

Joan: Hello, and welcome to WorldCanvass from International Programs at the University of Iowa, I'm Joan Kjaer and we're coming to you from Merge in downtown Iowa City. This is part two of our program on the politics and impact of immigration. In this segment we're going to take a look at how media cover immigration issues, and we'll discuss public and local responses to the current immigration crackdown. So I'd like to introduce our guests. Just next to me is David Ryfe, director of the UI School of Journalism and Mass Communication, thanks for being here, David.

David Ryfe: Thanks.

Joan: Next to him is Jeff Cox, University of Iowa history professor and board member of the Hawkeye Chapter of the Iowa ACLU, thanks for being here, Jeff.

Joan: And at the far end we have Captain Bill Campbell from the Iowa City Police Department. Good to have you here, Bill.

Capt B Campbell: Thanks.

Joan: Thanks.

Joan: David, I'm hoping that we can get a little perspective on the broad debate about immigration by looking at ways in which the media tend to cover it. As the head of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, I don't suppose that there's anybody better equipped than you to help us sort through what we're hearing and what we're seeing. How do you think immigration is being covered in today's media?

David Ryfe: Well there's actually quite a lot of academic research on that subject, of people going out and counting stories and following along and there's been a real transition in the last 20 to 30 years on how the media cover immigration. Before we start we should probably define our terms. We didn't have to do that in the past, but we do now. When I'm talking media, I'm talking really about professional journalism, I'm not talking about the cable shows, I'm not talking about online news sites, I'm really talking about people who are in the industry as professional journalists.

David Ryfe: In the 1970s to 1980s you would see a very common frame was a business frame for immigration. Immigration as a part of the local economy, and as an equivalent of that you'd see a lot of stories about labor and immigration. Partly because there was a broader labor movement, and unions were very important in public culture still, and therefore were ready and reliable sources for journalists.

David Ryfe: Today, we've seen almost a wholesale shift in the way in which media frame immigration. It tends to be one of two frames, and then a third is kind of creeping in. One frame is a public order frame, it's a very common way of

framing immigration issues today about public safety, people coming over the border illegally, what's happening to our communities with immigration, those sorts of issues.

David Ryfe: A countervailing frame, is a more humanitarian frame. Talking about individual immigration often or personalized and dramatized in these kinds of stories. Following them as they make their way into the United States and setting up themselves and their communities.

David Ryfe: There's one last little frame that's begging to make its way into the media coverage and that's more of a race and culture frame, where they talk about the different categories of people who are coming into the country and how they're changing the racial composition of the communities they go into. It's a minor frame compared to the other two, but as you can imagine these dominant frames tend to be driven partly by the news industry, certainly the commercialization of news in the last 20 to 30 years has meant that journalists look for stories they can dramatize, and conflict is easy to dramatize. And so, public order frames, humanitarian frames fit nicely into that need.

David Ryfe: But partly also what's happening in our political environment, professional journalism is bolted on to conventional politics and conventional politics moves, you're going to see the frames and news coverage move. So that's kind of generally an overview of how the frames have changed in the last 20 to 30 years.

Joan: Uh-huh (affirmative). Well I think that many people would say that we're sort of in an unconventional time in terms of politics just now and if we were to take that point of view, you did mention that you're not specifically referring to cable news and certainly not what happens on social media. But, there is so much news on a daily basis it seems these days. The news is kind of churning out, whether from the central, from the administration, or from anti-administration activists. What's the role of a responsible journalist to sort through all of this and try to give us a picture that's a seasoned, honest picture?

David Ryfe: Yeah, that's a question that professional journalists ask. Unfortunately for them, and perhaps for the larger public, journalists have really lost their ability to gate keep information in the public square. They once served as the primary conduits of information in public life and that's no longer true. They're one of a series of voices in public life and in a digital world there's lots of producers of information and consumers of information as well, so it's a more chaotic environment and journalists really, even if they could answer that question, their answer wouldn't necessarily be impressed upon the public anyway.

David Ryfe: We just live in a much more fragmented media landscape.

Joan: So what do we do when some call mainstream media 'enemies of the people?' How does one combat that?

David Ryfe: Well unfortunately, the way in which people process information psychologically is connecting to a new digital system that allows them to consume information based upon their predilections. Generally speaking, psychologically speaking, we prefer information that confirms our pre-existing views, we tend to gravitate to information that confirms those views. The digital space gives us an opportunity to limit ourselves to information that confirms their views, and there's a lot of public actors and political actors out there who are more than happy to produce information that looks like news, and feels like news, it's just simply not journalism, and are able to push that out to their particular audiences and it creates filter bubbles in the public square that are a part of the polarization and partisanship of the current political environment.

Joan: Yeah, Yeah.

Joan: Thanks for getting us started. Jeff, I'd like to go to you next.

