

The Legacy of John Adams

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[00:00:04.3] Jeffrey Rosen: To celebrate John Adams's 289th birthday, I visited the Adams Presidential Center in Quincy, Mass., for an enlightening conversation on the constitutional legacy of the Adams family.

[00:00:16.6] Jeffrey Rosen: Hello, friends. I'm Jeffrey Rosen, President and CEO of the National Constitution Center, and welcome to We the People, a weekly show of constitutional debate. The National Constitution Center is a nonpartisan nonprofit chartered by Congress to increase awareness and understanding of the Constitution among the American people. In this episode of We the People, I'm joined by Danielle Allen, professor at Harvard, and Jane Kamensky, the President and CEO of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello. Thanks to the Adams Presidential Center for convening this discussion, and to President Kurt Graham for moderating.

[00:00:56.1] Jeffrey Rosen: Together, we explore the constitutional legacy of the Adams family, including John and Abigail Adams, and John Quincy and Louisa Catherine Adams. And we discuss the importance of resurrecting the Adams family's tradition of self-mastery and self-improvement to defend the American idea. Enjoy the conversation.

[00:01:15.2] Kurt Graham: Well, thank you all very much for being here. I know it was a great effort, especially for you two, to come from a distance. In getting at the relevance of John Adams, Jeff, I'd like to start with you, and you've spent a lot of time thinking about the way American history has been defined between Hamilton and Jefferson, kind of as two points of view. And I'm curious if you could, first of all, just kind of explain that to us in a little bit of detail. But part of what we think here is that Adams has been overlooked in some of these conversations. How is it that he doesn't, that he didn't get included in that discussion of the sort of sweep of American history?

[00:02:00.1] Jeffrey Rosen: Absolutely. Well, first of all, it's an honor to be here. I'm so excited to launch with you this great Adams initiative. I haven't been back to Adams birthplace since college, more than 30 years ago, when I was writing a thesis on Henry Adams and went out and was so inspired by that amazing place. And Adams, for me, has been overlooked in American history because he didn't fit neatly into the debate between Hamilton and Jefferson that defined so much of American history. National power versus states' rights, liberal versus strict construction of the Constitution, and democracy versus rule by elites was that central debate by Hamilton and Jefferson that radiated out from 1776 to today.

[00:02:47.4] Jeffrey Rosen: But Adams and John Quincy Adams and the Adams family are the hero of the book I've just put out about the pursuit of happiness and how classical writers on Virtue inspired the lives of the founders and defined America. Because the Adams family, more dramatically than any other in American history, exemplifies that quest for self-mastery, self-improvement, character improvement, mastering your unreasonable passions and emotions so that you can be your best self and serve others. I love the story of Abigail and John meeting for the first time, and what do they decide to do when they're dating? To make a list of each other's faults. And they're getting this from Pythagoras, who has a system of self-accounting, which Ben Franklin channeled, and Abigail, recognizing that John is, you know, considered the most arrogant man of his time, said, well, some people are just intimidated by you 'cause you're so brilliant. You know, she puts it very nicely.

[00:03:46.1] Jeffrey Rosen: And he said, well, you're, you should practice the piano more and read more, plus you're pigeon-toed. And she says, you know, I'll work on my piano, but a gentleman shouldn't comment on another, on a lady's posture. But what's so remarkable about both the great intellectual and romantic and spiritual partnership between John and Abigail is they exemplify that quest for self-improvement and self-mastery and passed it on to John Quincy, who, at the age of 30, has just been appointed to the Supreme Court, and he is minister to St. Petersburg, and 'cause his mother is always exhorting him to master his passions, I thought having a Jewish mother was tough. It turns out that having a Puritan mother is even harder. Quincy Adams writes, you know, I'm squandering my life.

[00:04:34.1] Jeffrey Rosen: If only I had more self-discipline, I might have conquered war and slavery. He sets a very high bar for himself, but then he does it, and he has a dark night of the soul. He lost the presidential election. His oldest son commits suicide, and he, after spending a year reading Cicero in the original and reading the Bible, converts himself into the greatest abolitionist of his age and introduces a constitutional amendment to end slavery and denounces the gag rule on the floor of Congress and dies on the floor of Congress, whispering Cicero's words, I am composed, kind of the exemplification of self-mastery in the public good that is his ideal. So I share all this to really say how extraordinarily important I think it is to resurrect the Adams tradition of self-mastery, self-improvement, and constitutionalism, which is Adams' greatest contribution.

[00:05:30.9] Jeffrey Rosen: John Adams, among the framers, is the most important champion of the separation of powers, and he drafts the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 and insists on a strong executive and a bicameral house and an independent judiciary, and that proves to be the wisest lesson of American constitutionalism, even more important than a Bill of Rights, which the Massachusetts Constitution also has, is separating powers, 'cause all the Adamses have a dark view of human nature, and they believe that men are not angels but are constantly struggling for ambition and fame.

[00:06:09.7] Jeffrey Rosen: Adams uniquely recognizes the danger of oligarchy and is worried about people voting for rich oligarchs and surrendering their liberties in exchange for cheap luxuries, and all the Adamses constantly worry that America's gonna go the way of Greece and Rome, 'cause we'll surrender our liberties and our constitutional principles for small, to dictators and Caesar on horseback. I'll end, I hope I'm not going on too long, but I'm really keyed up about

working with you to defend Adams, and whenever in these difficult times I get to talk about history, I end with John Quincy Adams' exhortation to the people in 1839, it was a time much like today, civil war is on the horizon, it looks like the Union's gonna break apart over slavery and polarization.

[00:07:00.7] Jeffrey Rosen: And Quincy Adams quotes the book of Deuteronomy and says that we must cleave to the principles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and educate our fellow citizens about them, unless we do that, democracy will fall, and then he literally quotes Deuteronomy and says, take these principles as frontlets between your eyes, bind them to your hands and arms, whisper them to your children before you sleep, make them the principles of your political salvation, and that's how important it is that we learn about the Constitution and the Declaration, and that is why there is no better spokespeople for the urgency of education about the principles of the Constitution and the Declaration than the Adams family.

[00:07:41.7] Kurt Graham: Well, thank you, that's terrific. We will never cut anybody off who's fired up about talking about this.

[00:07:52.7] Jeffrey Rosen: I really like it. I hope that wasn't too much.

[00:07:54.6] Kurt Graham: Be rest assured. You know, we've talked a little bit about the sort of Hamilton-Jeffersonian split. Let's talk, Jane, for a minute about Adams and Jefferson and that sort of, again, I feel like he has a split with Hamilton, but then he also has this on-again, off-again, on-again relationship with Thomas Jefferson. Tell us a little bit about that and why that's relevant.

[00:08:14.8] Jane Kamensky: Great, thank you, and also wonderful to be here. Last time I was in Quincy High School, I was at a regional swim meet with my younger son. This is much, much more civilized. So Jeff's thinking about 1839, I'm thinking about 1774, which I believe is the first time Adams ever left the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, right, goes to the First Continental Congress, at a moment when exactly 250 years ago, Congress ended October 26th, 1774, so really exactly 250 years ago, existing colonial institutions are breaking down, the center has not held, people are building the wagon as they fly it, and have decided that they need to bring the north-south center, hopefully Canada also, together, what Adams would eventually call 13 clocks, there were 26 clocks, but 13 of them eventually came together in Philadelphia to begin forging a kind of compromise and consensus.

