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**Marshall Poe** [00:00:01] Welcome to the new books network.

[00:00:05] Hello, everybody, this is Marshall Poe. I'm the editor of the New Books Network. You're listening to a special podcast we're doing in conjunction with our friends at Princeton University Press. We call it the Princeton University Press Ideas podcast. In the podcast, we'll be publishing two interviews with Princeton authors every month. If you're interested in following along, you can subscribe to the Princeton University Press Ideas podcast on the NBN or on your favorite podcast app. The podcast includes not only interviews in the series, but all the interviews we've ever done with Princeton authors, hundreds of them. We hope you enjoy this series and we hope you visit our friends at Princeton University Press on the Web.

[00:00:46] This is Marshall Poe, and I'd like to welcome you to the inaugural episode of the Princeton University Press Ideas podcast. Today, we're very lucky to have Ismail White and Chryl Laird on the show, and we'll be talking about their terrific book, *Steadfast Democrats: How Social Forces Shape Black Political Behavior*. So, Dr. White and Dr. Laird, I'd like to welcome you to the show.

**Ismail White** [00:01:14] Thank you.

**Chryl Laird** [00:01:15] Thank you for having us.

**Marshall Poe** [00:01:16] Absolutely. Dr. White, could you begin by telling us a little bit about yourself?

**Ismail White** [00:01:21] My name is Ismail White. I'm a professor of politics and public affairs at Princeton University.

**Marshall Poe** [00:01:30] Dr. Laird?

**Chryl Laird** [00:01:31] Yes, I am Chryl Laird. I am an assistant professor of government and legal studies at Bowdoin College.

**Marshall Poe** [00:01:38] Well, thank you both very much. Now, as I said in the pre-interview, I was going to ask this rather pointed question. And Dr. Laird, you can go first because we're taking turns. Why did you write this book?

**Chryl Laird** [00:01:52] So it's interesting. I think a lot of the motivation that stemmed from this book is trying to understand a political phenomenon that we've all been observing, which is this bloc voting among African-Americans and recognizing that some of our traditional measures that we've used in political science to try to understand it actually don't provide the explanation that we are expecting it to provide. So we were left with a puzzle, which is we really don't know how this partisanship is maintained. We understand that it is fairly cohesive, but we don't know what is doing that work. What is the mechanism at play? I think that that was a lot of what drove Ismail and I towards this project was trying to answer what seemed to be an unanswered question.

**Marshall Poe** [00:02:40] Dr. White, you have anything to add to that?

**Ismail White** [00:02:47] No... well, maybe. [laughs] We really wanted to try to understand what was going on with African-American partisanship and the degree, as Chryl said, of homogeneity, particularly within the black support for the Democratic Party. For us and for many scholars interested in studying the black experience, this was a real puzzle. There were lots of previous attempts to answer this question, and we just really weren't satisfied with those. Many of them added something to what we knew about African-American political homogeneity, but they just they just didn't quite answer the question we thought. That's what motivated us to do this.

**Marshall Poe** [00:03:40] To establish the facts here, and I get these facts out of your terrific book, *Seafast Democrats*, and a little googling, there are 42 million African-Americans in the United States, and among the adult population that's been surveyed, fully 85 percent of them affiliate themselves with the Democratic Party. America is very divided, but at least in terms of party affiliation, African-Americans are not. That is a pretty astounding thing, and it does cry out for explanation.

[00:04:12] I wanted to start historically, I'm a historian, and I'll begin with an anecdote. I was talking to Peter Gomes. Have you ever heard Peter Gomes? He was a reverend at Harvard University. He was the reverend of Memorial Church, and this was about 2000. I was talking to him one day and he explained to me, and this is the words he used, I'll tell you about the first time I did not vote for the party of Lincoln. [laughs] That's what he called it. The Party of Lincoln. So how is it historically, in general terms, the case that the Democratic Party has come to be the predominant party of African-Americans in the United States?