Jeff Cox: Okay.

Joan: And talk to you with both of your hats on-- maybe the history professor hat and also someone who's part of the ACLU. You believe in the goals and values of the ACLU. To get back to the immigration topic directly, the ACLU has been right at the forefront of defending immigrant rights, trying to help people at the border that are in a lot of trouble right now, helping reunite children and so on and so forth. And I know that the ACLU has also been fighting cases here in Iowa. Give us all a little understanding of why this matters.

Jeff Cox: Right, well I don't speak for the ACLU, I'm just on the local board. I was just talking to Bill Campbell--our local chapter, for the first time ever, we met with the police chief of Iowa City, Jody Matherly, and had a very fruitful discussion. We were about, this was about racism rather than immigration, but he said something that I thought was very important in our meeting, he said. "There are things that police and prosecutors do that are lawful, but awful."

Joan: Hmm.

Jeff Cox: "They're lawful, but awful." And I was very pleased that he recognized that. We ... the ACLU has been at the forefront, as you mentioned, in defending the children separated from whoever brought them here, at the border.

Jeff Cox: The New York Times, I teach a course on the New York Times, history through the New York Times, and the New York Times is good on some things, just terrible in others, but if you saw the front page today there was a picture of a two year old girl on the front page who was in court in New York. She was sitting there and the immigration judge who dealt with something like 30 or 40 cases the same day, came in, sat down, looked at her, and said, "Oh, she's two years old." And the Homeland Security agent who was there wouldn't look at her. And I was thinking as I heard people talking about how comforting it would be for

her, to tell her, "Oh, you're under civil not criminal, I mean don't worry, there's 17 different agencies at work here." She's incarcerated and the ACLU has been at the front lines on the border in defending, it appears now, the 13,000 children who are being put in camps on the borders.

Jeff Cox: And I really feel obliged to respond to two things that Mary Hogan said. That is, "We're just enforcing the law." Reach for your billfold when you hear somebody say that. I mean the law is not fixed and settled. Immigrants have inferior rights to full citizens, but they don't have no rights. They have rights under the Constitution, they have statutory rights, they have rights under international law when it comes to asylum. And there is a very large amount of discretion in the people who enforce these laws.

Jeff Cox: This is the case of asylum seekers. The, it's true, as Mary Hogan said, that the people who cross the border were breaking the law by crossing the border with their children. That's true. But they're... in the past, they've often been treated under asylum seeker regulations rather than charged with criminal offenses.

Jeff Cox: That is a matter of discretion, and it is the same thing with the enforcement, whatever you want to call it, at Mount Pleasant, there're 11 million undocumented workers in the United States. To pick out 30 of them, somebody made a decision, that we're going to pick out this place in Mount Pleasant and arrest them, and of course this is political. It's to teach them a lesson. But, you know, this is not a lesson that's going to eliminate the 11 million undocumented workers. It's only going to terrorize them, and their children, and break up families.

Jeff Cox: There're large numbers of people who benefit from the fact that we have undocumented workers in this country. It's Iowa Ag. Most of these people have been invited here by employers, and are doing nothing more than being responsible people by trying to make themselves a living and take care of their families. There is no way 11 million people are going to be deported, so what we've got is a constant state of, a kind of racist aggression by the government against selected groups of people. That we never know exactly why they were picked out this way, or why they were picked out that way.

Jeff Cox: One of the biggest problems that we face in the ACLU is all Bill Clinton's fault. It's the '96 Immigration Act which made it legal to deport people for minor offenses. Barack Obama was known as the "Deporter in Chief" for good reason, because in his first term in office he deported three million undocumented workers. Three million. Almost each one of those represents a family that has been broken up, disrupted, orphans created, and so forth. He thought that if he showed that it was a hard line on immigration the Republicans would come around and cooperate with him. Well, that didn't work too well.

Jeff Cox: So, I think all we can do in the ACLU is fight a kind of hard line defense on individual cases and collective cases. We got the federal courts to declare the separation of children from asylum seekers, who had broken the law, against

the law. I mean it's not just immigrants that break the law, it's the government. In their enforcement of it.

Jeff Cox: And so the ACLU is fighting a kind of rear-guard action against a situation which is creating a kind of horror show for asylum seekers, for children, for undocumented workers in this country. And at some point we're simply going to have to do what Ronald Reagan honorably did, which was grant amnesty to the people who've been here, and who haven't broken any important laws. That's the only way we're going to end this situation. Otherwise it's just going to go on forever.

Joan: Well, Bill, let's go to you.

Capt B Campbell: You bet.

Joan: Yeah, okay.