[00:09:28.1] Jane Kamensky: Jefferson didn't enter the equation until the following spring, at the Second Continental Congress in 1775, but from the beginning, Adams is quite dazzled by the differences between the New Englanders and the Virginians, right, the Virginians come in their coach in six, they're much more high-toned people, they're high church and not low church, they have different kinds of cosmopolitanism than Massachusetts does. Gordon Wood, the great historian Gordon Wood, calls Adams and Jefferson the North and South Poles of the American Revolution, and I think one of the interesting things about considering them together, and Monticello is doing this in a concerted way in a special tour for 1775 and 1776, is you see what's missing from both by looking at them against each other.

[00:10:28.3] Jane Kamensky: So the North Pole is a cold place, right, and the North Pole has one kind of highly unstable hierarchy, a hierarchy mostly of what we would call class, what they would have called rank and condition. The South has a highly unstable but seemingly secure hierarchy around race. So Jefferson is the great Democrat because he doesn't really worry about social mobility around the people who count as subjects and potentially as citizens, Adams worries a great deal about social mobility because his own rank is recent and unstable, and he's looking at those Olivers and Bradfords and others. They both come from a world of hierarchies that are cracking apart, and they're thinking about how you build a new polity that is more horizontal from a world that is highly vertical, right, and a world in which the colonies have come out. There's a family analogy that is pervasive in the 18th century. The king is the head, the father is the head, the family are the limbs, and the colonies have come to think of themselves as the trodden under feet of this collapsing colonial hierarchy in 1774 and 1775.

[00:11:56.4] Jane Kamensky: Adams and Jefferson have radically aligned views about what needs to happen vis-a-vis Great Britain, but once they affect that separation, they very quickly have different views of what the country should look like. They're both institutionalists in different ways, but I think Jefferson trusts the people as he imagines them being constituted, and Adams has a profound distrust of the people, right, distrusts elections, distrusts open competition for offices. Adams trusts Britain as the exemplar for the path that the United States should follow, commercial, industrial, eastward facing. Jefferson will not, even in the 1790s, get off the train with the French Revolution, right, like he trusts in the idea of republicanism.

[00:12:51.5] Jane Kamensky: Their correspondence, there are about 1,200 plus letters in all, you probably have the exact numbers, their correspondence touches on every feature of American conditions as they're emerging. They famously fell out in the late 1790s with Jefferson's contest for election as president of the United States in 1800, and didn't speak for 11 years. 11, you know, the competing visions of the United States have come to seem so contentious that part of the revolutionary band of brothers, two-fifths of the drafting committee for the Declaration of Independence can no longer speak, and at Monticello, we're leaning into the telling of that story of coming apart, what is partisanship that does this to friends, how do we organize our differences without losing our civic friendships, but then also leaning into the hopefulness of their coming back together, brokered by the great republican theorist, anti-slavery activist, physician Benjamin Rush.

[00:14:07.7] Jane Kamensky: They're coming back together and exploring only on paper, and I think there's a lesson for us in that, in the slowness of the transmission of ideas, where they've been and where they and the country have been and where they and the country can go. There's an incredibly poignant line in one of Adams' late letters, and it seems characteristic of Adams that in their resumed correspondence, three-quarters of it is Adams to Jefferson. It's his rotundity, you know, knocking at the door of the sage of the mountain, where Adams says, we ought not to die without explaining ourselves to each other. And I think there's a line, that's a sign of where we were and where we are. We ought not to die without explaining ourselves to each other. So a story that is earnest and real, that is brutal at times.

[00:15:13.3] Jane Kamensky: They miss each other for crucial moments of their lives, but the coming back together and the thinking that the we is worth more than the I is a story to lean into.

[00:15:28.8] Kurt Graham: It's worth it. And taking that sweeping view of American history as it's been explained by these two, Danielle. Danielle, by the way, is one of the leading authorities on civics education in our entire nation and has led a very important effort for the Educating for American Democracy initiative, and we have some partners from that effort here tonight, and we will maybe have a chance to introduce them a little bit later, but Danielle, what, when you listen to this conversation and when you think about what it is we're trying to do to kind of reinvigorate the understanding of civics, how does Adams play into that? What is it that he brings to this moment that makes him useful to the effort that you and others have launched?

[00:16:17.4] Danielle Allen: Well, let me also, as my colleagues have done, just say thank you to everybody who's here tonight for this inaugural program for the Adams Presidential Center. It's really exciting. We are here. We are doing the work, having the chance to recover the legacy of the stories and to make space for thinking together about our shared country and its future, so it's just a real honor to be here. So I want to say some things about civic education, but before I do, let me also just round out this story about how the Adams family matters so much.

[00:16:58.2] Danielle Allen: We have a very fragmented understanding of our history now in this country and a very contentious understanding of our history. We all have sort of awareness of the fights over whether or not 1619 or 1776 counts as a founding moment for this country. That fight is in many ways carried out over the question of how to think about enslavement in the nation's founding, and without any doubt, that has been a central feature of the unfolding nature of this country, both the fact of enslavement's existence and then our need to overcome that, the fact that it took a war ultimately to overcome it, but there has been a real hole in our understanding of that history.

[00:17:47.6] Danielle Allen: That hole is represented by the fact that the histories of Jefferson and George Washington are much more available to the broad public than the history of the Adams family. The reason this matters, of course, is that, as we know, both Jefferson and Washington owned human beings. They were slaveholders. Washington did in his will emancipate the people whom his family owned. Nonetheless, that fact of their ownership of slaves is at the core of a lot of people's understanding of the nation's founding. Of course, Adams was as important to that founding. He was on the drafting committee for the Declaration of Independence. He was, if anything, with Richard Henry Lee in that year, 1775 to 1776, the motive force. Not Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was a kiddo. He was brand new to Congress. He didn't know anybody. He wasn't very social. That also meant he wasn't on any committees, so he had time to write something like the preamble to a Declaration of Independence.

[00:18:49.6] Danielle Allen: But Adams was really the person with Richard Henry Lee who was doing all the work and laying the conceptual foundations. Working closely with Benjamin Franklin as well. And John Adams and Abigail Adams never enslaved human beings. They were against enslavement continuously and consistently, and they brought that set of commitments into the process and practice of the founding. Benjamin Franklin as well, by the time of the writing of the Declaration, had given up the practice of enslavement. He had previously owned people, but he had abandoned that and he had embraced the project of abolition. And the importance of this story is for all of us to be able to recognize that right from the beginning of the

country. The question of enslavement was fully contested. And there were really two voices when you painted the picture of the differences of opinion.

[00:19:35.9] Danielle Allen: One piece that didn't come out was the difference on the question of enslavement and how that might be handled over time in the country. But that was another point of difference and distinction. When Adams wrote the Massachusetts Constitution, he drew on the language of the Declaration of Independence. And of course, the way he drew on that language provided the basis for the Massachusetts Supreme Court to declare enslavement counter to the Massachusetts Constitution. And that meant that Massachusetts before the end of the American Revolution, like Pennsylvania before the end of the American Revolution, had abolished enslavement. That is a critical part of our founding story that most Americans don't know. And so I think of our founding story as being like a set of pearls.