**Ismail White** [00:05:04] It's a complex story. As you mentioned, you know it when African-Americans first got the right to vote -- I should say, African-American men -- following the Civil War, they thought it was almost the inverse of what we see today. They all supported the Republican Party --.

**Marshall Poe** [00:05:31] The party of Lincoln.

**Ismail White** [00:05:31] Exactly, the party of Lincoln, and they did for many years after the Civil War until the southern Democrats took that right away from African-Americans in the South. The federal government decided to not protect those rights and thus disenfranchised the vast majority of African-Americans in this country. So for a while African-Americans were sort of left out of electoral politics, and as we moved into the 20th century, on top of Jim Crow restrictions on voting and the everyday social lives of of black Americans in the south, many black Americans left the south and moved to the north. There began this sort of complicated sort of partisan politics of trying to get African-American support between northern Republicans and northern Democrats. Many of the blacks in the north begin to support Democrats, particularly in local elections, and that sort of begin the shift. But the real change came when the Democratic Party decided ... they were going to support the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act in the 1960s. That solidified African-American support for the Democratic Party. What's important there is that it integrated, black Americans into electoral politics, and black Americans began running for office as Democrats. That is what begins to tie black Americans to the Democratic Party, because most of the black people running for office, nearly all of them, were running as Democrats.

**Marshall Poe** [00:08:09] Dr. Laird, you have some dead to that?

**Chryl Laird** [00:08:12] No, I think Ismail covered a lot of that history and really thinking about the importance of African-Americans responding to the policy positions and the politics of a particular time periods that he laid out and that in civil rights movement. That legislation that gets decided on then is really key, and I think we see it as the consolidation moment of when we see that homogeneity of the partisanship really solidify around the Democratic Party. It is something that is pro-partisan, right? So it is going with the party that is more embracing of the interest and the concerns and even allowing for a seat at the table for African-Americans who have long found themselves denied that access within the political space. They're also in a constrained space with that. They are dealing with a two-party system and trying to navigate the best way to leverage their voice as a minority group within that. This consolidation is one that is strategic in order to try to ensure that they aren't somehow left behind in those discussions.

**Marshall Poe** [00:09:17] That's very well said. You have a very nice graph in the book that shows the uptick in support for Democrats, starting essentially with the civil rights movement in the 60s, and it is precipitous. The Democratic Party did a great job of appealing to African-Americans in that time, and you begin to get numbers that are close to what we see today, which I said is 85 percent.

[00:09:44] So you offer an interesting explanation, and I found it very compelling, actually. You call it racialized social constraint to explain the affiliation behavior, if I can put it that way, of African-Americans. Dr. Laird, can you begin this time by telling us what racialized social constraint is?

**Chryl Laird** [00:10:07] Yes. It is theoretically the concept that we put forward in the book here where we're trying to argue that the maintenance of partisanship by African-Americans has a lot to do, not only with some sort of individual decision making, but that is actually a social dynamic that is at play. Right. So there is a process of social interaction that is going on that helps to maintain it among among black populations. Part of that is that basically there is a norm that has developed over time that has basically tied together black identity and partisanship, to some degree, basically to be black is to be Democrat. That understanding of that norm is based in a long, collective history of the group mobilizing together in efforts to try to achieve group interest. sBut this norm with partisanship and that consolidation around the Democratic Party is a clearly understood norm, and we argue that those who potentially may have rationale or reasons for why they may defect from that understanding of that norm, and even the behavior that goes along with that, are individuals who will feel constrained in doing so because of their social interactions with other African-Americans. A lot of that is going to be able to happen because not only are they concerned about those social interactions, but African-Americans are disproportionately likely to be having daily interactions that are going to be homogeneous in terms of race. So the communities and spaces and places where they're engaging in their political decision making are predominantly black. And so we argue that that is a lot of the work that goes on, that there are reasons we can come up with that we can think of where African-Americans could think that it may behoove them to do something else and not go with the Democratic Party, but that the social constraint within the group about this norm and the enforcement of the norm through these sanctions that we talk about in the book, or even rewards for those who are in stronger compliance with it, maintain this collective behavior over time. That it is most constraining for people who are black conservatives, who would probably be the most likely to come up with reasons for why they might defect from the norm.

