precisely that type of thing that short circuited, when what we do instead is judge people according to their political labels or any other sort of thing so that we can kind of wipe away the nuance, if you will, and just lean into the thing that says up person x, person x, y, z here is a fascist or communist or, you know, radical this, that of the other. So that's the thing that we've got to disentangle.

**Bret** 28:38

Well, there's also an issue of blind spots where I can almost imagine the position of somebody who thinks you'd have to be terrible to be signed up with the republican party if they belonged to a party that was making some kind of sense. In other words, I have a principle that I use is I don't hold people responsible for bad decisions if they didn't have better decisions available to them. And the thing that has struck me for a long time is that Americans are stuck between two very bad decisions. Right? You know, it's two different failure modes. And so, you know, I can't fault you for being a Republican, because what else would you be you I mean, you could be a Democrat, but, you know, that is too many minds and equally dangerous, if different possibility and I mean, just think about the fact I'm frequently challenged by people about unity 2020. And their point is always, the only thing is to defeat Trump, right? That's what must be done. I can't see anything past that doesn't matter who they nominate. Doesn't matter who the VP is. I'm voting for him because the only thing is Donald Trump. Now if that was really The way the Democratic Party saw things, wouldn't it have put aside nonsense and given us much better candidates? In other words, I don't think the Democratic Party, the machine inside of it believes this. Because if it really thought that the only thing that was necessary, you know, the only priority we should have was defeating Donald Trump, it would have given us candidates that couldn't were beyond question, even if it compromised them with respect to their donors or whatever. But instead, it gave us incredibly feeble candidates who are obviously not popular with anybody. That's a terrible move, if you think that Donald Trump is an existential threat. So at some level, the people are signed up for a false narrative, the parties have set up a battle for us, that they it's not even the one they're involved in. So, you know, what is the good option? I mean, this is really, this is the motivation behind unity. 2020 is I'm sick and tired of being left in a situation where there just simply isn't a good option. And I'm supposed to be upset at my fellow Americans for choosing some bad option that happens to be different than the bad option I've chosen enough of that already.

**John Wood Jr.** 31:11

made. I'm curious, so just if I can throw a native question here, Brett,

**Bret** 31:17

what's your,

**John Wood Jr.** 31:19

your your family? Your folks? I don't know, if you have brothers and sisters, but your parents? Is there a partisan tilt in your family background? And if so, what direction? Does it up? Does it go in?

**Nate Boyer** 31:31

Oh, pretty pretty all over the place, which is, which is I think a good thing, you know, because we we have discussions, conversations, you know, they always say, don't talk about politics, religion, the dinner table, of course, but stuff comes up. I mean, with everything being politicized, how does it not these days, you know, and my parents are definitely, you know, conservative. And we grew up, you know, by conservative values, and grew up with religion, stuff like that. However, I also grew up in El Cerrito, California, which is right between Berkeley and Richmond, which is arguably, arguably probably one of the most liberal places in the country. So I think I had the fortune as a young child to kind of grow up with both of those things. My parents also like they enjoy, you know, they enjoy arts and music, and like, other plays music, and my father likes to travel a lot. And like, so they do these things that are, I guess, traditionally not not really conservative things. And they're sort of outside the box people. And I think that they just, you know, the biggest thing for for them, is just the frustration and the amount of hate that exists, or at least that we see, you know, they the amount of hate that is very palpable, and public these days in the country. And, and that's frustrating. And, and, you know, they're getting a little bit older, and it's like, they want to feel safe. And like, they want to, you know, they want to be close with their family and all that. But they don't want these distractions, all of this. This constant aches and turmoil, right, everything. Is it a fun isn't a fun? Thanks. So I know that's frustrating for them. And then my, you know, my brother and sister. They're sort of, you know, pretty middle of the road, I'd say, you know, I'm calling them all out right now. But whatever. Yeah, that'd be fine. I'd say, you know, they may my brother, you know, his wife, they probably lean a little bit to the left and my sister, maybe a little bit to the right, it's hard to it's hard to kind of say she used to be, I think a little more conservative than even now. And and that's, you know, we were talking about the middle earlier bread, I mean, that I call it the radical middle. No, and that's where I feel like I kind of sit it's hard for me to say, which way? I mean, it depends on the topic depends on the situation. I think that's how it should be depends on depends on what we're discussing, what is the issue, because I've got varying viewpoints on that stuff. And, you know, I'm big on people taking care of themselves, you know, I mean, and figuring things out, because their ability, if there's no way forward, and they need assistance, they need help. Of course, we make that we figure that out. But I don't like this reliance on somebody else taking care of you. And, you know, complaining about things constantly, but then expecting somebody else to fix the problem or to fix it. I don't like that. At the same time. I don't like the you know, I don't think it's to be every man for themself. And, you know, when people come from a tougher situation, a tougher background, didn't have a lot of opportunity, maybe didn't have the right guidance. They need that mentorship and leadership and, and opportunities that they would not normally have, they need a chance, you know, an additional way for And then it's up to them. At some point, it's up to you to realize those things. That's not really like a simple thing to sort of lay out, you know, but I think that that's, that's my biggest thing is like, is is ownership in, in ourselves and they need.

**John Wood Jr.** 35:17

Yeah, go ahead. Well, I was I wanted to if it's there, I wanted to tie something to what Brad had just said here, it's interesting hearing about the distribution in your, the sentiments in your in your family and sort of where you come down because you yourself seem to be kind of an amalgamation of the diversity of you know, the points of view that you're explaining or in your family. I'm just what did was there any? For instance, can you think of a family member who has a picture of Ronald Reagan up somewhere in their house or on their truck or anything like that?

**Nate Boyer** 35:50

Not not a family member? No.

**John Wood Jr.** 35:53

Okay. The reason I asked but you know, folks who probably do, and the reason the reason I ask and Brett, this is this is tying back to your point about no good options and why people vote for the parties that they vote for oftentimes, when I was campaigning for office, you know, it was very common for me to see pictures of the Obamas, Brock, Michelle, their children, on folks, mantel pieces in the in the doors that I would knock on, right. And you might say, well, that's probably African Americans, no one just African Americans, but even taking the Obama phenomenon and putting it aside because that was somewhat unique. But I was raised with Kennedy histologia in a big, big way. You know, as a kid, I was raised knowing the story of Camelot, what Camelot was supposed to be this new era that Kennedy was ushering in. But I know that there's a huge segment of the country for whom, you know, Ronald Reagan, he's he is this figure in our cultural memory for many folks, and for many other folks, he's something of a demon, right? There's this part of the issue here. But the cultural memory of Ronald Reagan is represented representing this reinvigoration, this renewal of American optimism, you know, guy born forth from traditional values, so forth. The reason I mentioned all that, Brett is because I think that when you wonder to yourself, Bret, why is it that the Democratic Party has seemed to produce weak and feeble candidates if it was serious about giving us a better option than what was on the table. And you could even say something similar about the republicans and why the Republican Party selected Trump to begin with. But it's certainly in the Democratic Party, there is this fracturing of the cultural sort of landscape within the party, which is obviously reflective of a fracturing across the nation where part of the function of a political leader, the idea of a Head of State President of the United States is that his role is not just functional, but also ceremonial. Political leaders, whether rightly or wrongly in human history have tended to be looked at as figures who are supposed to have a certain cultural significance. They're supposed to represent something that people can touch and have a relationship to, they symbolize something, you know, what, again, rightly or wrongly, they tend to be meant to symbolize something, some set of values, that that can bind us. But it's hard to do that in a landscape for any of the individual parties, and certainly in the Democratic Party, where we can't even quite agree on whether or not America actually is or is not a racist country, for instance, right? We cannot exactly agree, you know, whether or not the United States of America is a country that's founded in pursuit of freedom, or if it's something that's in hock, to slavery in a, you know, a corrupt capitalist superstructure, or whatever, or what have you. There are all sorts of variations of this. I see the producing of weak political candidates as itself being a reflection of the identity crisis that's at play in in America, in a way to where the safe bets that get produced are folks who No, in this case, Joe Biden, who is great, I think appeal is just the fact that he seems sort of safe and comfortable, whereas any and everybody else who could have selected might have seemed to have had some strong appeal for some segment of the party, but wouldn't have had a general kind of popularity because that cultural connection just isn't there because we're so fragmented. That's a theory anyway. But Brett, I wonder what you what you do with that ball?

**Bret** 39:25

Well, first, I wanted to respond a little bit, I hear something very interesting in both your stories, you know, Nate can't quite figure out whether he's right or left. And I actually find something totally beautiful about this, right? Because I think it's the hallmark of somebody who's actually doing their own work, right. If you do your own work, why would you come out with one of these slates or the other, right you'll your particular values will result in you landing on a unique set of, of answers and desired objectives and hear something similar in your story, john, I hear that, you know, you're, you know, you're enough of a republican that you headed up the the LA County chapter and yet you campaigned for Obama. So you know, I hear you do in your own work too. And I have to say, as much as I will swear to you that I am a radical, right? I find myself in the same boat, whereas to me radical means one thing, it means I believe, radical change is necessary to save us. That's the only reason I would want us to contemplate it because it's too damn dangerous otherwise, right? You engage in radical change when you don't have a choice. But in terms of where my values land, it's also eclectic, right? There are things about what I believe that do match better what conservatives tend to believe in, then there are other things where I seem much more like a liberal. And so in any case, what I think is missing is the Safe Harbor for people who are of the same mind that we apparently are. And, you know, this didn't come up before we were on screen here together. We discovered this in real time. But I think the point is, lots of people would have this instinct, maybe everybody would, but the, the penalties that come to you, if you evidence that you're actually thinking differently about these individual issues are such that people are incentivized out of it. And if we, we obviously at Unity, 2020 have an objective and it does involve curing the body politic of its corruption by starting at the top. And you know, actually draining the swamp, not draining it to put in a golf course, but draining it because it shouldn't be a swamp. But to the extent that that's what we do, we also have a secondary objective, I think, which is, as we have the discussion is necessary to talk about how we can address our political situation, we are also providing evidence to people, that there is a way to think independently to land on different conclusions than the people that you're breaking bread with, and to have it not be a catastrophe. And if that can spread that is in and of itself a very worthwhile objective. Yeah, yeah.

