

Writing Sample Context

The following pieces were originally produced as weekly editorial adaptations of the progressive political podcast *Democracy-ish* (hosted by Danielle Moodie and Touré), then produced by DCP Entertainment (the podcast has since moved to Mary Trump Media and is co-hosted by Moodie and Wajahat Ali).

Over the course of more than 100 episodes, my role involved distilling long-form political discussions into structured, audience-facing digital articles (optimized for SEO) to help raise the profile of the podcast; they also might have been excerpted in newsletters to podcast subscribers.

These adaptations were designed to retain the hosts' voices and rhetorical styles while shaping narrative flow, clarifying key arguments, and organizing themes for digital readership. In politically sensitive moments, I collaborated with production leadership to evaluate tone, inclusion, and framing, balancing urgency with editorial responsibility.

While the (often salty) language reflects the voice of the podcast hosts, my role required editorial judgment in determining structure, emphasis, and contextual framing (while capturing Danielle and Touré's inimitable personalities and long-running in-jokes like signing off with "pray about it."

These are no longer live anywhere online; I reproduced them here from the original Google docs, with the client's house style and links intact.

[Sample 1](#): "Say It With Us: 'I Refuse'": A discussion about 1619 Project creator Nikole Hannah-Jones and then-NYC mayor Eric Adams, among other topics

[Sample 2](#): "Love, Life and Plenty of Sauce: Serving Up Our Favorite Black Food": A review of Netflix's documentary "High on the Hog"

[Sample 3](#): "Who Needs Tiger King with a Fat Cat in the White House?": The early days of COVID

Sample 1: Institutional Analysis

July 9, 2021

Say It With Us: 'I Refuse'

On this episode of [democracy-ish](#), Danielle and Toure are clapping for Nikole Hannah-Jones and clapping *back* at racist bullshit.

- It was a hell of a week in the news. First, 1619 Project creator Nikole Hannah-Jones rejected the University of North Carolina's much-delayed offer of tenure in favor of a position at Howard University.
- Then we heard that track star Sha'Carri Richardson was not chosen for the U.S. 4x100 relay team, and won't be heading to Tokyo for the Summer Olympics. Plus, the International Swimming Federation denied certification for athletes to wear a swim cap designed for natural hair.
- While these stories aren't surprising, they're emblematic of the institutional racism entrenched in nearly every aspect of our lives. How can we push back against (or opt out of) these systems that disrespect and exclude us?
- In New York City, retired police officer and Brooklyn borough president Eric Adams won the Democratic primary for mayor.

"We dedicate this episode to the lovely people at the University of North Carolina," says Toure, "who are probably stewing in bitterness, shame and embarrassment after [Nikole Hannah-Jones rejected their offer of tenure](#), like Dikembe Mutombo rejecting a weak shot from Brian Scalabrine."

Hannah-Jones chose instead to teach at [Howard University](#), the venerable HBCU, alma mater of our vice president, and home to faculty like [Ta-Nehisi Coates](#), who also recently accepted a position. Toure thinks those two "superstar names" might encourage bright young students to choose Howard over other elite institutions.

When he was growing up, his parents told him that, as Black people, "we have to be twice as good to get what white people have. But Nikole Hannah-Jones' resume is about five to 10 times as good as anyone else."

That resume includes a Pulitzer Prize, a Peabody, a McArthur "Genius Grant" fellowship, and a high-profile position at the New York Times.

So Toure is still stunned that the "politics and fear over what she's doing with the [1619 Project](#), would play such a role in her ascending to be a professor."

But “how glorious is it for her to be able to say, *fuck your job. I’m going where I’m wanted?*” he asks.

Danielle thought “that was the most beautiful thing of it all. Go where you are celebrated, not where you are tolerated.”

That’s just one of the rant-worthy stories this week. Our hosts break down the heartbreaking exclusion of Sha’Carri Richardson from the Summer Olympics, a racially-charged dustup at ESPN, NYC mayoral candidate Eric Adams’ primary victory, and more.

The elegant f*ck-you of ‘I refuse’

Danielle particularly appreciates [Hannah-Jones’ statement](#) about why she denied UNC’s offer of tenure — which was finally granted by its board of trustees after many months of deliberation. The board’s approval was the final step in a process that included unanimous approvals from multiple faculty committees — and the fact that, since the 1980s, everyone who preceded Hannah-Jones in the position she was seeking (the Knight Chair in Race and Investigative Reporting) entered with tenure.