**Marshall Poe** [00:12:29] Dr. White, you have something to add to that?

**Ismail White** [00:12:31] Oh, no. Chryl's explanation was excellent. The only thing I would add is that what's important about this norm and the reason it was adopted, as I mentioned, this idea that blacks are Democrats developed just after the civil rights movement. So did this particular version of the norm and it developed in part because it is a means of empowering the group. So as a minority group in a majority rule nation, African-Americans have an incentive to be unified in their politics. It is a perpetual challenge to figure out how to maintain this unity because that unity is what is empowering. This is where the norm developed from.

**Marshall Poe** [00:13:41] If I could radically simplify, and I do want to say I'm radically simplifying your explanation, African-Americans affiliate with the Democratic Party because other African-Americans expect them to. As Dr. White just said, they know that this helps with group solidarity, which helps all African-Americans. Would that be a fair characterization?

**Ismail White** [00:14:03] Yes. But I would say one more thing is that it gives them a certain amount of power in partisan politics. You can see this in the primary season this year with Joe Biden. African-Americans become this key constituency that you can rely on to support the Democratic Party, and their ability to give or withhold support for a candidate granted them a great deal of power. I mean, for example, we were talking about reparations a few months ago. One could never have imagined that we would be talking about something like that, but the reason we were talking about it was because of the electoral strength that African-Americans have through their ability to maintain unity within the group.

**Marshall Poe** [00:15:03] Let me ask a follow up question, and this was part of the book that I really, really appreciated and enjoyed. How do you test this proposition that it is racialized social constraint that actually is moving African-Americans to affiliate with the Democratic Party? I mean, it's one thing to say it, but under what conditions can we isolate variables and the other things that political scientists like to do that show that it is, in fact, the expectation of other African-Americans that is doing this?

**Chryl Laird** [00:15:35] One of the ways that we had to first try to even accomplish testing our framework was to think about, how do we even prove that there is a norm? Because you have to establish that there's the expectation. So we spend a lot of time first doing analysis to show the long-term trends on African-American political behavior and that their partisan loyalty is above average high for what we see. It's fairly cohesive in the 80, 90 percent area of people voting for the Democratic Party. We also see exit poll data from various elections, and we can see consistently high levels of support and a very cohesive and homogeneous way among black people. Then we started to think about as well, can we try to see responses from people where they seem to provide indication that there is an understanding from friends and family members who, if you're African-American, were elected, those individuals are going to be black, that they have an understanding of what it means to get behind certain candidates in the election and that this is some sort of understanding and expectation that if you were to somehow step away from supporting the Democratic candidate for president, how that would be seen by those individuals. Would they be supportive or not supportive of you?

[00:16:56] So we started some of that there and really thinking about, can we point to an idea that this norm and expectation is clear? And can we see evidence of people basically calling out individuals, even in certain cases historically, for seeming to defect from