**Nate Boyer** 42:24

So that's how that's how deals get done in business, you know, and you've got, this is our offer, this is our counter, and you figure things out, you know, when you make a deal. And that's not how that's not how this is working right now. And that's, that's how it probably should work. And that's why things get hung up for months, and sometimes years, you know, in a senate Congress, and they just don't happen, because it's all one way or the other way, we're pushing this through, we're halting it. And then we're just gonna quit, you know, and we're shooting because the government's another government shutdown, coming and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And it's just very frustrating and mind numbing as a citizen, I think, also, as a veteran, knowing you fought for that you fought for everybody. And it's not that people don't care, man, people are very appreciative of our veteran community. And I love that, you know, I get thank you for your service all the time. And I know that people genuinely care. But what I don't think they understand is that we're not just what we're volunteering to protect is not just a physical threat from an outside source, you know, what I mean, at least for me, like I took the oath as everybody else to join, to defend the constitution, and the amendments in that constitution which can be changed. And, you know, everyone should be looked at at all times, once again, 244 years ago, we don't need to live by the word and the letter that of everything that is written in there we can we can adjust with times, you know, life changes, the world evolves around us, but that first amendment, especially, you know, that freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, those types of freedoms, those are very important. And those should be respected. I think by everybody, if done in a mature, peaceful and respectable way demonstrated in a way like that needs to be and if you disagree and argue great, have that discussion have that you can call it an argument, disagreement, whatever, but just to, to just, you know, indict somebody and call them all these things and put them in this box and write them off completely. Because they said something or believe something. And you just it is something that's part of the whole canceled canceled culture. Just it's not just for celebrities on, you know who tweeted something 10 years ago, it's for everybody. People just get canceled, john, like what happened to you a political, you just got canceled. By that by that woman, she

**John Wood Jr.** 45:11

pretty much said what

**Nate Boyer** 45:13

she did you know, after having a pretty balanced sounds like reasonable human conversation which is

**Bret** 45:21

ended. So I heard something and what you said and you just blew right by it but it struck me as so important and so rarely discussed. You said that as a soldier, you were fighting for everybody, even the people you disagree with. Now, one level that should go without saying, but I think people have lost touch with this. And I must say, I've never been in the military. But I do feel that when I am forced to politics, and it's really not my instinct, I don't like it. But unity. 2020, for example, is an attempt to fix things for everybody. Even the people who swear that I'm evil for even contemplating anything other than, you know, the main menu of options. Right? This isn't about that patriotism is about the recognition that there is something that unites us that has nothing to do with the fact that we do agree over dinner or don't. Right? It's about a bigger project than that. And I see, very few people are even aware of it. Right. You know, and this, it's worst when this happens at the level of the President, because as you point out, john, you know, the role of the president is, in some ways, a technical role, but it's also a symbolic role, right, they have to lead, which means they have to sort of give voice to the collective public will and when you have, you know, I mean, I'm harder on the democrats here, because in some sense, Trump was a break with the broken Republican Party in favor of something that I also find quite broken. But nonetheless, it's not the same republican party that I grew up with. On the Democratic side, though. I mean, if we go back to 2016, and you have, you know, michael kinsley says, A, a gaffe, a political gaffe is when a politician accidentally tells the truth. And, you know, when Hillary Clinton called republicans a basket of deplorables, she was basically saying something in the wrong context. That was something she would have said in a private context, and should have held her tongue in the public context, because it revealed exactly what kind of disdain she had for some large fraction of the people she claimed to want to lead. And so you know, that's, that's the modern democratic party at this point. And the question, I guess, is, how do we, most Americans really do agree over the basics, we don't agree on the priorities. We don't agree to how close we are to, you know, a really functional system. But we agree on what a functional system would be like, generally, we know that, you know, the hidden tribes report, which I mentioned, frequently says that something like 86% of us agree on what America should be. But in this context, where we've been artificially divided by parties that are being steered by their fringes, and by machine politics, parasite at their heart, how is it that we can wake people up to their shared humanity, and to the destruction that is brought to that by these corrupt parties?

**John Wood Jr.** 48:48

Right? Well, so I, from my vantage point, there are a couple of things that need to happen. So on a broader sort of cultural level, of course, I tend to speak in terms of saying there needs to be kind of a way of understanding the story of America that makes clear the fact that as different as all of our different streams of history are, they sort of join stream in this larger river of progress that seeks to realize kind of these higher ideals that informed the American frapp founding this idea that we're entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and within that sort of a mutual dignity, which makes space for intellectual disagreement in pursuit of ultimately bettering each other towards that realization. But I mean, to your point where the question is, how do you actualize that in in society, and I think that on the one hand, the work that we're doing, again, it braver angels, and it's not just us, but the work of actually creating the context in which the American people and by the way, this live stream is an example of this. The work of me being able to create the context where we can actually meet each other within a framework of communication that doesn't predispose us towards seeing each other through through a jaded sort of prism, creating the space for that actually building the structures in which that is possible, is very much necessary. Because right now, the structures that we lean on cable news, talk radio, the general sort of media culture, and also increasingly, the traditional institutions of American life, the universities, there's a way in which this country creep into the church and religion and other places where we meet each other in our lives. Increasingly, these traditional sorts of contexts where we meet each other, only allow us to meet each other in an oppositional sort of way. And so on the one hand, we have to be innovative and creating the space for the American people to engage in that way. And so again, that's what the work of braver angels is about, that's what many folks are working on. But even then, for those of us who want to lead in a reconciliatory direction, we have to be able to speak in these sorts of unifying terms infrastructures that already exist. And so you know, part of what I tried to do and bread, I think that in your way you try to do this to As matter of fact, you do try to do this, let me not even qualify this, and may not see you doing it to man, whether we're on a right leaning, or a left leaning outlet, or on a podcast or anywhere else to speak in terms of saying, look, this is my subjective perspective. But I'm speaking from a bed of ideals, which are aimed at establishing the common good, right, that ultimately, we want to generate opportunity for all people. Ultimately, we want to be sensitive to the differences in people's starting points, so we can understand their positions and communicate with one another. Effectively, our language cannot shift on the level of fundamental values, depending on whether or not we're speaking to a conservative audience or liberal audience, because that just makes us like politicians who can't manage to hold to some truer kind of ground in terms of articulating a point of view that is for all of the American people as much as possible. So there's a defensive game and as much as we need to sort of hold and build up ground in the context that we can shape and control. And then there's an offensive game when we need to get into the endzone with a message that can take root, even in the established kinds of media outlets, and so forth. And the difficulty there becomes getting past the gatekeepers, so to speak, or, you know, finding your way to these places, because these contexts are sort of designed in a way to service the polarized partisan establishment, but nevertheless, there's a hunger in America for this type of for this philosophy of civic engagement. And that makes me think that there are ways to get this ball into the endzone. Pardon the corny football analogies make good? No, you hear him all the time.

**Nate Boyer** 52:53

Now. It's all good. Yeah, I'm with you on that I, you know, I just, it's gonna take a great deal of humility, which we lacked quite a bit. As a nation, I think, by and large, at this point, where it's like, we're not in a place seemingly, that we that we are seeking, the individual that's best suited to be the figure, I don't like to say run the country, but to be the figurehead of the representative of this country. We are, are more interested in the one that looks after my own personal interests, who will who agrees with me, and I pick them it's not about values, it's not about personality, really, like, people will, you know, they, they act like because that person is their representative for their party that they are, you know, on board with, with Joe Biden or Donald Trump, but you can see it and feel it in a lot of their heart of hearts. Like they don't like the person they don't like the choice, they don't really think that that person is the right leader. But you know, it's become this cultic thing, you know, where, I mean, the amount of like Trump flags, for instance, that I see in the lack of American flags that I see really disturbed me it really frustrates mad is like, that's Patriot, that's like a patriotic thing now to do that, you know, as, as far as conservatives see it, it's patriotic to have that Trump flag in your yard because he's the president dammit, and, you know, I'm gonna, I'm gonna I'm gonna worship him. I mean, not that you should be worshiping the the American flag either but it's just, I remember growing up and only seeing that, you know, that was a popular thing. And most people in our country saw that as a beacon of hope. Most people around the world see that as a beacon of hope. And now it Like, you know, it is such a divisive object. And it just, yeah, it really, it really is something that shot up that shot of humility that everybody's going to have to take in order for this to actually work for this dramatic change this revolution to occur, which is necessary is for people to truly find who are the individuals who are the people that would best represent all of us, listen to all of us, take into account all of our concerns, and try to find, try to find what's best for everybody. And that's it's not an easy thing to do. But where it stands right now, it's like these candidates, they're representing half the country, they're not representing the nation, they're not representing American people, they're representing half of the American people. They're fighting for half American people, they just hope that more of their half shows up to the booths on November 4, November 3, whichever date is November 3, then the other side's 50%. You know, hopefully, two out of three of mine show up and only half of their show up. So we win, because then I'm good to represent my team. And I don't really care about the other team. I just want to represent represent my team.

