

@Risk - Risks on the Ballot in the US Election with Bruce and Vicki Heyman

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Jodi: Hey, I'm Jodi Butts. Welcome to @Risk, brought to you by Interac.

Today I'm joined by ambassador Bruce Heyman and his partner in all respects Vicky Heyman to discuss the upcoming, and incredibly fraught with risk, US Presidential election.

Bruce Heyman served as United States ambassador to Canada under President Barack Obama from 2014 until 2017. He appears regularly on media outlets as an expert on trade and bilateral issues. Vicki Heyman was an American cultural envoy in Canada, leading cross-border conversations and programs related to the arts, social innovation, and youth engagement. She's on the board of the Council for Canadian American Relations, the international advisory board of C2 Montreal, and Chicago Media Project.

Together they live in Chicago, are the authors of *The Art of Diplomacy*, and serve as ambassadors of the voter abroad initiative. Thank you for joining me Bruce and Vicki, and welcome to @Risk.

So this is such an unusual US Presidential election. I'm super interested in hearing and learning about what the two of you feel is on the ballot in this election.

Bruce: So Jodi as you think about it, historically as we've gone through time it's usually about two people. Compare and contrast these two individuals, where people are sitting there listening to ads and watching these two people and trying to make a decision. Which one of these two do you want to be your President and why?

Then second you may sit down and say, "So what do they represent in terms of party values?" And you'll look at the platforms that were released at various conventions, and you'll listen to the party values.

Here we are today, and I think it's entirely different than any experience that we've had in my lifetime for sure. And that is that we have a candidate, Donald Trump, with no party platform. The Republican Party did not create or release a party platform. This is nuts, but it's true. And so then you have to look at his leadership and what's happened over the last three and a half, three and three-quarter years. And you see that there's an attack on the rule of law, democracy, rights, rights of women and people of color and different religions.

And so you have to sit back and say this is bigger than any election before where you pick between two men and two parties. But I think it's a time where you're making a

decision about what kind of country is America going to be going forward? Is it going to be the country that our forefathers conceived of and built, and subject to the rule of law and to elections? Or are we going to have someone who is an authoritarian ruler who disregards the rule of law and makes it all about himself?

And I think that it's about decency, integrity, honesty, but most importantly democracy. And that's what's on the ballot. And I hope people are realizing that. I think many people are, and millions of people have rallied to the ballot to vote for that.

And Joe's a great guy. We know Joe. We know him, he'll be an amazing President. But he is about the country that we knew and valued for so long, and Donald Trump is the opposite of that.

Vicki: I agree with everything Bruce is saying. And I think when I reflect on what's on the ballot, Joe with us and thinking of our national community, our American community. Not the divisiveness of the Republican states versus the Democratic states, or the Republican cities versus Democratic cities. But rebuilding and connecting our country.

Freedom of the press is on the ballot. I mean, the way in which this administration has interacted with the press and denigrated the press. Truth versus lies are on the ballot. Character is on the ballot. Competency is on the ballot. If you look at where we are with the pandemic here in the United States, the virus, I mean it is out of control. We have the highest number of cases ever today, 77,000 cases of the virus in the United States. And Trump has mismanaged and recklessly confronted... Or I don't even know if he's confronted, right, I'll say allow the virus to multiply without intervention.

Our economy is on the ballot. And I think as Bruce mentioned, I mean racial equality and social justice is on the ballot. And also the relationships that we have with our friends across the world. Many have, as you know in Canada, many have faltered and been damaged in this presidency. And a united global connection is on the ballot, along with a very important thing being climate and the air and the water that we share across the globe.

So there's many, many things on the ballot. And I think that is why we've been working so essentially hard every day to try to restore the sanity that we feel we've lost in the leadership in the White House.

Jodi: That list is so rich and so fundamental. Do you think we'll see higher voter turnout this time around despite the pandemic?

Bruce: Well we'll see what...

Vicki: I do.

Bruce: I'll see what November 3rd holds. I would say every indication is the answer is yes. But what we don't know, so we have tens of millions of people who are early voting.

Vicki: We have 50 million as of today who have already cast their ballots, which is an extraordinary number, I think about a third of the typical number of voters in the past. Yeah, early voting looks really, really strong, which is great. And we still have another 10 days to go.

Bruce: So here's the issue though. What we don't know and we won't know till November 3rd, did we just take the votes that were going to happen normally on November 3rd and just get people all energized and excited to vote early? Or are we expanding the base? Are we expanding the total number? And then so you'll know November 3rd whether that total number now is larger.

Every indication is that that we have expanded the base, and for Joe Biden expanded the map. But I don't know what the world's going to look like on November 3rd, what the pandemic's going to look like, what the weather is going to look like for people standing out in inclement weather. You just don't know.