“It was beautiful in its refusal to bow to the applause and acceptance of white people,” Danielle says. “I cannot express to you, as a person who wanted so greatly to attend an HBCU but did not, the *fuck you* that Nikole Hannah-Jones in her eloquence, in her brilliance, provided.”

She was particularly fond of a particular passage in Hannah-Jones’ statement:

For too long, powerful people have expected the people they have mistreated and marginalized to sacrifice themselves to make things whole. The burden of working for racial justice is laid on the very people bearing the brunt of the injustice, and not the powerful people who maintain it. I say to you: I refuse.

“I *refuse*,” says Danielle. “Black women — Black *people* — never get to utter that phrase with boldness, with the straightness of our backs, and the liftedness of our chins to say, *I refuse*. I refuse you, deciding at the end of the day, after seven months, to accept me.”

The power of Black institutions

Hannah-Jones’ story illustrates “why we need Black institutions in our lives,” Toure says. “So we can go somewhere where we are valued, and we don’t have to change and kowtow and accept the bullshit from white institutions.”

Too often, Black people are forced to go into places that marginally accept them and then tell us that is enough.

However, UNC is Hannah-Jones' alma mater, and "she wanted to teach there; she wanted to teach the next generation," Danielle adds.

"I feel terrible that she had to go through such trauma publicly. But I appreciate that we all got to see what many of us have experienced behind closed doors, which is: *You've played by our rules, but we've changed the rules. We're not going to provide you with any reason why. You just need to accept it. When we decide you are worthy, you should just receive it with a grin.* Nicole Hannah-Jones said — what? *I refuse.*"

The E at ESPN is for *embarrassment*

Over the weekend, [the New York Times reported on a year-old conversation](#) in which Rachel Nichols, the host of ESPN's "The Jump," talked shit about her colleague Maria Taylor's rise as an NBA reporter at the network.

Apparently Nichols suggested Taylor, who is Black, was given more airtime not due to her talent, but something else: "If you need to give her more things to do because you are feeling pressure about your crappy longtime record on diversity — which, by the way, I know personally from the female side of it — like, go for it," she said in audio the Times obtained.

"Just find it somewhere else. You are not going to find it from me or take my thing away," Nichols added.

After the story broke, ESPN removed Nichols from sideline reporting at this year's NBA Finals.

"She has shown a lot of grace and poise through a very difficult professional situation," Toure says of [Taylor](#).

He has met Rachel Nichols, and he "saw that thing that we talk about that I think we fear sometimes as Black people: the well meaning, left-leaning white person who still perpetuates and stands up for white privilege."

Weed isn't a performance-enhancing drug

Sprinter [Sha'Carri Richardson](#), whose victory in the women's 100 meters event at the U.S. track and field Olympic trials was invalidated due to a positive test result for marijuana, will not be going to Tokyo at all.

Fans hoped she would be chosen for the 4x100 relay team, which allows coaches some latitude in selecting runners. But officials announced Tuesday that the coaching staff already selected the relay team before Richardson's positive test became public.

Toure is “really sad about that,” he says. “Yet again, our stupid backwards policy around marijuana has led to a Black life being changed. The notion that, well, she knew the rules, and she shouldn't have smoked, is really small-minded.”

He thinks it's easy to blame an individual for their behavior. But it's more thoughtful to look at the institutions that make rules and ask whether they are moral and just, whether they're outdated, and whether they make sense at all.

“If marijuana is a natural substance that does not provide performance enhancement, and it is legal in the place where she's using it, why is she being banned from the Olympics for using it one time to deal with grief? It doesn't strike me as moral or just.”

Another Black casualty in the war on drugs

What troubles Danielle the most about Sha'Carri's situation “is not just the weed issue of it all, which is problematic, given the fact that we have such a patchwork of rights and restrictions in this country,” she says.

“We also understand the ways these laws have been established to incarcerate our people. Am I applauding her use of marijuana? No, but I'm saying it shouldn't be the thing that disqualifies her from competition.”

Marijuana has been “the thing that has disqualified us from participating in society,” she adds. “By throwing the book at us, while giving licenses to white individuals who are opening up dispensaries and delving into a multibillion dollar industry.”

Sha'Carri Richardson's story is sad — “and a little boring,” in the sense that it centers on such outdated rules, says Toure.