**Bret** 56:20

Well, the problem though, and it's it's a hard thing to say, but I'm driven to say it a little bit in response to what john said about Biden being a seeming like the safe choice. I don't think he does seem like the safe choice. In fact, I think he seems like a very perilous choice, but he does seem safe with respect to what the DNC represents. And so I would just point out that there's something absurd about the fact that the democrats claim to wanna win, and to have to win for the good of the nation. There were candidates that did capture the imagination that did spark people's passion, and they were all sidelined in favor of a candidate that doesn't inspire anyone, even at his best he didn't inspire, but in his

**Nate Boyer** 57:10

hasn't lived in the real world and 50 years,

**Bret** 57:13

hasn't lived in the real world and 50 years, doesn't have any unique ideas to speak of, I can't name one. It has demonstrated through his choice of a running mate now that really, this is all about the DNC view of the world, and so on. I'd also just point out in passing a couple of other things, he announced his running mate in text. Now, I've noticed as others have, that there's a difference in how cogent he seems when he's on camera, even when it's scripted. And when he's, for example, tweeting, or delivering a note, that's very ominous, the idea that we would elect somebody who at this point, you know, once upon a time, he could deliver a pretty fair speech, he doesn't appear to be capable of it. We're talking about governing a nuclear nation and leading it in a time of tremendous polarization. It's manifestly not safe to elect a person that compromised. But nonetheless, we're going to do it. And the reason Well, I don't know that we're going to do it, but we're going to the democrats would have us do it. And the reason that they have chosen the candidate that inspires no one over candidates that inspired many, was that those candidates that inspired people did so because they actually representative kind of change. And the fact is, I've said for a long time that the DNC his purpose, is to prevent meaningful change, we can have anything else we want, but we can't have meaningful change. And so that's what Joe Biden represents. He represents no meaningful change. And the reason the DNC does not want meaningful change is because it represents established interests who are threatened by change, and they're not threatened by the status quo. And at some level, it's that simple. And you can see how this plays out in the fact that not only did they nominate, or did they put Kamala Harris on the ticket in the VIP spot, but they denied Andrew Yang, a spot to speak at the convention, when he clearly did inspire a great many of us. Why would they do that? Because he represents an actual path to change. And so that's unacceptable to them, and they are going to snub him once again. So at some level, I think people need to wake up to the fact that just as the Republican Party is not the one that we grew up with. The Democratic Party is not the one we grew up with either. It has effectively got a parasitic infection. It's like it has rabies. And you know, to do its bidding is to do the bidding of the disease, not the bidding of the people at once represented.

**John Wood Jr.** 59:58

Brett Can I can I Say something that might sort of seem in a sense to be in defense of Joe Biden. But I don't think it necessarily contradicts anything that you that you said. I mean, I

**Bret** 1:00:12

you're welcome to contradict anything I've said this is about an honest discussion. So

**John Wood Jr.** 1:00:16

the truth is I don't I don't disagree with the idea that political parties and political institutions favor candidates that allow them to maintain the status quo. And I think you can make a very strong argument that Joe Biden does that, for the DNC. So I start to quibble with that. But let me explain what I mean, when I refer to him as this, in a sense, the safe choice, it's not that he's inspiring to do, I think very many people in the democratic coalition, but there's a reason why he's comfortable in a meaningful way, when we think about the nominee of a presidential party and a potential president is being sort of a cultural figure and a cultural representative here, Joe Biden is the one candidate in that field that was made up of a lot of folks who were, you know, in many cases, you know, younger, sharper, more of their wits left to them. And even I mean, Bernie Sanders is Joe's age, but had more of his wits left to him, I think in terms of his delivery, just had more fire, and so forth. Here's the thing about Joe Biden, and the Democratic primary, the Democratic primary is ultimately driven out of all the constituencies in the party, by the African American voting bloc, by and large, not just in terms of, you know, the concentration of the black vote in certain key states, but the way in which the politics of communities of color and within that African American, the African American community in particular, has begun to drive sort of has long, sort of driven more and more over time, at least, the social tone of politics within the party. Joe Biden is not a black man, Cory Booker is Kama Harris is so on so forth. But neither Kamala Harris nor Cory Booker had a sort of appeal to the broader constituencies of the party, which has to include the white working class and so forth. And people who are longing for a sort of stability that comes with season and experience that Joe Biden was able to provide in his background with his resume given his length of time in office. And yet, Joe Biden has something like a made of appeal to the black community because one thing that just about any and all supporters of brock obama in the computing community know and feel and believe, is that Joe Biden really did seem at least to have a personal loyalty to brock obama to the first African American president who wasn't just incidentally black, but was a person who people honestly loved, you know, people not just in the black community, certainly. But people in the black community to be sure, honestly loved and trusted, brock obama, even if they were disappointed with so much in the way of his actual material output. For the country, those things in a way are reversible. And so you look at Joe Biden, and what you have is a person who has some social and cultural credibility with the African American community and the base in that, that in that key base constituency in the party, while also being a familiar and a relatable sort of figure to white working class democrats who folks wanted to win back from Donald Trump and to a degree of, you know, a wider range of folks in the community. And by the way, Joe Biden's relationships in the black community don't just start with brock obama. It goes decades before that, his relationship with glimmer, Jim Cliburn, the folks in Baltimore folks in southern states folks in different parts of the community of color over the course of time, through his relationships in Congress, in the Senate, and so forth. But just Joe Biden being a traditional retail sort of politician, he knows people, people have a familiarity with him. So that's what I mean, when I say Joe Biden is the safe choice, you wouldn't want to reduce his significance all the way down to him nearly being an institutional puppet. He is a life and blood human being who has some social presence where it matters most right? And so I think to comprehensively understand who Joe Biden is in this context, you have to understand them, in part, at least in that way.

**Bret** 1:04:21

Well, I appreciate the analysis. And there's a good bit of it that I think is right. But the there's also just an irony to it. And the irony is that the status quo reproduces patterns of inequity through time. That's what it does. And so to the extent that the black community has actually gotten the short end of the stick, which I believe it has, that short end of the stick process is continued by the DNC, not because the DNC is anti black, but because the DNC is status quo and the status quo Leaves people in circumstances in which you're unlucky born into this zip code, that means you're going to face all kinds of disadvantages that reduce the likelihood that you will have the tools to make use of the market to get ahead. Right. So I guess my point is, symbolically speaking, he may be a safe seeming choice for black voters. But what he represents is anything but safe for black voters. And so in any case, I'll go ahead.

**John Wood Jr.** 1:05:32

No, no, just to say and that's why I say none of that analysis, I think runs afoul of what you're saying, right? From the standard, from the vantage point of understanding how some people are thinking and how they relate to our political candidates, you know, it's important to have that larger social frame, right. And there's a parallel thing to be said about Donald Donald Trump, which we could go into if we wanted. But the point is, it is totally possible for a politician to be somebody who, who seems to genuinely connect with his constituency. And maybe he really does, you know, I'm just to be charitable, right, and yet still operate in service to a structural, you know, mechanical established status quo that continues to drain opportunity, from the very constituent groups, and the very people that that politician professes to serve, those two things can absolutely be true, at the same time. And yet, understanding that possibility is still perhaps important for warding ourselves away from the temptation to totally demonize some of these folks, even some of these political leaders. Because it can be the case, of course, that again, person can be in service to something that is corrupted, not working, and still have some good intentions at play, or some real social connections that that account for who they are and why they are where they are. So moral reality becomes complicated, but the the need to recognize the way in which the system turns on those serves, is still something we can look at with very sober eyes.

**Bret** 1:07:04

Well, I, I quite agree with that. And, you know, I think I have taken great pains not to demonize Joe Biden as a person. You know, to the extent that I'm dehumanizing something, it's the DNC, which isn't a human, so I think it's fair. But you know, my point would be, look, at some level, as long as you play this game, at the level of symbolism, then you will be owned by things like the DNC, which will play the symbolic game pretty well, and they'll feed you something that feels safe and familiar. And all the while they're robbing you out the back door. And the point about unity 2020 is that it is an alternative, that is not symbolism first, in fact, it's not symbolism at all, it is a gamble on the idea that if you simply gave people who were above politics, and understood values on both sides of the aisle, if you gave them sufficient power by speeding them past the corrupting process, and into a position where they could actually lead that that would actually do a tremendous amount for communities, like the black community, like the American Indian community, like all people who are facing economic and other kinds of oppression, just by virtue of the fact that they would be inclined to do the right thing. And the right thing will correct those problems automatically. And not fully right. We can't expect perfection, but it will at least move us in the right direction. So I'm hoping that people will tune into this conversation and others. And they will realize that it is the symbolism that has allowed things to get so bad, because symbolism is cheap. Right, and that the substance can be fixed. But it does involve us departing the narrative in which we have no choice but to vote for the standard options.

**John Wood Jr.** 1:08:54

Yeah, right. Well, yeah, I mean, and this is why I emphasize up top. Nate, my enthusiasm for unity 2020 being born from the fact that on the one hand, you know, yes, there's the strategic there is what we can argue at least is the strategic need to change, not just go to the occupant of the White House might be it's, it's it's beyond that getting folks in office, I think this applies on every level of government, right? who are willing to govern for the common good and conceptualize their role in that way. Yet, on the other hand, I feel that you know, and even for folks who may not be supporting unity 2020 at this moment, but who are engaged in this conversation, to say, look, one way or the other, our politics and who we elect are going to be a reflection of the very spirit of the sorts of conversations that we're having with each other. Are we demonizing each other and shutting each other out? Are we open to one another's experience and perspectives and looking to create some wisdom that is greater than the sum of its parts, right and So I see unity 2020 as growing out of this, this sort of movement in this direction where in this big heterodox kind of space, I mean everything from the intellectual dark web to the work that brave Rangers and folks in the depolarization movement are doing to this plurality of Americans who are leaving the political parties to folks who are still in the parties, but who are represented in the research shown by more income than tribe support that you mentioned, that was on a call Tim Dixon, who led a lot of that research the other day, we see these sentiments that are seeking to really humanize our fellow Americans, looking for a home looking for a way to join stream in search of a better nation in search of a better country and a better future, right for our children, everybody else. But right now, we're locked into structural and cultural patterns and status quos, which continue to take more and more from us with each election cycle, every time we choose the lesser of two evils, not just in terms of who we vote for, but in terms of how we are willing to settle in compromise ourselves in terms of how we treat each other in the process of even being able to achieve that lesser of two evils, right. And so you know, it is rebalancing our internal instincts, our internal dispositions towards each other, which I think is the route from which a truly sort of unified America can spring. And we'll get better politics and better politicians from that.