Capt B Campbell: So, I'm going to bring a different spin to this. I'm going to start off by telling you a little bit of a story. You've probably all followed immigration issues, or you wouldn't be here tonight, and you've probably followed what's going on locally. So if you recall back in early 2017 there was a resolution that the council passed and during the resolution basically affirmed what it was that the city wanted to represent and so forth within its law enforcement in town. And it was entitled "Resolution reaffirming the public safety function of local law enforcement."

Capt B Campbell: So if you jump back a couple months before that, I was approached by the city manager, at the time I was the interim chief, and he asked me, "So tell me Bill, as we're putting this together what do you guys do, what's your interaction with ICE? What do you surrounding immigration? What kind of stuff are you involved in?" Now to date myself just a tad I've been with the department for 28 years, I've worked in just about every position that the department has and I started to kinda go back through and go, "Okay, let's see if I can't give a good answer to this question, so let me think of the experiences I have with ICE, with customs, with immigration," and I still to this day can't give you one. Because, frankly, local law enforcement, in this community, doesn't get involved with ICE really very much. I can't say that I've never talked with somebody with ICE, but I can't think of a time when someone from ICE has been called in by us to do something.

Capt B Campbell: So, my experience in this is very much one of the non-experience, to be honest with you about what I saw. So fast-forwarding to something ... And since then you've seen a number of policies, you've seen some laws passed by the state legislature that required certain things of local law enforcement, required certain things of local governments as far as things they couldn't do, couldn't limit what the police could do as far interacting with customs and with ICE.

Capt B Campbell: But ultimately I think it gets summed up very succinctly in one of our guidelines. And I'll just read right from it, "The primary function of the department," and speaking about our department here, "is to protect public safety for the benefit of all persons who reside in and visit the community. The enforcement of immigration law is the function of the federal government and currently resides with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE, at the Homeland Security level."

Capt B Campbell: So, I bring an interesting message to you on this and it's one that really says by and large we don't get asked by ICE to do much. I can't say it never happens. If I were to come up here and tell you that you'd go like "Really? You've never really talked to customs about anything?" That's not true, but we don't get really asked to do anything. So when it came down to the resolution and what we'll use for resources that kind of thing to be involved in immigration enforcement, it was pretty simple. This policy, this resolution, those things don't change what we do very much.

Capt B Campbell: Now, just one caveat to it, and I know you have some follow-up questions to this. So the question comes up then "What about, what if ICE were to call and ask for your help?" Certainly, we, and I'll go back to something Mary said, and that is we don't, we're not the people who are going to make policy, the police are not going to make policy, they're not going to make the law, we are required, by law, to uphold the law. So, if I get called by someone from the FBI or the IRS, or from ICE, and they're going to request us, we're going to filter that through the same way we'd filter any other request. To determine what the need was, and how it fits inside this mission. Again, this mission to protect public safety and so forth. Having said that, we can play a lot of "What ifs" if we choose to, but it's really not a question we get asked, it's not something we get asked.

Joan: Wow, wow. To take this to sort of another level related to community safety.

Capt B Campbell: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joan: Certainly there are some people living in our community that have concerns about their status, who have concerns about a family member who may not be legally in the country. I understand that you and the chief and others in the department meet periodically with people who have those concerns. Can you share some of the concerns and some of the assurances you could give.

Capt B Campbell: Yeah, and I think that that's probably one of the most unfortunate things that comes out of this. And it's something that on a personal level as a police officer, but also just someone who's interacted with people that are from other communities who may or may not have status to be in the country, we see an anxiety. "Should I come forward to report a crime?" "Should I come forward to be a witness?" I think there's times where we have lots of good witnesses to crimes and were violent crimes and they don't come forward 'cause they're concerned about what's going to happen with that information.

Capt B Campbell: You know the reassurance that we bring is that we're not tasked, again we go back to this primary mission, we're not tasked to be doing immigration enforcement. Having said that, and this is the one that's challenging I think for us, if ... Obviously the police department can't control what happens with information when someone ... I mean let's play out a situation. You have a court case, someone is a witness in court, obviously that information becomes a public thing and then where does that go to? Where does that information go? And there's a lot of anxiety about that. I can tell you that it's not our go-to to run and take information from a criminal case and provide it to immigration officials. That's not what we're going to do with information. There's some pretty specific information within our guidelines that prevents that. That's not what we're doing with that information.

Capt B Campbell: But that's a tough one. Because ultimately if I show up and I'm wearing a police uniform what is my job there. Why am I there? If I'm involved in a criminal investigation and there ends up being a crime that gets investigated, what if that crime involves something with immigration and then I'm around and with it, certainly easier to just stay away from the police, than to engage them if there's that risk. I think that we try to send that message, as the chief would say, it's really about how we send that message every day. It's not about how we interact on whether we pass this resolution or not, it's what are the police really doing when they're out there talking to us. How are they treating us? What kind of confidence can I have with them?