“They don't have anything to do with our current understanding of the world, or the way these drugs work. Continuing to ban them is really silly. And the Olympics have lost out on a fairly obvious superstar. People watch the Games for the people in them.”

A hair-raising swim-cap controversy

Making matters worse, the International Swimming Federation (FINA) [denied certification for athletes to use swim caps designed for natural \(non-Caucasian\) hair](#) on the grounds that elite athletes “don't require caps of such size.”

“What the fuck does that mean? That the only people who excel in swimming are white, who can use a close-fitting head covering?”

So many aspects of our lives have been “so steeped in white supremacy and white normalcy that we have never had to push back against it,” Danielle points out.

Decisions of every kind and at every level, not just about swim caps and weed, are really about “the ways in which the world sees Blackness, and Black and Brown people,” she says. “But we’ve never been in a position of power to question their logic. So right now is our time to be like, *yeah, so... no, this doesn’t work for us. This doesn’t make sense.*”

That’s why we’re hearing the rumblings of a boycott of the Olympics this year. Black athletes in particular are “just like, *this isn’t for us. It wasn’t built for us,*” Danielle explains.

It’s not altogether different from what Nikole Hannah-Jones is saying: *Why am I trying to fit into places that never made room for me, that were never built for me?*

“This is the question of our time for Black and Brown people,” says Danielle.

An NYPD veteran in Gracie Mansion

Toure is “super disappointed that our home city has elected a 20-year veteran of the NYPD to be mayor,” he says.

Well, not quite yet: Eric Adams, the retired cop and Brooklyn borough president, [narrowly won the Democratic primary for New York City mayor](#), edging out his more progressive rival Kathryn Garcia by just over 8,400 votes. It was the first citywide race to utilize ranked-choice voting.

But it’s likely Adams will win the general election (over Republican Curtis Sliwa) handily in a majority-Democrat city.

“It was just a year ago we were marching in the streets against police violence, for police accountability. And now many of us have voted for a cop. We cannot get real police reform from somebody who is indoctrinated in the system.”

‘Stop and frisk’ is still a threat

And although Adams co-founded [100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care](#), an advocacy group for Black police officers who back criminal justice reform and sometimes speak out against police brutality, “the issue is not about caring,” says Toure.

“The issue is not about being nice to people, or about the relationship between cops and the community. The issue is about police, who are judged based on the number of arrests they make. They are tasked by their supervisors and allowed by the Supreme Court to be more aggressive in who they stop in high crime, a.k.a. Black, areas.”

There is crime in both cities and suburbs. But in white neighborhoods, the bar for traffic stops is much higher. The police well understand that “about 5% of people commit about 95% of crime,” Toure says.

“Still, Eric Adams is in favor of ‘stop and frisk,’ which is just a democratizing way of attacking almost any Black person for any furtive movement.”

What is a *furtive movement*?

“Anything the officer wants it to be,” Toure adds.

Adams: Former cop, and reformed... Republican?

Adams was *not* in Danielle’s top five choices for mayor.

“Anybody who took until 2006 to recognize that, as a Black man, the Republican Party was not for you, it’s incredibly problematic *for me*.”

That’s right: the [Democratic nominee for NYC mayor is a former member of the GOP](#). But it’s really his past as a police officer that’s problematic.

“I am not anti-cop, and I’ve never been anti-cop,” Danielle says. “What I am is anti-police brutality.”

She also wonders why — because we hear so much about how *blue lives matter* — why there hasn’t been a “cacophony coming from police departments about the inquisition into what happened on January 6? Where is the noise about the 140 ‘blue brothers and sisters’ who were tormented, terrorized and tortured?”

Law enforcement is like a sorority or fraternity, she adds.

“These people pledge their allegiance to these groups, not to the citizenry they are sworn to protect ... So the Eric Adamses of the world get a middle finger from me.”

Big anti-racist energy

Toure’s favorite video of the week came from Mount Laurel, New Jersey, where [cops arrested Edward Cagney Mathews, whose vile, racist rants directed at his neighbors went viral](#).

“It was just such a beautiful sight watching this racist get his comeuppance, being escorted out of his house into a waiting police car,” he explains. “While hundreds of Black people are around him, throwing things, chanting things, playing music and — just the chef’s kiss — when a Black

Lives Matter flag came down on his head, almost like blessing him or whatever the evil equivalent to blessing would be.”

