

Journalism Under Siege: A Conversation About Journalism and The Freedom Convoy

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SPEAKERS

Adrian Harewood, Raisa Patel, Rupa Subramanya, Judy Trinh, Justin Tang, Jorge Barrera, Justin Ling, Audience Members, Allan Thompson, Glen McGregor.

Allan Thompson 00:10

Good evening, everyone. Welcome to Journalism Under Siege, a unique event being held in this remarkable space the Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Center. Thank you for joining us in person for change, or through the broadcast. My name is Allan Thompson. I'm the head of the Carleton University journalism program and your host for this evening. I'd like to note off the top that this important event is being sponsored by Carleton's faculty of Public Affairs represented here this evening by our dean, Dr. Brenda O'Neill. Let me also begin by acknowledging that Carleton University and this majestic space are located on the unseeded and uncentered territory of the Algonquin nation. And for those who are joining us virtually, let me encourage you to be mindful of the territory on which you live and work. This event is called journalism under siege. We'll talk more about that later. journalism as a profession was already in some measure, under siege, even before the unprecedented events of the last month in Ottawa. But the protests mounted by the self-described freedom convoy in downtown Ottawa, something that Ottawa police chief described as a siege presented a multitude of challenges for the journalists trying to make sense of these events. As Canada's original journalism school, we thought it was important to hold a conversation about what those few weeks meant for our profession, and how journalism serves the public. I want to thank our panelists for being so quick to respond and so generous with their time. This is the first time we've had a chance to get together, face to face to compare notes. And it was important to do it here in the heart of downtown Ottawa. It was also important to hold this event as soon as possible.

The world is a tumultuous place, and we are already immersed in another crisis on a much grander scale in Ukraine, where we find ourselves turning to journalists to try to understand the full gravity of the day's events. Many of the journalists who covered the convoy became the target of jeers insults, and sometimes even physical assault. While journalists, especially women, and journalists of color, have long been accustomed to online harassment, this kind of behavior seems to have reached new levels.

It's a worrisome trend that we have to discuss. But public trust in the media has also been eroded. We saw that during the events on the hill. It was both striking and distressing for me as a career journalist, to talk to people talk to those among those who are protesting downtown. And to realize that some live in an alternate reality when it comes to the news media. And I don't mean that in an in an insulting way. There is a growing divide in this country. And that is something that we also have to discuss. We need to talk about notions of media objectivity, media bias safety for individual journalists, who found themselves operating in a hostile environment in the shadow of the Peace Tower. It's important for us to discuss how journalists went about their work, how they use technology, how they made decisions about the stories they were telling, and what lessons they draw from this experience. No matter what side of this issue you find yourself on. And there are many. No one can contest that those three weeks, when much of downtown Ottawa found itself under siege, were unprecedented in this country. With us here tonight, we have a cross section of journalists who lived and breathed these important events for several weeks running. Another journalist who couldn't be with us this evening because of other plans is going to join us by video. And we are fortunate to have as a moderator, Carleton journalism professor Adrian Harewood, a fixture on the media scene in Ottawa, his hometown. In a moment, Adrian will set the stage for the evening, introduce our speakers, and then invite each of our panel panelists to share a brief opening remarks. There will be some discussion among the panelists led by Adrian, followed by a question and answer period.

We will do our best to get to those questions in the room, here tonight. To give you a chance to pose your question, someone will be walking around with the microphone, they'll hang on to the microphone and give you a chance to put your question. For those who are participating virtually, please use the Q&A function on the webinar to post questions. I'll be monitoring those from my little station down here. And every now and then I will pop up with a question for the panel. With that, let me thank you again. And turn this evening over to Adrian Harewood. Well, thank you very much, Alan. And it's certainly a delight. It's an honor. It's a privilege for me to be serving as your moderator for this evening. So welcome to those of you who are joining us online. And of course, those of you who are here with us at Dominion-Chalmers, tonight, let me begin by saying how good it is to see you. It's good to see people after so long.

Adrian Harewood 5:50

Well, thank you very much, Allan. And it's certainly a delight. It's an honor. It's a privilege for me to be serving as your moderator for this evening. So welcome to those of you who are joining us online. And of course, those of you who are here with us at Dominion-Chalmers, tonight, let me begin by saying how good it is to see you. It's good to see people after so long.

People are always disappointed when they see me because they realize I'm not that tall. So when someone said that, to me, you're not that tall anyway. But I'm seeing faces in the crowd that I literally have not seen for years. And it's really great to see you. We've missed these opportunities to commune during this global pandemic. We've missed coming together to exchange and wrestle with ideas to debate in a public forum, like this. And so collectively, collectively, I think we appreciate how precious how valuable these moments are. So, while tonight's discussion may at times get tense, they may be

difficult. They may be painful. People will feel frustration, and they might feel consternation, tonight is an unapologetic celebration of the resilience of our community. And we are still here. And we've assembled a stellar panel tonight of some of this country's most respected journalist to discuss and reflect on how they experienced an extraordinary moment in Ottawa and indeed in Canada's history. For a number of days, just a few short weeks back, the eyes of the world. Were on us on our nation's capital, whatever you call what took place between January 28 and February 20, in the city's downtown core involving the freedom convoy, whether you labeled it a blockade, a demonstration, a protest, an occupation, a siege, whether you thought the events of those weeks were peaceful or violent, or something in between. Whether those days of demonstration, occupation, protest, and siege left you feeling exasperated, incensed, inspired, exhilarated, exhausted, bewildered, energized, or depressed. We know that what happened, what took place was unprecedented. We know that has already changed the City of Ottawa. And we know that has changed the country. And there might be a sign of change in our politics, but also a sign of change, or perhaps the confirmation that the relationship between the Canadian public and journalists, the Canadian public in the mainstream media has fundamentally changed. We want to try to understand what happened. And we will be led on this journey by six individuals who are on stage with us tonight, and one individual who will appear on the big screen.

Judy Trinh is sitting beside me right now. I normally sit behind Judy in the newsroom at CBC Ottawa. But Judy is an investigative reporter with CBC and during the three-week long occupation, she provided some of the most detailed coverage of the Ottawa police services and the freedom convoy in cabinet on Coventry Road in Ottawa East End. Reporter Subramanya is a columnist for The National Post. Unfortunately, Rupa can't be with us tonight, but she was a prominent voice on the ground throughout the weeks long demonstration. Justin Ling is sitting beside Judy tonight, and Justin is a freelance investigative journalist. His reporting during the occupation and his social media presence on Twitter was certainly mandatory reading for anyone following the events and Justin's expert reporting on extremist groups behind the siege was sought out by The Guardian and CBC's The Fifth Estate. Jorge Barrera is another colleague he works for CBC Indigenous unit based out of Ottawa. And at a critical moment, during the demonstration in Ottawa's downtown, Jorge waded into the crowd with his mobile phone to report live on his own. Raisa Patel is a national politics reporter for the Toronto Star. She's based in Ottawa. She's a graduate of Carleton University's journalism school, and she was reporting on the ground throughout the protest. Glen McGregor is a senior political correspondent for CTV National, he was a constant presence on television screens and on Twitter during the occupation. And like others, working with camera crews was subjected to harassment by some of the protesters. And Justin Tang is a photo journalist, an award-winning photo journalist. He's a contributing photographer to the Canadian Press. And certainly, anyone who consumed news coverage of the convoy will have seen some of his now iconic images. So, this is your panel and welcome to you all. Thank you so much for joining us. We're going to start with Judy, I think each person will speak for about five minutes. And I guess I just wanted you to kind of locate yourself in those three weeks. Tell us a little bit about how you experienced the freedom convoy.

Judy Trinh 12:00

Adrian, I do not live in the downtown core and I work in the downtown core. So, when I go into work and I see what is happening, the one thing that resonated with me was just how angry I felt. I didn't understand it, I just felt I felt a little bit like this. Everything that was that I held dear in terms of democracy, in terms of what Canada was, or Parliament Hill was somehow being disrespected. And I think that, you know, if I was to be honest, starting from that point, right, it is it. We are to be balanced and objective reporters, but we are citizens. I am a citizen of this of Ottawa. So. there were there was that feeling. And then I would talk to my relatives, and my relatives would be a bit confused about it, because for them, it looked like there was just a party that everyone was just having fun that it was that it was out of control, really, but that no one was really getting hurt. And then they kept on asked me about what is driving it? What are the reasons behind it? And I and I was looking at the coverage and, and assessing my own reporting. I'm like, what, what is driving it? Why are police so behind? What were the answers? And then I wasn't sure that the answers were on Parliament Hill, because these were politicians, and they were giving you the political reaction. And what I saw was this paralyzed police force, a very inept response if I can use that word. And I wanted to know why. And obviously, the protesters themselves had lots of skills.

So, when I wasn't able to get downtown to a certain degree, they were saying, you know, work from home, we don't have even if you were to report, we don't have security to go out with you. at CBC in order to go out as a reporter, you need a one to one security guards. So, your cameraman would have a security guard and the reporter would have a security guard, and there weren't enough so if you weren't assigned to an actual story in that day, you couldn't leave. So, I was doing a lot of digging around the scene. I didn't have that resource, so I thought I would just drive where to Coventry. And what is interesting about Coventry is that on day one of the protests on Facebook Tamara Lich actually put out a post in which she said, "Hi, everyone come down to Coventry. This is where our base camp is going to be. You're going to have toilets here. You're going to have food here." I had seen this post but I had not yet seen Coventry. So on day three, I thought I am going to take a drive. I'm just going to see what's out there. And it was astounding.

Hundreds of vehicles, like tractor trailers and tents were had gone up already. They were they were hauling materials. And at that point there, there was no sauna. But what was interesting I was just driving by, and I wasn't sure what, how I was going to be received. So, my first visit was just in the car, just driving. And I saw what I thought were people in military fatigues. And so that struck a bell was like, what is what is going on? Like, are they are they just dressed like soldiers? Are they soldiers? Are they veterans? So that kind of became a question that I wanted to answer. So, my first story looked into military and police connections. We know that there are sympathies among military amongst officers to the convoy protesters. So, did that have an impact on their response? And in my reporting, what I revealed was there was a response, there was a link there. These protesters were very skilled in the sense that they knew certain they had they knew what you know, even if they knew what a military operation look like they were organized, right. So, for me that I wanted people to understand that part of it that it wasn't just fun, that it was individuals who had these paramilitary skills, who could use it to entrench within the city, who perhaps had access to firearms, because we knew that there was no way police could search hundreds of vehicles, they could not, they do not have the grounds for a search

warrant. So, what was in those trucks? We knew that some of them, you know, we knew that there were members of the JTF, too, we knew that there were at least 10 active soldiers who were sympathetic to the cause. Were they part of the protests? We don't know. But we knew that they had the skills. So, by putting that type of information out there, at least we knew that this was a real threat. It wasn't just people protesting peacefully for or against vaccine mandates or mass mandates. It was individuals who, if they held extremist views, also had military training, which made them even more dangerous. So that that was where I started, and was to answer those questions from friends and relatives who really thought that this protest was about people just blowing off steam and having some fun.