**Nate Boyer** 1:11:30

They beautifully said, we're not going to realize great changes, nothing great changes. If we just keep doing this, we're, we're on the hamster, the hamster wheel right now. And it's just, we're not going anywhere, we're not moving fast, we're not going anywhere. And yeah, it's not gonna change unless something dramatic happens. It's just, that's how life is, you know what I mean, if you don't like something about yourself, you keep making the same mistakes, you keep doing it and want to change it, you've got to do something drastic, you've got to make a great change in yourself, you know, you've got it's got to be your habits, and how you interact with the world, every day, you've got to be focused on it really hard to do. That's the only way that those things change. And if we don't, even if we just don't try, if we just accept that this is the way that it is, it's always going to be like this, there's nothing that we can do, then, if this is this is the way it's gonna be, and there is nothing that we can do, if that's what we accept. I don't accept that. I think a lot of people feel the same way. It's just, it's that simple. I mean, how do we make this happen? You know, it's got to be a huge team effort. As Brett has said, it's got to be a groundswell from people from individuals, everybody's got to share this message, be on board for this fight for this. And that is the only way we get out of our own way, is by doing something dramatic. That's Yeah, by the way, mate, you've

**John Wood Jr.** 1:13:03

got a good president's chin, I'd say very president. Is that why you're on here? Man? is red, Mr. Dark Horse candidate on the line with us a week? Are you gearing him for surprise now, so maybe, maybe next election?

**Bret** 1:13:15

Well, I should tell you. So first of all, I want to react a little bit to what Nate has said, You're right, something dramatic has to happen, or we will have the illusion of moving very fast. And, and the reality of getting nowhere, it's not going to get easier or safer. So to the extent that it does not feel easy or safe, that's an argument for doing it now rather than later. And I think the other thing that we're drawing to a close of this first hour here, and that what I'm getting from this is this conversation, flawed, sprawling as it may be, is vastly better, it feels better, it has more weight to it, then the polarized conversation that we're being bombarded by all the time in normal venues. So the real point is, look, if you can see that this is better, and you can see that we are trying to do something to deviate are coarse enough that we just don't get more and more opportunities to, to go after each other, then join us and it doesn't mean that you're committing yourself to anything. The fact is, we're in the nomination process. We're putting forward names and it's very heartening, actually, to see these names come in and see how many really good people that you would love to see elected to office, you know, submitted as nominations and how many people are thinking carefully about this enough to submit these, these nominations for us to to advance them. So if that feels better to you than what's going on in the world, then join us and what you're going to find is a bunch of really interesting people who aren't alike in many regards, but are aligned Oh, The shared sense that we must do something, and that our differences as big as they are small relative to that which unifies us. So maybe that's where we should Oh, go ahead.

**John Wood Jr.** 1:15:14

Oh, no, I was just saying amen and Hallelujah, that's

**Bret** 1:15:17

a matter hallelujah is good. Alright, so I think what we should do, I loved both of the final statements that you You gave, I don't think there's any reason to. to go further. with that. I would like to take a break now to look at some of the feedback we got on our initial question questions. And then to re gather in 15 minutes for some discussion in which we will try to interact with the audience who is assembled and get a sense for what they're thinking. How's that sound?

**John Wood Jr.** 1:15:50

Sounds good to me. All right.

**Bret** 1:15:52

Great. So stay put if you're there, especially if you're logged into democracy AI if you weren't lucky enough to be in the first 1000 people who got to log into democracy AI, you can find the discussion going on. At choose unity. Hashtag choose unity on Twitter? No, is there anything you need to tell us before we take our break? Hey, ah,

**Moderator** 1:16:21

so there is not anything I need to tell you. We still have a few spots open. I'm excited to share what everyone has shared so far. And we'll get to in just about 15 minutes.

**Bret** 1:16:34

Great. So it sounds like there are a few spots, grab them quick because they won't last long and we will see you in about 15 minutes. Until then. Be well In order out

**Bret** 1:32:34

all right welcome back folks to our second campfire for unity 2020. Much of this break that we have just spent, we were looking at some very interesting data that Noah who is the disembodied voice behind the scenes was showing us from democracy AI. So I will confess democracy, AI is a very powerful tool that allows us to interact with you and to learn what you're thinking. We are very much learning on the fly how to leverage it. So in any case, please bear with us as we figure out how to apply it. I think the first thing to do is to look at some of the answers that we got to the initial questions that we posed to you both the three before the stream and the one at the beginning of the stream. So Noah, can you show us some of that data?

**Moderator** 1:33:31

Yes, you should hopefully in just a second see on your screen our poll results. The question the first question we want to focus on here is we asked people before unity 2020 Which of the following categories most represented your political views? We had five different categories, one being none of these options, but the other two were vote Trump we need to drain the swamp. Trump is a problem vote blue no matter who I'm going to reluctantly vote Democrat, we need to but we need to tear this whole system down. And I'll reluctantly vote for Trump there's a left wing threat to our nation that needs to be stopped really quickly to take you through these numbers that you should now see on your screen. These percentages are the percentage of people likely to agree with each one of these answers.

**Bret** 1:34:21

Can you scroll up Zach so that we can see they're not blocked by the the image of us working? I was at Noah who needs to scroll up. Right?

**Moderator** 1:34:31

Tell me when Tell me when we're good. I'm scrolling

**Bret** 1:34:34

up. Either way. Other way. There you go.

**Moderator** 1:34:39

All right. All right. Great. So um, what you'll see here is a percentage likely to agree with each one of each one of these options. Actually, this is a poll, excuse me, these are a hard number of who's going to agree. And then we also ask people when they were on boarded, if they were going to before unity 2020 Whether we're planning to vote for Trump, or vote for Biden, so roughly Brett, take it away and talk through this. But what you can see is these numbers should check out we've got a, we've got a mix of people. And we've got a lot of a lot of Republicans a lot, and a lot of Democrats. And and I think probably the thing to call out here is that you've got a variety of opinions.

**Bret** 1:35:22

Yep. So I think actually, some of this will be borne out if we go into the other questions. So can we go move on to the next set of questions?

**Moderator** 1:35:33

Absolutely. Let me let me get us there. Because our our next set, so here, people can see the interface and when we get to see on our end, so the next thing that we asked are not the next thing, but the next thing would call out was do you feel like there's a real and present danger to America? And the answer right here 95% of the participants said yes. So what we did is asking an open ended question, how would you describe that danger or lack of danger to a friend? Now I'm going to go ahead and hit analyze here. And what you'll see are some of the answers that we have, and hopefully you're able to see that on your screen. And this is the percentage of people likely to agree with each answer. And I can also sort this so what let's let's do this, right, let's take the answers most likely for Trump voters to agree with. And maybe you want to kind of talk through these first top two answers here and get people's feelings about that. And

**Bret** 1:36:31

so these are just to be clear, these are answers that were submitted by people logged into this tool. And then these were the top vote getters. So people could submit an answer, and then other people voted them sort of Reddit style to reach the top. Is that right?

**Moderator** 1:36:49

So the first part of that is right, what I want to say is it's not Reddit style, we use algorithms to figure out what's called matrix completion, and synthetic voting. So there's some artificial intelligence and machine learning behind all of this. So what that means is that people don't need to vote on every single answer for us to have statistically relevant results. I said, by voting on answers within a two to three minute time period, as as many as you feel comfortable voting on, we're able to get this percentage likely to agree. The more people the more confident we are in that score.

**Bret** 1:37:30

I see. So the first answer is the Republic is in danger. And our country is facing a potential takeover or takedown of all we hold to be American. And this was this 69% of respondents resonated. 78% of Trump voters resonated and 64% of Biden voters resonated. So an overarching fear that something is going to take over and take down the core values of the country. All right, second one, there is a real chance that one of these two things will happen, people will lose confidence in government, to the extent that law and order breaks down. Or conversely, the powers that be, will use the social unrest to further their own executive authority. So either things come apart, or they become authoritarian in a bureaucratic sense that the opportunity of law and order breaking down will be utilized by the powers that be resonated by resonated for 70% of respondents, Trump voters resonated somewhat more 77% and Biden voters 70. So something about the AI is causing those numbers not to be compatible in an obvious way. But

**Moderator** 1:38:53

that's the percentage agreement so what one way to one way you could interpret this is, um, yeah, mostly Trump voters agreed a lot with this, right? But But Biden voters also agreed with these statements. What I think I'd point out here is on the right hand column, people who would vote for Biden are many of them would agree with the same things that Trump voters would agree with. And then it's all another thing if we add up these numbers here, 5050. There's 103 people here, but almost 200 people voting. So about half of your audience would not vote for Trump or vote for Biden. It of reasons. Now, if we sort this, for what the Biden voters agree with, you can see the same plays out we're going to have some different answers here. But again, there's a lot of alignment.

**Bret** 1:39:40

Okay, so it's interesting, the Trump and Biden voters, the would be Trump and Biden voters are resonating with the same statements at slightly different rates. Should we go to more answers and by the way, john and Nate, you are welcome to react to what you're seeing and to propose Things that you would like the audience to be queried about in real time. So anything yet?

**Nate Boyer** 1:40:08

Not at this moment, sir.

**Bret** 1:40:09

Okay. So third answer, we have two parties that act like street gangs, putting their party's interest before that of the people, loyalty to move, loyalty to money, and interest first, endless pointless wars. As long as we keep settling for these candidates, the polarization continues. Well, that's interesting, that mirrors many of the things that we were saying in our first hour of discussion, I think this is and again, the looks like above 70% resonance across the board. And the fourth one, you got to scroll up a little bit for me to see it completely. political polarization is preventing everyday folks from engaging in conversation, there's so far wedged into their political corners, silos and echo chambers, that they're all convinced the other party is to blame, or that Trump alone is the problem. Yep. And again, 70% or above, across the board. So what I get out of this is, this is a little bit what the scales falling from the eyes sounds like that there's something about people who are still caught up in some narrative about, you know, Trump is the only thing that we must focus on, or the converse is that, you know, the Marxists have taken over the democratic party or something along those lines. And for those of us who are beginning to understand that we are being played, this is the recognition, these are the ways that that recognition manifests in the mind. Are these particular fears about the danger that this is putting us in? Does this resonate for you guys? This? Yeah, the conversations you're having

**Nate Boyer** 1:41:56

this? Exactly. You know, I? I'm also aware that, you know, most of the people who are probably polling feel similarly to us, of course, which is great. You know, I think a lot of people would probably fall into those categories. As far as you know, the echo chambers and whatnot, wouldn't want to see this. Or, you know, probably wouldn't agree with it, they wouldn't admit and then that that comes back to that humility conversation that wouldn't want to recognize that in themselves, that they're probably that and they would have a Yeah, but you know, but how do you not see that Trump is destroying this country? Or how do you not see the threat of, of, yeah, a nice socialize America, or whatever you want to call it? And I get that I understand what they're saying, I hear you. But yeah, it just, it's exactly that it's, it's, it is a huge harm to us. It's a huge danger. And I think I think a lot of people do recognize it. He I think people do that even fall in those categories, probably recognize it, but to them, they don't see any way out, they see that it is what it is, we cannot change it. So for me, it's the lesser of two evils in this situation. And that's that's also dangerous. I don't, I don't, I'm not inspired, unless I'm inspired. You know what I mean? And I'm not going to attach myself to something if I don't believe it, just because the other way, or the other side is maybe maybe more dangerous. I need to believe it. I need to be all in. And, you know, and I'll fight for what I believe in, and hopefully bring some people along with me enough to, you know, help us all change the same together.