Apparently, neighbors have repeatedly complained about Mathews, who “dared Black folks to show up at his house, as if he thought that he was going to be able to use his whiteness as currency to get him out of reality,” Danielle notes. “That’s where I think we are right now: racist white folks emboldened and empowered to spout out some of the most heinous, disgusting shit ... I hope that this is a cautionary tale.”

The cheers of Black people as a notorious racist is detained by cops on his own property: “That’s the energy that I want us to keep,” says Toure. “That’s the energy we need to sustain in the face of white supremacy in the face of privilege.”

Danielle agrees. She wants us to harness the spirit of Nikole Hannah-Jones: *I refuse*.

“I refuse your bullshit. I refuse your nonsense,” she says. “I refuse your gaslighting. I refuse your lies. I refuse your discrimination. I refuse your hatred. That’s the refrain that we need to keep.”

Check out the frustration, rage and absurdity that was the 2020 election on [democracy-ish](#) as Danielle Moodie and Toure discuss the current state of the political climate and our country from a Black perspective.

Sample 2: Cultural Analysis

This piece demonstrates tonal range and cultural storytelling, shaping a conversational episode into a cohesive exploration of identity, history, and community through food.

June 26, 2021

Love, Life and Plenty of Sauce: Serving Up Our Favorite Black Food

On this episode of [democracy-ish](#), Danielle and Toure are hungry, and you’re about to be hungry too.

- **Black food is American food. That’s the theme of the new Netflix series “High on the Hog,” which our foodie podcast hosts recently *devoured*.**
- **Inspired by its investigation of Black culinary traditions, they discuss how food connects them with family as well as their favorite dishes and destinations.**

- **Toure and Danielle also answer these burning questions: What's better — KFC or Popeyes? What will they always skip at a soul-food spread? And just who thinks it's acceptable to serve mashed potatoes without gravy?**

Inspired by [last week's discussion of Netflix's "High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America."](#) Toure and Danielle — who both love great food — want to dig deeper into the subject.

"The history of Black food is so rich and important to me," says Toure. "It connects me to my grandparents, my ancestors."

Danielle agrees and says "High on the Hog" taught her so many things about America she didn't know.

The four-part series about Black culinary traditions begins in Benin, West Africa before winding its way to the U.S., notably the Carolinas, Virginia and Texas. It made Danielle feel like she was "learning through eating" and giving her new respect for dishes and places with deep Black history.

"When we watch other food shows, we're often inundated with European chefs with Michelin stars and all these things," she adds. "It's usually largely white and largely male with very few women sprinkled in."

Often, culinary stars don't have a deep connection to the places they work in. They're considered great chefs because they're French or trained under someone who is. But "High on the Hog" transports us to specific places and histories, Danielle says.

Watching the show was like "taking a journey with the entirety of the black community, getting to experience this thing we have different attachments to, but as a collective. The history that was taken from us — exactly what makes the show so special — we're bringing it back."

On this episode, our hosts tell stories about the food they love, dish on what they hate and bicker plenty, too.

Let's dig in.

Slow food for thought

Toure's grandmother, who is no longer with us, grew up in Alabama as "one of 12 children or something like that," he says. "She made Thanksgiving dinner for the first 15 years of my life. She had this amazing gravy that just made every turkey taste amazing."

But the biscuits were the real star — "just so perfectly fluffy, yet crispy, and the perfect warmth. I

felt this connection to where she came from, and whoever she carried those recipes forward from,” he adds.

Danielle definitely knows how food can transport us to another time or place. Her family is Jamaican, so “for me, black food is Jamaican food,” she says. “Whenever I smell it walking around Brooklyn, or I’m home with my family, it just brings back all of these memories and all of this history.”

Learning about food, especially Jamaican cuisine, is “a way to take a journey with family,” Danielle adds.

Toure remembers visiting Jamaica and “going to the tiniest little shack on the side of the road,” where he had lobster and french fries, and a Red Stripe.

“You can see that it’s just made for you, because they don’t do fast food. Like, three people come in there for lunch per day. It’s super fresh and you just feel so connected to the people and the place and the culture.”

Big Easy-going

Toure says the absolute best Black food he’s ever had has been in New Orleans.