Adrian Harewood 18:07

Okay, thank you, Judy. But Rupa Subramanya has recorded a message, and we're going to play her opening remarks. So, this is Rupa Subramanya from the National Post

Rupa Subramanya 18:20

I wanted to use this opportunity to actually talk about the way this conversation is being framed. And how I find that framing. In some respects, I find that framing problematic. So, let's start with the poster for the event, which you know, refers to the protest as the so-called Freedom convoy. So immediately, I wondered why so called no one said so called Black Lives Matter, no one said so called Occupy Wall Street protests, you don't have to agree with the cause or even like the people who are involved in the protest, but I found that this was a maybe a subtle or not so subtle, put down of the movement, it is called what it is. Now, you can have a separate discussion on, you know, on how to unpack the term freedom convoy, you can critique that, if you wish, but I thought that this was, you know, calling it so called was actually emblematic of a lot of the mainstream coverage of the protests. Which you know, featured some snide and mocking tones. And then next I wanted to talk about the poster, which refers to the description of the poster of this event, which refers to the occupation, which refers to the protest as an occupation of Ottawa and it and it refers to the protests as a siege on the nation's capital. Now, when I'm reading this, I was thinking, Well, are we talking about a city in Ukraine besieged by Russian troops? Or are we talking about Ottawa, a g7 capital, which saw what I thought was an act of non-violent civil disobedience. And I do want to acknowledge that there are, there were residents in Ottawa who felt that this was some kind of an occupation, and some kind of a siege. But I also found that we were only referring to this in the singular term, without offering any other alternative lenses through which you could see this as being debated. And this was the singular lens. And without acknowledging that there are other alternative lenses out there, I thought this was particularly problematic. And I felt that the premise of the panel itself had been pre-judged from it's terms of reference, that this was an occupation and a siege and, and it differs wildly with folks like me who were there who saw this through the lens of civil disobedience.

I should note that I'm originally from India, a country that invented civil disobedience in its modern form. So, whether it was Gandhi's resistance to British rule, or Indian farmers resistance to farm reforms that blockaded highways for more than a year in India (which, by the way, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau supported quite vocally), to the freedom convoy. I think these are all forms of civil disobedience. And by

definition, civil disobedience is going to be noisy and disruptive. The real test is, does it remain peaceful and nonviolent, and I found it to be largely peaceful and entirely nonviolent. Now, if you if the worst you can say about the Ottawa protests, were noise and parking infractions, then I think they were safely on the side of nonviolent protests. And actually, not that different from these farmers protests that I mentioned in India, which dragged on for about a year where trucks and tractors blocked roads and highways in India.

And I remember, you and I having a conversation a few days ago about the title of the of the event journalism under siege. I thought it was a little self-indulgent, because it seemed to make this about the journalist but not, but not with what was actually going on which, which was the freedom convoy, and I think it was one of perhaps one of the most important cultural moments in this country's history, no matter what you think of think of the protests or the people involved in it. But I agree, your interpretation of it is also a valid one, which is, you could see this as perhaps a crisis in journalism, and how do we confront this crisis? How do we deal with that crisis? So, I do take it in that spirit as well. So, I guess, I think, you know, I found the framing of this conversation for this event, as interesting as the subject itself. The framing pointed to a particular narrative, and a particular lens through which to see the protest, which is, by the way, not that different from what the pm and the Ottawa city councilors and large sections of the media, you know, how they saw it. I felt that they we're all marching in lockstep again, in my opinion, if the media is largely seen as mirroring the message coming from politicians...
video cut off

Adrian Harewood 23:50

That's unfortunate. Okay. Well, those were those were route those comments and I should just state for the record that we were in conversation. I interviewed Rupa on Sunday. Justin.

Justin Ling 24:06

Thank you. Yes. So, for starters, I'm not based in Ottawa, I'm based in Montreal, most of the time. I have lived and worked here in the past. But, I have not had to experience the day to day kind of frustrations for the most part of this occupation. So, I'm going to get that out of the way, upfront, I got the luxury of taking the train and going back home, which a lot of folks I know didn't so you know, I'll start by saying that I think we're the lucky journalists who got to step out of this when we're sort of convenient.

But, from the very beginning when I first saw the some of the Facebook groups and some of the telegram channels and whatnot for this so-called freedom convoy, I'm going to come back to the so called thing in a second because I have a problem with that. But when I saw you know, a bunch of these groups popping up, you know, something jumped out to me that this was probably the first real confluence and the first real kind of cooperation that I've seen over the past two years of Canada's disparate networks of anti-vaccine, anti-mask, anti-lockdown groups, right? And I realized that since this thing got underway, there has been this real effort to say no, no, no, no, no, listen, this has nothing to do with anti-vaccine groups. This is about the trucker mandates or vaccine mandates or what have you, which, you know, from the very beginning I knew was false. You know, from the very beginning,

I'm looking at the organizers, the groups, the activists who put together who organized this, this convoy, and their groups, I recognize their groups I've been following for years. You know, most of what I do as a journalist is follow misinformation, follow conspiracy theories, follow extremist groups, and all of the ones that I've been looking at and a few that I hadn't even heard of, were getting together, were all getting on the same page. When we're saying it's time to go to Ottawa. Now, this includes people who, in recent years tried an occupation of Ottawa. This is groups who tried to arrest and prosecute Justin Trudeau for treason before the pandemic even began. These are groups that were either involved with or affiliated with individuals who are trying to perform citizens arrests of people in downtown Ottawa.

Hilariously, at one point trying to arrest a CBC journalist, thinking that they're a member of Parliament, which civics lessons is something that we need to improve in this country. But you know, I'm following all of these groups. And it's just striking to me that this is probably the first time maybe in North America that you've seen all of these groups get on the same page, put all of their organizing skills and their followers and their email lists and their Facebook groups pointing in the same direction, and trying to enact a single event. And seeing the images of these trucks, you know, which did not number of 200,000 people as they claimed, but seeing these trucks that actually, you know, stretched kilometers coming from out west, coming from out east, I thought to myself, this is going to be bigger than I think anyone totally appreciates. So, of course, I booked my Via Rail trip and I maybe mistakenly booked myself at the Arc Hotel downtown, which also happened to end and ended up being a really happening convoy hotspot. Which I didn't know at the time, I thought boutique hotel, I'll be I'll be in the clear anyway. Just so you know, when I got to Ottawa, the Friday just before everyone kind of sort of started properly arriving, seeing these trucks come in, you know, listening to some of the radio channels, following some of the telegram channels, it started to really sink in the degree to which these folks were ready to make a stand.

These are individuals who, for two years now have been hearing propaganda that says, masks don't work. COVID-19 is not as serious as they tell you. The government is using this to restrict our civil liberties and perhaps enact a permanent sort of lockdown. And then later that COVID-19 vaccines are dangerous and effective in killing people in scores. And they're getting this information from a totally Alternative Press, not just an independent press, but a press that exists in a totally alternate reality. One where they get to make up their own facts, interpret their own research, have their own scientists have their own doctors, and it's a reality that is totally decoupled from everything we sort of hold true it is it is one where if it exists in a major newspaper or in a peer reviewed journal, it must be false. And the opposite must be true. That is literally part of the philosophy that governs what many of these people believed. As they started arriving, there was sort of a dual reality that existed when the convoy finally arrived and the occupation began. And it was an occupation, they admitted it was an occupation. The occupation was the point. They called it a bear hug, they were going to freeze the City of Ottawa cut off in one country. One organizer was saying they were going to cut off supply to the city and basically freeze it and make it impossible for people to go to work or get some sleep. That was the point. So, to suggest that it's not an occupation is just completely ludicrous.

But you know, walking through the crowd, it was an exercise in living in two different realities. You had the reality where you knew these people were saying vaccines are killing people, Anthony Fauci created a bio weapon to restrict our civil liberties, The World Economic Forum is using this this this virus to take over and install a one world socialist government, all things that were repeatedly said, not only by organizers, but by many of the people attending. That's reality one. Reality two is you walk around and people are sitting in hot tubs and people are dancing and people are having a wonderful time and people are being nonviolent and are being peaceful and as Rupa actually correctly notes, exercising civil disobedience, and it's a tough thing to square. You also, as time went on had to realize that there was another reality, which is the reality of people who actually live in this city, where they're being constantly harassed for wearing masks where they're feeling constantly unsafe, where they're unable to go to the pharmacy, they're unable to go at the front door, they're unable to get to work, they're unable to take their kids to daycare, they're unable to let their cat out. You know, there was the other reality that this wasn't just frustrating or annoying, it was actually dangerous and damaging to many people who lived in the city.

So, these three realities are really hard to kind of put together. And it which is really why I have a problem with even Rupa suggesting that this is the so called a sort of a put down, it is a so-called Freedom convoy, because this wasn't about freedom. This was about restricting freedom of the people who live in this city. This was about trying to force our democratically elected government into the decisions that were preferred by this occupation. And fundamentally, this was not about freedom for the country. This was about freedom for unvaccinated people to do something dangerous. That is fundamentally what this was about. They have the right to do it. Did they have the right to do it? Yes, I firmly believe that the folks who occupied the city had some limited right to install traffic and to frustrate the hell out of everybody who live in the city. But there has to be limits to that. And I think fundamentally, you know, what a lot of the work we did was trying to highlight the degree to which there needed to be a solution to this, you know, this could not go on forever. You know, we were trying our best to underscore the sort of dangers, the frustrations, and the damage being caused by this into the city. And to highlight how it could be done, how can be cleared out how it could be resolved peacefully without acquiescing to these frankly, ludicrous demands. And it was a tall order. And frankly, we didn't always get it right. I actually tend to agree with Rupa strangely that Journalism Under Siege is probably a little bit over the top. And I think that there's actually probably some blame to be shared between the media between the politicians for maybe being a little too dismissive of some valid concerns. But fundamentally, this was a really tough story to cover. This is unprecedented. We've never done this before. And I think overall, we did a pretty good job, I'm pretty happy with how my colleagues, you know, covered this story. And I think there's a lot of accolades to be to be sure to vote for it.

Adrian Harewood 32:22

Thank you, Justin, Jorge.

Jorge Barrera 32:26

So, I'm still working on threads from what I consider to be a movement that still exists and how it will manifest itself again, you know, remains to be seen. So, I've continued to stay in touch with people

involved. Still, you know, spending a few hours just sitting around just last Thursday with someone that tried to set up in a new location, and we ended up having to leave that location and I followed them to someone's private residence, several kilometers away and on the way there, we were followed. Because I was falling behind them, there was three OPP SUVs tailing us the whole way, all the way to this private residences driveway, and they got out and wanted to know what was going on. So, for right now, for me, I'm, I'm really trying to keep an eye on how authorities continue to monitor and surveil and try to preempt any, you know, renewed surge from this movement.

To situate myself where I'm at, I'm still kind of covering this thing... my role that I took in this was to just try to figure out what brought people to Ottawa to, you know, park their trucks there, what brought people to, you know, leave their houses and in Petawawa, for example, and drive to Ottawa nearly every day. To go down and stand with, with, you know, the sometimes several hundreds, sometimes thousands of people. And what I found was that there seemed to be this complete loss of faith in institutions. A crisis of authority, I think others have termed it for various reasons. They no longer trust what you know, official health authorities have to say or what media has to say and. We're living in a very fragmented information, landscape. But part of what I was hearing also remind me a little bit of what I would hear from activists from the left in the late 1990s, when the anti-globalization movement was starting to really surge, and the mobilization to go to start to shut down to WTO. And what turned into the battle in Seattle, where they actually did end up shutting the first day of the WTO meeting there, and there's this, this belief that the system no longer looks out or cares for the common person. Even though, you know, the truckers who were here have really large assets. I mean, these transport trucks that they had put on the line for this are at the very least 150 grand, and some of them had actually paid them off. Most a lot of the guys who were here that I spoke to were owner/operators. So, they were putting their life's assets, something that they've worked and paid into, for most of their working life, on the line for what they believe to be a government that for whatever for various reasons was either bordering on tyrannical, or they believe was overstepping its authority. In terms of threatening their livelihood, or overstepping its authority by through provincial restrictions, even though it was all, you know, leveled at the federal government, but the notion that health authorities could shut down churches, you know, they felt that, the divisions. There's a really strong Christian element to this type of sort of evangelicalism that is really influenced by American type evangelicalism that's taken on a really political hue. Where, they believe that it's part of their duty to also take political stance, as opposed to simply focusing on, you know, growing their own communities through converting souls. So, you know, there was a lot of different reasons why all this thing, all these people came together, but at the very root of it was a complete loss in faith in the way that the system works, and indicated it was, and they explained it in different ways.