expectations of the group? We go through a historical analysis of various points in history where we can see that even prior to the Democratic norm. So collective behavior is a long history within the black community. Thereafter, we had to get really into the experimentation and the empiricism of it. How can we empirically show that? One of the ways that was advantageous for this was using something like race of interviewer effects, because in the field it has long been known that the race of an interviewer does have an effect on responses from individuals when they're participating in surveys, and that this would be an opportunity for us to at least do a conservative test of our theory to see if the presence of a person who is a member of the black community, an ingroup member interviewing a black individual or somebody who's not black,, have an impact on something like reported partisanship. The idea is that the norm is so entrenched and internalized for African-Americans that even being in front of another black person that you may not even know could be enough to alter your partisanship reporting. That this would be, in our mind, an indication that there is something that is going on with the social component, that there is something between the interaction of you as the participant and the person who is now interviewing you and that is impacting your responses. That was key because I think prior to that, outside of the race of the interviewer affects research, we often think of political participation and partisanship as an individual based type of behavior. In this case, partisanship then shouldn't move at all. We shouldn't see any variation happening there, because if I'm an individual reporting my partisanship, it shouldn't matter who's asking me about it. But in fact, we find that and you are able to then look further into the details of that with larger data sets, even on telephone surveys where you might even face to face the people make associations with voice and tone to race. Even there, we see some conservative test of our of these effects. Beyond that, we used experimentation, and Ismail can talk a bit more about the experimental design, but we really tried to operationalize social pressure and constraint on behavior and what that does to an individual's partisanship reporting and even their decision making when set in a position to have to make a decision between the Republican candidate and the Democratic candidate.

**Marshall Poe** [00:19:44] Dr. White, could you talk a little bit more about the experimental design of the experiments?

**Ismail White** [00:19:49] Sure. To start to test this idea of racialized social constraint, it's difficult to just observe it in the real world and say that it's somehow causal of black democratic partisanship. To get around that challenge, we designed a series of experiments that we thought would help us to understand how this social pressure, particularly from other ingroup members, might be able to constrain the political behavior of African-Americans. So in 2012, Cheryl and I embarked on several weeks of in the field lab experiments. What we did was we designed a series of experiments that would basically pit an individual's self-interest with this understood expectation of black political behavior, and that is supporting the Democratic Party and its candidates. In the first series of experiments, which we did at a historically black college, we decided we would offer, in terms of trying to get at an individual self-interest, we figured out first a baseline of support among black Americans in terms of trying to identify this form of political behavior.

[00:21:44] What we did was we went to a historically black college in Baton Rouge, and we interviewed almost 200 African-American students there. The experiment, in terms of its construction, was fairly simple. In one condition, we told African-American students that we were researchers from a large Midwestern university and we received a grant to give young people the opportunity to participate in politics. With this grant, we told them, and this part was using a bit of deception, we were going to give them one hundred dollars that

they could donate to either of the candidates. All they had to do was just tell us which candidate they wanted that money contributed to. Within that condition, as you might expect, the vast majority of African-American respondents contributed, because this was 2012, all the money to Barack Obama in that condition. They couldn't keep any of the money; they just had to contribute it one way or the other to Romney or Obama.

[00:23:19] In the next condition, which you call the incentive condition, we told them that the organization might offer them an incentive to contribute to one candidate or the other. Now, to be clear, we weren't telling them they were contributing to candidates, per se. It was organizations that would support that. What we did was we we told them that this voter turnout organization might give them an incentive, and in this case it was one dollar for every ten dollars they contributed to that candidate for either Romney or Obama, and that it was going to be randomly determined. And in fact, this wasn't randomly determined. Everyone was offered an incentive to contribute to the Romney campaign. So in that condition, we saw a significant drop off in support for Obama, where in the control condition, about ninety dollars on average was contributed to the Obama campaign. Once we offered this one dollar for every ten dollars you contributed to this particular candidate incentive, we saw a decrease up down to about sixty dollars in contributions to Obama in the face of these incentives.

[00:25:00] So that condition demonstrated was that the commitment to the Democratic Party, at least in this case, could be outweighed by some sort of personal self-interest. So in order to demonstrate our argument, this racialized social constraint and how it would have this effect of constraining the potential for defection from the Democratic Party, we then told the respondents in the next condition, which was identical to the incentive condition, we just told them that all the contributions would be reported in the university newspaper along with the individual's name. Once we told them that they were going to be essentially outed for their contributions to the Romney campaign, we saw basically a return to the norm of contributing to Obama, even in the face of this meaningful incentive for these students. It's ten dollars. You could go buy something with it. So we saw a return once we presented them with this outing of their behavior. It returned to this norm of about ninety dollars for Obama.