“[Dooky Chase’s](#) is one of the greatest restaurants, perhaps in the whole country. The chicken, the biscuits, everything was perfect. There are certain places — like the first time I went to Nobu. The first time I went to Dooky Chase’s was the first time I had gumbo that was perfect.”

Danielle hasn’t been to New Orleans, but she gets it.

“There’s something about showcasing your culture through food ... and perfecting it,” she says. She *has* been to Nobu, and she has “never had fish that was cleaner. And I don’t mean clean as in *clean*, but just like, so *pure*, and so perfectly sliced, you feel like you’re transported.”

She thinks Toure missed his calling as a food critic.

“The way you’re describing New Orleans through the food makes me feel crazy that I’ve never visited.”

It’s a must, he says.

“You could just go on a food crawl ... the gumbo shop and then the fried chicken shack, and then Dooky Chase’s and just be so happy.”

The secret *is* sauce

The food that intrigues Danielle the most, particularly when she travels, is what the locals describe as “what the workers, or the peasants, eat,” she says.

“A lot of the foods that made it into our everyday lives were considered workers’ foods. When I think about black American food, I think about how little folks had to make something so delicious. There’s something really beautiful about that.”

That makes Toure think about the magic of sauces. He thinks “working folks will add a lot of sauces to their food because it makes the food seem to last longer and fill them up more. Less can seem like more if there’s a great, thick sauce with it.”

He argues that anybody can make chicken, but nailing the sauce that comes with it is something else entirely.

“There’s something about a killer sauce that will just destroy me,” he adds. “I keep coming back to New Orleans, but he po’ boys — gimme extra gravy. Gimme a little meat with the gravy.”

Food court press

If you’re in D.C., a great place to experience Black cuisine is the [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#), says Toure.

“The rest of the museum is amazing. But on the food court, they did not skimp on details.”

The Sweet Home Café offers four different regional menus: Agricultural South, North States, Western Range, and Creole Coast.

“If you ever want to go there, you have to spend some time in the food court, because it’s an important part of the whole situation,” Toure says.

“Do you think there is something white Americans are particularly connected to as it pertains to food?” asks Danielle, who thinks part of what “makes black people so incredibly extraordinary is the way food is so embedded in our culture.”

Toure thinks the answer is “embedded in the question, which we’ve talked about before: Whiteness in terms of culture is not equivalent to blackness. There is absolutely a black culture that is meaningful to us, that we agree upon, that transports us — music, food, language, et cetera. There *is* no white culture.”

Southern fried fake

Toure points out that *ethnic* culture is totally different. “There’s an extraordinarily rich Italian American culture, and Italian American food is fantastic. Greek American food is fantastic—”

Danielle interrupts: “But let’s think about Paula Deens of the world. They say *Southern* cooking; we say it’s soul food or black American food.”

Toure isn’t a food historian, but he feels confident that “99% of what we know as Southern cuisine comes from black people.”

Even if Paula Deen is the one demonstrating the recipes, “you’re making black food,” he adds.

“You were taught by black people. Surely you know black people who do it better than you. You’re just a white face presenting black cuisine.”

Hot-chest crunch

Colonel Sanders popularized black cuisine, Toure notes.

Speaking of, Toure asks Danielle: KFC or Popeyes?

“Popeyes,” she replies without missing a beat.

“Really? Popeye’s is for crunch. But I used to be addicted to KFC,” says Toure.

Danielle thinks Popeyes is better “at all of it — the crunch, the seasoning ... there is no real comparison.”

She knows the Colonel has rolled out “extra crunchy” options, but she can’t help but associate KFC with soggianness.

Toure points out that if it has been sitting on the rack for 10 minutes or more, it’s bound to “have that sog.”

But he has a pro tip to share: “This is how ridiculous I am. If you ask for it from the hot chest, then it will have a little more crisp to it, because it’s newer, and it’s being kept warmer.”

You learn something new every day.

‘Strip mall food’ fight

That’s an ideal segue to the next topic — which involves another poll going around on Twitter.

“We’re a little out of the realm of black culture with this one, but Olive Garden versus Red Lobster,” Toure says.

“*Umm*, I’m gonna say something that’s probably going to make me come off badly,” says Danielle. “But I couldn’t tell you the last time I was in fucking either of them. I don’t live in a chain restaurant district. It would be unfair of me to pass judgment.”

Plus, she thinks it’s like “comparing apples to oranges, because it’s two completely different cuisines.”

