

# Rage: A Rountable Discussion Presented by Religion Dispatches

**Panelists: Alex Zamalin, Davin Phoenix, Myisha Cherry**  
**Moderated by Koki Mendis**

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**Koki Mendis:** Thank you all—thank you all for joining Religion Dispatches today for our inaugural webinar, RD’s first, titled simply, ‘Rage.’ Today, we will explore rage and its potential for transformative racial justice, the contemporary and historical weaponization of White rage, and the deployment of civility in maintaining social order. Who benefits from the boundaries of civil political discourse? And how can we channel our collective anger to move beyond it and toward liberation? For those of you who are new to Religion Dispatches or to its publishing home Political Research Associates, Religion Dispatches is a daily outlet that is creating a new way of thinking about religion in American culture and politics, one that is both secular and independent and which invites free discussion of religious ideas once they’ve hit the public square. Political Research Associates is a social justice research and strategy center and publisher of Religion Dispatches. We are dedicated to blocking the advance of oppressive, anti-democratic movements and to building a just and inclusive democratic society. Over the past four decades, PRA has researched, monitored and publicized the agenda and strategies of the U.S. and global Right, revealing the powerful intersections of Christian nationalism, White nationalism, and patriarchy. After today’s webinar, we definitely invite you to head over to [ReligionDispatches.org](https://ReligionDispatches.org) and [PoliticalResearch.org](https://PoliticalResearch.org) for more great reads and for more on our mission and vision for our shared world.

So, helping us think through some radical potentials for improving said world, we are delighted to be joined today by three incredible thinkers wrestling with the question of the role that emotions play in the public sphere. We are grateful to be joined by [Myisha Cherry](#), assistant professor of philosophy at the University of California, Riverside, and the director of the Emotion and Society Lab. Today’s webinar was inspired by her latest book, *The Case for Rage: Why Anger is Essential to Anti-Racist Struggle*. Myisha is joined by [Davin Phoenix](#), associate professor of political science at the University of California at Irvine, and his book, *The Anger Gap*, looks at how race shapes emotions and

politics. And last but certainly not least, [Alex Zamalin](#), professor of Africana studies and political science at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. Alex is the author of six books, including, *Against Civility: The Hidden Racism in Our Obsession with Civility*. Thank you very much to our esteemed panelists and to you, our wonderful audience for joining us today.

Please note the webinar will be recorded and the recording, along with the transcript, will be distributed by email and on RD and PRA's website in the next few days. Audience, we encourage you to introduce yourself in the chat so we can see who all is with us. And we encourage you to use the chat to engage in the conversation. You are also able to toggle on captioning, closed captioning, on the bottom of the screen, and if you have any issues with that, feel free to message, via the chat function, our tech support. Okay. Housekeeping notes are out of the way so we can go ahead and get started. As we embark on our discussion I'm going to start us with the visceral before we move into the abstract. What is one of the many absurdities of our political system or manifestation of sociopolitical violence in the contemporary U.S. that fills you with simmering or acute rage? It can be anything from a relatively minor instance of hypocrisy to a full anti-democratic movement or trend. And if rage isn't your natural response to U.S. politics and social order, which is okay in today's conversation, what frustrates or preoccupies you as you move around the world? So who on our panel would like to start?

**Davin Phoenix:** I can get us kicked off. I just want to thank you for inviting me to be a part of this conversation. As I was thinking about this question, you know, what really gets me going? We see just kind of endless examples of people finding themselves at the mercy of the failings of political and corporate elites who just don't fulfill their basic responsibilities, and then find ways to avoid all accountability, and leaving folks just kind of in the shadows looking to pick up the pieces. Whether I think about the residents of Ohio who are being poisoned, their families being poisoned, their pets dying as a result of the train derailment and the, you know, toxicity being produced. So we look at that as the results of the years of deregulation. And then we look at the train company that can't even show up for the town hall meeting, right, and leave these people in the lurch. I think about the people in Texas who as we're dealing with climate change and the weather's dip below normal, they're left without power. And there seems to be no answers from people in charge of infrastructure and from, you know, a governing body that's more concerned with busing migrants across the country for political capital than they are to address the basic needs of the residents.