**Marshall Poe** [00:26:49] That's very, very clever. I also was blown away by the fact that the race or identity of the interviewer or the person gathering the data, it really changes the result. It's kind of intuitive if you think about it, but the strength of the effect was pretty remarkable to me.

[00:27:11] I wanted to touch on something because it's a little bit counterintuitive in the sense that America has experienced a great growth in inequality. We know that it is also the case that since the 1960s, Americans have generally got more prosperous. This has of course been true in the African-American community as well. There are a lot of wealthy African-Americans now, just as there are a lot of wealthy white Americans, and you might think that they would defect because for whatever reason, I don't know whether it's true or not, people associate gathering wealth and having higher income with the Republican Party. But you don't see that in the data. Is that correct?

**Chryl Laird** [00:27:53] That is correct. I think that a large part of even some of the motivations around some of the other works that have come out that were trying to explain some of the phenomenon we are seeing. We think of Michael Dawson's book *Behind the Mule*. I think a lot of the motivation behind that book and what has been seen as the major canonical texts about black political behavior with this concept of linked fate and this belief

that what has been happening to the group has an influence on their own individual lives. And the motivation there is that as more black people are gaining education in the post civil rights period, we would expect based on our theories and political science on what economic diversity does, that we would see changes then in people's political leanings and why do we see affluent blacks or more educated blacks support the Democratic Party.

[00:28:50] What we find, again, is that linked fate doesn't necessarily predict that partisanship, but we do see that this social constraint does a lot of work for individuals who have reasons and rationale that could come from, for instance, economic gains that would say to them that potentially they wouldn't support the Democratic Party. Now, they could have reasons for why they would, obviously. But if they were people who were potentially on the edge of that or considering doing otherwise, that the social constraint actually serves as a way for even African-Americans who have not reached that economic space and want to continue to make sure that that collective behavior continues. And support for the group can hold these elites accountable for potential defection by making it clear that it is not accepted. If you decided to step away from what is understood as this group norm of behavior. So it is an interesting thing because it is quite counterintuitive to a lot of the literature and political science. But I think a lot of that literature is focusing on how people are behaving under a notion of an individualized decision making where African-Americans are much more likely to be socialized and understanding the political world through a viewpoint that is more group centered.

**Marshall Poe** [00:30:12] Dr. White, anything to add?

**Ismail White** [00:30:14] No, I think Cheryl capture that pretty well.

**Marshall Poe** [00:30:19] I wanted to offer another anecdote because this book does a lot to explain things that I've seen that I didn't understand. So I know someone, who is a friend of mine that I've known for many, many years, and he is the pastor of an AME Church. This guy is very conservative, and a serious Christian. I mean, serious. He's a Democrat. And one of the things you find in the data, if I'm not incorrect, is that you see people espousing positions that are not completely aligned with the Democratic Party, but they still maintain their allegiance to the Democratic Party. So you see this kind of broadening of opinions really within the Democratic context. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**Ismail White** [00:31:06] I think originally, this was an observation that political scientists who study African-Americans have been grappling with for a while, particularly around the black church. The black church had this rather sort of conservative position on lots of issue, yet everyone was Democrat. In fact, black Americans who attended black churches were actually more likely to be Democrats than those who didn't really. So people were like, well, why is this? Why is this? So a lot of the researchers were reaching for explanations, and the explanations always boil down to something like, well, it's race, of course. But that wasn't a very satisfying explanation because, you know, what does it mean to be race? There's a real conservative tradition within the black community around the idea of race, beginning with Booker T. Washington and even further back than that.

[00:32:26] We weren't satisfied with the argument that it's race that's driving the Democrats position on race that's driving their support for the Democratic Party. So we wanted to create a theory that would both capture and explain that and offer a sort of more general understanding of the sort of social dynamics and political dynamics that we've been observing within the black community for, particularly, over the last 20 or so years. The

racialized social constraint argument helped us do that, because what it does is it centers the segregation and the idea that black Americans do live in these racially homogeneous communities is the key mechanism for how racialized social constraint gets socialized and enforced within the black community. The black churches is one good example of this because it is the black church. It is a black space, and within these black spaces are where the norms can most effectively be both socialized and enforced. The black church as an institution, in particular, has this kind of structure that very much enables that.