That’s fair, says Toure.

“In Brooklyn, we definitely are not inundated with that. There are more individualistic options. Although my mom lives in Boston, and I have been to Olive Garden. I have been to Red Lobster. Red Lobster is superior.”

“Look at Toure, he’s just like us,” Danielle quips.

“I have suburban culture in me!” Toure retorts before pitching up his voice and sing-songing: “*I’m Danielle. I’m too good for the exurbs. I’ve never been to the mall. I’m a city kid.*”

Danielle wonders: “Strip mall food — I guess that’s suburban culture. That sounds terrible. Maybe that’s why I left.”

“I’m not saying it’s good,” Toure replies. “I’m saying it is what it is.”

Chicken and waffle house party

Toure recently went to a friend’s house, where the host served fried chicken and waffles.

“I let him know before we got there: high pressure, you’re making fried chicken for a black man. You better step it up and come correct.”

The chicken was good and crunchy, but there was a problem.

“I hate to validate stereotypes,” Toure adds, “but it was not sufficiently seasoned. It didn’t have enough salt. There probably could have been more pepper, garlic powder, onion powder—”

“What was on it?” Danielle asks. “And why do you think they were compelled to do chicken and waffles? Is it their specialty?”

“I don’t know if there was any seasoning on it. I think it was just fried,” Toure replies. “We were coming together for brunch. So it made sense to do some chicken and waffles. I guess they felt confident—”

“Did this happen last Saturday, which was Juneteenth?”

“It was not,” says Toure.

Gravy reign

Toure thinks you can “100% tell the difference between white people and black people because white people will serve you mashed potatoes without gravy,” he says.

His grandmother used to make the best mashed potatoes,” he says. “They had some lump and texture and skin in them.”

And they always, always were accompanied by delicious gravy. Eating them without it is an utterly foreign concept: “Like, *what?* How did that happen?”

It probably shouldn’t, says Danielle. “I don’t know — baked potato.”

Toure is incredulous: “You prefer that?”

Of *course not*, says Danielle. But if you’re “not going to do the proper pairing,” you should.

“It’s like a peanut butter sandwich. You want peanut butter *and jelly*. With mashed potatoes, one would assume gravy. If you cannot indeed make a gravy... And I feel like I’m doing a Law and Order defense here — *if you cannot afford a gravy, then one will be provided to you by the court* — no, then you should just microwave a baked potato.”

Toure can’t wrap his mind around this. “What are you talking about? You have put it in the oven for like, an hour.”

“Yeah, in an oven,” she replies. “Eight minutes in the microwave ... What are you, Amish? Are you not using electricity in your home?”

Toure and his family use a toaster oven, thank you very much.

“We take our time with our food,” he says.

“Oh, look at you slowing down. How wonderful. I'm glad you have all the time in the world to make a potato,” says Danielle.

The tea on greens

Toure wonders if there's anything on the traditional black soul food table that Danielle *doesn't* like.

“I don't love everybody's collard greens,” she says. I don't like collard greens, as a green.”

Toure doesn't either.

“I don't want *anybody's* collard greens.”

Danielle thinks “they taste like dirt.”

Toure “wouldn't go that far,” but he'll always pass them up.

Danielle points out that they're not “something that, if they're a little bit bad, it's still okay. They're not pizza. If collard greens are a little bit bad, you want to vomit. Not a risk worth taking.”

My cousin rigatoni

“I'm not big on mac and cheese either,” says Toure. “I don't know. It's so—”

“Are you a terrorist?” Danielle asks. “It's so, *what?* Delicious? Oh, noodles that hold both milk and cheese, and the creaminess, and the levels of cheese and flavor. That's a black soul staple. People have competitions for this and it's a serious thing.”

Yeah, Toure knows. But it's just not his jam.

“I love rigatoni bolognese,” he says. “An Italian dish that, when it's done right, is just perfect. The first time I went to Italy I had it and it was like this is heaven on a plate. It's creamy and it's meaty. And it's just everything. Mac and cheese is its cousin, and I'm like *eh...*”

Macaroni and cheese is *certainly not* a cousin of rigatoni bolognese, says Danielle.

“How is it not? It's a noodle,” Toure responds. “I mean, there's no meat, obviously, in the mac and cheese. But they're both noodles with stuff — with cheese or cream — on top of them. Usually you put cheese on the bolognese.”