I'm thinking about—this morning I saw in L.A. someone died by just being

caught up in the wrong place at the wrong time in a police pursuit of suspects and just thinking about the ways in which police violence is enacted in so many ways. But folks out here are just trying to be John Wayne, folks caught in the crosshairs. So I think about all of those linkages, like what the stuff—I think about the Black families in Florida who are told that the most perfunctory explorations of their history and their contributions is now banned, because maybe it makes some other kids uncomfortable. And so I just think about all the ways in which these folks, through no fault of their own, are just left out in the dust because, you know, elites are just failing to meet the basic threshold and not seem to be held accountable for it.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Davin. And I think that's a perfect start to today's conversation. Sort of the really acute, contemporary, in this moment examples, and things that have been sitting with us now for a while. Alex, Myisha?

**Myisha Cherry:** Do you want to—I was going to, Davin just made me think about kind of a frustration that has been on my mind. I've just had a hard time trying to articulate what exactly it is. Of course, it's got reference to our politicians. And in some way, I believe I'm angry, frustrated, enraged about the fact that there are no intellectual, political and spiritual adults in the room. I think there are a lot of problems that we face. And I think these are problems that happen anytime you get people in a community to live amongst each other. But we, at least in our democratic process, we believe this kind of notion that if we elect certain kinds of individuals, they can represent us. They can come together and make decisions, of course, as a perfect kind of picture of what democracy looks like. But you do expect that there would be some results from the kind of democratic liberation, hearing what the people have to say. And I think my frustration, as I look at the news and I look at how politicians are more interested in being popular around very narrow bases, provocative for no reason, and have political ambitions that have nothing to do with the people. And as a result, there are lives that are tremendously being affected by these decisions. And I think I'm kind of heartbroken by that. And as much as—we'll talk about civility in a little bit—but as much as we might think that this is a failure of political representation, I'm nervous about the, I guess you could say, the impact that this is really having beyond the rhetoric, beyond the headlines, the impact that it's having on actual lives; that our political leaders are not doing their democratic, sympathetic, intellectual, spiritual jobs. And it's affecting lives in tremendous ways.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Myisha. I was, you know, reflecting on your

comment, thinking about sort of the immaturity of our political system, but then thinking about how there are literal children doing more for climate justice, for gun violence than, you know, the adults, the so-called adults in the room. I appreciate you really talking about the political system and its many failures. Alex.

**Alex Zamalin:** Thank you so much for inviting me to the panel. I'm so excited to be here with such great guests. And, you know, I think to kind of follow off what folks have been saying, as someone who kind of looks at history and examines history, I think the thing that kind of enrages me and bothers me the most is this kind of repetition of the past without any clear future vision. And I think that everything we see today, whether it's police brutality, whether it is incarceration, whether it is violence on the streets, whether it's apathy, I mean, all the things that we just named, these are all things that have existed in the past in various contexts. And these are all things that activists, those concerned with social justice have pointed to. One of the things that I show my students is that the I Have a Dream speech specifically names police brutality as a crisis in American society. Now, we don't remember that. It's much easier to whitewash it, to forget it. But King names that. This is a crisis that King was dealing with in 1963. And the fact that we continue to have these conversations over and over and endless amounts of ink are spilled on, 'how do we reform policing, how do we deal with all of these problems that have plagued us over the years.' What's striking to me is that these problems are kind of repetitions of a haunted past, and there are brilliant activists who have provided solutions. So King's solution is, you know, a social democratic society. King's solution is to deal with the structural conditions rather than simply talking about reforming a few bad apples. And so the cycles of surprise, of kind of hand-wringing, of shrugging one's shoulder as if this is the first time we've encountered these problems before and these dynamics, I think that is something that really, really bothers me and, you know, upsets me.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Alex. Yeah, the Sisyphean nature, I think, of the task at hand can be incredibly, incredibly enraging. I, you know, I think we start in a good place with tangible examples of tangible emotions in hand. And I'd like for us to move through a discussion where we see what we can do with these feelings and these emotions and this orientation of outrage. So I'd like to move to a discussion of what we mean when we say rage or anger. Let's start with what is rage? Myisha, how is rage, and its less acute form anger, distinct from emotions like despair, dismay, concern? What are the unique qualities of anger that give it political salience?