[00:34:09] Going forward, and Chryl can definitely speak on this better than I could, on the emergence of black social media spaces and their role in enforcing racialized social constraints.

**Marshall Poe** [00:34:30] Would you like to talk a little about that?

**Chryl Laird** [00:34:32] Yes. This is one of my favorite parts of the book is the section that we write on Twitter and black Twitter, because I think it is an interesting thing to think about one innovation and how that interacts with these long standing practices and the way that communities like African-Americans are able to leverage this as other spaces to engage in the same kind of politics that they've been doing before. So Twitter is a social media platform, like many that are out there, and there's been lots of discussions around this idea of black Twitter that there are a lot of Twitter users that are African-American and that there is a space on Twitter where political discussion, talking of pop culture, various things are going on among many of the people in that space and that it is very black. It is very in line with the expectations of the black community. It is one which conversations around who's doing what is in line with what is expected from the group, and it's happening in a space not where it's [Twitter.com/black](https://twitter.com/black). It's happening in the open forum of what Twitter is, where key people and certain individuals have been elevated a bit in that space and are able to highlight some of these conversations.

[00:35:56] There has been concern over time, I think, about some of the decline of the brick and mortar spaces where a lot of that socialization and norm enforcement occurs. Black Twitter and other social media has emerged as another space to essentially enforce the norms and even sanction people who are not in compliance. One of the things that we talked about in the book was the instance in which Steve Harvey seemed to be putting himself in close proximity, literally going to the Trump Tower at the time President Trump had been elected into office after the 2016 election and how much backlash he received as a consequence of that association. I think Steve Harvey was struck by it, but people were like, you know what's going on? You know what we do collectively as a group politically, and this is unacceptable.

[00:36:50] I think Steve Harvey being jarred by that as much as he was, because in terms of what we know of Steve Harvey is that mainstream public sees Steve Harvey as the host of Family Feud, but for black people Steve Harvey has been a longtime comedian in the community. He's been on popular black programming. He had his own TV show. He was on like Def Comedy Jam. So we've known him for a very long time, and this is just not what you do if you are somebody that is in touch with the black community or that involved with the black community. We expect better of you than to associate not only with the Republicans, but associate with Donald Trump. And he ended up getting a lot of flack and having apologized for it. At risk for him was not only a social reputational concern there, but also one financially because a lot of his money and financial gains comes from the black communities who see him in a positive light. He can't put that at risk.

[00:37:50] Another person would be, for instance, Kanye West, another person who ended up hearing a lot of responses from people on social media, especially on black Twitter, with regard to his association with the Trump campaign and an open and very direct backlash to what he was saying to the point that he had to come back as well and kind of backtrack on some of the statements that he was saying, like slavery is a choice and being supportive of where Trump's position on particular policies and that he's a free-thinking black individual and had to walk it back. So it really does seem that there are these new avenues for this inter-group politic to continue, and what I think is interesting about black Twitter as well is that it's an inter-group politic that is happening within the space of the white gaze. So white people can see it and mainstream the mainstream public can see it, but it doesn't matter, because the inter-group politic is known. It's understood. And people will call up individuals when they seem to be stepping out of line with it.

[00:38:54] Additionally, those who sacrifice at high levels on behalf of the norm are very revered. So someone like John Lewis, when he passed away, was heralded. So much commentary came out of the social media space about who he was, what he represented, and what he embodied, because he has made the ultimate sacrifice for community over his lifetime and is seen as almost the symbol of what someone who is truly committed to the group interests should represent in our modern times. So it really is just interesting to watch, and I enjoy engaging it. We see even a growing space now even on TikTok and black TikTok in other places. It is an interesting dynamic to watch.