**John Wood Jr.** 1:43:47

I did. And I also have a query for the, for the audience. I think my my question would be, and this is particularly for folks who I think sort of, you know, maybe sort of strongly identify as Democrats or Republicans or Biden voters and Trump voters maybe more partisan, pertinently, but do you see values and or concerns on the other side of the aisle that you agree with or relate to, even if you disagree, or strongly disagree with the overall politics of the other side? Does that make sense, Brett or should I try and articulate that and I wonder kind of way?

**Bret** 1:44:33

No, I got it. I think I'm guessing No, I got it enough to pose it.

**Moderator** 1:44:38

Yep. restate it for in one moment as I type it. Ah, good. I think that's a great question. Do you see values and or concerns on the other side of the aisle that you agree or relate to even if you strongly disagree with Can we say with the party with the party in general?

**John Wood Jr.** 1:44:56

Yes. Yeah, I think that gets it.

**Moderator** 1:44:58

All right. I'm gonna ask this and You have an answer in about two minutes and 10 seconds, you can see, we're gonna ask, you're going to get a, you know, a couple 100 people's answers. So let's see this,

**Nate Boyer** 1:45:10

you know, guys, I was thinking about this on the break. And when it comes to leadership in the military, and probably a lot of Corporation, big business, you know, when we have an elected official, a president, CEO, whatever you call it. To me, the more impactful ones, they don't necessarily have these big grand saved the world ideas, the ones that are successful, hire a really good team have a really good team around them have differing opinions. And when they get in that war room, when they get into these, the boardroom or whatever. They're the ones that, you know, ultimately makes that final decision, when they hear everybody out. And everybody else has different ideas and thoughts, how are we going to grow our business? How are we going to fix what's broken? How are we going to do this? How are we going to do that? And, you know, the best military leaders I ever had, were the ones that literally listened to everybody. It didn't matter if it was we call it we call them private Snuffy, McGee, you know, I did, it didn't matter if that was it was that guy that just everyone was like, Oh, geez, here he goes, again. It listened to him. Because once in a while, that guy has the most obvious, quick fix and right, probably correct answer that no one was thinking, because everyone was so far in the weeds on like, this is the way we do things. And this is how it's got to be and blah, blah, blah, that, you know, they don't see the forest for the trees. And that's strongly lacking in political leaders. I don't see that. It's like, when you get into these, and it's tough, because I understand when it comes to debates, you have to have ideas, you have to have your theories, they probably have to be pretty, pretty strong, pretty radical, maybe, and pretty new, to get people excited, and get people interested in build that following. You know, and so you can get elected because it's all about winning, you know, and then once, once you get elected, it's like, immediately, you're starting to think about re election, and preparing for that. And it's just that's the game. But the best, the best leaders I've ever encountered in both in sports in the military were ones that yes, they made decisions, they were decisive, they delegated, they did what they needed to do, and everyone looked up to them and felt like this person's got it, like I trust them, I will follow them. But they were better listeners than anything else, you know, and they took took into took to heart what everybody said. And sometimes they just said, I just don't think that's a good idea. And sometimes they said, You know what, I hadn't thought about that. I normally wouldn't do it that way. But we should try this, we should maybe implement this. And that's something in political system as someone who's not a super political guy is probably what turns me off about it more than anything, it's just that just that they're, you know, that it's about, it's about the individual. It's not about what's best for the company.

**John Wood Jr.** 1:48:12

I agree with that. I agree with that entirely. There's a you know, there's there's biblical reference, there's a whisk, there's wisdom and a multitude of counselors write and read, I actually feel like this is somewhat implicit in in the unity proposal, because the way in which it conceptualizes the relationship between the candidates is that it is sort of highly consultative, at least between the two of them, but I, I imagined that if we want to build a culture out that shifts the tone and tenor of politics, that it has to be broadly collaborative, right. And so this is why loosening of the, you know, of our being wrapped around the partisan axis axis is also so necessary, right? Because, you know, that type of knee jerk sort of built in resistance to other points of view, there's a word for that it's called bigotry, right. And in addition to it being corrosive to relationships, it therefore also is, is is a strong impediment to, to coordination to learning. And so um, you know, yeah, Nate wrote wise words but hard to swallow in a society where everybody is so bound and determined to sound smart and be right, that we can't sort of create the space for listening and receiving the wisdom of folks who we may feel are, I don't know less qualified or otherwise perhaps in the way of all the right answers that we have to share.

**Nate Boyer** 1:49:41

So I mean, go ahead. No, I was gonna say you know, it's this this the world we're in right now. Beyond the political spectrum, you know, I go outside and, and I live in LA and you live in LA john too, and so you understand that you see it. This the amount of the amount of concrete and technology And just the digital world, you know, an access to everything right now right now right now, and just his lack of connection to the, to the, to the real world environment. And people as people as human beings, you know, as not as emojis or, you know, screen screen handle or whatever you want to call it, like it is killing us, we are, we're killing each other by living this way, you know, and it's, it has crept, it's crept into every facet of life, and talk about politics. I mean, this was that that was probably 2016 was probably the first, at least in my recollection, the first election that was, seemed almost purely digital, you know, what I mean? I understand we had debates, and then this year, they're going to be, I don't know how they're going to do them. What's the point exactly, as far as virtual this mat, but, you know, with COVID, it's exacerbated even more everything is digital now. And it's just, there's just no connection to reality, and to, you know, to the world that I think as it was intended, and it does make things simpler and easier for people in some ways, but also greatly complicates and makes things incredibly difficult. When it comes to you know, I guess just the, the connection with one another, you know, and truly empathizing and truly feeling like, we are really a part of something, it's part of something genuine, and, and making a difference and feeling like we matter in this world is just getting bigger and bigger and faster. And, you know, we're all trying to play catch up. And so it's kind of a daunting statement there. But, uh, you know, that's part of that dramatic shift. It's not just in politics, I think it's in the way that we live our lives. Right? Well, there's

**Bret** 1:51:55

a an aspect of this, which is, you know, those questions reflect the sense that we are hurtling towards something, you know, it's like we're on a train. And it's dawning on us that there's nobody manning the the engine, and that we're hurtling towards a, you know, the end of the line somehow. And so people are waking up, which is very frightening. But it's also liberating to discover that there are other people awake, and that you don't have to have that mind numbing conversation. But it does raise a question for me. I think many of the people who are, who have ears to hear this conversation are having that sense that we are headed towards something frightening. But the conversation we don't typically have is one about the timescale. And so I don't know how to phrase the question, but maybe we can Smith it together. What I want to know is, people keep talking to me about, Oh, you don't need 2020? That's a cool idea. But how about 2024? You know, after we deal with the real problem, and my sense is, I just wouldn't bet on us getting to 2024 intact. In other words, there'll be something but so I guess the question that I want to want the answer to is, what percentage of the audience has the sense that if we miss in 2020, that we should try again in 2024, that the opportunity will be there, and what percentage believes that the trajectory we're on is so dangerous on such a short timescale? That that's unlikely to work?

**Moderator** 1:53:38

Awesome. I will work on formulating that question. Before I do. I did want to point out, we asked the question of, of whether there's things we can reach across the aisle. And I will admit, I did not formulate the question quite right, because the answer was yes. But I think the question you really wanted the answer to is, can you describe the values that reach across the aisle? On your screen, you should see a bunch of different answers. I've sorted by all. So that's the priority here is that the most agreed to answers. And then you can see that there's a lot of agreement between Trump and Biden voters. I do want to point out, of course, people who watch this show are not a representative sample of Americans. But the people who are watching this show have a lot of agreement around the issues that you see on the left hand side of this screen.