But every indication is that we should have turned out around 150 to 160 million, which would be a record in terms of the number of people voting and at least a record in terms of percentage of people voting in the last 100 years. I guess we'll see on November 3rd.

Jodi: Yes, we won't know until we know. And if there's any one lesson to be learned from 2020 is that it's difficult to predict tomorrow. So I want to ask you both again, and Vicki I'm going to ask you to go first this time. What happens if Trump wins? Like is he more emboldened, like is it even worse than expecting more of the same?

Vicki: Jodi, I think about that every day. I mean in my gut we know who we're dealing with. I mean he has... Trump has shown us who he is. And I can't imagine any other answer to say that yes, if he wins, he will be more emboldened. I mean we have the Supreme Court nominee that's going to be voted on in very short order. The courts look more conservative. He continues to use his cabinet as personal attorneys, lawyers, protectors, and interveners. He really doesn't listen to science or to scientists, he makes his own abrupt decisions. And I can't imagine if he wins he wouldn't double down on that. And that to me is one of the most disturbing and frightening things I have in my head right now.

Bruce, I don't know if you agree or disagree. But I really feel that it's a frightening prospect to think about Trump winning this election. And not only from what he is going to... how he's going to govern and how he's going to double down on, I think, the terror he's inflicted on our country. But it's also such a disheartening and disappointing thought for me that the majority of Americans could actually vote to re-

elect this man. So then you kind of look around and you're like, wow, maybe I'm not living in the country that I thought I was living in, surrounded with the people that I thought I shared values with. So it's a very, very serious, pivotal time for our country. And I would say, I'm speaking for myself personally, very, very frightening thought. And a thought that keeps me awake at night.

Bruce: So Vicki and I virtually agree on this one. I would say look at the language that President Trump is using. And even more recently he talks about the parts of the us government as his. My justice department, my FBI, my intelligence agency, my... In terms of like ownership. And this whole concept of public service versus personal services has been missed.

I think he missed the concept of you are a public servant. You are not... This is not all about the Trump empire. But I think he's lived his whole life putting his name on things, promoting himself. He is a master self promoter.

And so but here's what concerns me most about a second term. When we started in this administration, and look, I had a conversation with John McCain actually in Halifax, at the Halifax Security Forum in a private conversation the two of us. We were talking, it was just after the election but before the inauguration, before my departure as ambassador. And he said he was very worried about Donald Trump, but he was less concerned because some of the high quality people that he felt were coming in to... he was going to surround himself with that would protect the realm. And people like Mattis in the Defense Department was a particular part of our conversation.

And I think all of those people that John McCain envisioned as being there to protect democracy and protect the rule of law and protect our country, they're gone. And what we have left are a whole series of enablers. And I think that if someone goes against what Donald Trump wants that they're at risk of being dismissed.

Or look what he's done to Fauci. Look what he's done to the people who even remained and tried to stand up for these things. And so that's my fear. There's nobody there that will be left in the second term that will protect the realm.

Vicki: And also you look at the character of the people that he has brought into leadership in the first term and how many of those people have been indicted or been removed or have left the administration. And I can only see that getting more cronyistic and worse. And I don't expect it to be any different in the second term. So more corruption, more mob bossing, and more of the same.

So I think if you take what we have right this minute and you extrapolate it into the future and light a match to it, that's what we have. And that's why all hands are on deck. We can't leave anything on the field. Everyone has to have either voted or made a voting plan, and that's the way in which we recapture our country, recapture our

government. That's democracy in play. So hopefully that democracy will not be horribly interrupted over the next 10 days.

So far things given what we're seeing with voting numbers, I just was looking. I think 138 million Americans voted in 2016, about 58% of the American voter population. So it does look like we're on target to certainly exceed that number. And that's how we win and it's how we take our country back. So that's what we're counting on and hoping for and working every day toward.

Jodi: Yes, and the two of you are working together on Joe Biden's American Voter Abroad Initiative. Can you tell us about that initiative, how it's going?

Bruce: So I'll dive in and then we can go back and forth a bit. But Jodi, it was our experience in Ottawa and standing there on election night and then seeing how that changed. We were at the Chateau Laurier and we were there with members of the Canadian government and ministers and families and people from the embassy...

Vicki: 500 happy people...

Bruce: 500 happy people, it started out beautifully...

Vicki: Until they weren't happy anymore.

Bruce: Banks of cameras, and then obviously we all know what happened and how difficult that night was for a lot of people. But then when we left Ottawa, we read this report by the US Government that said there were more than 3 million Americans eligible to vote. The country with the largest number of Americans abroad was Canada eligible to vote. And the voter turnout in Canada was 5 in '16.