“What kind of comparison are you making?” Danielle counters. “Why don't we throw in lo mein as well? Do you see how ridiculous that sounds?”

Toure is incredulous.

“Well, *you* sound ridiculous all the time.”

Have bolognese, will travel

The key difference between *rigatoni bolognese* and *maccheroni e formaggio* for Toure is that he “would travel” for the former.

“If you said someplace makes really good rigatoni, I’d drive two hours to try that. But mac and cheese — *eh. I’m good*. Just me. I’m weird,” he says.

“You are,” Danielle tells him. “And I think you’re going to have fewer friends after this show.”

They both might, actually.

“I’m pretty sure people will judge the collard green remarks,” she adds.

Just in case they do, pray about it.

Check out the frustration, rage and absurdity that was the 2020 election on [democracy-ish](#) as Danielle Moodie and Toure discuss the current state of the political climate and our country from a Black perspective.

Sample 3: Crisis Political Analysis (Early Pandemic)

This piece demonstrates tone calibration and crisis-era framing during early COVID coverage.

April 10, 2020

Who Needs Tiger King with a Fat Cat in the White House?

This week, [democracy-ish](#) is live on IG and in a *mood*. What else is new?

- Bernie Sanders officially suspends his campaign ... along with our dreams of universal healthcare, free college and Larry David on SNL every week.

- **Will Joe Biden take up progressive policies or pander to Trumpy Midwestern suburbanites?**
- **The maxim “white people catch a cold, Black people get the flu” is taking on a disturbing new meaning as the coronavirus hits communities of color hardest.**

Since we last left our intrepid hosts, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued its spread, Bernie bowed out of the Democratic primary race and Trump’s insane daily briefing is driving them to drink.

Plus, Touré and Danielle haven’t seen each other IRL in ages.

“I like yelling at you in person,” says Danielle.

“I know. It’s more fun that way,” Touré replies.

But there’s no end to the quarantine in sight, so they’ll just have to yell at Donald Trump. Some things never change.

Goodbye Bernie (and Medicare for all)

On Wednesday, Bernie Sanders dropped out of the presidential race. Although it wasn’t a surprise, Touré is mourning what might have been.

“I feel like it’s the death of a certain dream,” he says. “The dream of Medicare for all, free college, of an economic revolution that would make a difference for millions of working-class and poor people.”

The dream died not because we don’t need or want those things, but because Democratic voters are “understandably paralyzed by fear,” and crave safety, Touré says.

And while Joe Biden may not actually be the safest choice, his Obama-burnished record seems safer than Bernie’s promise of revolution.

But when Touré “got the taste of a true progressive — somebody who was offering more than the traditional status quo ... I was hoping this would be a moment when we could go for real change,” he says.

“But now I’m being told that I have to vote for Joe because Trump is horrible — rather than *Joe has to win my vote*. There’s already an expectation that he’s going to move to the center, if not the center-right, and I have to go along with it.”

Will Biden pivot to the center in Bernie's absence?

Fans of democracy-*ish* know that Danielle isn't exactly sad to see Bernie go. But she's willing to give Uncle Joe the benefit of the doubt.

"I think Biden and his camp are actually well aware that he cannot go center-right. That's definitely a no-go. He'll probably go to the center, which is where he's always been, but center-right? No."

Touré isn't so sure. He worries that Biden seems intent on winning back the same suburban rust belt voters who voted for Trump. If it works, "we [Democrats] owe them," he says. "Then they are the center of the party. Giving them what they need and holding on to them for the next election becomes the center of the Democratic Party. It makes me very uncomfortable."

Everything about our current situation is uncomfortable, says Danielle. But she's hopeful that, over the coming months, we'll see Biden step up to the plate.

"Biden is going to have to develop a spine," she says. "Winning back Trump voters does not win us the election."

That begs the question: What *can* win back the White House?

"Getting the 100 million people who did not vote in 2016."

SCOTUS-approved voter suppression in America's dairyland

Mobilizing the vast swaths of America who sat at home while Trump voters spoke for the rest of the country is a tall order. And this week, it got even more difficult when the Supreme Court ruled that Wisconsin [could not extend](#) the time it accepts absentee ballots — even in the midst of a pandemic.

"They have given the Republicans an open door policy to voter suppression across the board," Danielle says.

The only thing that can beat back voter suppression is mass voter turnout, she adds.