You know, one, one woman that I interviewed on the record said, all the parties need to get rid of their party banners, and we should just be electing individuals. Others would say, you know, I used to really support the Conservative Party, but and actually a lot of people I talked to traditionally voted conservative. And, you know, the Conservative Party no longer represents my views. And there is a lot of a lot of people who you look at Maxine Bernier differently because he allowed himself to be arrested, and he saw someone who actually would put his money where his mouth is. But beneath that, is this

feeling that no one really listens to what they have to say that the people sitting in Ottawa, don't really care about their views, because their views don't fit into certain narratives that they feel that are only acceptable. And so, one of the reasons that some people came to this or would travel from there, because there's a lot of day trippers that went to the went downtown Ottawa and that, that helped to increase the mass of people that were there. It was just simply the feeling that no one cares what I have to say, I send emails to my MP, and no one responds to me. I call my MP, or my MPP, or my MLA, and no one's listening to me. So, they felt that there's a system that's, that's basically oppressing them and is not listening to what they have to say and is now in terms of the truckers specifically threatening their livelihood. The idea that your work can be tied to a vaccine mandate is actually a legitimate concern that the left has raised as well. Like Jeremy Corbyn has talked about that. So, it's not sort of out of nowhere, that exists. But also, within the group itself, they did create a sort of bubble and within that, they felt that their energy just by being there just by gathering would win out in the end. And when the police came, they were completely unprepared because they didn't believe it, because they also sort of... I guess they kind of misguided themselves to believe that there is nothing that could stop what they were doing simply because of the pure energy that they thought they were generating.

I spent as much time as I could, talking to people, and I realized there's so many different stories that brought everybody, it's really hard to find a theory of everything of why this happened. But the closest thing I could come to personally in sort of my reporting is that this belief that systems and institutions no longer reflect or care about the needs of what they believe to be, you know, the common people, their communities. And I think this this was kind of reinforced by some of the language that that was used initially by the federal government and the prime minister and leader city councilors the way that they describe this, obviously, because of what was happening in their city. But I think as journalists, as a reporter myself, I consider myself a reporter, I just go in and try to gather the views and characters and try to reflect back what is happening.

I think we have to work on trying to build that bridge to these groups that are they're scattered all these communities, these families, these groups of friends that no longer trust us, and to figure out why they no longer trust us. Why there's so much rage against us, and to try to build those bridges back, try to build up that trust. Because I want those individuals who who've told me to my face when I was in there that they completely don't believe what my organization reports on, they think we're all controlled, I want to convince them that no, you should read my story. Because no, I'm not controlled. And no, my colleagues are not controlled that we actually are not pushing an agenda. We're just trying to do honest reporting. And I think government institutions also have to be open to the need, that they have to make the effort to also reach out all parties. I mean, the Conservatives are probably the party that's probably will hurt the most from this based on the people I talked about, I think this is a moment in time that we need to avoid what's happened in the US with the extreme polarization, and try to figure out a way to build bridges.

Adrian Harewood 41:58

Alright, thank you.

Raisa Patel 42:00

So, I cover federal politics. And that was sort of the lens through which I was looking through everything. And, you know, thinking back, I think one of the most pivotal days of this convoy was a couple days before it started, I think it was the Wednesday before everyone arrived. And that was the day that Justin Trudeau referred to protesters as a fringe minority, a small fringe minority with unacceptable views. And that was the line that I think colored the entire event that it was exactly what convoy members were expecting to hear from the Prime Minister. It emboldened them it, they were ready for him to say something like that. And they showed up on that very first Friday with those words written on T shirt, on signs, they had signs made with those words, ready to go stuck to the side of their trucks. They were screaming it in the streets, we heard that from day one, until the very last day of the convoy. And still, I'm still hearing, you know, small fringe minority with unacceptable views almost every day. And so that was really interesting. And we heard him say that on the Wednesday and, you know, made note of it, but I don't think I expected it to blow up in the way that it did. And it was interesting as reporter to kind of not get sucked into that mentality. Like these are people who think that they're here with very serious concerns, and some of their concerns were, you know, reasonable to an extent. And to sort of downplay that, and to underestimate them was dangerous. And some politicians did that, you know, the convoy members would argue that the media did that. But it was really important for us to not play into that, you know, mentioning that my angle was federal politics, I ended up having a very local focus on this event.

I'm, you know, born and raised in Ottawa, I lived in Centertown for about six years. And this was a very eye-opening experience for me not in terms of maybe the sentiment that was expressed or the longevity of the event, but just living in Ottawa forever and never seeing or experiencing anything like this, I live less than a kilometer from Parliament Hill. So, I was in the middle of everything from start to finish, you know. I can remember the sound of that first honk that Friday, and I'll never forget it. But that was a really invaluable experience. To me, it was really important that I actually didn't leave center town, you know, many people were kind and, you know, said, come live with me in another part of the city, and I really didn't want to do that. On the one hand, you know, I thought I was being exposed to COVID every day and I had no rapid test, so I didn't want to go anywhere. But, you know, I just sort of felt like residents of Centertown didn't have the privilege of going somewhere else and escaping from this. So, if it's my job to bear witness to it, why would I, and it was, it was really eye opening for me just how trapped I ended up feeling as a resident. And that's, you know, a word that I never thought I would use to describe my hometown. Essentially, I saw exactly what this demonstration was doing to residents of Ottawa. Day in day and out, middle of the night, first thing in the morning, you couldn't escape it. You would see it in the grocery store, you know, people getting in fights with security, not wearing masks. I saw it. My walk to the pharmacy to pick up a prescription, you know, people being harassed for wearing a mask and talking to residents on the street and hearing that they were called slurs, or they were followed home or, you know, there was garbage right in front of their apartment. My apartment building had to hire security, the arson attempt was very close to me.

So, all of that was sort of, in the back of my mind, I couldn't use that a lot in my reporting, just because I was I was looking at it from such a national perspective. But when I would go out and talk to convoy

members, and I, you know, I did that every day. And we would go, you know, in pairs, or with a team, and sometimes with security, and I hope my boss isn't listening to this, because I would sometimes go by myself, when I shouldn't. Just because I live there, and it was happening, you know, at all times of day and you want to go out and see what's going on. But what really struck me is that when talking to these people, they would say, you know, "I don't know what you're talking about, no one here is being aggressive. No one here is hostile. We're welcoming everyone with open arms." And you know, some people did, but that experience sort of gave me the opportunity to say, Well, no, you know I've seen it, I've witnessed it, I've experienced it. I'm hearing it every day from my neighbors, and so that I think really helped with the accountability aspect. For me, it wasn't secondhand. I saw someone say this on Twitter. And maybe it wasn't true, or, you know, my friend texted me this, it was nice of seeing it with my own eyes every single day and experiencing it. And that was really invaluable.

In terms of how we approached covering this event, obviously we had to think of our safety in a number of different ways. But you also really had to think carefully of how you were portraying the event, you know, how much weight would you give to the more hateful elements that we saw, compared to the people who had nothing to do with those sentiments. This protest was a culmination of a lot of things. And it brought together you know, a lot of different kinds of people, there was pandemic exhaustion, anger, frustration, a huge lack of trust in the media, some far right elements. These were things that if you weren't paying attention, even though they were bubbling under the surface this entire time, would really catch you off guard. And I think this did catch a lot of people off guard. One of the things, one of the ways where I was actually able to talk about the local aspect of things a little bit more was on Twitter, on social media. If I couldn't use it, my reporting, then I was, you know, sharing conversations that I had with residents on my Twitter or posting pictures or videos, talking to grocery store clerks, asking them what they were experiencing. And Twitter was a really interesting space during this time. Those tweets ended up being more controversial than anything I was writing, in the newspaper, or any anything else I've ever done. You know, every single thing that I wrote on Twitter was just instantly declared to be a lie. People started to campaign against me, contacting my employer telling them that I should be fired, you know, sort of digging up things about you, figuring out who your family was. And it led to me having to lock my account for the first time ever. And that's something that I didn't take lightly. You know, I'm a racialized woman, I experienced death threats and hate mail all the time. And I've never felt the need to lock my account/ But it was out of volume, I think, where it just didn't feel worth it to sort of be on that platform anymore. And locking your account as a journalist is really interesting because it almost feels like a form of censorship. It means that the public can no longer see your reporting and things that you're putting out there and so that was not a decision that I took lightly. I had to do that for about a week and take a step back for a couple of days. But, you know, eventually your need to just get your reporting out there supersedes everything, and I kind of jumped back on.

So, all that to say, like we've talked a lot about, you know, journalist's safety and things that journalists experience. And I think we certainly experience things in all realms and all spheres. And I hope that one of the big things that comes out of maybe this talk and this experience is just learning how to address that and prioritize journalist safety and also rebuilding trust with these people at the same time.

Glen McGregor 50:41

Yeah, I'm going to pick up on that theme about the thing that I found kind of united all these disparate groups. And as Justin was saying, there was a lot of different types of people there. But their distrust and contempt for journalists was the one thing I found it was consistent through just about everybody. But before I start, I think we want to put this a little bit of perspective. We've all went through kind of bad things, at different levels. But it's nothing like what our colleagues are going through recovering Ukraine right now, I just put that out there. Because we have colleagues in my network who are dealing with that too. And they're literally in harm's way. So just put that on the record.

So, the tone of the of the protest changed a lot. I think, from that first day, that first weekend, when achieve kind of the highest, largest crowd on the Saturday, I think the police said it was around 18,000, maybe nowhere close to the 500,000 that the organizers optimistically predicted that. And it was also kind of like the most jubilant crew that we saw throughout those three weeks. People there were really having fun. And I think part of the reason was, a lot of them may have been over the last couple years been ostracized by some of their friends or family. Suddenly, they're surrounded by people. It's a tailgate party, there's barbecuing going on, music. And they're surrounded by people who are of like mind and common cause on this issue of vaccine mandates. And I think that must have been really exhilarating for them. And we heard that from so many protesters, how much fun they were having, and they perceive this as just being a really good, spirited, friendly event. And so, because of television, of course, you know, we are can't tell a story without our pictures. So, we set cameras up everywhere. And on that first day, it went pretty well, we were expecting some negative reaction. And we certainly got that when we went to try and interview people who want to ask them on camera, why they came and what issues were important for them. And, you know, I would say on that first day, maybe half the people would kind of turn on their heel and say grumble something about fake news, and I'm not going to talk to you. But there was a number of people who did and it was really useful getting their perspectives on this. And they kind of had a maybe a moderating effect on the other side, because people saw them talking to us. So that first day went pretty well. We had hired private security like CBC had. And after the first day, we're thinking about, maybe we kind of overreacted a little. But then it changed, the tone really changed. And hat original group that came on the weekend, mostly went home, leaving a much smaller, more committed and determined group.