And so we're like, what? And then of course looking at Michigan, which was lost by less than 11,000 votes, in less than like 80,000, 77,000 votes I think in three states moved this whole election. And there were more than that in Ontario, probably, of Americans that could have just changed the outcome of the election.

So Vicki and I took this on in 2018 in the midterms throughout Canada, did television, radio, et cetera. But still in a non-partisan way, just rah-rah, get out to vote and do our thing...

Vicki: Exercise your right to vote.

Bruce: Exercise your right to vote. And yet again this is still like in our crowd that there's something here. And so early this year Vicki and I got on the phone and we started calling the Federal Voter Assistance program, Overseas Vote, Democrats Abroad, calling former ambassadors. And what we realized was that number was probably low. It looks like it may have been a closer to six and a half million Americans eligible to vote, that about 7.7 – 7.8% globally actually had votes counted.

And then when you peel it back a little more, half the votes that were counted, about 510,000 or so were swing state votes. And the number one state was Florida which was 15 of the total. And so we said, "Oh my gosh. This is a real thing. It's a swing state strategy, it's a Florida strategy." And we made a presentation, Vicki and I to the Biden campaign and said this has never been done before nobody has ever really gone after the American voter abroad. But we think that there is something here and we would like, if you're so willing, to lead the effort within the campaign in collaboration with the Ambassadors for Biden, the Democrats Abroad organization, influencers.

And what ended up coming on as well was voter protection issues or suppression issues that came on. And so this was a fast moving, multi-factored campaign that was put together really over the last six months. And the good news is the numbers are good.

Vicki: It's been a really, really amazing coalition of folks. And the Ambassadors for Biden group is a coalition of 200 former ambassadors and partners that are Democratic, some Republicans, from the Obama, Clinton, and Bush administration. And all those individuals have networks of media as well as networks of influential leaders and American leadership in their host countries. And they've activated with their own social media and their own set of influencers and press contacts to talk about the importance of voting and registering to vote and making a voting plan.

Our strong, extraordinary, amazing strong partner in Democrats Abroad globally. Democrats Abroad is all volunteer run. They do their own funding. They have 200,000 members across 197 countries with 45 organized country committees. And they are like the foot soldiers of this effort.

There's also a non-profit voter registration tool that we've been using, excuse me, non-partisan voter registration tool that we've been using called votefromabroad.org. And that portal of entry is where we have been directing people to actually get registered and provide support for those registrants.

Democrats Abroad has done an extraordinary job not only in kind of their advocacy and geo tv efforts. They've done postcards, phone calls, and they've been very integrally involved in targeted advertising with ads across the world. Facebook, Instagram, radio, podcasts, and also been very involved in voter protection.

So between the Ambassadors working hand in hand with Democrats Abroad in their host countries, and Democrats Abroad I think they've hosted over 2,000 global geo tv events virtually over the course of the year.

So we've really gotten the word out, we've gotten the messages out. And then as we've mentioned these influencers. We've had such amazing influencer participation. We've had everyone from Emmanuel to Mayor Pete to, gosh Bruce help me out here, Hannah Bronfman...

Bruce: Hillary Clinton, Susan Rice...

Vicki: Toronto raptors,

Bruce: Tammy Duckworth, Mayor Garcetti, Beto...

Vicki: Over a million views...

Bruce: Kim Cattrall just signed on. And so it's been amazing. So we have over a million views...

Vicki: We have over a million views.

Bruce: And 18,000 volunteers at Democrats Abroad who are now all signed on doing this globally. So it's been this new, this is brand new. Nobody's ever really pulled all these pieces together so this is...

Vicki: Looking at the metrics of something like maybe over 150, this is just the ambassador's group, over 150 radio, tv, podcast spots, dozens of op-eds in the top newspapers across the world. We've had, just the ambassador's group alone has had probably over 30 events. And fundraising has been a part of that as well to help with the targeted advertising.

So in terms of the results, I mean Bruce you can speak to this, but we are seeing early results that are very, very good from the abroad efforts. You want to talk about that a little bit?

Bruce: Yeah, so vote from abroad, which is one of several portals that people can go through and register and implement this voting from abroad, we're seeing right now today it's about 2.7 times interactions with that portal versus the same time period in 2016. We are trying to at least double the vote, which would add a half a million votes. But if we triple it, then we could add a million votes. So I think between a half a million and a million votes, our potential in terms of coming back to the US for this election, new voters, new votes.

And that's a big number especially if the number one state is Florida representing 15%. So maybe American voters abroad could bring in 150 to 200,000 votes into the state of Florida. This could be a tight race where Florida is won by those kinds of margins.

Vicki: And then you think about Michigan, Bruce.