[00:20:18.3] Danielle Allen: And the question is, can we take those pearls and string them into a complete necklace? We've got the pearl of Monticello, we've got the pearl of Mount Vernon, We need the pearl of the Adams Presidential Center, and we need all those pearls together to have the complete story. Now a word about Adams and civic education. So, oh, thank you, baby. Thank you. Jeff said constitutionalism was one of the great things that Adams contributed, and he did, for sure, in that same year, '75, '76. He was already laying out that commitment to separation of powers, proposing that as the map. The colonies were already writing constitutions before they decided to declare independence and have a revolution. They figured out where they wanted to go. That's a really important part of their story, that it wasn't about breaking things and then seeing what happens. It was about laying out a pathway to a flourishing future. Now that pathway was about constitutionalism and it was also about education. And this comes together beautifully. It's very clear in Adams' writings throughout '75 and '76. In January 1776, he actually drafted a declaration for the Massachusetts Assembly for the general court, which was the first draft of the Declaration of Independence. A lot of the language, even the course of events language that's in the final declaration is in that January of 1776 declaration.

[00:21:47.5] Danielle Allen: But the thing that's different about that January 1776 declaration, is that after he works through the legal changes that he considers necessary, there is an extremely long section about how the virtues of the people need to be cultivated. And they need to be cultivated through the organs and engines of education, also religion, as he lays out the argument in that text. But there you have it. For him the two halves together, constitutionalism and the education of the people, the full people. He was not a full Democrat in his politics, but he was a full Democrat in his commitment to an expectation of education for all. So there was a little bit of a tension, I think, in his own work in that regard. And Abigail as well was an immensely educated woman. She used her learning to drive positive change. He respected that in her. It was a whole family project. And so for that reason, I think the Adams are just ideal for carrying the message to the country that the health of this enterprise, the health of the American people, has to have civic education at its heart. We have to do that work on making ourselves a people who can carry our responsibilities with honor.

[00:23:05.5] Kurt Graham: Let's carry that forward just a moment. You think about it, she's just explained education and constitutionalism. So Jeff, talk to us a little bit about constitutionalism and what is the basis of that? What makes constitutionalism work? And talk

about Adams in that regard. Obviously, one of his primary accomplishments is having drafted the Constitution for the state of Massachusetts. But it doesn't just work by itself. What is needed to make constitutionalism a functional form?

[00:23:40.3] Jeffrey Rosen: Separation of powers, and that was Adams' great insight. In order to prevent the president from becoming a king, in order to prevent a republic from going the way of past republics and surrendering to demagogues and the mob, in order to prevent financial elites from aligning with the executive and engaging in corrupt behavior, you have to ensure that no branch of government gets to speak for we the people on their own. And that's why Adams' insights about separation of powers are so unfamiliar and so important to study. There's this great moment at a dinner party in Philadelphia that defined all of American politics. And it's not the room where it happened, debate from the musical where they move the Capitol to DC in exchange for assuming the debt. This is a year later. Washington is away, and Jefferson summons the Cabinet.

[00:24:44.4] Jeffrey Rosen: And Hamilton looks around the room and says, "Who are those three guys?" And Jefferson says, they're my greatest heroes ever. They're Bacon and Isaac Newton and John Locke. And Hamilton supposedly blurts out, the greatest man in America was Julius Caesar. And Jefferson scribbles that down. And then later they're having dinner, and Adams says, purge the British constitution of corruption, and it would be the greatest in the world. And Hamilton blurts out, purging it of its corruption, it would lose its perfection. As it is, corruption is necessary to ensure its perfection. So Jefferson's convinced that Hamilton is a demagogue built on corruption as well.

[00:25:25.5] Jeffrey Rosen: What both Adams and Hamilton are getting at in their praise of the British constitution is that you need a strong executive to resist the self-interested behavior of the popular and aristocratic branches. And they disagree about what to do. And Adams famously, when he learns that the human impulse to be famous is our animating passion, he decides that all offices have to be hereditary. Imagine what he would make of Facebook today. Just that desire for attention and for prestige is so important that he doesn't trust popular offices and wants to make them hereditary in order to resist corruption. This is a completely unfamiliar way of thinking about constitutionalism in a world that exalts democracy above all, but at a time when democracies around the world are facing threats of populist authoritarians who concentrate power in one place who undermine the separation of powers and the independent judiciary, who assault legislative prerogatives and who attack their critics, suddenly we may be seeing the wisdom of some of Adams' classical insights about the urgent importance of sustaining separation of powers in order to sustain the rule of law and constitutionalism. It's very difficult, as Danielle so eloquently said, and I have to say what an honor it is to be part of this discussion with these great scholars thinking about the relevance of Adams today.

[00:27:06.3] Jeffrey Rosen: It's difficult in America today both to question pure democracy and also it's impossible to talk about politics. And at this terribly challenging time for the republic, it seems as if we fear of civil war is once again in the air. But it is possible to talk about history and I'm convinced that Americans can learn history deeply and can debate complexity. And that's why going back to first principles is so important. One of Adams' favorite passages was from Machiavelli's Discourses on Livy, which said that a return to first principles is necessary to

sustain the republic. And Livy is noting that the republic always falls to empire and aristocracies fall to oligarchies. The way to prevent that democratic backsliding which we would today call backsliding into populist authoritarianism is to return to first principles that's why Livy says that Brutus had to kill his own sons when they threatened to resurrect the empire he had to punish them by killing them in order to establish that devotion to democratic principles.

[00:28:20.0] Jeffrey Rosen: Adams of course never went too far but he did quote that passage from Livy and it was inserted into the Virginia Declaration of Rights, which said that unless citizens return to first principles of prudence, temperance, courage and justice, then the republic will fall. My experience at the National Constitution Center is you can talk about all this stuff with people around the country in Elkhart, Indiana, in Cookeville, Tennessee, groups of adult learners and kids. People are hungry to return to first principles to talk about history. Of course, the way to do it is through storytelling, and that's why all of us are telling you the riveting biographies and struggles of John and Abigail Adams and their families 'cause that's the way we can get into the history. But debates about constitutionalism are no longer abstract. They're of the most urgent importance in sustaining the Constitution of the United States. And to tell that story, there's no one better than John Adams.

[00:29:22.3] Kurt Graham: I think this, what we're learning tonight's between John and Abigail's dating practice and his desire, his decision not to kill his sons is we're not going to get advice from him about dating or fatherhood.

[00:29:38.0] Jeffrey Rosen: Absolutely.

[00:29:38.5] Kurt Graham: We leave it at that.

[00:29:40.3] Jeffrey Rosen: My sons have the same impression.

[00:29:44.1] Kurt Graham: Several of the comments from the audience have been, and we hear this a lot even in the media today, is people say, well, we're a democracy. Well, no, we're a republic. And no one seems to really land on definitions of these words. And that's why with the constitutional republic, we do need to define these terms. Jane, talk to us a little bit about that. How would you define for the audience the difference between a democracy and a republican and how we and the Adams fit on that scale.

[00:30:11.4] Jane Kamensky: So the way the educating for American democracy leadership consortium threaded this needle was to talk about constitutional democracy America has had very few experiments with direct democracy the Pennsylvania state constitution of 1776 is probably the closest unicameral legislature with one year terms, an administrator, not an executive, and all bills of consequence have to be debated Agora style by voice in the public square. Such a thing collapses on its own. It's a feminist editorial collective. Such it's such it. Okay, this is not a joke. A group that got. When when when everything is flat and everything is consensus and you have to talk about everything from the shape of the table to whether you do or don't serve Hamas in the middle of the Gaza war you really can't get very far especially over an extensive republic so our democracy has always been mediated by institutions but with increasing belief and capacity for the power of a wider range of people right universal White

male suffrage by the 1830s women and people of African descent advocating for full citizenship some of them really Abigail in some ways from the 1770s Black people in Massachusetts by petition as early as 1773 and 1774 so the number of Americans who count as citizens and participants in this constitutional democracy grows.