Capt B Campbell: So we really try to instill that with the officers, you know what it's important, it's that people trust you, it's important ... I mean that's about solving crime. I think the chief, and I should have the stat in front of me, but I think the chief has said since this resolution's passed, I think that violent crime in Iowa City dropped by 11 percent. Does that have anything to do with the council? I'm sure it does. Or I'd say it has everything to do with the council.

Capt B Campbell: I think ultimately the goal is to have a community that trusts its police, and recognizes at least for that group of people that's not what our job is, that's not what our mission is, that's not why we're here.

Joan: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, thank you for explaining that. Clearly those kinds of city resolutions vary, right? You could be in a very different city, maybe in a different part of the country with a much ... with a police force that was much more anxious to engage with enforcement of immigration violations. And so then on a national level, I guess this is where the ACLU is again, and other organizations that are concerned with the rights of immigrants and so on, get involved.

Jeff Cox: I'll just say one thing. The person to ask this question to is Lonny Pulkrabek, I think not you, but most of the ACLU cases on so-called sanctuary cities, which don't really exist, they're just some who've passed certain kinds of resolutions and others. Is whether ICE requests to the jail, to hold people longer than the

time that they are legally obliged to hold them. Beyond the time they're legally obliged to hold them before charging them.

Capt B Campbell:

And I think Lonnie's-

Jeff Cox:

And that's been a flashpoint, I mean some cities have done this, others have refused, others have been threatened with having their federal aid cut off. Oakland I think. Do you know anything about that?

Capt B Campbell:

I do believe that the Sheriff came out with a public statement that said he would not-

Jeff Cox:

He wouldn't do it.

Capt B Campbell:

Yeah.

Joan:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Would not hold people-

Capt B Campbell:

And was fairly critical of, yeah.

Joan:

Yeah, yeah, huh.

Capt B Campbell:

Although I don't believe the board of supervisors passed a resolution. I believe that the sheriff made a statement, and I think that's also, you can find that online pretty easily.

Jeff Cox:

Well he's in charge of the jail.

Capt B Campbell:

Yeah, yeah.

Capt B Campbell:

And I think that he also commented, and that again, is not something that he ... He doesn't get requests from ICE very often. It doesn't come up very often.

Joan:

Huh. Yeah. So David, when you hear about these kinds of things does it trigger any thoughts in terms of what you've seen in reporting?

David Ryfe:

Well, you know there's lots of different consequences of the disruption of journalism, but certainly one of the most significant is the demise of local news and local newspapers. Any of you who get the Iowa Press Citizen, you can see that on a daily basis. It's just not the paper that it once was. And most local newspapers are not that anymore. Strangely enough what that's meant is that most local people consume mostly national news. And so strangely enough it used to be said that all politics was local, and now all local politics is national. Because local people are reading local actions through the national discourse.

David Ryfe:

And it's the demise of the local news is part of the increase of partisanship and polarization. It's easier to come together to figure out how to fix the specific

issue we all together share here. But when there's no conversation about that in the local news and what we have is on cable news, it makes for strange local discourse. It becomes refracted through the national conversation. And that's part of the acceleration of partisanship and polarization today.

Joan: Yeah, yeah. Any concluding thoughts and of you want to give?

Jeff Cox: No, I just want to second that. The decline of the Press Citizen. I mean there's some, the Gazette has actually gotten better, it really has. I mean Vanessa Miller does a great job at covering the university. But you know if you want to read a really good newspaper, I recommend the Tipton Conservative, it's a weekly, published in the county seat of Cedar County. They'll print any letter anybody sends them on any topic, and so you have the weekly cranks in there, but you have a real debate going on. It's a better newspaper, a weekly, than the Press Citizen now, it's just such a shame. Such a shame.

Joan: And do you feel that the community is pretty solidly behind the kinds of approaches you've taken here in the police department?

Jeff Cox: I'm sorry what-

Joan: Oh, I'm sorry I was talking to Bill.

Capt B Campbell: Definitely, and as Jeff has said, Chief Matherly's done a fantastic job of really ramping up those aspects of things. I think we're out there more than we were, and I think that we have a supportive council surrounding those things too. I do believe that and I think that, again, we can always do things better and there's always, I mean, I jokingly say that police officers are often times like the playground monitor, except adults don't like to be told that they're not supposed to run.

Joan: Yeah.

Capt B Campbell: And that's a tough role. There'll always be criticism and review of what we do, and we expect that. But I think we continually do things better.

Joan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeff Cox: Not everything is getting worse.

Joan: Yeah.

Capt B Campbell: That's right, that's right.

Joan: That's a good way to end the segment, I think. So thank you David Ryfe and Jeff Cox and Bill Campbell for being here. Really appreciate it so much.

David Ryfe:

Thank you.

Jeff Cox:

Thank you very much.