Bruce: Michigan, yeah, Michigan. so we're really working Michigan hard. And so in Windsor in particular, tv, radio, digital. And we're even wrapping buses with information that are driving around, the city buses in Windsor to remind people to register to vote. And we think there are 30,000 Michiganders in Windsor alone. And again, that race was lost by 11,000 votes. So we'll see how it all comes through but people have to return those ballots.

Vicki: Yeah, so that's where we are now. I mean, many of the registration dates have closed. There's just very few open. I think North Carolina and Arizona are still open for registration, but now it's chasing those ballots, getting those ballots in, and making sure people realize that there are options if they can't mail their ballots or they feel that mailing their ballots would prohibit them from getting their ballot in on time. There are options with UPS where you can actually get a discounted courier to mail your ballot back.

So it's just critically important that people don't wait too late and ballots, ideally you want your ballots to be postmarked in the United States by 11/3. So the time is now. If anybody that's listening to this is sitting there with a ballot on their desk, go right to...

Bruce: votefromabroad.org.

Vicki: Votefromabroad.org, and they will take you to a UPS portal where you can actually get a discount on your mailing in your ballot in Canada.

Jodi: Yeah, I think I saw a message being a border girl myself, right, growing up in Windsor. I think I saw a message saying in Michigan like walk in your ballot, drop it off, don't mail it in.

Bruce: Interesting.

Vicki: Well a lot of people are doing that back here in the States. I think a lot of people that were doing mail-in might have requested mail in and then they are taking their mailing ballot and putting in a dropbox or dropping it off at their election office. So that's a good thing, that's a good thing.

We were very frightened about the US post office services and the constriction of operations and reading out of the sorting machines, et cetera. And I think that was a rallying... I mean as much as it was a negative and we were very frightened by it, that was certainly a rallying call for people. Like no, no, no, no, we're gonna make this work.

And people are resourceful and they're figuring out ways to do it and prioritizing the voting process. And I think the mantra, which is such a good mantra, that's been coming from all Democratic leadership. And really, you're seeing it on news media channels and from the Obamas and when we all vote and from the campaign. Make a voting plan. It's not like you can just go vote, it's very complicated in the United States to vote because we have 50 states with 50 different sets of rules, and Americans living outside the United States and inside the United States. And every voting process is different. So it's an investment of time to figure out how to get registered, make sure everything's returned, make sure you follow the directions carefully.

And happily we're seeing people, I think, attend to that. And certainly early voting and that opportunity for mail-in voting is giving people an opportunity to sit with their ballot more and be more thoughtful and be able to take more time in the process.

Jodi: So two things really jump out at me listening to you both passionately talk about this initiative. One is it's so hard to vote in the United States. So that strikes me. And the second thing is like wow, it doesn't seem like you, despite the pandemic and the inability to gather, and Vicki I'm hoping you'll, address that this latter question. It seems like you haven't really skipped a beat. You've done an easy transition to digital methods of outreach and convening. And when I was rereading *Art of Diplomacy* reading about your hive model, gathering was such a big part of that. So what has this transition been like for you?

Vicki: Gosh, I think that because of the pandemic obviously we've been gathering virtually for everything. We've been organizing virtually via Zoom, via virtual events, emailing, calling folks on the phone, texting. There's so many ways now to reach out to people and unfortunately because of the pandemic these methods of reaching out have become more of a norm.

So I think what we've done, what I've done personally, and what the campaign has done and is really just take that hive model and take those personal gatherings and work to create them recreated them in a virtual space. I mean as you can see from the numbers of the campaign, the campaign is outraising... We'll probably be able to outraise any campaign in history, and they've done it basically through virtual events and distributed organizing. And those individuals like ourselves have been organizing in these virtual ways.

So I think about... I'll give myself an example yesterday. It's everything from aligning myself with different types of groups and different networks in order to get the message out. So my own personal network, yesterday I sent my kind of closing, I don't want to call closing but next to closing email to a group of about 500 close friends about what they can do in the next 12 days, whether make sure they've voted themselves, help their family friends with the voting plan, how they can phone bank, or they can text to help. They might even be able to virtually help in a battleground state.

The other thing that I've been doing is organizing through the arts and Arts for Biden, and that's a whole different constituency. We're involved here in Colorado where we're living right now with an Arts for Biden group in Colorado. We have gathered artists and creatives in the state of Colorado to use their messaging and their abilities to get out the word about voting.

We have the American Voter Abroad effort which is another demographic of folks in which we are kind of getting the word out. So the whole idea of the hive model is really just finding various different constituencies where you can intersect and have those individuals in those constituencies really be kind of the tentacles that reach out to help the multiplier effect of the message getting out.

And so it's been a very similar process, but unfortunately been really in the virtual space. And I think happily, because this is all we have, it hasn't really hurt us. We still

see great numbers coming in, we talked about the Voter Abroad effort, we're talking about the numbers for fundraising, and I think actually voter participation will ultimately be out which is a really good thing.