"Focus on the Bernie bros who already say they ain't voting for Biden. Focus on people who stayed home because they weren't *excited* ... We weren't in the middle of a global pandemic in 2016. It was all hyperbole, whether or not Trump would drive America off a cliff."

Now, she argues, that cliff is already in the rearview mirror.

“His administration kicked 3.5 million people off healthcare in the midst of a pandemic. He fired the inspector general who was supposed to oversee a \$2 trillion stimulus package, to make sure it didn't turn into a slush fund.”

Mind the racial healthcare gap

Although we have yet to understand the true scope of COVID-19's spread, one thing is clear: the virus is [hitting Black and brown people more harshly](#) than others.

“You see areas where we are 20 to 30 percent of the population, but we are 70 to 80 percent of the cases. We're dying at rates two, three or four times higher than the white people around us,” says Touré. “Ultimately, it comes down to generations of systemic racism.”

The racial wealth and class divide is just the beginning, he notes.

“Doctors prescribe us tests less often and downgrade Black pain more. A lot of us don't have health insurance. Black life expectancy is at least 10 years less [on average] than it is for white people.”

Some say COVID-19 is a “great equalizer” because it can infect anyone regardless of race or age. But Danielle thinks that's... BS.

“We never really talk about economic vulnerability and how it plays into all of this,” she says. “What happens when people are poor? They're more likely to have diabetes, hypertension, high blood pressure, asthma ... and let's talk about food deserts ... low-lying areas filled with pollution ... being forced into densely populated housing complexes.”

The vulnerability of ‘essential’ workers

Meanwhile, the essential workers who are the backbone of our economy don't have the luxury of staying home.

“Either stay home and risk starvation or go out in the street and risk infection,” Touré says. “What kind of a Sophie's Choice is that?”

Danielle points out that poverty is the very definition of vulnerability. It's a painful reality laid bare when we see [images of packed New York City subways](#), she says.

“Those are the janitors ... the people who are cleaning up your hospitals, working in nursing homes — and they're doing so without the protection that they actually need.”

It's also worth noting, she adds, that it's easier to find supplies like masks and food in Harlem and certain areas of Brooklyn.

“Why? Because these people do not have the ability to panic shop and drop \$500 on canned goods. They don't have a pantry that they're filling up with a bunch of shit?”

But we don't often have conversations about poverty, Danielle says, “because in America, we still believe that if you are poor, it's your fault.”

The virus has exposed the massive disconnect “between the haves and the have-nots, between Black folks and white folks, income classes, ethnicities,” she adds. “We want to treat people like everybody is the same, but we are not.”

Nasty pressers and daily stressors

Quarantine is taking an emotional toll on Touré.

“I am so drained by this whole thing ... and I stopped smoking weed six months ago, so I don't have that to rely on to sort of numb out. But I've been drinking one to two bottles of wine a weekend just to unwind from the stress. I have watched nearly everything decent on Netflix ... and the Trump daily insane press briefing is stressing me out,” he says.

“I thought it was your favorite show,” says Danielle.

“It is, but ... the gaslighting, the lying — it is so difficult to watch,” Touré replies. “I just scream: *no, that's not true. No, that's not true.* Over and over. Watching the tiger fight with the media.”

Meanwhile, the press corps carries on, asking long, context-based questions. But Trump “just jumps in whenever he wants and starts fighting with people,” Touré adds.

“*Where are you from? Your question was nasty. Your tone was mean* ... He's such an animal...it's gross and it's disgusting. And it's just such an incredible dereliction of what the presidency is supposed to be about and the sort of person that we need.”

White (House) crazy

Touré gave Danielle a homework assignment last week, and she didn't do it.

“I don't give a good goddamn about the Tiger King, I'll just be honest with you,” she says.

“That's because you haven't watched it yet,” says Touré. “You're the last person in America ... I watched it in about two days. You can't stop. And there's not a Black person anywhere in sight. It's just white craziness over and over. I love the show.”

“If I want to see white crazy over and over and over again, I'll just keep watching the fucking press briefing,” says Danielle. “I don't need to watch this. We have a Tiger King as president. I'm good.”

Get your weekly rundown of the presidential election from a Black progressive point of view on [democracy-ish](#). Consider Danielle Moodie and Touré as your tour guides, flight attendants and/or therapists as we move through this dumpster fire of an election cycle — together!