[00:32:00.1] Jane Kamensky: I think it's important, education for American democracy is at least center right to center left coalition. It's a broad cross-ideological coalition and it was very important to our thought partners on the right that we recognize that we are not a direct democracy and have generally not striven to be a direct democracy and very important to our thought partners on the left to recognize the power of the American people and to get as close to empowering, capacitating as many kinds of capital C and small c citizens as we can.

[00:32:40.5] Danielle Allen: I would love to pick that question up too if that's okay because there's a whole story to tell here in our theme of storytelling about the Educating for American Democracy roadmap and to explain what it is and why this conversation about what are we educating kids for anyway? What do we live in, a democracy or a republic? Why does that conversation matter? So the Educating for American Democracy Roadmap is a framework for excellence in history and civic learning for all learners, grades K-12. And it was released in March 2021, funded by the National Endowment for Humanities and the US Department of Education under both the Trump and the Biden administrations. And that's very unusual. I bet you can register that. But it's a very important part of the work that a group of 300 scholars, educators, practitioners from across the country came together across all lines of difference, so demographic background, regional expertise, and political viewpoint, with the goal of answering the question of what should our kids learn? This is a question that as a society we haven't been able to answer for generations. And when the adults can't answer the question, what should the kids learn, the kids don't get to learn. It's as simple as that. So there was a very weighty responsibility to actually figure out how to break through our polarization to answer that question.

[00:34:00.3] Danielle Allen: And what the roadmap does is it's got sort of seven thematic areas and then sets of questions. So it's not answers so much, it's not lists of things kids should know, but it is lists of the questions all kids should have the chance to encounter in their history and social studies classes over time. But you might well ask, how on earth did anybody manage to do something that was supported by both the Trump and the Biden administration? Were you wondering that? A little bit? And the answer to that is that we started out, before we became a group of 300, we started out as a group of six and built ourselves from the get-go to have that ideological diversity in our mix. We said to each other, look, Jane was a member of this group, so we're both telling the same story here, and Louise and Peter, who are here, are also members of that group. We said to ourselves, we have an incredibly important purpose here. Kids are not getting the opportunity for civic learning that they deserve. And so although we disagree, and although we're gonna build a group with a lot of disagreement in it, we're gonna just link arms and commit to getting this work done. And that means when we hit something we disagree about, we're gonna stop. We're gonna wrestle it through until we figure out a compromise. We're not gonna have paper over disagreements.

[00:35:14.2] Danielle Allen: And so we'd been working for about two weeks when we hit our first roadblock. Is this thing a democracy or a republic? It was exactly that question that was the first thing that we had to stop on and think about. And for historians, it can be a little frustrating because it's a bit of a red herring of a question. Yes, there's a distinction between direct democracy and representative democracy, but both terms, democracy and republic, were used at the founding. Both were used. Hamilton argued for the Constitution as a representative democracy in the New York Constitutional Conventions, ratification conventions. So both terms were used. But in Utah, It's a matter of state law that kids are taught that this is a republic, not a democracy. So there's really a real issue here, how to think about it. So exactly as Jane said, we sort of talked and talked and wrestled. I think it took us about two weeks to wrestle this through. We came to the recognition that for our colleagues on the right, the word republic communicates values of constitutionalism, rule of law, order, and structure. For our colleagues on the left, the word democracy communicates the values of universal inclusion, popular sovereignty, and full participation. And so our compromise was constitutional democracy. That's what we're educating kids for.

[00:36:27.2] Danielle Allen: So it's a great question. So glad you started with it. It was right at the very beginning of our process too. But I hope that story also answers the question, the question that you asked, Jane, about how do we make sure that we explain ourselves to each other before we die? I think the Educating for American Democracy Roadmap Project was an effort of a lot of educators from different parts of the country to explain ourselves to each other before we die. So that we can actually educate kids. So we'll tell you more about this project, but just for your awareness, you can look it up online and you'll see it, schools in about 19 states are piloting curriculum based on this roadmap. So it's a quiet effort to build civic learning infrastructure for the 21st century.

[00:37:18.3] Kurt Graham: It's a tremendous effort. Turn to a question from the audience here that I think dovetails on this a little bit. Talking about the Adams and their, as orators, they brought this need to deliberate. And you've just sort of given us a great example of that. To deliberate on issues in the legislature, in public, on behalf of the people they represent. So a two-part question. Explain why public deliberation is essential to a robust democracy, or we would say constitutional. Or what can we do to promote public deliberation in our local legislature? How important is that concept to what we're talking about here?

[00:37:56.4] Jeffrey Rosen: Well, it's central. George Washington wants two things to prevent the republic from descending into faction. One, and he wants them both to be taught at a national university where people will set aside their parochial biases and converge around the principles of the Constitution, and also the habits of deliberation. Unless people can learn to disagree without being disagreeable and can listen to differing points of view, then we'll descend into Rome and violence. The Adamses are the greatest spokespeople for deliberation and rhetoric 'cause Quincy, of course, was the first Boylston professor of rhetoric at Harvard.

[00:38:39.0] Jeffrey Rosen: And the gift that John sent to Jefferson to reconcile after their long break was, he called it a packet of homespun. It was Quincy Adams' lectures on Oratory, which was the classic text for a century. And they're all about how to master the passions, how to give effective speeches not by succumbing to anger or to demagoguery, but persuasive argument. And

kids learn this for much of American history. The fact that that's fallen out of public schools where people just learn how to debate and to make arguments on both sides may be responsible for a lot of our current vexations. We've found at the Constitution Center that it is so difficult to talk about politics today, but it is very possible to talk about constitutional issues and the habits of deliberation. And you do that by bringing together liberals and conservatives to debate and discuss every clause of the Constitution discussing what they agree about and disagree about.

[00:39:49.1] Jeffrey Rosen: So this amazing online resource, the interactive constitution, has 160 of America's greatest scholars like Justice Amy Coney Barrett and Neal Katyal with a thousand words about what they agree the habeas corpus clause means, and then separate statements about what they disagree about. And we do that in this podcast that I do every week. We, the people, are bringing together liberals and conservatives for civil debate in this great new Khan Academy course that we've done with Khan Academy on the Constitution, Constitution 101, which just launched. And I'm delighted to report, I just found out today the most popular video in this concourse, which has just been live for a month, is the civil dialogue discussion, How to have a civil dialogue. And it begins with justice Stephen Breyer talking about the importance of civil dialogue. And that requires articulating both sides before making up your own mind learning to disagree without being disagreeable when you're talking about the Supreme Court reading the majority opinion and the dissent and being able to argue both sides.

[00:40:52.0] Jeffrey Rosen: The Adamses didn't think that this was a debater's tool or something for lawyers or some esoteric skill. It was central to the liberal arts curriculum in college and also central to the high school curriculum. And I do think, as my colleagues are saying so strongly, as American politics becomes more and more fractured and it's so important to bring together people of different perspectives, I think the way to do that is not through political debates 'cause it's not been my experience that those are all that productive, but constitutional and historical debates, just what you're doing now, Liz, isn't it fascinating to learn about history? I'm learning so much from Jane and Danielle, and I know you are too. Just bringing together people of different perspectives and including historians and scholars of different perspectives to model this kind of debate and dialogue and teaching kids to engage in this kind of dialogue is necessary for the future of the Republic.