Bruce: So you talked about how hard it is to vote, and you just have to think about it this way. We have a two-party system. The Republican party is representing a narrower and narrower set of our population. That population tends to be older and white. And so as our country has become more and more multicultural, that this balance between those who support Democrats and those who support Republicans continue to tilt against the Republican party. And they've seen this for a long time.

And so what do they do? So one, they have deep loyalty in terms of their group getting out to vote. But what they do next is to try to stop the other team from voting, the Democrats. And so they make it hard, they purposely put rules in that make this hard. It's not by accident that these challenges happen, it's not by accident that they kick people off the registration rolls, it's not by accident that they have one polling place for tens of thousands of people in black areas of our country, in Louisville that we saw in the primaries or in Atlanta.

It's not by accident that they put one drop-off box for ballots in Texas per county, even though one county has millions of people in Houston that versus another county has a couple hundred people. One ballot box. Why? Because the city of Houston is very democratic. And so this is what's going on the gerrymandering, the voter suppression.

Why are they playing games with the census? Well the census will determine then how many congress people are allocated to these various states. And they want to make sure that, and then what are they fighting? They're fighting to take off illegal immigrants off the census, which was never the case before but now that's going to the supreme court.

And so we've got this battle, and I think that the only way to overcome this battle is what the Democrats are doing. We have to just get out all the numbers, all the people we possibly can to vote, and then we have to go in and do election reform. But we won't be able to do it unless we have control of the house, the senate, the Presidency, and many of the state houses.

Vicki: That's why really this is so important. We're talking a lot about the Presidential election but voting down the ballot. I mean the state legislatures and the secretary of state, whether it be Democrat or Republican, control the voting process at the state level. So in order to get the voting reform that we need, we need much more of a sweeping government with this election. As Bruce mentioned the senate, the house, but also in the state houses. We need governors and state congress people and senators to, and also local officials to be more open to this voter reform and election reform.

And it's badly, badly needed. I think it will be a priority of this new administration and I hope that there's the numbers that we need in the senate and the house to move that forward as well as at the state and local level.

Jodi: So just thinking about how many barriers there have been that that are targeted at Democrat voters and recalling that when the President was asked about whether he would accept a negative outcome he refused to answer that question. Regardless of the victor, is there going to be a contested election result this time around?

Bruce: I think it's much harder to contest it if the numbers are overwhelming. And especially in some of these early states where all the counting is done on election day. So Florida is an example. East coast time zone that you have all these ballots getting counted right off the bat. If Florida goes and goes in a wide enough margin right off the bat so it's not contested, Florida, and it goes for Joe Biden, I would say the path ahead for Donald Trump is very, very challenging for the rest of the night.

And then of course next would be North Carolina. If North Carolina and Florida go for Joe Biden, it's over. And almost regardless of any of the math for the rest of the evening, you'll need to get confirmation but I think that would be confirmation enough that he won't contest it.

But on the other hand if Florida and North Carolina go for Donald Trump, and then all of a sudden he then says, "I don't believe any of the mail-in ballots are valid," and he just takes election day voting which is expected to be more Republican in nature in some of these locations because Democrats have voted early through mail-in ballots, then he might just walk out and say I win even though it's not even over and there's no chance he could have won but he might declare victory and then say challenge me. Which would make it a real mess and be very difficult.

Remember in the US that nobody historically declares victory until someone else concedes. And then this is just the way we've done it. But that doesn't mean that's the way Donald Trump is gonna do it. And so I think we need to just get as many people out and make sure they vote.

And I really want them... Hello Floridians and North Carolinians, we need your votes especially to come out for Joe Biden. And so let's see how it goes. But look, I don't assume anything with Donald Trump. The only thing I could assume with him is the unthinkable, and the unthinkable becomes possible with him.

Vicki: And preparing the unthinkable is a challenge. But we know that there are great lawyers in place. I mean the campaign obviously is, we're not speaking to the campaign, but I'm sure that they have a plan and a very good plan. And our plan is to win and to do everything we can to win and to have a conclusive blue tsunami of a win as Bruce mentioned.

And we are leading in a number of... Democratic leaning in a number of very important states right now. And even without Florida and North Carolina, if we have Pennsylvania, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Colorado, Nevada, Nebraska, we've won. We're over 270 with the solid democratic states.

So yeah will we know more and will it be a lot more indicative of a blue tsunami of victory for Biden if we early in the night see Florida and North Carolina heading our way on the ground within on-ground voters? Yes. But, and Bruce correct me if I'm wrong, isn't it like some tremendous number of Floridians have already voted in early voting? I don't remember what the percentage was, I want to say it was... It's not as high as 50%, maybe it was 30%. But I mean... And I think that when we can anticipate to have the Florida numbers relatively early and in good stead, and that the ballots that were mailed in won't they be counted and tabulated on that evening?