So, then we would send our cameras back up on Parliament Hill every day to shoot new images. And we're conspicuous. I mean, the thing about it's different from some of my printer online colleagues is, when we send a camera crew into the field, everybody knows, they have big cameras that go on the camera operator shoulder, we have light, sometimes we have sound people, often a producer comes with them. And then there's the reporter, so we kind of become a magnet to people who want to express their views with the media. And that really started happening a lot more. So, we had people who would yell the usual things, fake news, tell the truth. You're all a bunch of liars. The theme about how we're on the government payroll was one we heard a lot, which is bizarre to me, but because we're not my network doesn't participate in this media fun that seemed to trigger a lot of people. Not that I think necessarily doing so would compromise their integrity. But that was a real flashpoint for them. So, and the other thing was, you know, in those first couple of days is they were really a lot of the protesters

were very upset about the reporting of the fact that someone had a flag or at least two flags with a swastika and Confederate flags. And we felt that by us reporting that we had tarred the entire group unfairly and there was concern about that. Even though, on our newscasts, we, of course, we have been negligent not to include that in reporting because it's a scolding image, it's enormously offensive to a great number of people. But they felt that that was we portrayed them all as, as a bunch of racists or anti-Semites. So, things after those first couple of days were not going well. And we had to kind of retrench and think about how we're going to do this.

For the rest, we didn't know how long that's going to be, but we knew it was going to be a while. So, we try to kind of reduce the size of our footprint of our crews. So that meant moving to smaller cameras, smaller crews, no sound tags just going out individually. And they blended in pretty well, because everybody at the protest pretty much all the time had a phone out, shooting their own images. So, we were able to send even our producers out not necessarily our camera operators, and they could shoot images as well on their phones. So that that way of adapting worked pretty well, we still had some, you know, we still had those moments where we had to go interview somebody off into the window of a big rig, we of course identify ourselves, and that would often provoke the same kind of response. But we said we thought that was going okay, we were getting the images, we needed to do our stories, and to a lesser success, we're getting people to talk to us, but we were still managing to do it. And I give credit to our young producers and our bureau who are really good at that and convincing people even though we're with the dreaded legacy media that they would still speak to us. But the one thing that was that was really tough was doing on camps. So, at the end of conventional television report, the reporter appears, says a few pithy words, and throws back to the anchor, to go in different names, and we call them on cams, or on cameras, our shops on places, call them standups. But they're hard to do discreetly, because you, first of all, you have to go out at night, and you have to use lights, and you want to have a backdrop that is reflective of the story you're covering. So that means you want to get as close to the protest as you can. And then you have sometimes a sound technician, alone to help as well. And then there's reporters staring in front of the cameras. And those really became difficult, and they got harder and harder as the protest went on. Because we attracted people just soon as the light would go on, on the on the camera, then people would kind of flock to us. And I wouldn't say we it happened every night. But all but maybe a couple of nights, we had really unpleasant negative interactions. I mean, language thrown at us, that's, you know, I hear every day my newsroom. It's not like, not shocking to me. But the but the anger and contempt that was being expressed. And we tried to kind of develop some, I tried to kind of try some things to deal with it. You know, sometimes I would just ignore it completely and do like 1000 Yard Stare and pretend they weren't there. I didn't usually work. Other times when people come up and start yelling at us and calling us fake news. I try and engage with them a little bit. Sometimes I'd be trying to be more personal and say, Hey, do you mind if I just do my bit because I got to go home and walk the dog or see my kid like, just give me a second. And that usually didn't work. And they really just wanted to disrupt it. I mean, that was all they wanted to do. I mean, when people would run into our shots behind us, people would start yelling soon as I started reading my line, they were just determined to impede our process. And you know, I'm somebody occasionally when I talk to people, you know, I feel a little more rambunctious and I want to engage more. And say what you say on fake news, what's fake about my newscast? And then they would say,

well, you're all fake. All you do is lie. And it became evident to me that most of these people who were doing this had completely unsubscribed from my newscast and my colleague's newscast. And so they couldn't really say what they thought was wrong. Some of them did mention the depiction of the swastika and the Confederate flags. But beyond that, it was just kind of a general sense. And it was like it was wisdom made received from elsewhere and we're spreading. It wasn't really opinions they had formed. So that made it very difficult to kind of respond in any way, any way to it.

I guess it was the day that police finally moved in on to Parliament Hill, I think was a Saturday. Our Bureau got a call from MSNBC in New York, they want to report it to do a hit. And I was kind of up in a rotation and I just had this like sense of dread it was going to go really badly that day. And so, the camera crew got set up outside on Metcalfe and I went out, I thought it would just go up there again position, right at the exact time the hit is scheduled for the live hits or like connected live to MSNBC. And so, I get in position, I got my noise cancelling earbuds into drown out the people yelling at us. And there's a technical problem. That's like, we can't get the routing to New York, they have this device that sends signals and it wasn't working and did it. So, we understand that for 25 minutes. And as they're doing this, like the crowd gets bigger and bigger and bigger, until the point that there was probably 18, two dozen people like immediately around us. And we've got one security guy who's trying to keep him back. Evan Solomon is there trying to talk to people trying to distract them, because he's so he's like, such a friendly guy, like, everybody loves to talk to him, he's kind of a celebrity. So, he's trying to like hive people off away, so I can do this live hit. But it didn't really work. And, and finally, we get the connection to the, to the studio, and then the anchor throws to me, and immediately just like a wall of noise, profanity, screaming, yelling, like, and because it's a little bit like a mob mentality where you have people will do things in, in groups that they won't do, individually or in smaller groups. And but so they were just kind of goading themselves into this, and it completely drowned out the head. And I think the anchor at MSNBC had like no idea what was going on. And then, you know, she heard somebody screaming, some salty language, and she's like, Okay, thanks. And that was it. They cut her off. And that was it. And so, they succeeded, like those people who really don't like the media and think were lying about everything, managed to shut down our hit. Victory for them, maybe.

So, I give these examples not to try to engender any sympathy for us. Because everybody was physically safe. I think in the total of the three weeks, there was one incident when Raphael from TBR got physically pushed while he was doing an on cam. Like pushed towards onto the ground by a protester, who was like really stupid, because the cameras pointed right at this person, right. And then Evan Solomon had a frozen beer can thrown at him, that missed him, but hit one of the flight cases and exploded. If it hit him, it would have been dangerous. So, I think I mean, this is something we're going to have to deal with. It's going to happen. The one strategy I adopted, and then I try to encourage other reporters in our bureau was, when we go out to do these on camps, until our camera tech, as soon as we get outside the doors, start recording, because I want you to get everything. And you know, in the potential, something bad happens, I want to have it on tape. And I also want to have it so that I can put it online because, and I started doing that when we people were coming out and harassing us at these on cameras. I started putting it online, because I wanted to show that this was not a small minority of this group, who was here in Ottawa, especially when it got smaller during the week. This was like a

substantial portion. And it was happening every night, it was different people every night, there was a lot of them. But they were united in this belief that the media is lying about them. And we can talk about solutions, like kind of a bit.

Adrian Harewood 1:03:31

Glen, I actually want to ask you a question, we're going to get to Justin, but you just said something, and you said it in passing, and you said it in a kind of a cavalier way. And you said that something is going to happen. We had a conversation the other day, in which you said that it's inevitable that someone's going to get badly hurt, badly injured, maybe killed? And is that what you think?

Glen McGregor 1:03:54

I mean, you know, look at the beer can. If it hits Evan in the head, he's going to be badly hurt. You know, Ray wasn't I don't think injured by that. But the more people saw this and normalize that behavior and rationalize it, because and, you know, certainly gets spread online. We see that. Just the reaction to when you posted this event on Twitter reaction is overwhelmingly negative. About right so I don't know where it's going. I mean, if we have another one of these protests, it's going to be a factor. And it wasn't just the protests in Ottawa. I mean, Sean O'Shea down in Windsor, same thing was happening to him. People, my colleagues from CP in Toronto, when the convoy rolled into them, they had to basically drive like run back to the car and get out of there. So, you know, I don't know if how violent is going to get we look what happened in the United States. Starting in 2016, this was a feature at Trump rallies, you know. So, I hope not. I hope people realize that it's this is not the right path to go on. And I hope, kind of the political leadership kind of redirects them and says, Hey, this is not we won't be doing.

Adrian Harewood 1:05:07

Thank you. Justin.

Justin Tang 1:05:09

Yeah, thanks. I guess I'll just share briefly about what it's what it's like to be a photojournalist for this. I mean, I guess for journalists, we don't we often are hidden behind our cameras. And we don't often end up on the stage. So, forgive me here. But you know, I want to share about kind of what my goals were when I would go out. I mean, I covered pretty much every day, except for maybe four or five or six days. Out downtown. But you know, what is important for me to do my job is to be on scene, we have to be there in person, you have to take the pictures, you have to show people what they're not seeing if they can't be there. And then you have to go file those photos, and then you have to go home. So those are the most important tasks for me. And so, I decided that I would kind of carry myself in a way that I could accomplish those things every time I went out. Because, I couldn't file, I cannot do my job. And if I don't go home, that's that. So, you know, you want to go home. So, I decided from the get go, the first Friday, when everyone was coming in, I was going to start covering from a bridge. People were waving flags, and receiving honks, I guess. And so, I said, knowing what I know about some of the folks that are going to be supporting this, I'm going to not wear a mask. I figured, you know, I've had two vaccines and a booster, if I, if I were to get sick, hopefully I'll be able to get better. If I get into a discussion that turns into something physical, I'm not sure, you know. I don't want to I don't want to have that risk. And

my sense was that the mask would just draw way too much attention towards that, that physical thing that hopefully didn't have to be there. You know, when you show up with a camera, you change the dynamic immediately. I don't want to use my iPhone, you know. It's possibility that you could go out and use a really small camera or something like that. Which, which has been something that's been discussed in various panels that I've listened to talking about security, especially in the wake of the January 6th events in the States. I wanted to use the cameras that I normally use, it's very conspicuous. And like I said, it definitely changed the dynamic. So, I wanted to reduce the chances of getting into a discussion or into something else that that would impede my ability to work. And I wanted there to be less, you know, to be to blend in. Less than anything to distract from what I was doing, and the people that I would be interacting with. And I think that kind of shaped the rest of the way I decided to carry myself which was to blend in. And we do that all the time as photojournalists, you know, you work on Parliament Hill, you wear a suit jacket, you wear a tie. You go to cover a protest, you're going to wear, your boots that you can run in or a jacket that allows you to not feel to handle the -20, -25. You dress to blend in, you dress so that you can do the job.

Covering of the convoy, I figured out different ways that I was going to actually be able to do my work successfully without having to negotiate different barriers to that. And one of those ended up being, like, having a forward and kind of cheery disposition. So, that that meant that you know, because folks were so you know, you got that right away that they were very suspicious of, of the mainstream presses as they would say. I found that interacting with people on a on a very easy going away, would actually put people at, I would say put people at ease, someone might say, oh, you know, putting them in a good mood or something like that. But a lot of the time it would be coming up to someone and preempting anyone's negative reaction towards you just by saying, Hey, how are you doing? Or like, for a while it was like, Wow, you got so many jerrycans or like, or like oh my gosh, I can't believe you're filling up. This this, you know, this pickup truck and the police, they're over there. And they're like, yeah, like, of course. And you get a sense of, of who people are in this unguarded way. And then it's like, do you mind if I'm photographing you and then it turns to no problem in a good number of situations. So, I really found that by carrying myself in a way that was non-threatening to these folks, I was able to do my job. And people were showing me how they were feeling, which is important for me as I document this.