[00:41:54.9] Jane Kamensky: If I can offer a friendly amendment. I think one of the places that the Adams example really shines is in private disputation as well as public, right? So we overstate the Puritan legacy in New England and in American history, but one of the places it really matters is the literacy and intellectual capacity of women. 70% of women in New England could read by 1700. This is unheard of in the history of the world. And so family culture, while not egalitarian in the ways that we would recognize it is, is robust, right? The family is the little commonwealth in Puritan terms, and it's where you learn the habits that you take out into the market, the public square, your political life. And you see it in Adams' letters. How much dinner table conversation is going on, how often Abigail will say, and you remember we talked about that two weeks ago. So this sense of a family culture also that is rife with the exchange of ideas where children are seen and heard and where women are seen and heard. That's not the Virginia Case, right? The Virginia women play a very different role. And I think it matters that we have this quartet of silhouettes and not two, and that we think of that faculty for democratic deliberation as coming out of households as well as political sways.

[00:43:32.8] Kurt Graham: And talk about that too, Jane, because I think when we think about presidential centers, presidential libraries, presidential homes and estates, and wherever else we celebrate the American presidency, which is in a lot of places, fortunately I think that, you said to me the other day that the ADAMS Center is somewhat unique in the sense that it's focused on a family and not just on a single president or even a pair of presidents in this case. What is there to say about that? Because for example, at Monticello, Jefferson's wife died, he was only married for 10 years. I mean, we know about Martha Washington, but really, I mean, it's not the same as it is with Abigail for sure.

[00:44:12.5] Jane Kamensky: Yeah. There is a wave of scholarship and popular history around first ladies, much of which is terrible. I think what's wonderful about treating the Adams legacy as a family legacy is the women's roles are not decorative right? They resist decoration, they're bold, they're pioneering, they're disputatious. And I think Adams is a quite singular case. John Adams is a quite singular case in the history of the American presidency where the line of dissent goes upwards, right? Where his son is a more full embodiment of everything an American can be and do politically has among other things. I think the second greatest, if not the greatest post-presidency in history. That's a rising family story, and it takes all hands. And to me, thinking about the Adams Presidential Center as one that talks about a family culture, when you have Abigail Adams, Louisa, Catherine Adams, you don't just add the women and stir the women who are baking the cake.

[00:45:29.8] Kurt Graham: Yeah. Great. Your reference to the Puritans and of course, talking about the values and the ethics and things that anticipates a question from one of our audience members that asked specifically, in what ways did their religion and faith and values influence their public service and thoughts on government? How did faith help guide them in terms of their work in the public square? And I'll just throw that out there to whoever wants to take the bait.

[00:46:00.4] Danielle Allen: I mean, I think we probably all would share a similar message on this. I mean, it was very important to them without any question. I mean, they were pious people. And I mentioned the text, the declaration that Adams drafted in January of 1776. It's a bracing read for a modern sensibility. It is about education. It is also about religion. And it's very clear that for him, a virtuous citizenry is also a believing citizenry. So that was a part of where they took, I'm sure their sort of self-discipline, their self understanding. I mean, Jane, you've done a great job already of articulating the Puritan sort of framework there. Happy to pass to you to extend.

[00:46:44.9] Jane Kamensky: Both Jefferson and Adams, by the end of their lives, are deistic, right? They're people of faith, but they're not heavily churchied. I think Jefferson is much more capacious in his thinking about what religion can and shouldn't mean for the Republic, right? Whether my neighbor has one God or 20 neither picks my pocket, nor does some other thing that I can't remember from the quote, but you probably do. So I think Adams does have a view of a Christian nation more central, although not an established church nation. And Puritanism is pervasive in educational habits. The sensibility, right? The sensibility of New England. It's strongly middling orientation, right? The great line in John Winthrop's model of Christian

charities, we abridge ourselves of our super fluidities, right? Nothing too high. Nothing too high, and therefore nothing too low. Virginia's a place of high highs and low lows.

[00:48:02.3] Jeffrey Rosen: If I could just add one of my favorite moments from the Adams Jefferson letters, they're old men. What do they want to do? Talk about books, in particular books about spirituality. And Adams is so excited when he learns that Pythagoras, who invented the system of moral self accounting, may have traveled to the east and read the Bhagavad Gita, but he's not sure whether Joseph Priestley, who's writing a comparison of the Hindus and the Christians, has lived long enough to complete his comparison. And Jefferson says, good news, he's lived, I'll send you the book. Adams is so excited both to get the book because he's convinced that this will show the basic unity of the Eastern and western wisdom traditions. And with remarkable insight, Adams notes that the central lesson of the Gita renounces and enjoys. Renouncing attachment to external events and enjoying eternal salvation, is also the central lesson of pythagoras' insistence on the dichotomy of control. Don't try to control stuff you can't control except for your own thoughts and emotions.

[00:49:08.7] Jeffrey Rosen: It's just this remarkable depth. And then Jefferson counters, at the end of my long life, I started off as a stoic reading Cicero's Tusculan Disputations, which was Quincy Adams' favorite book. And he says, at the end of my life, I have become an epicurean. And by that he means not wanton hedonism, that's a liability on Epicurious by the stoics. It's the rational contraction of desire so that we can virtuously meet them. I mean, just to see the depth of their lifelong learning and the fact that they're learning and growing. Oh, and then Adam sums it all up, he says, my mature spirituality is embodied in the idea of love God and all his creatures rejoice in all things. So although, as Danielle and Jane had said, deeply rooted in Puritanism and certainly both in the family practice, more orthodox at the beginning of their lives than Jefferson at the end, much more interested in the consonances among the tradition than the differences. And for me, it's just the most inspiring model of lifelong learning.

[00:50:14.2] Kurt Graham: Do you think either one of you, that when, in the election of 1800, when Jefferson was just skewered for being, an atheist, which is like the worst thing you could be accused of? I mean, it's just this sense that things he had written proved him to be a godless heath and all the horrible things that would happen to the country if he were elected. And I've always sort of just jumped to the end of their life and thought, well, they're not that different. I mean, they don't look at the world that differently, but in 1800, was there enough of a difference? Because I always thought Adams just kind of laid low and just kind of let Jefferson take the heat when once they start corresponding again, you realize that they share a lot in their beliefs.

[00:50:53.6] Danielle Allen: Yeah, I think that's fair., I think they're more like than different in terms of doctrinal practice.

[00:51:00.5] Kurt Graham: Right.

[00:51:01.0] Danielle Allen: The faith traditions that they come out of within Protestant Christianity are quite different.

[00:51:07.6] Kurt Graham: Yeah. Did you wanna take something there? I was gonna change topics. Okay. I wanted to switch just a minute and talk a little bit about something that intrigues me about both Adams, but we'll talk about John primarily tonight because it is after all his 289th birthday. I mean, we can't let the occasion pass. I think that he and Quincy are two of the greatest diplomats that our country has ever had. Two of the greatest ambassadors and certainly, Adams and Jefferson, I mean, they're not in Philadelphia because they're abroad, right? They're representing us to the nation to these other nations. And I wonder if you could talk a little bit about, as we think about civic education, we think about educating ourselves. I marvel at these men who, and women who were citizens of the world. I mean they were so aware of what was going on around them. And I think about, and I don't want to get off on the whole tangent of how uneducated or uninterested we are in the world and can't name the countries and the capitals and whatever. But at the same time, what is it about those experiences that they had representing their nation abroad that had to influence, had to inform the kinds of presidents, the kinds of leaders, the kinds of people that they became?