**Myisha Cherry:** Yes, I'm not—I'm going to try not to make this my emotions seminar. So we can categorize anger as an emotion. We know that it's kind of a response to wrongdoing. We call it a blameworthy emotion that usually responds to something that we find offense to, something that we judged to be bad, which is very different from, for example, disappointment. So disappointment may arise when outcomes didn't go your way, not necessarily a moral outcome. Sadness may arise, kind of something similar, but it has nothing to do with wrongdoings. It responds particularly to wrongdoing. It points out that a wrongdoing has occurred and particularly usually has a target, and just singles out—goes directly to the person who indeed did the wrongdoing. You know, one of the things that I kind of see in my work, and one of the things that we know about emotions, is that not only does it have this particular profile, but it has kind of, what we call kind of approach tendencies. So usually what emotions do they motivate you towards a particular action, at least they can have a tendency to motivate you towards particular actions. And sadness may lead you to retreat. Fear may lead you to retreat or to go for it. But one of the unique things about anger is that it leads you to approach the target of, or the cause of your anger. And so one of the things that I kind of signal in my work and one of these reasons why I think that we need to kind of keep anger in our moral and political toolkit is that it can be good motivation to do something, to end the cause of the of the anger. Right. So it can motivate us to kind of end an injustice.

Another thing that I kind of—particularly a kind of anger that I motivate in my book is the kind of anger that is inclusive. So it usually [will] kind of have a perspective to it. You think about, yes, I am angry that a wrongdoing has occurred, but I'm not just angry that it's occurred for me, but I'm afraid about what it would do to others. And so I'm now not only thinking about myself, but I'm thinking about the implications for the particular community. And so because I believe that anger can have these positive features—now, no doubt we can talk about this in a little bit, that it can go wrong, as any emotion can go wrong—but I think particularly the kind of context that we were just describing, the anger that arises in this particular context has a lot of potential. And that's why I think it's important to kind of keep it and not get rid of it just so much, but to continue to kind of moderate it, to make sure that it is maintaining its virtuous features so that we can use it for good. One of the things I meant-- I'm going to say this, one of the things that people have a tendency to say is that, you know, why can't we just get rid of anger? Well, if we get rid of all wrongdoing, then yeah, anger will be completely irrelevant. But as long as there is wrongdoing in the world, as you just described, that

anger will always have a place. And I think the challenge for us is to make sure that anger directed towards the right thing, as Aristotle would say, towards the right people; that we do something productive in bringing about the change that we want, that we want to bring, that there's no doubt that it can go wrong. And I think one of the things that I tried to do in my book is to arm us with the resources to make sure that it continues to go in the right direction.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you. That was a big question. And you did a wonderful job of really helping us understand what it is about rage that actually brought us into this room today. Why are we talking about one specific emotion? And, you know, I want to highlight sort of some of the themes: the community building aspect, the confrontational piece. Right. We need confrontation for change, and the way in which rage is reactive, but in a way that's looking for accountability. And I really want us to stick with these themes. So thinking about how rage currently operates in U.S. politics, where we've talked about it in our personal, sort of, how we're oriented to today's moment, we've talked about it as an abstract emotion, its list of qualities. I'd like for us to discuss who gets to mobilize their movement's constituencies on the basis of anger today. And Davin your book, *The Anger Gap*, deals directly with the real differences in the perception and deployment of White and Black anger. Myisha, you write about the anger police. Who are the anger police, and to what end are they policing? And Alex, in *Against Civility* you detail the very concept, how the very concept is designed to strategically bound the limits of acceptable political discourse, suppressing authentic, felt responses to injustice. I want to start here with civility. Alex, what do you mean by civility? In what context? And how does it relate to the prevailing social order?

**Alex Zamalin:** You know, I was thinking of Myisha's comment. And I think that, you know, one of the things that I am trying to do is identify civility less as a moral virtue and more as a kind of political response, a program, an agenda. And so despite the fact that I kind of understand the particular values and virtues that might come from a person being compassionate, seeking compromise on an interpersonal level, I think it's so crucial for us to think about political mobilization of these concepts and ideas. So when I think of civility, I'm not thinking about people kind of breaking bread at the dinner table or talking about kind of, you know, the prospect of reconciliation. I'm talking about this language being mobilized in politics for the sake of either policing, legitimate discourse, silencing protest and righteous anger, or creating the conditions that make it difficult for people to survive and thrive. And so what I try to do in the book is trace the way that almost every mobilization by elites, whether it's