**John Wood Jr.** 1:54:30

But what that does signify is that at the very least, we can see that there is this cross section of Trump voters and Biden voters and you know, it's natural to think that if they're going to converge anywhere in the in podcast land, you know, the Dark Horse podcast is a pretty likely stopping point, right? But But still, that's not that that not even that's not disqualifier, the significance of the fact that there clearly are points at which at least You know, a faction of folks in either side of this major split in America, in American politics, do see areas of convergence. And I'm willing to bet, actually, I'd stake everything on the idea of that, that space in which we converge on the levels of some more fundamental values and objectives is much bigger than people people realize. And again, you know, we can go back to the hidden tribes report, but you can almost just take it down to the very basic fact that, you know, we're all human beings who share, we share a country, broadly speaking, we share a history, of course, there are radically different, you know, streams, and that, that history, different avenues of experience. But, you know, there is a way in which I think it would be hard for any of us to conceive of a fulfilling and happy life in a fulfilling and happy society, which was not also of maximizing the goods of liberty, the goods of justice, or material goods, like education, economic opportunity. And I think it would also be hard pressed to find Americans who don't have a basic sense of the fact that to safeguard those goods and those values, we have to treat each other and interact with each other in a certain way. And so, you know, it really takes a lot of work to pull us away from that basic consensus, but the polarizing establishment, you're doing a lot of work. So we're in the situation we're in, but that, that compels me to be hopeful. In the final analysis, the timeframe question, not, not the standing bread, because I, I see the urgency there. But I do think that just to speak that really quickly, we don't mind. My general sense is always that we need to do as much as we can today without also forgoing the need to plan for tomorrow, right. And to the extent to which we can maximize both of those things, you know, I see success for unity 2020, obviously, you know, the highest marker of success would be, you feel that you feel to ticket that's able to inspire the American people towards shifting the direction of our presidential politics, and it changes things, you know, on the top level, and that would be amazing. And I think that we shouldn't give up hope at the idea that that scale of change is possible, while also committing to the fact that even if that was accomplished, the most important shift on a foundational level takes place in our relationships between one another. And so I go back to the work of braver angels, I go back to the, to the project of building out civic structures and civil society, they give us space to interact with each other and collaborate with each other, digitally, physically, etc. in politics, and the grassroots of the college campuses. And in the halls of government, that work can be successful. Regardless of who wins the presidential election, even as we pursue change at the highest level, all of these things, I think, are part of this of this larger wave of change. But I do think is going to prove itself to be successful as we adapt to the challenges at hand, you know, this year and beyond

**Bret** 1:58:10

100% agree that basically, yes, we have a, a plan for a rapid fix or fix that would begin rapidly. But whether or not that plan succeeds, that waking people up to what we are losing in this polarization, such that they are prepared, irrespective of what comes is his work that needs to be done. So I guess maybe part of the reason that it's formulated the way it is, is that one doesn't have to choose it's the right direction, irrespective of which mechanism or both mechanisms function. So go ahead spot

**Moderator** 1:58:50

data for john, as he talked about the ways were the same, but now I've switched over to your polling question, Brett. So I tried to phrase these as best as possible, but you should see some results on screen. So 158 people answered this question, which is should give us some confidence that this represents unity? 2020. Can you see the answers? Yep.

**Bret** 1:59:18

Okay, can we get to you showed some data about who is interested in unity 2020. During the break here, I thought it was very interesting.

**Moderator** 1:59:30

Oh, yeah. Well, actually, one of the things that we were exploring, I think everybody here has spoken to the moment that brought them to unity 2020. So the question that we asked was to explain an experience that kind of got you here, and I'm just scrolling through and searching for that. And, and I'm going to bring that up in a second and talk you through through that. I believe that's right up here. Great. So the question we ask is, can you Describe the moment or experience that most piqued your interest in the ideas of unity 2020 that unity 2020 represents. And now we didn't ask people to, since this is a personal experience, what we then ask people to do is is to categorize how they would see that experience. So we can click in here on the screen and say, say this, and I thought this was really cool. Um, you may be making new voters. One of the answers verbatim that people said is what brought them to 2020 is discussion on Joe Rogan podcast, I'm considering voting for the first time in my life, I've never felt like it was more important that I stand up and speak.

**Bret** 2:00:44

So I gotta tell you, this gives me chills a little bit. And it also is reflected in the data that we collected on our 1500 volunteers who took a survey as they came through the door. And a number of things were in that one was that the source populations were about evenly divided between people who would have supported Trump and people who would have supported Biden with a slightly larger number coming from the Trump side, but a large number, something like a quarter, if I'm recalling correctly, were drawn from people who were not planning to vote otherwise. And so one of the things that has been true about our political system is that it drives people away. And it doesn't care. Right. It alienates people out, but it doesn't change who wins the power that is one is the same, the legitimacy of that power is reduced when people are driven away from voting. But the amount of power that's divided and peddled is the same. And so the idea that unity 2020 is actually bringing a significant number of voters back into the fold, because again, they see something worth their consideration is extremely heartening. And so for all of the people who say, you know, you can't do this, You'll spoil the election, a, it appears that that's not the case based on the split between the different types of voters who are arriving, right, very evenly split. But the new voters that are being brought back are a dividend on this plan that I must say, I wouldn't have dared hope for at this level, to the extent that anything re energizes people and brings them back into the active role of citizens. I think it's a very good thing, and it really has has spurred us on. So here we see some poll results.

**Moderator** 2:02:33

Data is good. This is data that just supports what you said we asked 1000 1000 people were responding on, we've got 20% Biden 26%. Trump,

**Bret** 2:02:43

are these are would be Biden, and would be Trump voters who are listening to unity 2020.

**Moderator** 2:02:49

Yes, exactly. Who are you planning on voting for before you found out about unity 2020. And what you're speaking to here are the 12% that we're planning on not voting for president, the 13% that we're going to write in a vote on not voting at all can cover a lot of different reasons from them being a felon, and not able to vote to living in a US territory that may not allow voting to being under the age of 18. But this is an enormous of number, which I think is

**Bret** 2:03:21

12 and that 16 these are people engaged enough to be paying attention to unity 2020, which seems unlikely if they're just simply not eligible to be voting, we don't know who these people are, what they're responding to. But nonetheless, it's a large number of people who in one category or the other 12% of the 1,016% were either not voting or not voting for President. And then amongst the people who were committed to major party candidates 20% are would be Biden voters, 26% or would be Trump voters. So anyway, this says that a, these things are evenly divided pretty evenly, and be that to the extent that they are drawing more from one side or the other. They're drawing more away from Trump than they are from Biden. So I think that that really belongs in people's mindset. The fact that we have now seen that in multiple data sets as people consider whether or not we should be engaged in unity 2020 they should be thinking about that. All right. What else do you have for us now?

**Moderator** 2:04:26

Well, let's, let's see our first of all, let's ask our guests. Is there are there some other questions we should fire off? Um, and if not, I do wonder if we can look a little more closely at the the potential areas of agreement here so Did either of you have anything you want us to ask right now and what I'm going to put up on screen here is I'm going to start sorting let's let's sort by Trump voters and see what can you describe one value that reaches across the aisle, and you can see that what Trump voters think reaches across the aisle reaches across for Biden out, and that the topic is actually college education and education in general. So but let's break this down. First of all, john, Nate, do you have a question we should fire off to people?

**Nate Boyer** 2:05:13

Do do we feel is a very general question? Do we feel hopeful about the future of America? Very, very general. All right, we do we genuinely genuinely feel hope. It's a good one.

**Moderator** 2:05:32

All right. And then I'm going to ask people to describe why or why not. All right. So we'll get some some good data there.

**John Wood Jr.** 2:05:40

I imagine you might have a lot of people who might be tempted to say both, because a lot of times that is kind of the real sort of thing. There are things that give us hope. And there are things that make us pessimistic. Right. But in any event, I'll be I'll be interested to hear that hear the spread?

**Moderator** 2:05:56

Well, here's a question. The pollster would say the options are Yes. The other end? No, but should we put a third option, which is depends on the day? Yeah.

**Nate Boyer** 2:06:09

What about what about what about a little thing to the questions, we feel hopeful about the future of the unity of America? I think that that is a little more pointed. And it's more what I'm kind of alluding to. Right? Yeah. All right. Because it's felt like it in my, you know, asked I mean, I think, September 12 2001, was a very unified day. We've had other moments like, that seems like a lot having to do with disasters, whether they're natural, or, or otherwise. And we seem to come together in those times. For the most part, it seems like it's lessening here, more and more, but I don't know. So that's kind of what I'm alluding to. Yeah.

**Moderator** 2:06:54

There you go. Guys, you're you're you're, you're really split. Up by by likely vote? No, everybody's 30, you know, pretty close to even. So you can interpret that a lot of

**Bret** 2:07:12

different ways. Yeah. All right. So I'd like to get some information in talking to people that I know about what they are seeing and experiencing, I'm beginning to think that there's something about your, your friend, group, your spouse, that affects whether or not you can use whether or not your eyes are openable. In other words, I'm finding people who don't have any diversity of thought in their friend group, and they don't have a reality check in a significant other, for example, are having an almost impossible time resisting the social pole of, of what is overtaking us in either direction. And so what I want to know is of the people who are paying attention to the Unity 2020 conversation, what fraction of them have somebody in their close circle with whom they have substantial disagreements? But get along? Well?

**John Wood Jr.** 2:08:11

That's a great question.

**Moderator** 2:08:13

Do you have someone in your close circle that you have substantial political disagreements with or?

**Nate Boyer** 2:08:24

And yet, a lot of people?

**Bret** 2:08:26

Yeah, well, I would guess that we all do. That we all do. And that, you know, I gotta say, it doesn't throw me at all right now, all day long. I meet people with whom I have substantial disagreements, and it means nothing about whether we get along. I mean,

**John Wood Jr.** 2:08:43

but many Americans are lots, I think, in an echo chamber, or, you know, maybe, maybe you have a relative or something who's coming from the other side of the political divide. And you know, you hear this first you see this person postings on Facebook Now, again, but for the most part, you're getting the same messages reinforced over and over again, by people who agree with you, it would be interesting to get real data on that. And I'm not sure. Are you aware of data like that has more in common than that kind of research where we analyze, you know, what percentage of the American people are in a are networked in a way to where 90, upwards of 90 95% or so of their meaningful social relationships are with people who think the way they do politically? And how many have some substantial, you know, number of relationships with people who differ with them that way? Is there data on that, as far as you know?

**Bret** 2:09:44

I don't know. It seems to me essential that there would be data because just what we're seeing play out plays out so differently, if you know, if you you know, and I think actually this goes to something that Nate was saying about the military, right? The military forces you into collaboration with people who are across a wide spectrum that may not be as wide as it might be, it may borrow more from some parts of the political spectrum than others. But it cuts across racial lines, it cuts across class lines. And then this necessity of understanding somebody, you know, you can't just decide that somebody who's in your unit is a terrible person, and you're not going to collaborate with them. It's just not, the structure negates that. So you have to find the humanity and other people in order to make it work. And so in any case, there are a small number of things in society that force you into that kind of contact. And a large number that don't. And my fear is that most people are surrounded by people who agree with them so much, that it's very easy for them to fall into this echo chamber thing. And it's much, it's much harder, if something about your day to day life just simply violates those boundaries.