[00:52:29.1] Jane Kamensky: Well, I'll say one thing that is really extraordinary about that generation. The Adamses, Jefferson, and some of their European peers. I'm a big fan of somebody you've never heard of, called the third Duke of Richmond, who was a British aristocrat who argued for universal manhood suffrage in 1780 in the British Parliament and was the first political patron of Thomas Payne. And I was thinking about the set of them the other day, actually. And one of the things that's really remarkable about them all is their books, their collection of books. And this is a thing that the center might think about a little bit, sort of like, look at, what was the reading of this family? What did it consist of? But what's extraordinary about it is just like the voracious curiosity about the rest of the world.

[00:53:15.4] Jane Kamensky: I mean, every single possible way in which human life had been organized was represented in Jefferson's library, represented in the library, the Duke of Richmond. I would love to know more actually, about the reading habits of the Adams, but I would imagine they're the same. Adams loved the British constitution, and that love of the British Constitution was a part of, a sort of a moment, a cultural moment where people were, again, really scrutinizing how Sweden, Denmark, how the Hindu societies and so forth, as they would've named and described them were organizing life. And in this sort of voraciousness inspired by our recognition that the answers hadn't been written yet. They needed to be written, but that the way you would equip yourself to solve problems in the here and now was by figuring out the best that had been done in every other society in place.

[00:54:08.5] Jane Kamensky: So the orientation towards religious traditions was exactly like the orientation to political traditions. At the end of the day. I mean, I think success as a diplomat is in some sense, like that is part of what makes that success possible, because there's a just sort of immediate desire to know, to understand, to learn from, to take the best of. And so I think that made them in various ways, sort of very respectful participants in the societies of others when they were abroad. But again, it's just sort of that voracious-ness to fully understand the whole range of the world that really distinguished that era. Our roadmap does have a theme in it, America in its global context. And so we're trying to figure out how to revive that voracious appetite for rising generations.

[00:54:58.0] Danielle Allen: So, the 18th century term, the Republic of Letters. The Republic of Letters is a real place, right? They're reading each other and writing to each other. There's a fantastic digital humanities project out of Stanford that's mapped all of the places that Franklin sent and received letters. And they're all over the world. I think in the British American colonies of the 1770s. So before Jefferson or Adams gets on the boat, there's a poignancy about the republic of letters, because this place is so unbelievably provincial, right? They can read about these distant worlds. The Harvard College curriculum, the William and Mary curriculum is Latin and Greek, and is heavily invested in these worlds distant in time and in place. But until the first continental Congress, very few of them have left their home colony.

[00:55:55.2] Danielle Allen: So when we think of those journeys of diplomacy they're both a small skip from already participating in the Republic of Letters and a huge leap like going to the moon and experiencing the places that they've only seen in black and white. And their letters with each other when they're in London and Paris shows some of that tremendous cultural dislocation. These are wildly provincial places in some ways in the 1770s and 1780s, even as they have commodities, including books and ideas from all over the world.

[00:56:40.8] Kurt Graham: Yeah, that's a great point, Jeff.

[00:56:42.2] Jeffrey Rosen: Just to echo both the observations about the Republic of Letters and the importance of deep reading, of course, foreign policy is central to John's presidency and his decision to make peace with Britain in the Jay Treaty, which lost him the election of 1800 was an example of principled moderation that saved the republic. And when he's over-engaging in his diplomacy, Quincy is accompanying him as a secretary, Abigail's worried that Quincy's checking out women in the streets, that he's not mastering his passions, but based on that, he becomes, of course, the great diplomat minister to St. Petersburg writes the Monroe Doctrine and views, America's global role is central to its domestic success. But Danielle puts it so well about just how inspiring their deep reading is. And I have to share that what got me into this project of trying to figure out what the founders meant by the pursuit of happiness was discovering an amazing reading list that Jefferson would send to anyone who asked him when he was old, how to be educated, kids who are going to law school or adults. And it's inspiring both 'cause of the range of the reading and the schedule that he prescribes. The range is international and it's in French and Greek and Roman, and its moral philosophy and political philosophy and science and novels.

[00:58:06.0] Jeffrey Rosen: But the schedule is even more striking. You have to get up before dawn, read moral philosophy for two hours, watch the sunrise, read Locke and Sidney and political philosophy until lunch, then ancient history and light science, then dinner, then you're allowed some Shakespeare and poetry then to bed 12 hours a day, seven days a week. And it was that reading list that inspired me to do this crazy reading project during Covid, where I tried to follow the Jefferson schedule. And got up every morning before sunrise, read the moral philosophy, wrote sonnets after watching the sunrise. It was this crazy kind of project. And then it turns out that Quincy Adams wrote sonnets too. There's something in the air. But I'm saying this in a serious way, 'cause the takeaway for the project for me was rediscovering the transformative power of deep reading 'cause I'd fallen out of the habit of reading 'cause I'm so addicted to these screens like everyone else.

[00:59:01.8] Jeffrey Rosen: And just the unexpected discipline and habit and practice of getting up every morning and reading changed my life and changed my understanding of the founding and how to be a good person and a good citizen. And since this project, I have a new rule that I can't browse or surf in the morning until I read for a half hour or an hour.

[00:59:23.8] Jane Kamensky: You got a lot of unread mail on there.

[00:59:25.4] Jeffrey Rosen: I can check it out now. I can look at it now, but I can't do it tomorrow morning, 'cause I gotta do my reading. And you know why I'm sharing this 'cause it's meaningful, but often when I'm tempted as I am every morning to swipe left to the email and not to my, I do read on Kindle, I think of Adams and Jefferson and how they were just in their '80s, eager to learn and read. Access to books was so difficult, and they kept up their youthful habits, they fell short of their virtues in so many ways. They were so imperfect in so many ways, but that youthful industry and being lifelong learners was transformative. So just to bring this home, we're all addicted to these screens, and we know that the great urgent existential crisis that the Republic is facing is that people are not reading. And it's not just kids who are not reading according to all the data, it's adults too. So I'd like to put this in the mix as part of our civic education efforts. I'm just a radical evangelist for the power of deep reading.

[01:00:35.7] Kurt Graham: So you're the only person I've ever met Jeff who said that Covid made you a poet. That's really it.

[01:00:40.1] Jeffrey Rosen: It did. Who knew?

[01:00:41.4] Kurt Graham: That's it. Who knew? So are these sonnets available to the public. They're gonna show up on a website.

[01:00:44.6] Jeffrey Rosen: They can. There are a few in the book. I started this chapter with one and if anyone wants the complete set, just let me know. I'll be delighted to share them.

[01:00:51.2] Kurt Graham: Oh, thank you. I wanna make one final comment on the diplomatic score. Just that one of the advantages we have of their what we call foreign service, I guess, is the tremendous correspondence that it generated. The idea that we know what went on in Philadelphia because Madison and others were writing to Adams and Jefferson back in these letters back and forth, and the letters between their friendship, all of these things, when they're away, even John and Abigail, when they're apart, we know so much about their marriage because he's off being a diplomat and she's home and that back and forth.

[01:01:28.1] Danielle Allen: Historians love it when people are unhappy.