slaveholders like John C. Calhoun in the 1830s, when we first see this language emerging, whether it's White moderates in the 1960s that King is responding to, all of these deployments of civility are almost always, when it comes to racial justice, being used to diminish, to police, to silence the voice of those citizens who not only have the most to say in terms of critiquing the system of racial injustice, but historically are the most effective. It's abolitionists, it's Black feminists, it's civil rights activists, it's prison abolitionists. And so what I mean by civility is something like a discourse that imagines that the solution to political problems can simply be understood through a kind of moral us and them attitude, which then highlights ideas of compromise, of reconciliation in the political sphere. What I'm trying to say is that the most effective way to achieve political change is actually not through civility. It is precisely through civility that we have seen a policing of the boundaries of what counts as exemplary citizenship.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Alex. That's an excellent place to jump off with Davin. You know, you really talk about the way in which civility has been used to police and the us versus them quality of civility. So who are the us and them? Davin who gets to be angry? What does the politics of White anger look like? And what is its political efficacy?

**Davin Phoenix:** Yeah. So I really hope to build on the synergies across our work. In my work, I'm thinking about, you know, race being a driving force in politics and observing the ways in which historically and contemporarily Black people as individuals and as collectives don't have the same runway to express anger or even just kind of political dissatisfaction. If we look at a number of kind of, you know, general and specific instances of ways in which Black emotions are policed, whether it's literal hyper surveillance and overpolicing of Black communities, and of course, the efforts to tear down and destroy Black organizations, right, Black political movements that carry potential to be actually transformative. Whether we think about recent—recently, relatively recently, a kind of after—the...after Michael Brown's killing in Ferguson in that uprisings he had, the FBI put out a report that was made public saying in the spate of all these incidents of police violence against Black communities, we need to be on the lookout of BIEs—Black Identity Extremists, standing for any actual standing collective or group.

You look at that report, and you can look at it's widely available, well not widely available, but, you know, people made it available. It's literally like saying you know, we presume that people, Black individuals are going to be angry about this. And so that demands monitoring. Right? So we see they

recognize the spate of state sanctioned violence and are not problematizing that, but are problematizing the potential anger response of Black people to that violence. I think that's a really solid kind of contemporary example of the ways in which Black anger is even policed before it even kind of gets a chance to manifest itself.

We continue these examples of that. In contrast, we see plain examples of White individuals and White collectives having full license to express their anger. And that anger moving the needle. That classic idea in that movie *Network*, "I'm mad as hell. I'm not going to take it anymore," right? This is a rallying cry that many non-White people can't imagine publicly proclaiming because of the pushback they get, whether it's in the form of kind of official type of policing or even kind of social stigma, right? And I think Myisha, you'll speak to this, the kind of Angry Black Woman trope, even the kind of Angry Black Man is this boogeyman trope. When Michelle Obama left office, she had that interview with Oprah where she talked about how much it stung to be labeled an Angry Black Woman. Despite her very vigilant attempts to always come across as even keeled. That continued to haunt her.

And so we can draw that contrast, right, because if you're not able to show your anger, there is a real accountability gap because we see within the political sphere, anger does move, which is a signal to political officials that they are in trouble if they do not respond to you, because as Myisha really rightly pointed out, anger moves people to action. It makes them more confident in their actions. It makes them less risk averse than they normally are, and it motivates them to kind of right that wrong they receive.

And so we look at how White anger plays a role in politics. We see endless examples of it. We see parents worked into a frenzy over the specter of CRT in schools. We see thought leaders really on both sides of the aisle, within the academy, within journalism, within popular media, railing against this imagined cancel culture, right? We see political figures who seem to be basing their entire campaigns not on real issues of governance, real challenges that we face, but on combating wokeness. During the pandemic, the height we saw people engaging in anti-mask and anti shutdown rallies, we see misinformation campaigns to disingenuously frame the fight for trans rights as a danger to our children. All of these are mobilizing, stoked by people's sense of anger. And what's kind of the linkage, right? It's not just generally White people, but it's White people that are positioned to benefit the most from a status quo. And when they are looking at pushes for greater inclusion or greater equity or even greater recognition, their response is "I'm offended by that call to create more space for people that I do not deem worthy of that space. And I'm hostile to it and I'm publicly and loudly aggrieved by it."