Now, I think Justin mentioned something that is part of the crux of the difficulty in reporting this is that there are so many things that are true at the same time, that kind of, if you're not able to hold them, at the same time, you would say that these can't be happening at the same time. But, you know, it is true that multiple things happen this same time. In that, you can have a largely nonviolent protest, where people are not actively injuring each other. And you can also have a protest, where people are, for example, to bring it back into the local context, people are suffering. So, for the visual journalist, that becomes the challenge of how do you depict an event, where there are people who are having a great time, who have found a legitimate community with each other, that cannot be denied when you're when people have come together, are living together, are eating together, they have found something true amongst themselves. And then, you know, we talked about we talked about the bouncy castles and hot tub, of course... Then how do you frame that among the other currents of what is happening? As a

photojournalist, I'm not able to always be there when something of the aggression, for example, is happening. But the hot tub for me is an example, because I think that was a good example of where we're trying to show something to set the scene. And on the one sense, the convoy members would have told would have wanted us to say, look, the hot tubs are here. This is you know, this is the most fun carnival, this is extremely peaceful. And you know, that scene, indeed, it was peaceful. There was no violence in the hot tub. You saw what I saw. There was the fun I missed, I missed a number of hot tub opening, but I did finally catch the hot tub. I would have been very sad if I missed the hot tub. Because it was bizarre. And it was strange. And this is what I wanted to show in the picture of the hot tub like you have Wellington Street. But you also have this incredible scene and the viewer can make up their own mind. Once they see this. They can they could decide, oh, well, it looks like it is indeed the most fun carnival, or they could see the context of what is in the image and say, that's kind of odd. There is a hot tub in the middle of the street beside a whole bunch of hay bales on Wellington Street, which is a street. Streets normally don't have hot tubs. And then they can they can make up their minds from there. And that's I think what the job of the visual journals is to do is to bring the viewer in and say, this is what I saw. Maybe, you know, maybe the streets are normally a certain way, but I'm seeing it a little differently today. And I want you to ask some questions about why.

Adrian Harewood 1:13:47

Thank you, Justin. I want to get to questions. But I get this there's a bit of a division. I think within this panel. There're some folks, you know, Justin, you were saying that you feel as if journalists performed well, during this moment in time. Rupa, you know, suggests that that journalists are part of the problem, and that journalists, mainstream journalists in this country exist in this quasi or exist in this echo chamber. Jorge, I'm hearing from you that perhaps you think that we're not listening, as well, or as deeply as we need to, when we're not listening to these folks who feel alienated and they feel somewhat detached from us. Glen, we were having the conversation the other night where you were saying that journalism as a profession has changed. This used to be a blue-collar occupation. Now the people who occupy these positions are from the social elite in this country, and that that perhaps accounts for the way in which we engage or don't engage. The question, I'm going to start with you, Justin, are journalists part of the problem? And if so, what do we need to change in order to become engaged again, with this population that feels as if we have contempt for them? And that we don't listen to them?

Justin Ling 1:15:16

Listen, I have lots of complaints about journalism. I could keep you here all night with my complaints about various aspects of the industry. And you know, Glen is to some degree right now, this used to be a blue-collar profession, and to a large degree, folks who can afford to do it are the ones who occupy that we're using the word occupy a lot, and I'm realizing that the problem, but yeah, it's funny, because I'm not from that. You know, I flunked out of journalism school twice. I'm from a coal mining town in Nova Scotia. I'm not from the rarefied air of some of the (no offense to the rarefied air crowd) but some of the journalism schools in Ontario and Quebec. And, I'm sympathetic to the argument that journalism has gotten a bit detached from the everyday concerns of folks who live in this country and folks who

experience economic social hardship. But at the same time, we have to stop playing into the game, that just because someone invokes that complaint, they're right.

So let's talk about many of the people who came to occupy this city. In many respects, you know, they are people who have tremendous assets. In some cases, owner/operators have, you know, significant businesses, which doesn't make their complaints illegitimate. But you know, they're not folks who are necessarily experiencing economic hardship. In some cases, they are folks who lost their job. But let's also be clear, there are folks who lost their job, because we wanted them to do something that will stop people from getting sick and dying, right. It's not something we're arbitrarily imposing on them, just to, you know, get our jollies off and crushing the little guy. This was a measure done to make sure that our hospitals didn't collapse. Right. This was not a punitive measure. And there's also a significant number of people involved in this who led this who organized this who brought people into it, who are not, you know, working class heroes. There are people who have peddled in disinformation, who have peddled in conspiracy theories, who have taken advantage of regular everyday folks who are just frustrated with government and who have weaponized them to their own ends. There are people who have political ambitions people like Maxine Bernier, a people like Randy Hillier, Derrick Sloan people like Ezra Levant, who is suing me, so I'll stop, I'll stop there. But people who are trying to build media empires off of this, who are using these people, to advance their own political agendas, and I think the many of the conservative party also have a tremendous amount of blame to shoulder there, as do some people... the Liberal Party for using them for weaponize them in the opposite direction.

But nevertheless, just because these people are frustrated and alienated from the media doesn't mean that their complaints are necessarily justified. There are a ton of people who are alienated from the media whose complaints are justified, and we should talk to more frankly. But I think there's also a real problem we have and this is one thing, I think the media got quite wrong in the early days of this is that we were really willing to hear a lot of these people on their own terms, right? We're really willing to take what they're saying at face value. And frankly, I think Rupa is incredibly guilty of this. She spent a tremendous amount of time during this occupation, repeating verbatim what she was hearing from folks who organized and participated in the occupation in a way that I think was, you know, not was not critically engaging with what was really going on. You know, there's this little parable about a guy who lives in Edinburgh who opens the evening newspaper and sees that drunkard outside of London has driven his tractor into a barn, and he closed the newspaper and said, Well, no Scotsman would ever do that. The next day, he opens up the paper. And it turns out a really similar incident happened, just up the road from him there in Scotland. Guy gets drunk, crashes his tractor into a barn, and the guy closed the newspaper and said, well, No True Scotsman would ever do that. And it felt like that was constantly what we were doing during this there was these people who were going. Yes, yes, yes, he's waving a Nazi flag, but no true member of the occupation would do that. Yes, yes, yes, he believes the World Economic Forum is part of an international conspiracy to enact a one world socialist government, but no true trucker would ever believe that right. And it's a really endemic problem, because at a certain point, you have to listen to some of the, you know, less savory things these people are saying and proposing and going, well, maybe that's what they really believe. Maybe all this stuff about the vaccine

mandates for truckers is a bit of a cover because they know it sounds less offensive. Then, you know, there's a secret somewhat Jewish cabal that's secretly running the world.

Adrian Harewood 1:19:54

Jorge, is Rupa right?

Jorge Barrera 1:20:00

I think it's more of a structural thing. I think information, the structure of information has changed. Where it used to be more like vertical, and now it's horizontal. And so, the institutions that were responsible for disseminating information and people relied on suddenly have been blasted by what is, you know, online. And the fact that 1000 people could all do their own live stream reports from what was happening in Ottawa. And I think that structural change is what's changed. I think, the fact that authority over what is information, what is news, what is truth, what is fact, is now been completely democratized, for lack of a better but everybody has the power to do what we do within institutions. And yes, there is an advantage to being an institution that does journalism. It's very difficult to report on Ukraine, unless you have institutional backing, you have multiple reporters, in multiple areas with security, that can extract you after you get shut up, like those reporters from Sky News. So, there are advantages for, but structurally, things have changed. And that structural change has just by its nature, undermined or eroded the trust that the public has, in what we do. So, I think it's a structural change, it's not necessarily that we're doing a bad job. It's just that's the way the system was working. Now, it's just it's shattered.

Adrian Harewood 1:21:40

Judy, is Jorge being a little soft, there? And I ask that, because you have one of your many gifts is that you get people to talk to you, right? You have this ability to get a lot of different kinds of people in different situations to talk to you. You were able to get a lot of these protesters to feel as if they could trust you. And they told you things that they didn't tell other reporters. You perhaps approached this task in a different kind of way. Are we listening in the way in which we need to listen? Are we engaging in the way in which we need to engage?

Judy Trinh 1:22:14

I am more critical of how we as media are doing it in terms of just the amount of centralization we have. Like if we were to be honest with ourselves, right... When was the last time we traveled outside the downtown core to West Carleton to do a story? A daily news story. You know, south out political views of people in Barrhaven, right? When a lot of it is geography, most reporters live in the downtown core. So in terms of what they see as story ideas, what they experience, it's, those are the ideas that are coming. It's because we want eyeballs for online stories. So, you know that if you are doing a story about a dense population in the core, you're going to get more eyeballs on it, because more people can relate to it. I think that we have to do better. I think that the reason why people feel that they are being heard is because they are getting these alternative news sources. And they're being listened to, I think that we need to travel up to the suburbs, we have to travel out to the rural areas more regularly, not just come election time, when we do our word stories or our constituency stories. It should be a regular part.

And it was. CBC Radio used to have one thing, and I think it should be a regular occurrence, they would call it naked radio in which they would just basically put it on the map. A lot of reporters would just basically choose, you know, blindfold choose an area and wherever they land, they would have to, like go out to that area, and they would have to come back by five o'clock and there would be a story. And there was always like this this fear, or am I going to get a story? Oh, my God, they're sending me out to you know, they're sending mail to Almonte, what's happening in Almonte? But they would always come back with a story and the stories would be great, because people are out there. And I think we need to do that regularly.

So, if we were to look at ourselves critically, we have to admit that we have, just how in the same way that we've ignored BIPOC populations, you know. There's also a little bit in which like you're looking at, you know... It's interesting that some comments online say that there is no diversity in this panel. Right that we are but look at this panel. It's very diverse, divided ideology. Right. But even if you were to look at what the stories that we have covered, right, so you have someone covering in terms of the religious aspect of someone covering in terms of the extremist elements, you know. I focused on police, there are people who are focusing on the politics. Right. So, this is a very diverse panel, in terms of the type of reporting that you are getting. This is a complicated story with so many facets, right. So, if we were able to show that, you know. On a regular basis that we were willing to go out of our zone, comfort zone. But, I think reporters are good at adjusting, right. And I think that for myself, you go where if you don't want if you want to break something new, that hasn't been heard of before that would stimulate people that would interest people you go where everyone else isn't. So that is something that we should do on a regular basis.

Adrian Harewood 1:26:07

Glen, has journalism changed? You've been involved in this in this business for a while now. Has the profession changed? Have journalists themselves change in the way in which they?

Glen McGregor 1:26:20

Sure, absolutely. But I think the problem we're kind of trying to address hasn't. And I agree with Judy, that we don't cover marginalized communities often as well as we should, for a lot of different reasons. A lot of it is the constraints on the industry we've seen. But I mean, I remember when I started working the Ottawa Citizen, during a Liberal government, and it was then owned by Southern newspaper. And so, I would do stories trying to hold the government to account. And I would get all this criticism saying that this is big corporate media, pushing the base street agenda, that you're getting your marching orders from Conrad Black.

Adrian Harewood 1:26:59

So, there's a conspiratorial curatorial thing.