Bruce: Yeah, you're right Vicki. But I think the President's team in this voter suppression effort that we talked about made a critical error in the mail repression that has taken place by DeJoy and dismantling machines and doing it. And the critical error that they made was twofold. First that they did it in August, and doing it in August totally motivated the Democratic base to look for alternatives to think about alternatives and get energized and to get out to vote.

The second which they didn't think completely fully through was a very large portion of Republican votes in Florida come in by mail. And so when the President was attacking mail, that he actually suppressed the mail-in vote for the Republicans in Florida. And there was panic going on in the Florida Republican circles.

And so he tried to then, you know, re-imagine. He said, "I'm not talking about all mail-in. I'm just talking about the states that mail all the ballots out to everybody as opposed to absentee voter. And the absentee voter is okay, like I do in Florida. So Florida, hello, don't listen to what I said before about mail-in. Now I need you to mail in."

And so they're trying to recreate this now in Florida for the Republican base and so it's going to be very fascinating to see how this all plays out in Florida. It's going to be the most watched state, I think. Pennsylvania will probably be the second most watched state and see how this goes. Because if Donald Trump wins Florida, everybody's going to immediately turn to Pennsylvania and say what's happening.

Jodi: Right, right. Well listen, we have to talk Canada while I have you here. So I wanted to ask you, now Bruce, you wrote that it's in America's best interests economically and socially to have a strong successful relationship with Canada. Is that still true today? Like do Americans still view Canada as a friend and ally, or has Trump done serious damage to how people look at us?

Bruce: So I think you have to just take a step back before we dive into just Canada alone, and you have to believe that in the world in which we live in where there are challenges that we face, we face clearly this pandemic, where we are clearly facing climate change and a need to focus on environmental policies. These are not things that one tackles alone, regardless of how powerful a country is, how economically or militarily powerful, that these are global challenges. And there will be other global challenges going forward.

And so my belief when I wrote that, and I believe that today, is that the United States is stronger as being part of a team and having allies that have like values and morals in which we come together as a team to fight for these things, and to solve problems, and to promote good in the world.

What Donald Trump has done is he doesn't believe in multilateralism. He doesn't believe in bilateralism. He believes in unilateralism. And so his isolationist, authoritarian, xenophobic approach has diminished the value of these allies around the world and diminished our US standing, has left a gap in the world for leadership on these initiatives of the pandemic and environment and other things.

And nobody, while China has made some moves, nobody's really filled that gap yet. But another term of Donald Trump on these kinds of policies, then everybody will have to turn and find other leaders in the world. When it comes to the US and Canada, we share this incredible border together, 5,525 miles. Canada only borders one other country, that is the United States of America and then three bodies of water. That you live, you know, most of your population lives within 150 kilometers of the US border. Most of your trade, you're a great supplier of energy to the United States, largest supplier outside of what we produce ourselves.

And we do things together around the world. And having Canada as our partner on the world stage is an important thing for us. And yet again we're family too. We share all these interpersonal relationships. We're family here.

And so I think this relationship with Canada is the most important relationship we have in the world today. And because you can take it down to the 40 million people that get their drinking water out of the Great Lakes, including my children and grandchildren. And so we share that, we share so much and we're stronger. This is one plus one is three. This is so important.

Now I think has Donald Trump, at the governmental level, it has impacted it. At some level of his followers, they are somehow are following the language coming out of the White House that they think somehow Canada has become more adversarial in the US relationship. I think we can fix that and repair that. Again it'll take time. I think we've created a fairly significant wound in the bond of trust that we'll have to earn back as a country. But I think that much of this can be reoriented pretty quickly if we get a new administration.

And so I believe that this relationship is so important and should rise above. Who's in 24 Sussex when it's occupied and who's in the White House? It doesn't... It should never matter. and I believe that when we left Ottawa, I never imagined we would be facing what we face with Donald Trump in the White House.

Jodi: Vicki, do you think it's as simple as a new administration?

Vicki: In terms of the relationship progressing. I mean I do have confidence that a new administration will have eyes on the US Canada relationship, have a greater sense of value, a greater sense of urgency to be in the relationship. There will be a priority to repair that relationship.

I think there is going to be repair work to be done, and I think it'll be have to be done within the diplomatic ranks. It will have to be as it relates to the state department and the ambassadorial work. But I think it will also have to be done citizen to citizen, and it'll have to be done for the business community. And people will need to find new places to come together and that trust, that element of trust is so critical to the future.