**John Wood Jr.** 2:11:05

Well, and the thing is, is, the more the trends of polarization, increase, the more they will increase, right? Because suddenly, when you have to pay a social price for being of a minority point of view, then you're going to see solace and refuge with folks who agree with you, right, which means you're going to vacate those spaces that would otherwise be ideologically integrated. And I think I may have seen some data somewhere along the way to suggest that there's even a geographical sorting that's kind of taken place in that way where people are moving to places in part on the basis of wanting to be around folks with whom their politics surrounding politics can allow them to feel socially safe, right. So I can't recall where I may have seen any of that, but any of that data, but it may be out there. So yeah, but we can, we can imagine that this is this pattern is probably real and probably accelerating, by and large, which is why building up the counter forces to allow that trend to go in the other direction is important, which is exactly what we are doing here.

**Bret** 2:12:10

Exactly. Now, I've been having a weird experience I've been trying to do as much biking as I can, while the sun is still shining, because Winter is coming as I keep trying to remind my various viewers, but I've been looking at the signs that people are putting in their windows and on their lawns and things. And you know, a lot of it is exactly what you would expect, you know, there's a lot of very standard black lives matter stuff. But then there's this class of sign that attempts to make a different point. So assigned will very often start out with, you know, Black Lives Matter. And then it will go on to say something about science is very important, right? Something like this. And one has the sense that I mean, I can't imagine that Americans have ever accomplished very much by dialoguing through bumper stickers are what they do. But nonetheless, there's an attempt to figure out how you can say something so that it can be heard across a divide. Right? The the idea that Black Lives Matter is synonymous with sciences, white supremacist is nonsense. Right? So the attempt to deliver a message that contains you know, both something that you have to say and some nuance that's important to get across the divide. I find hopeful, I guess, right? Yeah.

**John Wood Jr.** 2:13:35

Yeah, well, people who are interested in brokering one more functional, you know, social relationships in to a better politics are interested in the project to figuring out how do you frame things so as to accomplish precisely that. And so that juxtapositions you identify is probably a signal of somebody tried to do that, that work. Nate, I'm wondering if you have particular tactics or tech techniques, or I mean, you're such an earnest guy, man. But I'm just wondering if there are things that you've learned along the way in terms of how you go about communicating these different directions that that come to mind, that come to your mind is things you might be able to share with some of the folks listening to us here.

**Nate Boyer** 2:14:22

I just copy people that I respect, none of them are my own ideas. I'm not original, you know, there's there's there's, there's people that conduct themselves in a way that impresses me, you know, and everybody's got their there's not everybody has all of those qualities, but certain people do certain things really well. And in my opinion, and so I try to I try to emulate that as much as I can and, and I try to do a I try to do a really conscious job of listening because I have that personal impulse as a lot of us do. I think anybody that feels like they're generally somewhat intelligent person, we have this impulse of like, you know, we want to piggyback back off this idea or like, you know, maybe we have a counter argument and like, we have that, that urge to just sit to definitely say something, you know, to step in, and make sure that it's validating ours for ourselves, you know, and it's validated, we can validate that person as well. But continue to contribute to that conversation in some way. And sometimes, it's just not necessary. And, you know, there's, there's, there's, there's artists that I've listened to that are incredibly smart at this great presence about them. Yet, they're, you know, they're there, their main currencies are silence and stillness, you know, and I watched those people, and I'm just like, wow, that person is engaged, that person could probably run circles around everybody else in this room, they wanted to, but they don't. And it's just that, I think it's that, that humility, that really inspires me, and I keep going back to humility, but I think that's a, it's a lost art. And it does motivate me, and it does, does make me want to follow. You know, I think, I think good leaders are great followers too, because you don't always have to take the torch, you don't always have to be in the front. If you're a good leader, you know, sometimes it's better that you're not, and you let your let your tribe lead the way and empower them. So those type of things I just I tried to do, and I fail every day, you know, I screw up and I put my foot on mouth, and I get so amped up and pissed off, and whatever about things, and I'm just, I try to be conscious about that, because it doesn't fix anything, just pure anger, and, and debate, you know, doesn't really fix anything, it's it's action. And being very deliberate about your responses and, and not letting yourself get too comfortable. That's another thing like I, I, I, I've done a good job. In my past that challenging myself, a lot of them have been physical challenges, and a lot of ways are strict, you know, difficult mental challenges as far as trying to be a greenbrae, whatever it is. But when I find myself getting comfortable, I that's when I get complacent. And that's when I start to buy into things that maybe aren't true. And I start to sort of drift, you know, to one way or another on a on a certain topic and start to form an opinion about a group of people, instead of forming opinion around, you know, these are individuals with different ideas. And just because this person wears that uniform and chooses this way of life, or, or raises that flag, or has that sign in their yard, it doesn't mean that I that I maybe disagree with or agree with, it doesn't mean that, that everything about that person is is not valuable, you know, and this is something I should just completely write off because I have a tendency to do that. I think a lot of us we do it's it's human nature, we want to, we want to, to categorize everything. And yeah, I just have a copycat, I do my best to follow people that inspire me, you gentlemen are two of those people. I mean, the way that you speak the way that you think about things, particularly you are, it's something that I'm not necessarily great at. So I try to listen. And then I try to speak from the heart and just be as genuine as possible. I'm not good at anything scripted. I'm not good at memorization when it comes to that I just want to speak how I feel. And that makes me feel better. And and hopefully it you know, it resonates with some people.

**John Wood Jr.** 2:18:50

You underestimate yourself, Mr. Boyer. And, yeah, I'm very, very moved and persuaded by the way you explain the vital importance of humility, which is why I'm so proud that I'm always the most humble person in any room I walk in.

**Nate Boyer** 2:19:07

I have no one is more humble than me.

**John Wood Jr.** 2:19:10

I mean, I beg to differ, sir, I think. But ironically, it's key to leadership isn't well, I'm sure there's some evolutionary biological explanation for why that might be.

**Bret** 2:19:20

Now I want to unpack it a little bit, because I think that there's something very deep here, but I often hear it miss portrayed, right? Like there's, you know, it's like, do you sound humble? I don't care. What I really want are leaders that are not ego driven. I want somebody who knows what they're capable of and has nothing to prove. And actually the flip side of this, an insecure leader, I find very dangerous. And I see this in Trump, and I saw it in Bill Clinton. There's just something about the need to prove something That causes them to be willing to do terrible harm in order to deal with some demon in their past. And what I really want is a leader who's just not even focused on that, right? They're really interested in figuring out, do I have the skills to do this? If I don't know the answer, who can I talk to, that will inform me, I want that person where, you know, I don't want somebody who isn't self confident, that's what we tend to get from this claim about humbleness. I want somebody who has self confidence, but has it, it's earned, and they've got nothing to prove to anybody. And that's going to make them capable of the kind of leadership that we need. So anyway, I just, if we're going to sign up for humble as an important characteristics, I want to sign up for the right kind of humble, where it emerges from just being secure, rather than being reflexive and, you know, trying to prove that you're not ego driven. That's, that's bad. Would you say that

**John Wood Jr.** 2:20:55

a component,

**Nate Boyer** 2:20:57

I was gonna say, I think people can see that I think most people can see that genuine, you know, the genuine humility versus a, that mask, I guess, you know, to cover deep insecurity, you know, the front, I think, I think most of us, most of us get that and see that. And I just, you know, going back to the military thing that I will always place the mission first is one of the first things you learn, instilled in you in basic training, you know, and you say it over and over and over, and you genuinely start to believe that and the mission is about, it's about the team to see overall, what is the greatest good for the greatest amount of people? It is not? What, what, it's not placing me first, certainly. And it's not, it's not this, this idea that we all have, as human beings of everything that we do is, you know, we want to look good, and we want to feel good, good, we can't help that that's in us. We do a lot of times people are charitable, because it makes them feel good. I mean, I've done things that that are that are charitable, for selfish reasons before too, because it makes me feel good. It's not a bad that you're doing that. But that's a genuine thing. In the military, that was you know, it's instilled in you at such a high level. And from day one that you understand if you if you don't pull your weight, if you don't do your part, for the team for the mission, if something goes wrong, you're going to live with that. The fact that it was your it was on your watch, it was your fault, you didn't do your job to the best of your ability for everybody else. It wasn't about you, because if we fail for ourselves, we screw up, and it only affects us, it doesn't really bother us. If we screw up and it affects the team, it affects the country in some way. Oh, you know, or we lose a comrade. That's that that kills us, you know, it just alive. And it stays with us forever. So that's the kind of mindset that has to go into leadership. At a political level, I think it really has to be.

**John Wood Jr.** 2:23:01

Yep. You

**Bret** 2:23:02

know, what do you have? Do you have data for us?

**Moderator** 2:23:08

Oh, man, we've got we got a lot of data on the screen. One thing I wanted to say is one of the most popular answers I asked the asked everyone. The question was, how do we increase humility among Americans and 67% of people agreed with this nice quote, which is more conversations like this one. When you hear someone who's extremely good at bringing people together, it puts you in the mindset that you need to improve this capacity yourself. So I thought that was a little good vibes. And you all might appreciate that. We also asked a few other questions, which is, which we can dive into. Right up here. JOHN suggested we needed to understand each other's starting points. What do you think now I haven't looked at what people said. So it might we'll see what they say, um, there's a lot of agreement that we need more empathy. And the another most popular answer is I think this is getting to bedrock living increasingly in our own silos. We've lost empathy, empathy for other people. Absolutely true. Empathy requires being able to understand how an individual came to be. So what I want to say is john amongst the people on this call, they, they agree with you.

**Bret** 2:24:27

So I want to I want to pause there and point something else out that's important, which is that this process whereby we lose track of empathy for other people, actually reliably proceeds war. In other words, before one population goes to war against another or engages in genocide against another. It portrays it as subhuman, as diseased as vermin. These are very common tropes. And so what I would say is it's very ominous that we are now hearing This kind of thinking inside of our political structure, because what it tells us is that we are engaging the circuitry that leads people to war. And for that to occur inside of the American political structure is frightening. I mean, not just for us Americans, but for people around the world who know how important it is that America does not tear itself apart.