Glen McGregor 1:27:00

There's a conspiratorial thing. And I think. and Jorge touched on this a little bit as well, with the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle. It's really good point. So, it's not the exclusive domain of

conservatism, although it is right now. And I do think these things kind of come in waves, and are probably tied to problems of inequality and economic inequality, I think, probably a big driver, too. But that's, you know, bigger minds than mine. So yeah, I agree. You know, we've got to do a better job at reaching out to marginalized groups. We've been through a bit of a reckoning on this. With trying to reach out to racialized groups and mixed results on how well that's going. But, and we saw this in the United States, because nobody understood the size of what was a primarily white, rural underclass that was set out suddenly a dominant political actor and got Donald Trump elected right. For a book called *Hillbilly Elegy* that kind of describes this culture that journalists have completely missed, don't understand it's gone completely on the radar. Is that happening here? Maybe a little bit. But at the same time, I mean, I don't think we have to indulge. Listening to them does not mean sitting down and having them tell us how you're on the payroll for the federal government. And you're, you know, you're getting phone calls from the public safety Minister, you know, I mean, just all the conspiratorial stuff. So, I don't know what solution is to any of that. So yeah, I agree. But we've got to do better at covering those groups. But at the same time, we can say some of them have just checked out, and you're not going to convince people to come back to mainstream media.

Adrian Harewood 1:28:46

Raisa, better job, do we have to do a better job?

Raisa Patel 1:28:50

I mean, I just kind of going off, like, what Glen was saying. I've been a full-time journalist for less than three years. And so, for me, it's, I feel like I joined this industry at a time of total chaos, like as soon as I graduated, I was like, what the hell have I done? And what have I gotten myself into? Because, you know, very quickly after I graduated J school, it was, you know, a pandemic, and everything just seemed to go south from there. And so, it's a great question in terms of what we can do better because I feel like I've only known chaos. I think what's really important though, is that we don't underestimate and undermine people, no matter who those people are. And, you know, as Glen mentioned, we saw that, you know, across the border, we saw that with the rise of Trump. Where that sentiment was made fun of it was downplayed, and in the lead up to this convoy. I heard journalists say like, let's, let's think of that, let's repeat that here. But I think, you know, elements of that did creep into the discourse. Anyway, it was Diane Dean who said this was a carnival of chaos. And I think the word carnival was used a lot and it was really easy and really tempting sometimes to slip into that mentality of the bouncy castles, hay bales, the connect-four, the hot tub, everything. And if I were to, you know, isolate a mistake in what we did here... and I think for the most part is, as Justin said, I'm proud of, of how journalists handled this and covered it... but I think that did slip into the social media discourse, especially just that, that focus on the party elements, the, the carnival, the people.

Adrian Harewood 1:30:42

There's a dismissive tone, there was a kind of the contempt?

Raisa Patel 1:30:44

Yeah, like it was unjust and I sort of put myself in the shoes of a convoy member in that moment and said yeah...if I looked on Twitter, and I looked to see what journalists were saying about us, and I was looking at some of these posts, you know, I would feel alienated. And I would, you know, be disinclined to speak with them. And so, at a very basic level, I sort of understand where they were coming from, in a lot of ways. And there's a lot of trust that that still needs to be rebuilt. I really do just want to underline that I think that journalists, you know, conducted themselves to the best of their ability throughout this situation. But it just sort of comes down to that idea of we can't, we can't undermine people when they have things that they want to say.

Adrian Harewood 1:31:33

Okay, just I'm going to come to you, but we should really go to some questions in the audience. And I know that my colleague, Brett Popplewell, who has written a fantastic article that all of you should read in The Walrus magazine that tells the story of the siege, the occupation, the protest demonstration, and in the most recent edition of The Walrus, it's really something that you should check out. Do we have any questions?

Allan Thompson 1:31:56

Yeah, why don't I just jump in. Just so people know, there are about 300 people watching this on Zoom as well. And there have been some questions and some comments, a lot. But I also want to give a chance to people in the audience. Brett Popplewell, and Matthew Pearson, two tall guys here, both have microphones and just in a sec I will ask, raise your hand if you want to get in a question queue and they'll eyeball you. From the webinar world: "The next webinar should be about Canadians under siege by the media. Another comment on the use of snarl words and PR words in journalism." "The very fact that convoy processes still being characterized by snarl words like Siege is part of the problem." "Do the seven people on this panel believe that this echo chamber will do anything to endear them to people who distrust them?" And then right after that, "I love this raw authenticity and approach. And I think this is what is missing in the written media." So, questions from the audience, and then I'll introduce a few from the webinar.

Audience Member 1:33:03

Audience member asks question here but is not audible in recording

Adrian Harewood 1:35:09

Anyone want to take a crack at that?

Justin Ling 1:35:18

I'll jump in and say, in short, yes. I mean, listen, it's undeniable. I mean, I think you can look at this party and any sane person would tell you: this is a party that wants to win back the one 820,000 votes that went to the People's Party last election, and that they consider this an electoral strategy to victory. I don't think they're even making a secret out of it. The question is, can that party do so in such a way that actually hears their concerns without validating their derangements? Frankly, or are they going to fall into the pit with some of these more conspiracy minded elements? I'll give you a little parable about

this, because Candice Bergen was photographed. And she actually one of her colleagues actually posted to her Facebook, she was photographed with two of the occupiers. And day four of the occupation, they were sitting in a restaurant at Laurier, you know, maskless, or whatever. And they're sitting around the table having a drink. And I asked the Conservative Party and the Conservative Party said, Whoa, no, no, Candice Bergen just saw them there and said, thank you to truckers, because she wanted to support truckers because that's what this is all about.

I find one of the guys who was one of the occupiers, and I get them on the phone, and I say, tell me what's up. And the government's very, very pleasant. And again, it's kind of the duality of the protest very, very nice guy that was not screaming at me over the phone, we had a very pleasant conversation. And he said, he's like, no I'm not actually a trucker. You know, I own a construction firm, and I have a truck, but whatever. And, you know, he said, it was really great, too. So encouraging to us, she was giving us the thumbs up telling us to keep going. And it was so wonderful. And I think, you know, it's great that she's recognizing this about the vaccine mandates. And I said to him, you know, I'm staring at your Facebook right now, you're sharing things that say that, you know, scores of people are dying from the vaccines. And you're castigating the media for not reporting on these debunked studies that say the vaccines are incredibly dangerous and part of this international conspiracy, you know, like, do you think it's, I mean, do you think it's wise for politicians to be sitting in either meeting with you or negotiating with the organizers considering that you're supporting a point of view that is, you know, what, the range? It's a conspiracy theory, and I was up front with him. And he said, Yeah, I hear you. But no, no, I think we're right.

And fundamentally, this is the problem. I mean, a ton of these people are really earnest. And I guarantee you on a bunch of matters, from economic policy to, you know, health care policy, they're really reasonable people who have really valid concerns that should be heard. But when it comes to this pandemic, and when it comes to vaccines when it comes to public health policy. And you know, and a couple other friends, they have fallen into a pit of conspiracy theories, they have exclusively begun reading outlets that lie to them, and that take their money and return to them nonsense. And if the Conservative Party wants to spend a ton of time convincing those people to come into the fold, I think they're going to fall into the quicksand with them.

Adrian Harewood 1:37:15

Anyone else have something to add to that? No. Okay, we do have another question.

Audience Member 1:37:25

Thank you so much everyone for coming out and for being here. My name is Noah. I'm a journalist, here in Ottawa. And I did go through the Carleton program a little while ago. I just want to touch on this idea of bias because it's something we hear a lot as journalists and I had a very interesting experience. I covered the occupation on the first day and on the last day and it was a bit of an interesting experience, because I work for CPAC, our parliamentary affairs channel here in Ottawa. And I got asked a lot, are you going to twist my words, you know, what I went up to ask people to talk to me. And I said, I'm here to listen, and to hear what you have to say, because that's part of CPAC mandate, we,

you know, share what Canadians are saying from coast to coast on a variety of issues. And as soon as I described it that way, I got flocks of people wanting to talk to me, because I was just there listening, letting them you know, share, as, as Justin would say, a lot of crazy, unbelievable conspiracy conspiratorial things. But I do want to touch on this idea of bias, like how as journalists, do we do we even believe anymore, that we can be fully objective? Because here we all are here, we all have been vaccinated, because we're all in this room. So clearly, we're biased towards public health measures, we put doctors on television, we hear from experts who believe in the pandemic, believe in public health. So, I guess when we go about our daily lives as journalists, like, how can we truly be objective, and are reporting and how important is that anymore? Because I know when I was in journalism school, that conversation was just starting, and I don't think it's been fully resolved. But I know a lot of younger journalists feel that the idea of objectivity is sort of a falsehood because how can we really be truly objective?

Jorge Barrera 1:39:25

I don't think you should try to be objective, I think you should try to be impartial.

Adrian Harewood 1:39:27

What does that mean?

Jorge Barrera 1:39:29

Well, you don't approach any story with an end. A predetermined end. You just you just go where the story takes you. And I don't think there's one way to cover. For example, to the convoy, there's many, many channels that you can take. I guess by picking a channel, you're getting rid of that objectivity. But when you pick a channel, you try to remain impartial. I think in partialities, what we should strive for, in my opinion.

Adrian Harewood 1:40:10

Are you aware of your biases?

Jorge Barrera 1:40:12

Am I? Yeah, absolutely.

Adrian Harewood 1:40:15

What are they?

Jorge Barrera 1:40:17

What are my biases? I guess some, I am partial to movements that try to challenge the system. I really, I gravitate to those stories. I gravitate to stories where there is high tension, and the stakes are really high. So, when I cover something like that, I have to be very careful not to get swept up in the and I mean...

Adrian Harewood 1:40:58

But you also have an expertise, because you spent a lot of time I pick up these things, and you immersed yourself.

Jorge Barrera 1:41:00

I've covered a lot of civil conflict throughout my career, primarily through, you know, land, a resistance with Indigenous nations and communities. So, I'm familiar with how the state interacts with these sorts of situations and I saw what happened coming a mile away. The moment that they went after the Ambassador Bridge, I knew that this was going to end with, you know, some serious force. And when they did a little tour around the airport, I knew that was a huge red flag. I know, within, you know, security services that was taken note of the moment you start targeting critical infrastructure. I think, the I mean, we're getting away from the question.

Adrian Harewood 1:42:00

But I think it is the question.

Jorge Barrera 1:42:03

Okay, I mean, I took the religious aspect of it, because I actually grew up in an Evangelical Church and a lot of the stuff that I started to see were familiar to me. And I actually thought that this would be a way for me to find common ground with people who were involved if I went in and actually looked to find Christians and then established my understanding of their faith views. As a common ground, I would be able to... what I wanted to do was understand sort of the life journey that leads an individual to that point. And I knew that there was a lot of hostility to the media, and I had faced some of it. So, What's the crack that I can find? And so, I chose something that I was familiar with. I'm a religious studies major. I never went to journalism school, but I see religion in a in a different way. So, I wasn't going to get into a theological debate about how they interpreted the book of Revelation or certain parts of the Old Testament. Right, I had, you know, I had to sort of rein that stuff in. I tried to be impartial and just go where were my interviews in my interactions took me.

Adrian Harewood 1:43:18

If I could just really quickly ask you, Justin, like, how do your biases affect the pictures you take and you don't take?

Justin Tang 1:43:24

Yeah, I mean, I think, to navigate for a moment away from bias, I think, you know, my personal view on like, objectivity in photojournalism. Everything that you do as a photojournalist, as a visual journalist, you know, you're operating camera is a decision. And it's a decision that if you're a step to the left, you're looking at something that could be different. The composition changes if you go an inch to the left. And so, everything that we do, from the lens that you pick to the setting on your camera, can change the way the picture looks. So, objectivity is not something that I that I would, you know, profess. I think that I'm looking for context. I'm looking for overarching themes. I'm looking for that what I'm seeing is informing what I'm going to bring my eye towards. And the stories that our reporter colleagues are working on, those helped to narrow where I'm going to look. There're so many decisions in that

way. To me, that takes it away from a concept of objectivity. But I do believe that there is a kind of like an overarching true story that we're looking to portray.