So even with the new administration, there's going to be a time of rebuilding and recapturing trust. I mean I put on... If I stepped across the border and I put myself in that space as a Canadian, I would ask myself if this happened once to our friend and partner the United States, could it happen again? And what does the long-term prospect of stabilization of the relationship look like? I was burned once, could we be burned again? So there's that element of kind of protecting yourself.

I, you know, the comment has been hope for the best but prepare for the worst. I think that is kind of the operation that that's kind of the space that Canada has been in. They've been disappointed so much in this administration. They'd hoped for the best and just saw the worst. I think that in the next administration they will give it some time and hope for the best. But I think there'll be some tentative aspects to re-engaging in the relationship, and I can understand that.

And I'm just hopeful that this time is an aberrative time. I mean, let's hope and pray that this is an aberration and that this pendulum swing and that the dark side of our population, the dark side of this political environment that we're in can dissipate. I'm hopeful for that, but I think the story is being written and we have to see really how the next few months unfold.

I mean Joe Biden if he is elected will not assume the presidency until January. We have a lame duck session, we have a lot of high level of anxiety in our communities not only around the election but on the virus, racial tensions. There's a lot of strings being pulled, and there are a lot of potential hidden things that can pop up and take us down a rabbit hole that we aren't even thinking about right now. So I think it's just kind of unfortunately right now as I look at it, it's like with the virus, it's one step at a time, one day at a time, one week at a time. And kind of watching things, planning and hoping for

a better tomorrow, but kind of taking a day at a time and putting out those fires as they creep up.

Jodi: One thing I reflect on is regardless of who the next President of the United States is, there's a challenging road ahead in terms of rebuilding that sense of decency and neighborliness amongst Americans. Like forget the rest of the world, just amongst fellow citizens.

And Ben Rhodes had this great piece in the Atlantic, and he wrote that it was really time to finally end the chapter of American history that began on September 11, 2001. And that got me thinking about both of your experiences bringing Eric Fischl's *Tumbling Woman* to Canada.

And so what I wanted to ask you is your experiences bringing that art to Canada, are there hints contained in that experience and in the conversations you had about that path forward for America?

Vicki: Gosh, I can speak really more to my own perception of how that time has evolved and how I how I felt at 9-11 and the closing of... The heightening of tension in our country and the closing of the borders and the restrictions and the concerns, putting up the walls of concerns about were we're going to be attacked again and just changing the way in which we operate in the world.

And then feeling a softening of that in a sense. Obama was elected, a yes we can attitude, anything is possible, let's lock arms, let's join arms, let's work inside our country to be a force of good in the world and do the right things for our citizens. And I think during that period of time and kind of reflecting on where we were, I felt like we had evolved.

And I think when Eric's work and Eric came to Canada and we looked at *Tumbling Woman*, she looked very different than she did at the time of the towers collapsing in 2001. Rather than tumbling out of the building, it was kind of more she had become more ethereal.

Tumbling Woman, when *Tumbling Woman* was first cast and created, she was created as a bronze sculpture and it was placed in Rockefeller Center, people saw it as a monument to the dead. I think that was the reason that actually *Tumbling Woman* became kind of an outcast and was removed in her first iteration.

When she came to Canada, we brought her as a beautiful Plexiglas sculpture. She was highlighted in the rotunda at the National Gallery and it's almost as like she had become ethereal and it had become like a sense of healing and hope. And here we are now, and a lot of the hopes and dreams that we had unfortunately I feel like in this time we've gone into a dark period. I don't want to say they've been dashed, but our wings have been clipped a bit.

So where do we go from here? Hopefully we go from this dark and contentious time to an elevated time where we can look to the future, where we can see... It can be the last gasp of the kind of dark patriarchy and a future looking at a more diverse inclusive society where young people are leading. And that maybe this is a time I'm hopeful that we've tested our core values as Americans. And I'm hopeful that the answer to this test is that we're going to elect Joe Biden and elect a group of leaders who we can believe in and who we can trust and they can help unite our country.

We need... We were united by 9/11 out of this tragedy. We need to be reunited again. And how do people reunite? They reunite by listening to each other patiently, by trying to understand the other point of view. We can't have a screamer in chief, a demander in chief, a person without empathy and consideration for others listening and leading. I'm hopeful with the right kind of leadership that we can get to the place where we can listen to each other and can evolve.

So that's kind of in a metaphorical way kind of how I see us going.

Jodi: Now Bruce, you also specifically brought Tumbling Woman to the US embassy and it initially caused some controversy. What did you take from those conversations that were provoked?

Bruce: I took that we are not beyond 9/11. And the path that we're on is still impacted by that loss of innocence in America, being attacked on our soil. I also think, just to take it a step further, I think that while we are not over this 9/11 experience in terms of how we feel and what we do and react, and we may not even mentally take it back to 9/11 but we project it forward.