**Marshall Poe** [00:39:38] Dr. White, do you have anything to add?

**Ismail White** [00:39:39] No, no, it was excellent.

**Marshall Poe** [00:39:41] Would it be appropriate to call this a kind of public shaming of people that go against the expectation?

**Chryl Laird** [00:39:49] Yeah. [laughs]

**Marshall Poe** [00:39:55] Sometimes one word is all you need.

**Chryl Laird** [00:40:00] It just happened. On SNL, if you saw the premiere recently, the host was Chris Rock and the musical guest was Megan Thee Stallion, who is a very popular rapper and has a number of songs that have been popular over the last couple of summers and is very popular with the 18 to 34 demographic. And in the midst of that performance, she calls out Daniel Cameron, the Attorney General from Kentucky, who also led the information in the grand jury hearings into the Breonna Taylor case. She openly calls him out in the middle of this performance on national television. She is like, Daniel Cameron, you are no better than the slaves on the plantation that would sell us out to the master. It's interesting that she uses that example, because that is an example that we actually bring up in the book. We talk about what happens to informants on the plantation that are talked about by Frederick Douglass when he observes what's happening to an informant who is trying to report potentially or threatening to report on a fugitive slave. She makes that association. Yeah, it is a shaming, but it's one where she's like, I'm speaking to you because you know what the group is thinking.

**Marshall Poe** [00:41:25] I want to broaden the discussion a little bit, and I'm reminded of two things. One is John Stuart Mill, which every political scientist knows and I'm sure many of our listeners know, and he was very full of orthodoxy and conformism. He thought this was essentially the death of what he called the marketplace of ideas. He really felt that

people should be as free as they possibly can in order to express their opinions. The other thing it reminds me of is my time in the Soviet Union ... and this is a nice introduction to my question because or entry way to my question, because there there was a really strong orthodoxy and you could be viciously punished for expressing ideas that were dissonant with this orthodoxy. But there were places where people did express some kind of safe spaces where people did express free ideas or ideas freely. I'm wondering if you have any thoughts on places where African-Americans who are socially constrained by this are expressing their ideas more freely, maybe out of the public gaze? I'm just speculating here because I imagine there are people who will identify with the Democratic Party yet, but they have other ideas and they need a safe place to express those ideas without being publicly shamed. Dr. Wite, you want to go first?

**Ismail White** [00:42:53] As we mentioned, I mean, obviously, the black church is a rather conservative institution. There is some openness there certainly to the expression of conservative beliefs. It is just that the constraints or the expression of conservative beliefs within this sort of particular partisan framework, and I'm not sure. In some ways you can think this shaming in the sense of the repression of minority viewpoints. That's not necessarily a good thing. But at the same time, you could think of the norm itself, the idea of black support for the Democratic Party, is a very much democratically determined norm. You could see this through polls and voting right now. Granted, we show some evidence that shows that those things can be somewhat skewed by the particular context in which they are discussed. But there is this sort of generalized idea of this is what's in the group interest.

[00:44:28] Now, there are black Americans who disagree with this, but there are plenty outlets for them outside of the black community. Now, they they are in a kind of constrained position, because if they don't have social network outside the black community, they are very much constrained. But if they have those connections outside of the black community, which is what we show in the book, that integration sort of enables this embracing of the turning of conservatism into Republican Party support. We show this in the book that the kind of access to white social networks makes African-Americans somewhat freer to embrace the Republican Party.