Adrian Harewood 1:45:11

Thank you. Next question over here.

Audience Member 1:45:15

I was struck by Jorge's comment that the Conservatives lost in this kind of equation. And I just wonder if you could expand on that, because as Justin talked about, there was a really big unification of a lot of groups, not just PPC. Not just certain other people that were racialized groups. There were, Every Child Matters flags, there were Black Lives Matter. So, I would really like to hear how you expand on how the Conservatives maybe didn't benefit from this, because it feels a little bit like it was a power grab, in some ways with the leadership change, and other aspects.

Jorge Barrera 1:45:50

What I based on, I had probably about a dozen on the record interviews with people and I spent hours. And most of the people I interviewed, I asked them, who did you vote for? How have you boarded? And almost all of them said they traditionally voted conservative but they no longer saw themselves in that. Those that did answer how they voted in the last federal election, told me that it was PPC, but they were unsure what they were going to do next. And based on sort of the intelligence that they would share with me about how other people that they knew that were there, it seemed that most people would have traditionally, according to them, voted for the conservatives. So that it seems based on just my own interactions and who I interviewed, that a lot of the people there came from that constituency. And in a way you could I mean, it's not a perfect parallel, but I think there's a potential because I think there's a lot of power to people interacting, and I think that that energy is going to continue. It's going to, you know, they're they all have their own networks of friends, they all have their families. And I think there is a potential that it could be as sort of a tea party type of situation where there is going to be a strong constituency, maybe based regionally, maybe rurally, that will actually have power within the Conservative Party. If you have certain ridings that you know, the majority who put those MPs in, you know, start tilting one way. You could actually create these power blocks that could have an effect on how that party. I mean, we it was split before it was split three ways, right? So, it's not a new thing. The Fault Lines are there, they were papered over. So, it's not new as well, I'm just I was just basing it on the people that I actually sat down and talked to. And almost all of them voted traditionally conservative.

Adrian Harewood 1:48:00

Thank you. Right.

Audience Member 1:48:02

Thanks for all being here today. My name is Sarah. I'm a student at Carleton in the master's program in journalism. And I was sort of wondering what your reactions to this sort of "citizen journalism" that presented itself through things like live streams or social media throughout the protest. And as you've all mentioned, a lot of people who said everyone I met has been really great, or all those people who

wandered around with their cell phones out live streaming everything, as it was happening as well. And the critique that journalism only covered the bad moments and ignored moments like the people who went and cleaned up the statues or the monuments in downtown Ottawa. And I'm wondering if you guys think that this sort of citizen journalism or live streaming that shows these isolated moments within the protest, if that continues to create division in society and what the responsibility of journalists is to dispel that type of division.

Adrian Harewood 1:49:07

I guess, Judy, to take that and then Raisa.

Judy Trinh 1:49:10

We can't be everywhere at once. We have to verify video that citizen journalists take. We have to take it we as a you know, something happened here. Did this happen? Can we report on it? Can we get to the person? So, I think that citizen journalists are important, that there is value in that. But what I am concerned about is that everyone is considered a citizen journalist just because you have a camera and you're rolling. Like, when I'm watching those feeds that are going constantly, what I'm hearing is commentary, right? What I'm hearing about when they are you know...

Jorge was doing the Facebook live posts of his of the protests and police move moving in, but he has that knowledge of being at various protests. So, he knows he can give you that insight in terms of why police are advancing. They're advancing, you know, within increments, like maybe five meters every 15 minutes, right? This is part of what they do. But a citizen journalist who has never been in a situation like that would view that as violent, as forceful. And that's what they are putting out to their viewers, which is not the case at all. Because if you have covered protests, involving racialized individuals, involving Indigenous people, you know that the force of police comes so much faster, quicker. And so it's just, there's no comparison. It's not, you know, an increment of five meters every 15 minutes, nothing like that. So that's what I'm concerned about is that when citizen journalists are taken at face value and they're not just explaining what's happening, but they're telling you this is very violent. Did you see that? Did you see about officer, he just he talked back to me, this is what you're hearing. And I think that's a faulty perception. Just because you have a camera doesn't make you an expert or knowledgeable in what you are seeing it makes you someone who is experiencing it.

So, as reporters, we never tried to put ourselves in the stories. And when we were asked to report on something that we experienced, we put it in a perspective that we try to like strip it of its emotion, right. We describe to you exactly what happened to me but I'm not trying to put commentary on it. And I think that's my concern about it. Whereas I value it because I see some of the video and I know, I wasn't there. And I know that that's intrinsically newsworthy. I'm concerned about the individuals who are interpreting it and skewing what they see,

Adrian Harewood 1:52:05

Raisa.

Raisa Patel 1:52:06

Yeah, the citizen journalism question is interesting because I encountered citizen journalists out there who were, you know, "independent." They were not affiliated with the convoy in any way. And I saw many people who were affiliated with a conflict, who presented themselves as citizen journalists, as well. And it was, what I really don't want to do is police journalism and how journalism should be conducted. I don't want to say you should go to J- school, you should intern here, you should work for, a legacy media company, and that's what makes you a legitimate journalist... because that's not true. And we kind of need to get away from that mentality, actually. But it's sort of what Judy said, it's that being a journalist, you have certain context. You have certain skills. You have certain experiences that you bring to the job, and that's what you need to do it properly. And it's a little bit harder to verify that or get clear picture of that with a citizen journalist. You don't really know where they're coming from when they're approaching something. But at the same time with the rise of social media, we're getting that a lot more, we're seeing it a lot more. And you know, whether or not someone labels themselves a citizen journalist, if they're sharing things on social media or putting things out there... as long as we can verify that it actually happened, they can supplement our reporting in that way. So, I think we're kind of entering a really interesting space in terms of how we sort of coexist together and where that area of reporting goes.

Adrian Harewood 1:53:52

Really quickly. Glen, we were having a conversation the other night and you had had a rather modest proposal. You were saying that you wished that some of these protesters got an internship from CBC?

Glen McGregor 1:54:00

Yeah. Just to kind of explain, Well, first of all, debunk a lot of these ideas they have about how journalism works. That we're, you know, constantly on the phone, getting our instructions from the Prime Minister's Office. And also understanding this question about bias. That I think anybody's working newsroom realizes every reporter has their own set of biases. Very rarely, in my experience, is the predominant bias that anyone has, a political bias. Right. I mean, I've worked with lots of people in lots of different newsrooms, and I don't really know. I couldn't probably predict how many of them voted. But I do know who torques the story a little more to this this side and who kind of falls with a narrative bias, they tend to follow more rigid story structures. So, if you're exposed to those kinds of things, worked in a newsroom and saw how you what's really done... you would be disabused of a lot of the notions that we're all propagandists for whichever government that you oppose.

Adrian Harewood 1:55:00

Yeah, quickly, Justin.

Justin Ling 1:55:01

Judy is absolutely right that you can't really invent experience. But one really interesting thing about the citizen journalists is what Justin was talking about earlier. It was a perspective, right? You know, they were all intentionally aiming their cameras at certain things, right. You know, they wanted to show a perception of the occupation that came from their own bias, which they've not ever declared, right. You

know, there was a lot of people standing around filming the hot tub. Not a lot of those citizen journalists were filming as the three guys in the hot tub as were harassing a TV crew, just an hour later, right. You know, at one point at a press conference on the last day, one of the organizers said, "I did not see one instance of anyone involved with the occupation being aggressive with police." And people in the room from this press conference, supposed journalists, were going, "me either, I agree." "Yeah, Tom." And I'm just sitting there going, I literally an hour ago, watched a crew of people try to wrestle the cops to the ground. These people are choosing what they want to see and what they want to show the world. And that's fine. But we should be very clear about that.

Allan Thompson 1:56:05

I think we're moving it on two hours. So, I think I also have to use the prerogative of the chair to suggest a way that we might start to wrap up. So, I would propose a bit of a buffet of several questions that people can pick and choose which one they'd like to answer. There are many, many questions online. And I think I'd like to undertake that we will post those after the fact so that everybody's question is seen. And there's no sense that you're not getting on. It's just everyone's not getting on, because we're running out of time. So, I had a question from here. And then I think we'll take one from Matthew and one from Brett in the audience. A question here: how can journalism, productively engage with people who have unsubscribed from the news media, and have adopted the skepticism of fake news? That's one. Keep that in mind and let's grab a couple from the floor.

Audience Member 1:57:02

Hi, my name is Jayden. I'm a first-year journalism student from Carleton. Black, Indigenous, and people of color have had their stories oppressed in and inaccurately told for years. Black, Indigenous and people of color have had their rights infringed upon for centuries and continuously today. But we haven't seen them occupy a city or disrupt the functions of a city. This convoy primarily made up of white members of the right wing, claims that their freedoms have been violated for a few months. And it's something that we can't seem to stop talking about and we still are talking about today. So what message is the media sending because I'm sensing a kind of privilege? Now, I agree, we can't just neglect occupation of a city nor those on the right wing, but radicalized but racialized and marginalized communities have their stories untold on a regular basis. Why is it that when a group of primarily white and right-wing demonstrators claim fake news, we have to reach out to them and rebuild their trust. But when black and marginalized communities develop a lack of trust in media, nothing changes.

Adrian Harewood 1:58:11

Those are two big questions. And I think we need to address it. So, does someone want to address?

Judy Trinh 1:58:16

Can I take the race one? Okay. I think that there are systemic issues at play here. And that is evident in the convoy protests. I mean, it is a protest of predominantly white Canadians. White people demonstrating and the privilege that that brings the individuals who have been held responsible or accountable so far. Ottawa's first black police chief, Ottawa's first woman Police Board Chair. I mean, that should just scream out to you that there is something wrong. So, I hear you and I agree that there

are issues in terms of how media has covered minority communities and their protests. And I would argue also, and I would agree, that those issues are much more pressing. As to why there is this massive coverage of this protest is because this protest was massive. This protest was allowed to grow in scale to a degree because they were predominantly white individuals. If you listen to the convoy organizer when they are talking about how they should deal with police... you have a former ex-RCMP protection agent of the Prime Minister basically saying, I go up to police and I tell them we're just like you, I know you feel me. I know you understand me. We speak the same language. So, there are those ties. So, there are those ties of systemic issues, racism, discrimination, working together. And I think that is probably one aspect of the protest that has not been adequately explored and should be explored more. I will do it hopefully.

Adrian Harewood 2:00:17

Can I add one quick thing? A lot of journalists are allergic to race. They're allergic to it. They're uncomfortable confronting it and talking about it. And I actually think that the way in which the Sloy story initially was not told, was really revealing. Right, people were so uncomfortable even noting that he was the first Black chief in the city. Like there was a real reluctance to even engage in that kind of conversation, when that was one of the reasons why he was brought in to the city. Right, to address some of the kind of fundamental contradictions that exist within the community and to address some of the history of enmity, or the tension between the police force and racialized communities. So, I'm saying, as an industry, we need to become a lot more comfortable talking about race and we cannot continue to be allergic to it. Anyway, that's my soliloquy for the night. There was the other question as well.

Glen McGregor 2:01:26

How do you bring them back?