You can draw contrast not only in how frequently we see these movements animated by agreements, but the response to those movements, right? The response to all of those campaigns and movements and actions is, well, let's contrast that with a counter set of information. We don't see that ever—we see actual efforts to stifle expressions of Black anger and Black grievance. We saw a very vivid example in this kind of very, you know, speaking of things that erage me, we saw the countdown to the release of the video of the young man in Memphis being brutally attacked, right, by those police officers. And so as we were counting down to this latest spectacle of Black violence, what was the overwhelming call? A call for nonviolence for Black communities. And so what are we reckoning with? We're grappling with the specter, or the fear, or the potential of Black anger being more of a threat, than that actual spectacle of violence that we see be kind of routinely inflicted upon Black community. So that's a number of ways in which we see kind of who gets to act on that anger, in the ways in which they get to benefit from that, the ways in which even it gets to be legitimated, even if people disagree with that, they're not saying we can't have that. We don't do that. But when Black people want to—and I see broadly kind of Non-White people, marginalized people generally, right, when they're ready to, like, make their grievance known, it's like “no, no, we can't have that.” And then we see those bounds of civility that Alex is speaking to look to kind of squelch that.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Davin. I think you, you know, we see from your examples exactly who is beholden to standards of civility and who has free reign, right? And you cued up Myisha perfectly. We cannot talk about rage without talking about the specter of the Angry Black Woman and the use of this designation as one of the most powerful tools for silencing people who not only live at the intersection of multiple modes of oppression, but who consistently lead some of the most powerful movements for gender, sex, racial and economic liberation. So who is the Angry Black Woman and who is so deeply invested in her silence?

**Myisha Cherry:** Yeah, I like this question. I have so much to say. So let me kind of focus here. You know, as I was, I was listening to my copanelists speak, you know, one of the things that I kind of failed to articulate, to kind of make sense of why there is this kind of movements for civility. And I think the stereotypes which we're alluding to is a way to police Black bodies, female bodies, etc, etc. and that key kind of undercurrent component of it—we mentioned kind of the motivational aspect of it, right? So if you want to really stop people from being about change, and if anger is able to mobilize change and of course you want

to tell them to be quiet, etc, etc. But that's not the only thing that you try to put a stop to, or silence, right? One of the things about anger is as much as it calls out wrongdoing, it also ascribes value to the person who has been wronged. It simply says that their life matters. I mean, Black Lives Matter, you know, you don't even have to articulate that. The anger says it, right. You would never get angry about something being harmed if you do not value it. So just seeing the expression of anger, having anger in response to wrongdoing, you're not just responding to the wrongdoing, you're also saying the person who has been wronged, is valuable.

So to combine that with what is happening when you're calling for forbearance, what is happening when you are utilizing stereotypes to silence people. You're trying to get them not to go about being a part of action orientated work, but you're also trying to silence their claims to value. Right. And of course this is very, very, very important because to fight for any kind of change is not just rooted in kind of a material fight, but it's also psychological fight. It's these underlining claims that kind of build in supremacist kind of societies, right? And I think that's very, very, very important.

So I think the way that the stereotypes work is that they do work as a form of silencing not only the action, but the claim to particular interventions. Right. And this is very, very important, particularly for those who have kind of these more layered kind of identities. In which it's already the case that in a kind of White supremacist society, Black lives don't matter, right? We're in a sexist society, female bodies don't matter, right? And so the power in some ways of the Black—the Angry Black Woman stereotype is that it is a way to silence kind of both of those claims to value, right? The not only—don't your claims to value matter in the context of race, but it also doesn't matter in the context of gender. And so what it does is that the stereotype allows you to self-police, right? Because you don't want your race to look bad, you don't want to confirm and make it bad for other Black women. And so what makes these stereotypes so powerful is that it gets the person to self-police themselves, right? So that they would not articulate the claims to value, and so that they won't put this stuff in action.