[01:01:32.2] Kurt Graham: Yeah. Unhappy and far apart. Yes.

[01:01:32.5] Danielle Allen: Far apart.

[01:01:33.7] Kurt Graham: Exactly. Yeah. Didn't have to be like that. Let me pivot to an audience question here. Adams was an advocate of education, but also an elite. Many today see education, especially higher education as a playground for social elites, one that's not accessible to normal people. How do we make constitutional education something that resonates with people who feel they have been left out of the ivory towers of constitutional scholarship?

[01:02:03.0] Danielle Allen: That's a really wonderful question. I really appreciate it. And I do think, again, I said before, what a kind of fractured society we are, what a fragmented society. And I do think that that is deep in the heart of what our struggles are. And I also love the question. When there are things that are necessary to change, we shouldn't tear our hair out. Can we fix this? Can we not fix this with how? So, really terrific to have that question. I think any time we are facing fragmentation, the answer has to be in relationships just from the get go. And so I do have a kind of fantasy that our nation's elite colleges and universities would look around the communities immediately around them and be really clear about the communities that feel disconnected, feel fragmented, and just go ahead and do the work of asking how they could be of service, just asking and hearing the answer.

[01:03:07.3] Danielle Allen: For example, here in Massachusetts, I think our elite universities could spend a lot of time in the rural parts of our state just asking, how could we be of service to you? And so I do think, coming back, the spirit of service that we're talking about here, there's a lesson in that for anybody, any organization that holds a role that sort of counts in the category of elite roles, that it is time to renew a spirit of service. It's as simple as that. And service has to start by reaching out to connecting with the people who don't feel served and asking, what can we do?

[01:03:52.1] Kurt Graham: That's a great answer. So, following along with that, another member of the audience asked, what things would you recommend that we could do to instill an interest in the rising generation in particular, but in all Americans to want to understand how the polity works and want to be more civically and civilly engaged, and promote that love of country rule of law, the sense of duty. What things do you recommend? You recommended reading and maybe sonnet writing. That can be a way. She talked about service. What other kinds of things come to mind?

[01:04:34.6] Jane Kamensky: So this is a very active question for, I'm sure for the National Constitution Center for EAD and the civil society work Danielle does, and for Monticello and the family of historic sites that we belong to the history habit skews old, right? There's a research firm that we provide data to, and get data from that shows us that at Monticello, our visitors are dying faster than we replace them. And one thing that we know about what gets Gen Z and Gen Alpha excited is they wanna be co-creators of knowledge and co-stewards of knowledge. They wanna be asked questions. The basic sort of equity principle in any kind of research, nothing about you without you, I think we have to bring young people into the room and into the conversation and ask them how they wanna solve this problem. What do you need from the past in order to create the present and the future that you deserve to learn in? So I think any place we can invite our young people into the conversation without, I don't know when I grew this finger, but it's very powerful now, right? Without those kids these days, we have an awful lot to learn from kids these days. And if we started there, I think we would have more productive conversations about how we transmit a vital and living tradition.

[01:06:15.2] Kurt Graham: Yeah, that's great.

[01:06:21.6] Jeffrey Rosen: Of course, the way to spark curiosity is the way that it's always been through storytelling and great teachers and great primary text, and it's such an exciting time to learn. When I was a kid, I was so full of wonder when I went to the Thomas Jefferson building in DC, which I think is the most beautiful building of all, at the Library of Congress with my mom. And I was so full of wonder at the thought that all the books in the world were in that one place. And now they're just free and online. It just blows my mind that those books that Jefferson and Adams fought over and that Frederick Douglass fought over, we think that we have struggles. The moment that he felt most enslaved was when his wicked master forbid him from learning how to read, and he bought reading lessons with bread, and then he bought with bread on the streets of Baltimore, this book, the Columbian Orator, which had excerpts from the classics, from the stoics, from Franklin, a diary, a dialogue on slavery that inspired him to become the greatest freedom fighter of his time.

[01:07:24.5] Jeffrey Rosen: Think of the sacrifices that he made and the struggle to actually have access to books. We have them all right here, and all we need is the darn discipline to read them, and to bring these beautiful texts and all this learning to kids across the world. So that's why our work together is so exciting and important. Each of the great organizations that Danielle and Jane and Louise and John Bridgeland, who's here, all these great civics organizations have so much superb material. And together we're gonna work to distribute it across the country. So the NCC for America's 250 is creating a civic toolkit with the basic principles of the declaration in the constitution, liberty, equality, democracy, separation of powers, federalism, the rule of law with great historians and primary texts.

[01:08:15.9] Jeffrey Rosen: And I have just been so moved. It's such an honor to go into rural schools and to learners of all ages, middle schools, and see these kids just coming alive. Their eyes are full of wonder at reading the text, and you can read them out loud together and discuss them and have the greatest teachers in America on videos inspiring people as well. And there's so much life and there's so much learning, and there's such a hunger in this country for these kinds of dialogues, not only among kids, but among adults in rural communities and across the world. We're also eager for a better way, a more perfect union, a vision of a republic of letters based on reason rather than passion. All of those beautiful enlightenment values that inspired the Adams men and women around their dinner table, what a gorgeous story that is. The New England faith and reason and education that Danielle was talking so movingly about, we can all be evangelists for that light and learning. And that's exactly what we're gonna do together. Yeah.

[01:09:26.7] Kurt Graham: Fantastic. Thank you.

[01:09:32.3] Kurt Graham: So several of your questions revolve around whether the Adams Presidential Center, where are we going, what are we doing, what are the plans? There's a whole bunch of questions here about that. So as General Dunford said at the beginning, we have several of our board members here tonight. Kathy O'Brien and I are here. So we're a small team, and we have every intention of putting the Adams Presidential Center on a par with Mount Vernon and Monticello and these other great legacy centers. We think that this backdrop merits that, and we

think we have every reason to believe we can be successful at this. So I would like to take advantage of the last 10 minutes of the program and get three of the very best consultants you can imagine ever having around the table, and they're free for the next 10 minutes.

[01:10:20.9] Kurt Graham: So I'd like to hear from each of you, from your vantage point. You run some of the most important institutions, you represent our great universities. If you were advising our board and our leadership right now, what would you have us do? What do you think the Adams Presidential Center should do in the short term to become what we all dream it will become? And I know that's kind of unfair to spring that on you, but I just like, I would like your advice. I'd like your input based on your experience with your institutions and no particular order, whoever's ready to take that, I'd love to hear your thoughts about what we're trying to accomplish.

[01:10:56.7] Danielle Allen: Well, I will start. I've been talking about the educating for American Democracy Roadmap, and so it's very exciting that there is already a partnership developing between the Adams Presidential Center and the Educating for American Democracy Initiative. And hopefully there'll be more to share about that very soon. But I would really say putting that effort and energy into being a leading voice for civic education in America, that would be what I would put at the top of the list. You knew I was gonna say that.

[01:11:29.2] Kurt Graham: I was hoping you would.

[01:11:30.4] Danielle Allen: That one was not a surprise. Exactly. And also just to really lift up exactly what Jane and and Jeff have been saying, that to be that leading voice for civic education is about that culture of civil discourse and deliberation, the skills of debate, the deep reading, the wrestling with the principles of constitutionalism, it is back to that line about making sure that you are reading the declaration, the Constitution, that you're keeping them locked to your wrist. You're keeping them beside your eyes. You'll have to repeat it, Jeff, so that we get it exactly right. But that was also Lincoln's view too, at the end of the day, as our great friend John Bridgeland always says as well, this is a cradle nation. What makes us a people united together is some core principles, but belief in self-government clarity about what it actually takes to deliver that as a way of life. And there is only one way to keep ourselves a cradle nation, and that is through civic education. So to have that be the priority to have this organization be the leading voice for the educating for American Democracy Initiative would be I'm very excited about that.