Adrian Harewood 2:01:27

Yeah

Glen McGregor 2:01:28

I'm not sure you can. I mean, I think once somebody has kind of gone over and checked out from reality-based media, fact-based media, and chosen things that confirm their beliefs. And there was a guy in Ottawa who, pre-internet, he used to walk around the streets of Ottawa, sticking mimeograph tracks that he'd written full of conspiracy theory about the Rothschilds, the New World, order all this stuff and stick it under people's windshield wipers. And his name was Harold Funk. And people come out to get their car at the end of the day and they think they got a parking ticket. And they were always relieved to see it was this thing that he had left there. And he was kind of harmless and benign. And I chatted with a few times, a nice guy. He's no longer with us. But if he were he'd probably be running Haroldfunk.com. And if you had a half decent web designer, beginning as many views, as a lot of other websites. And it was all crazy stuff, like it was just made no sense. It was wild conspiracy theory. But it's very hard now to differentiate, for an unsophisticated reader to tell what's right and what's not. And then you get to the whole confirmation bias, where you're going to give far more credibility to a source

that's confirming your own opinions than you would want that contradicts it. So, it seems I mean to be defeatist, but it seems irretrievable.

Adrian Harewood 2:02:55

Thank you for that. Can I just add one quick thing, just to clarify. Like, it's possible that race might have been involved with Sloly but it's also possible that he might not have been very good at his job. Like I'm saying that'll all come out. But we need to be able to deal with both of those things, at the same time.

Jorge Barrera 2:03:15

It's possible that the risk assessments that the Ottawa police did, and this has come out, massive blind spot, right. And I think it's possible well, and this will come out as to how they could have been blind to it. That played a factor. And I just want to say you know, you're right, I mean, look at what's happened in Caledonia with 1492 Landback Lane and what happened there. You know, very, very little coverage I was there. That was intense. But 2020 with the Mohawk Rail... I can't say it's a blockade because it just parked next to rails, but that did turn into a thing and why did it turn into a thing? Well, number one, because they stopped, it was critical infrastructure. The rail going, you know, the Via Rail and all that stuff. But that was triggered because heavily armed RCMP went in and raid Wet'suwet'en. Which happened, you know, months before this happened. But it's because it was between Montreal and Toronto or Ottawa and Toronto. It was critical infrastructure, that people covered it. So yeah, you're right there is there is there is a bit of a and this thing happened in Ottawa, his backyard, I think the Wet'suwet'en raids and the type of equipment and gear the RCMP used to go in that needed more scrutiny. There needed to be media there. Also issues with trust with media, with the people involved and all that stuff, but you raise a good point.

Justin Ling 2:04:48

One, we have to start asking when police go into an Indigenous encampment or go into a homeless encampment like they have in Toronto and use force like we've seen them use in the last couple of years... We should now start asking, how are you not able to deal with this like the Ottawa police dealt with the occupation of downtown Ottawa? Because evidently you were able to go and clear out several thousand people, who's really only leverage was the fact that had huge trucks with them. You were able to clear them out with basically zero injuries, zero tear gas, minimal pepper spray, minimal use of force, minimal arrests, nope, very little kettling. How come you can't do that with other groups? How come you can't do that when it comes to an Indigenous blockade or homeless encampment? And I think it's a question we better start asking from now on.

Judy Trinh 2:5:34

You know, we don't report it. But I will tell you that when I speak to officers during the protest, and like, why are you letting those jerrycans go? Why are you not intervening when you're supposed to be? You know. There's an attitude that they're not doing it because it's not real police work, right. Whereas if they are in riot gear, if they're advancing, that is policing. But there's also another attitude in which they tell me "well, they're harmless, like, it's a family event. It's bouncy castles, it's like Canada Day." Right? So, you've heard that a lot. This is a Canada Day vibe. And we need to ask this question, because the

interesting thing is, I don't think any racialized minority Indigenous group would even dare to fathom that they could take over Parliament Hill, or even and expect to be treated that way. Right? It would, it would not be allowed at all, it would not have lasted three weeks. And I think we have to acknowledge that. I mean, Ottawa's last elite... And the other thing that's interesting is this was never called illegal from the beginning. Which Ottawa requires permits for every type of protest. Right? So, when you have a protest without a permit, the first thing that someone says, they put it out there that it's illegal. So, everyone knows that when police advance this is an illegal operation. Right? So, the rhetoric at the beginning was they did not have permits. But even media didn't really report. Why didn't we use the word illegal? We said they didn't have permits, right? So, it softens language. And when I say that it's systemic, this is what I'm talking about. It's on us. It's on the policing. It's on politics on Parliament Hill. The other issue too, is if the last illegal protest, permitless protest, was November 2020, was a small group of black and Indigenous protesters who took over an intersection. So, within 36 hours, there was probably about 12 to 15 individuals who stayed overnight. And then around 2, 3am, you had 50 to 60 officers move in and basically dismantle their tent. And the reason why was because they were blocking a major thoroughfare. Laurier right, and access to the Queensway. Right, they could have used that justification to remove any other protesters within the first week if they wanted to. Yes, police may have been out numbered, and it's much harder to remove a tractor trailer. So, they had that. And that's why they, you know, they are, it was thought out, it was smart. They knew what they were doing. But at the same time, there wasn't that political will. And it's arguable whether or not that was because it was a predominantly white group of protesters. Canada being predominantly white, are we going to offend a huge swath of the population who would always suddenly see police force as "Oh, my goodness, you know, did you see that police force?" All of a sudden they're supporting defunding police because there's violence, right. So, there's all those issues at play. And we should acknowledge that.

Adrian Harewood 2:09:13

Well, that was powerful, thoroughly. Are there any other questions? No. All right I think people are almost ready to go. If one more one more question that keeps I'm ready to go. Last Last question over here.

Audience Member 2:09:32

So, some of you blended in and got really authentic reactions and some of you stood out and got disrupted. How did you decide what approach to use and how did the approaches and engaging with the protesters yield different reporting outcomes that your planned approaches give you the kind of responses that you expected?

Adrian Harewood 2:09:49

Someone want to take that question?

Jorge Barrera 2:09:50

Approach?

Allan Thompson 2:09:52

Again, it's like some of you tried to blend in and report and some of you just went in which can't be recorded. Which one worked and was there any limit?

Justin Ling 2:10:02

Let me briefly because I don't have anything with me, I'm freelance. Right, it's just me and my phone. I try and blend in as much as humanly possible. And, frankly, it worked. No one ever recognized me the entire time I was there, which thank God, because I can't imagine all of them were happy that I was there. I'm lying, there was one guy who recognized me. It was the funniest thing because he came up and he started ranting and saying, you know, "I really like your work, but you're not doing enough to cover the international money cabal that secretly run." And it was this weird thing where he was castigating me for not covering this conspiracy theory that he had invented. But also saying, I really like your work. And like, this is a very odd experience. Nice chat, but I'll just say is that, you know, it's a tough thing. To some degree, I actually opted largely not to go into interviews with people in the street. I like being a fly on the wall and eavesdropping and listening to what was being said. I did some interviews here and there and I got a sense of what people were out for. But largely, I wanted to just be in an of the occupation.

Obviously, others took different approaches. Which we need a plethora of approaches to cover this properly. But you know, I was very much a fly on the wall. Kind of move through the crowd, as much as possible, spend as much time in the occupation as I can. And it worked really well for me. But also, I think I've benefited from not being too public. And I'll just share this with you. The last day I was there, cops were maybe 20 feet up in the distance, they were slowly moving people back. And I saw this one woman who had her press credentials out. And I had gone to great lengths to kind of stuff my press credentials in my jacket for most of the week. And somebody had spotted on her and said, "Who are you with fake news media?" The whole spiel, and she's trying to ignore them. And there's people screaming at her. She's all by herself, she has no security. I'm kind of trying to get into this. And one of these guys gets right in her face and goes, Just you wait, when we beat them, you'll be swinging next to those other bastards up in Parliament." And this woman's face, like the blood is drained from it, you know. She's literally having this guy saying that he's going to hang her on Parliament Hill and it was really jarring. And people were just standing around, just kind of laughing at it like this was just normal at this point. And there is a real risk that people took when they went down there with their press credentials out, with their camera out, with their camera crew in tow. Not everyone had security with them. It was obviously was good that people did, but it was a really difficult thing to be there for those three weeks.

Adrian Harewood 2:12:29

Justin, the fact that, it seems everyone has a camera. Now everyone's a photographer, everyone's a camera person, does that make it easier for you to do your job?

Justin Tang 2:12:37

Well, from our experience, some of my colleagues that I've chatted with, it did change the dynamic and it did allow us to blend in and have those barriers that I talked about. It actually did reduce one of those

barriers. We were thinking, you know, are we going to have to go with one camera, you know, normally we have two cameras. And, and it was very strange because I've covered some protests. There were some of the BLM protests in 2020 where organizers were really quite afraid of cameras and were afraid of police using images of any sort, including photojournalism to identify protesters. To contrast that with this event where everything was being live streamed. And there was actually a funny moment where, you know, a colleague from Reuters and I were in one of the encampments, and this woman is like, "Who are you with?" And he was like, "I'm with Reuters." And I said, "No, I'm with CP." And then I was like "and where kind of watch your live stream?" And she said, "Well, I'm not telling you." And I said, "well, I guess I can't tune in then."

Adrian Harewood 2:14:10

And Jorge, you had a very particular experience of kind of being behind the lines with your cell phone and giving this almost kind of Hockey Night in Canada, comment style commentary.

Jorge Barrera 2:14:15

Yeah. So, during the day, when the police are to move in, I was live streaming for news network. My press credentials were out. I usually wore them out but at night they wanted sort of scene and just describe the front line. So, I went in without my press credentials and I drifted through the crowd to give sort of that on the ground image to supplement the cameras that were, you know, further back and taking more of a bird's eye view. Because The National wanted to get all perspectives. So, I just became another live streamer and people saw me with my phone and would be like, hey, freedom, and stuff like that, right? But really, I was just another channel streaming, you know, another fragment to reality, among a constellation of them at the same time. Some of the other streamers may have had more viewers than you did at the CBC... but this is the thing is like, I watched a lot and you had 14,000, or you had 40,000. And you had 5000, you have 500. And like that is a completely fragmented reality, because there's so many. You never had a critical mass just focusing on one. And I think that really also distorts everybody's perception of what's happening, because even those live streamers would put on their own personality. So, I think that the issue we're facing is just a completely fragmented image of what's happening.

Justin Ling 2:15:45

You also had multi streams where you had like seven different streams all at the same time.

Jorge Barrera 2:15:50

Yeah, people were ripping off each other's streams, and they'd get mad at each other and shut them, anyways...

Adrian Harewood 2:15:54

Well, on that note, I think we've come to the end of a really extraordinary session. I'd like to thank Justin Tang, Glen McGregor, Raisa Patel, Jorge Barrera, Justin Ling, and Judy Trinh. Thank you so much for your interventions, your contributions tonight.

Allan Thompson 2:21:18

Thank you, Adrian. This was clearly a conversation that we needed to have. And clearly, we've only just begun. And I just thank you, Adrian, thank you to our panelists for sharing your time. Thanks to all of you. Even Carleton students aren't required to sit for close to three hours in a row. So, thank you very much. Thank you to those who watched online. And we got to as many of the questions as we could in the time that we had. This is a wonderful space to have a conversation. So to Mara Brown and the team of the Dominion-Chalmers Center, thank you very much for helping us to make this happen. And to Carleton and all those who participated. So, have a great evening. And we will be posting a recording of this and a transcript after the fact. So for those who want to follow up and see more, it will be there. Thanks again. Good night.