I really began reflecting while I was in Ottawa and even since then of the trajectory of what has happened to our shared border during that time period and how the border operated prior to 9/11 and how our border has evolved as a result of what would be natural fear of protecting the homeland for the United States, but doing that universally at all of our airports and all of our borders and everywhere.

And that has resulted in a direct impact on the US Canada relationship. And it may not be as much an impact government to government, but it's definitely person to person. And that trajectory now as a result of this pandemic is even worse. Right?

So when I arrived, I didn't even have the border as one of the top critical issues that I thought we would be talking about during our time in the embassy. And yet as we traveled the country from one end of the country to the other, almost universally that was the one thing that everybody talked about.

And they used the language thick versus, thin and our borders become thick versus thin. What do you mean? Like what is that language? It's ease of access for both sides to move across, shared families, who you have towns that are literally split down the middle and now have changed. You've got the thousand islands where boaters are like

oh my god, I can't go over this far or I'm gonna get in trouble. And it's real life for so many people.

And now I sit here today and the border is closed to non-essential travel. Today nearly four years after I left Ottawa, we are getting pinged by people saying can you help me at the border. That is one of the primary things. People are saying, "I need to go visit somebody in Canada? Do you know somebody I can talk to?" I said, "Well you go to the embassy website in Washington, the Canadian Embassy or you reach out to CVSA. I don't have anybody you can talk to." And then of course there's some Canadians that say, "I have visa issues in the United States. Can you help me with that?" I go, 'No, I really can't, but you can go to the US embassy website."

But it strikes me that today it's as thick as maybe ever in our lifetimes together, and it's based on fear. And this fear that started with 9/11, now this fear with the pandemic, this fear has created a de facto wall. It's not a real wall like Donald Trump is building on the southern border, but it is a barrier. And we talked to people all the time. "I can't wait to see you. I hope your first visit back to Canada will be to see us. I really want to go down to Florida to visit my other home where it's getting cold here now."

And it's just the social interaction starts getting limited. And when you start breaking down that social interaction, that's where friends are formulated and relationships are developed. And that cements our relationship. And I'm concerned about the path, like I hope it doesn't get worse than where it is today. Because I could never imagine when I was Ambassador that we would be where we are today. And then as I approach people, they couldn't imagine it would be like it was when I was ambassador prior to 9/11.

And so then that you brought up Tumbling Woman, and I think it just solidified for me how dramatic it impacted things that we may not think about every day, like our border.

Vicki: I will say one other thing about Tumbling Woman I was thinking as Bruce was talking. Tumbling Woman was designed by Eric not to be an image of a figure that was falling from a building, but an image of a person with an outstretched arm who was tumbling like tumbling weed through an open field. And just with an outstretched arm looking for stasis, someone to grab a hold of that arm and reach out with empathy and kindness and stabilize that individual.

That is precisely the vision of what we need. There are so many people in this country, in our country, that are hurting, that are displaced, that are out of work, that have no health care, that are fractured from family. They have mental health issues, they have security concerns, they have you name it. And they're looking with an outstretched arm, just for someone to grab on.

What is that someone? That someone is our President. That someone is our congress. We're still waiting for the second round of COVID relief. We are looking for help on the mental health... As it relates to mental health and our economy, and all of the other things that deal with violence, and brutality, and racial equity.

We need each other to reach out and grab hands collectively as a society, and we need leadership from the top to demonstrate what that looks like and to help implement it. And the thing that I felt hopeful about a Biden administration is Joe is a good honest man who listens, who has extraordinary integrity, who has been at this for a long time. He knows the people to tap on the shoulder. He has the team ready to go. He has the great experience, he's a great listener, and he's a great delegator. And he will put in place a strong, effective leadership team that from the top down will demonstrate this kind of compassion, understanding, and healing.

And he's run this campaign on this motto, I'm here to help heal the soul of a nation. It sounds like, I guess you could say yes, it sounds cliché. But it's not cliché, that's where we are. And I think taking it back to Tumbling Woman, she needed help, she needed healing. And that is how I kind of see our country right now.

And I guess when you look for help, you've got find it within and you've got to lean on the people that you love and maybe the other people you don't even know. And that's the kind of society that we're going to need and that's the kind of leadership we're going to need to unlock that key.

Because there's people that will resist that, that will stand firm with Trump, his loyal followers. And let's just see how that goes. How do we not dismiss those people but reach out to them and help to bring all of society forward, not just certain elements of groups of people?

Jodi: Well thank you so much. You can count on Canada being here always. And you thank you for being such engaged and invested American citizens. Thank you for being champions of the Canada US relationship, and thank you for being builders of such beautiful bridges and for your time today.

Vicki: Thank you.

Bruce: It's very kind, thank you.

[Music]