[01:12:40.0] Kurt Graham: Excellent. Thank you.

[01:12:44.7] Jane Kamensky: So I was talking to a development professional the other day who impressed me by saying that they were raising \$265 million a year. And I said how do you raise \$265 million a year? And he said, well, our founder gave us \$4 billion. So that's not a plan.

[01:13:07.4] Kurt Graham: It's a good one though.

[01:13:10.2] Jane Kamensky: And I guess yeah, it is. That's plan A, but plan B is I think what you're already doing is leaning into what you have, which is a story and a network rather than a space of pilgrimage. And to think about what it means to build, it's ironic for Adams, for John

Adams at least, 'cause I think he was, in many ways, very past facing to build a center that has to be future facing 'cause it's coming without physical assets. Neither a founding collection nor a site is gonna be your core value add. It's this story and the connectivity that can come authentically from this story. So I think starting with a program is bold and also pragmatic, right? Assuming that somebody's not going to give you \$4 billion at the end of tonight, although, if there's anybody out there with \$4 billion.

[01:14:12.3] Kurt Graham: It could happen.

[01:14:12.4] Jane Kamensky: It's a very worthy cause. And then the other thing I would say, as a new leader of Monticello, which as Jefferson designed it, there's an Adams line. He had to go to Italy to name Ms. Hill. As Jefferson designed, it is a lonely place apart. And I think there were tendencies in some of our past generations to lean into that loneliness. I think the future for all of our work is in collaboration. So to think about, and maybe this is a 1774 principle that we can recover, to think that our strength comes from cross-fertilization collaboration. I'm thinking about how much they did pseudonymously not credit seeking but can I say the weave? Weaving. Weaving together the strengths of different organizations as you find what your own sort of bright red stripe in that tartan is.

[01:15:19.5] Kurt Graham: Fantastic.

[01:15:21.9] Jeffrey Rosen: Programming and civics as my colleague said are key, and it's so important that you're doing it. The Constitution Center was founded during the bicentennial of the Constitution by Congress, and a charter assigned by President Reagan with three missions to be a Philly based museum of the Constitution, national convener of debate and conversation about the Constitution and a civic education hub. And for much of its first decade, it was focused on the Philly based history museum, and that is not a way to sustain a business model. When I came in, we focused as much on the national convenings and the Civic Education hub and went online, and that just transformed everything. And the interactive constitution that we launched in 2015 since then, has gotten 90 million hits. And it's among the most Googled constitutions in the world 'cause there's such a hunger for non-partisan information about civics. And the web is a remarkable distribution mechanism for podcasts and town halls, and you can get very real traffic. And all of those are crucial, and having programs like this one and sending them around the country and collaborating will just be really important.

[01:16:36.8] Jeffrey Rosen: But in addition, I'd vote for also remembering the place. I came from the airport. I was so excited to see the Stone House again 'cause I hadn't seen it since college. And there were two nice rangers on the porch, but it's now closed today for six months. And I know that's the National Park Service, and not you, but keep it open all year. And if you can, can't you locate the center there or just encourage people to see that, and, maybe there are some difficulties there. But it's a sacred spot. And I just remember it from 30 years ago, just the smell and the low ceilings and the beautiful books and it's the Adamses. Place is very important as any grateful visitor to Monticello knows. You have to turn West the way Jefferson did and see the way he lived, to understand the complexity and inspiring nature of the ideas.

[01:17:29.8] Jeffrey Rosen: Now that national education and outreach is up and running, I've come increasingly to appreciate the power of space. At the NCC installed a year ago, the words of the First Amendment, 70 tons of marble, 50 feet high from the old museum building in Washington DC, and now all programs take place in this soaring atrium with the words of the First Amendment shimmering behind you. And then you gaze out at independence hall. And at the start of all the programs, I invite everyone who's there to look at the words and then gaze out of the hall and just feel the electricity, the spirit, the vibe of that sacred space and it's extraordinarily powerful. And it is in Monticello, and I think it is here, and in Quincy as well. These were farmers of Quincy who were lawyers and so forth. So whatever you can do to incorporate the place, I would go for that.

[01:18:38.3] Danielle Allen: So, where Jeff goes high, I'll go low. I think making a virtue out of necessity crack social. I don't think a single civic organization or presidential site or library has really figured out how to leverage the power of social media. I see two kinds of strategy that we could explore. One is we make the most beautiful buggy whips that have ever been made because there are people who still ride horses. They're all in Virginia. And then the other is we try to figure out where the fish are. I left my phone backstage 'cause I have more discipline.

[01:19:23.2] Jeffrey Rosen: I'm not checking.

[01:19:24.8] Danielle Allen: Greek reading colleague. But I think how does the deep reading, civic engagement, co-stewardship, and co-creation play on TikTok, right? Like, if you become known as the site that has the brilliant social strategy, just as these men and women of the Republic of Letters were on the cutting edge of information technology in their day, you'll have done something that we really need to emulate.

[01:19:55.8] Kurt Graham: Yeah. That's fantastic. We're at time. I promised the general that we would end on time if nothing else, no matter what happened, we would be out of here on time. I wanna thank our panel. I also want to just conclude by saying to you how honored I am and how pleased I am that people of this caliber are engaging with us in this great mission. I wanna quote my dear friend, the late great David McCullough who once said, of the founding generation, we can never know enough about them. And tonight is our down payment on that commitment to make sure that we remember the Adams, that we remember these other great founding legacies. We're not elevating one above the other. We want them all to be remembered because what they did was extraordinary.

[01:20:45.2] Kurt Graham: There was no other generation. There has been no other time in history. The American Revolution is unlike any other event in the history of the world. And we are here to commemorate and remember and draw those lessons from that, and hopefully play that forward and engage this rising generation that is curious. That is, they're not holding back. They do want to be involved, and I just, I think you've brought out so many brilliant insights and given us so much to think about. So please join me in thanking Jeff Rosen, Jane Kamensky, Danielle Allen for an incredible panel. Thank you all very much.

[01:21:27.2] Jeffrey Rosen: Today's episode was produced by Bill Pollock. It was engineered by the Adams Presidential Center and Bill Pollock. Thanks to the Adams Presidential Center for

sharing the audio. Please recommend the show to friends, colleagues, or anyone anywhere who's eager for a weekly exploration of the Adams family's constitutional legacy and the constitutional legacy of so much more. Friends, I'm thrilled to share that the NCC's partnered with Khan Academy and launched our new Constitution 101 course. Please check it out. It's constitutioncenter.org/con101. Look at the scholars, learn from the primary sources and take the quiz. And if you like, let me know how you did. Sign up for the newsletter at constitutioncenter.org/connect. And always remember in your waking and sleeping moments that the National Constitution Center is a private nonprofit who rely on the generosity, the passion, the engagement, the devotion to lifelong learning of people across the country. And I've been hearing from so many of you, and it's so meaningful when you let me know about what you think of the show and what it means to your learning journey to support the work, including the podcast at constitutioncenter.org/donate. On behalf of the National Constitution Center, I'm Jeffrey Rosen.