**Marshall Poe** [00:45:25] Dr. Laird, do you have a comment about that?

**Chryl Laird** [00:45:29] Yeah, I think they are their outlets because obviously in terms of the social network side of this, if your social ties are very dependent on norm compliance then you are in this constraint. You have to figure out a space to to find opportunities to discuss these more openly. And I think there are conventions that happen. I know Corey D. Fields, for instance, a sociologist, he has a book called Black Elephants in the Room. He basically goes and studies black Republicans at a convention that they're having to basically talk about being black Republicans. But at the same time, you know, there is some isolation, and that's brought up by Leah Wright Riguer's work on black Republicans and that there's this loneliness because of how the group dynamics are designed here. There are collectives that occur, and we can even see kind of more contemporarily. For instance, Candace Owens's organization is one where we've seen a lot of not only black voters in their support for ... Trump, who is the leader of the Republican Party. A lot of young black people have found that as an opportunity space. And I think social media is another outlet where potentially people would want to collect together and talk about these things more freely. But again, you know, it it becomes a bit of a challenge to become more public with that discussion if you are worried about social standing and if that is a top priority for those social those social ties, and if your social ties are homogeneous, You

ould, in theory, have homogeneous social ties. People who are of the same race in terms of your social network, but if those social ties are not a big priority to you and you have conservative leanings, that would lead you to support the Republican Party, if that is prioritized higher, for instance, then it wouldn't be of concern. And that's not going to matter. So there really is at the essential is going to be to what degree are you worried about these social connections and to what degree would they be threatened by your affiliation with something that is not held in high regard by the group.

**Marshall Poe** [00:47:45] That's well spoken. And I want to make sure that the listeners know there is absolutely no group of 42 million people can be homogenous in terms of their opinion. If you want to find black conservatives, it's not hard to find them.

**Chryl Laird** [00:48:03] They've been around for a long time in our history, too, I think the other thing that's always interesting is that some of them come out more publicly and say that we are the more independently-minded, free-thinking blacks. There have been, along history of black conservatives like.

**Ismail White** [00:48:17] Even on racial issues, blacks aren't unified, not even in the terms of support for the Democratic Party. Like with affirmative action, more blacks oppose affirmative action than support the Republican Party.

**Marshall Poe** [00:48:40] At the edge of the Internet, you can definitely find all of the black conservatives and liberals. It's funny because on the New Books Network, we interviewed the chairman of the Communist Party of the United States who happens to be an African-American. So there is a great diversity of opinion if you want to go find it.

[00:48:56] I want to thank both of you very much for being on this show. It's an absolutely fascinating book. *Steadfast Democrats: How Social Forces Shape Black Political Behavior*. Let me close the interview by asking our traditional final question on the New Books Network, and that is, what are you working on now? Dr. White, why don't you go first?

**Ismail White** [00:49:13] I'm working on a project that attempts to try to figure out how African-Americans use race to push them into political action beyond just that kind of Democrat support for the Democratic Party. This project would look at what makes people engage in costly political behavior and trying to understand the sort of psychological antecedents of that behavior.

**Marshall Poe** [00:49:47] Fascinating. Dr. Laird?

**Chryl Laird** [00:49:50] I so I have kind of two lines of work going on. One is doing a deeper dive into the measure of linked fate and how African-Americans express their linked fate and its accessibility in their mind when they're thinking about politics and talked about. Who is the key black person of focus in these media discussions around race, and do people feel connected to that? Does it actually lead to them feeling cued in their linked fate? And the other work I'm looking at is also on black women, and it's a co-authored project, to look at their socialization of black women and see the type of political engagement that we see them do right where there is strong, committed love to the Democratic Party and their willingness to do high risk type of participation, including protest and activism on behalf of issues that oftentimes may not actually prioritize them as the main figures who are dealing with those those problems. I'm trying to kind of get into how we should understand that and think about it.

**Marshall Poe** [00:50:59] Thank you very much. Let me tell the listeners that today we've been talking with Ishmail White and Chryl Laird about their book, *Steadfast Democrats: How Social Forces Shape Black Political Behavior*. This is part of the Princeton University Press Ideas podcast series. Dr. White and Dr. Laird, thank you very much for being on the show.

**Ishmail White** [00:51:18] Thank you for having so much.

**Marshall Poe** [00:51:20] Absolutely. My pleasure, and this is Marshall Poe and the editor of the New Books Network. We're signing off.