**John Wood Jr.** 2:25:22

Now you don't send arresting I have heard Pete Now obviously, I'm very much the very much a sort of champion of empathy. Right. And I'm heartened by the folks responses here, I have heard arguments that have tried to make the case that empathy is in fact, a dangerous thing. Because it is, in fact, empathy itself that leads to those preconditions that yield war, because when people find themselves empathizing so much, with the in group, they go to war with the out group, which to me almost seems like a bit of sleight of hand as an argument because it even within the statement, there is the clear break of empathy with folks in the out group. In other words, the problem I don't think is too much empathy on the in group is it is the lack of empathy with the out group. But I have also heard, and maybe this is Paul bloom, or somebody saying this, I'm not sure. But I have also heard it argue that, well, empathy with the outgroup can precipitate conflict, if we have a sort of empathy, where we get so wrapped up in, say, the suffering of just for example, you know, a prayer oppressed population in Iraq, let's say that we support, you know, armed intervention in way that winds up costing many more lives than we then we save in a certain context, because we're so concerned with the suffering of a small group of people that were willing to, you know, break the well being of a much greater group. I'm just wondering, Brett, how you deal with those those objections?

**Bret** 2:26:56

Well, I, it's a great question. And there is actually now well understood, I would recommend people read Robert sapolsky, his book behave, where he covers this in depth. And, you know, it used to be that we thought that oxytocin, the hormone, was the love hormone that it was the bonding hormone, which it is, but it's not just the bonding hormone. It's the in group out group hormone. And so the this molecule that is released when a mother bonds with her baby is also involved in the recognizing something as the enemy. So is that

**John Wood Jr.** 2:27:33

also the molecule I get when I bite into this chocolate cupcake?

**Bret** 2:27:37

No, that's good. That's labeled to be at least a certain amount of dopamine. But anyway, enjoy. Yeah, sure. But anyway, what I would say is, we are very plastic creatures, we can regard a very tiny number as in group and everybody else is out group, or we can increasingly in group people who are more and more distant from us. So this is sort of a you know, I see this encapsulated in Christianity in you know, the two stories. You know, Jesus tale of the Good Samaritan is one and the invocation of the golden rule. These are both instances where the the in group expands right. Now, ultimately, the question is, can the in group be expanded all the way? And should it be? And you know, this is not an immediate suggestion, but there's something about the peril that we all share, as, you know, creatures, fighting against incredible odds over the long term, trapped on a planet together, that we are now spending into oblivion, behaving very unsustainably. If we recognize the Jeopardy that we are putting all of our all of us in, by fighting between us, rather than recognizing that at some level, it must be true, that sustainability will either be the mode that we discover, or we will destroy ourselves one way or another, that that could result in us in grouping humanity. Now, this is a discussion for another time, you have to do it very carefully. Or it will be self unstable. But ultimately, I do think that that's what we should be heading for is a recognition that what we have is the result of having recognized a larger and larger set of people as within our in group, and that ultimately, the best and probably only stable endpoint is to recognize we are all in group, and that our long term well being depends on us standing down the competitive dynamics that threaten us while retaining the competitive dynamics that allow us to discover new ways of being and to thrive.

**Moderator** 2:29:57

Can I add a data point that supports that which is We just asked other than announced candidates, what would be the best thing unity 2020 could do to increase support 70% 77% of people the most pop, second most popular answer was, I'm scared of promoting it, because I don't know what to do, I want a step by step guide for talking to my friends and family, because I'm nervous.

**Bret** 2:30:26

So this actually suggests a line of questioning, I was hoping we would get to, which is I have the sense that those of us in the unity conversation, recognize that none of the standard answers, neither one blue or red is the least bit safe. And the disaster may be very different. But it's still a disaster coming either way. But most of the people we engage with who are not unity minded, yet, are able to see one of the disasters and incapable of seeing the other. And that's the reason that they're so hard to reach. And so the question I want to ask, first of john and Nate, and then of the audience, if it's possible to do it, is, what is it? If you're one of these blue no matter who voters, right, where you see Trump as the problem and your senses, well, until that problem is gone, I'm voting blue, and I don't care about the details. What can you say to such a person that will allow them to see the danger of that solution? If they see the Trump danger, and they can't see the Biden danger? What will allow them to see it? And then the flip side is, if you see the danger of the Biden answer here, and you think, you know, maybe you're one of these voters who isn't in love with the Trump solution, but you recognize it as at least a break from the standard pattern, what can be said to those voters so that they can see the hazard of continuing another four years down this road?

**John Wood Jr.** 2:32:02

So let me let me engage that, and actually, Brett, I'm met a maximum of my time, if you if you'll forgive me, I'll probably have to step away after this. But this has been terrific. And let me let me engage that in the context of Trump voters here. But the principle will clearly be applicable across the board. I think a lot of folks and I say this, you know, with absolutely no judgment or condemnation of folks voting for Trump or Biden, or anybody else. But a lot of folks felt that they had to kind of sidestep their normal sort of conscience or barometer for evaluating the behavior of a candidate who they can only feel good about supporting because the threat from the left was so eminent that they felt like they had to back a person who was going to be a useful bludgeon against destructive forces in society. And he was standing up for policies that mattered to them, right. And so for a period of time, the economy was good. We have conservative justices on the bench, and so forth from that, from that angle, the Trump presidency is arguably successful up until other things happened, right. But the thing that I always argued in all directions, is that ultimately, a prosperous society, a society whose political and other institutions are functioning well and serving us is only sustainable in a cultural in a cultural context in which the American people are working well together based on the strength of our interpersonal and our intergroup relationships. When that deteriorates, when that breaks down. The only thing that may hold us together to a degree for a while is material prosperity. But what happens behind the scenes of that is that we're all seeking to sabotage each other politically, and to punish each other socially. And so when that disappears, our ability to collaborate on meaningful things necessary to the survival and prosperity of our country disappears. That is what I said well before the advent of COVID-19. That is what I said, well before our inability to marshal a collective societal response to you know, a health threat, which is been obviously, it's far beyond just being a threat to public health, it is crashed the American economy in a way that hasn't happened since the Great Depression. And whether you think that we should have gone right or left and our policy response to that and how we implemented countermeasures. The fact is, is that any meaningful way of engaging a response there would have required the strong consensus of the American people politically in a way that would have necessitated some minimum threshold of civic trust to exist between us on a social and cultural level and that is obliterated when we put our faith in parties and politicians that are situated In such a way to where their pathway towards success and influence is predicated on division, as opposed to fostering unity. And so the more we invest our political and our social capital and, and confidence in, in those sorts of politicians in those sorts of political parties and parties can change, right. But in those sorts of structures, the more we ensure that that is going to be the pathway to our demise. And the only meaningful thing that we're choosing between when we choose between different variations of those alternatives is perhaps what the timeline looks like, or just how exactly that winds up expressing itself. And so yeah, I mean, I've actually been making this argument well before unity 2020 because even beyond beyond unity, 2020 it is, again, a question of what sort of politics do we want to stand for, on the base, most Cultural Foundation most cultural level, right? And we need to stand for a politics that strengthens our relationships as a people rather than destroys them. So that's my closing speech, bread.

**Bret** 2:36:07

yaffle, beautiful. Nate, do you want to go, and then we will close this out? And yeah, to the extent that we didn't collect all of the data, I think we will tweet it out using our Twitter account. But Nate, go for it.

**Nate Boyer** 2:36:19

Yeah, I mean, that's set up a lot of it right there. And I think it gets to the point where it's been to the point, but in this situation, like we've got, we've got our guy, the guy, we're going for the guy, the the guy we're voting for, and we're all in on that, it's all going to be that and if our guy wins, great, but if you think that it's just going to be calm, or better or good for the next four years, once that happens, you're in for a rude awakening. Because the moment that starts, whether it's Trump, whether it's Biden, it can be attacks continue, they're probably elevate, they'll probably escalate, they're gonna, they're not slowing down. And it's going to be this continued 5050 split. And it's just, it's just ugly, it's ugly, and and there's never going to be and it's going to come from the media, it's going to come from everywhere else. And it's just a cycle that will not stop until we stop it. And, you know, picking that picking that side, because, you know, you feel especially because you feel well, I can't go with this guy, because I mean, he's going to destroy the country. So I gotta go with this other guy. Neither these guys are going to destroy the country, we are destroying the country, we're doing it ourselves, you know, it's on us to our responsibility, and we have the power to change it. That's what's great about America, we do have the power to change that it's in our hands. But will you know that we're not accepting, we're giving that power up because we feel our list. We feel like we don't have the the aptitude to change it and it's it's, it's it hurts, it just hurts to know that that's how people feel that hopelessness. And I mean, that's one of the main reasons I wanted to ask that question about about hopefulness, because I actually feel that hopefulness. I just don't feel it in the masses. It's not that I don't think they're capable, I just don't think they understand or know that or believe in any way that it is possible. And I know it's possible, because I've seen people change. I've seen things radically shift in a short period of time. You know, not maybe at a national level like this, just a few a couple of months before the election. But when people get to a point where they finally see and believe how broken things are and how painful it is to live to live in this place right now. And how frustrating it is, you know, I think that their eyes may be open and may be willing to listen to, to something that's that's pretty, pretty opposite of what they're accustomed to. And I just I think it's necessary, it's absolutely necessary. We've got to rip the band aids off and start over. But it's going to take a lot of people on board to do it.

**Bret** 2:39:37

Beautiful. There is a Hopi saying or at least frequently attributed to Hopi elders, which I really like which is we are the ones we've been waiting for. And I think at some level that nicely bridges the two final statements you've just given and I hope we do it. Thank you both for joining us. This was really spectacular. I will say the metaphor of campfire was chosen for a number of reasons one of them had to do with the ability to take embers from a fire and start another one. And I would encourage people who have gotten something from this conversation to see if you can't start a difficult conversation with somebody you don't fully agree with somewhere. And if it works out, or if it doesn't let us know what happened. We'd be very curious about that. So you can find us at Twitter handle articles of unity. You can find us on the web at articles of unity.org. And let's let's do this because it ain't gonna get any easier. Thanks. Thank you. Thank you, john. Thank you. All right. Be well