One of the things I argue for in my books, the question is what do you do as these claims to civility are being echoed? What will you do given the presence of these particular stereotypes? And I suggest that we break these racial rules. And one of the racial rules is you don't have a right to White male anger. I say, forget that. I proclaim your anger, however, way prudently, you think that could be the case. But I think the way to fight back and push back against the call for civility is to be angry, to be expressive with that particular anger. And I offer some strategies at the very end of my book of how to fight back against the

anger police, right? Reminding people that your anger is valuable, that you're not crazy, that you're not imagining things. You kind fight back against these strategies because these strategies are very, very, very powerful in ways that it doesn't take someone on a news panel to call your anger out. But you can begin to do that work yourself. And I want people to be aware that once you start doing it to yourself to recognize how powerful society has made it the case for you to do that, and be reminded that your anger matters. And that it ascribes a value to your life, to the lives of others to keep using that anger to motivate change, because that's exactly what they don't want you to do.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you Myisha, perfectly put. You know—that emphasis on value, I think is really—another aspect of rage that really demonstrates its clinical efficacy and its strength, right? And also your point about sort of internalized oppression and self-policing. I've been talking to some colleagues on sort of the post-colonial experience or the colonial experiences. You internalize colonialism, right, you start to impose supremacist values on oneself and one's own community. And so you really provide a way out of that trap.

I want to continue our discussion with sort of where we see rage felt and acted upon and then suppressed. And Davin, in your book, you parse the ways in which anger, particularly anger felt and channeled by Black Americans operates differently in different spheres of political expression. I found this really fascinating in your book. So namely, looking at spheres of oppositional organizing like protest in vote, and then in voting in formal elections. Can you detail this difference for us?

**Davin Phoenix:** Sure. Yes. To put it simply I'm finding a couple of different ways in which anger's translating to kind of political engagement for Black and White folks. So generally, like I find anger, as expected by the kind of conventional wisdom that's not really paying attention to race, is for White Americans really broadly a mobilizing emotion. Right. Whether it's kind of making actions to influence an election outcome like volunteering and donating to campaigns or, you know, contacting officials, attending town hall meetings and then down the line to like protest and boycotting. But among African-Americans, anger generally has kind of a much clearer relationship to behavior. But where that anger is most pronounced, and I don't find this kind of surprising or not intuitive in any way, is in those counter institutional or those kind of outsider actions. I see Black people's expressions of anger over politics translate most clearly and most pronouncedly to protesting and boycotting, and more kind of conflictual moments of action.

And I think a big part of that is when I have a chance to get sets of White

and Black folks to talk about, you know, what makes them angry about politics, White folks it's like, you know, very specific objects of their anger: of this regime, or this party, or this policy, right? These figures or individuals. And for African Americans, it's such a different response. It's really generally just the system itself, right? They're not calling out a party or a figure, or a policy, they're—some of the things that even blur the lines right between political and the, quote unquote, nonpolitical, which makes the point clear that it's all political, right? They're talking about—they're angry about cultural appropriation, right? They're angry that Black people continue to have to work twice as hard to earn half as much, right? They're just angry about the whole general state of affairs.

And so it makes sense that that anger would translate to these kinds of protest type actions, because if you're not directed anger towards any regime, then, you know, these actions to change the regime just feels like, you know, rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic, right? And if your anger is directed at the system, you want to push back against that system and you can feel more license to translate that anger, because if you are working outside of the system, you do not need to be beholden to the rules of that system. The rules that, as we've been talking about, rules penalize you or stigmatize you for that anger.

So that's really important. I just want to echo another finding that I found that really dovetails so nicely with what Myisha has said. But people's expressions of anger are also associated with a lot of indicators, both intra-group solidarity with other Black folks and intergroup solidarity with other groups of color. To kind of echo that point about anger's being a significant force in the move for racial justice. I'm finding that Black people are more angry about politics. They like more support of the Black Lives Matter movement. They're even more opposed because there are some Black folks who are less opposed to racial profiling. They're more willing to work with Latinos, particularly in the Trump era, to oppose Trump. So we see that anger both having a particular impact on Black people's actions, but also, you know, helping to kind of facilitate the seeds of coalition building both within the group and with other marginalized groups.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Davin. Really excellent insights, especially sort of thinking about that coalitional piece you concluded with and going back to sort of rage as community building, right? I want to open this question also to you, Alex and Myisha, are there sort of realms of politics, realms of discourse that you see civility, rage? Are there competing emotional frameworks interacting differently with with the context?

**Alex Zamalin:** Yeah, I can jump in. I mean, I was thinking, you know, one of the

things that really struck me and this is connected to a lot of the conversation we've been having is if you have a kind of historical attitude, you see something really striking: when kind of White citizens deploy rage, it's often reinterpreted as a love for one's community. Whereas when citizens of color engage in those acts of rage, it's imagined to be criminal.

So I think about—you know, we're talking about Black feminism, and I think about one of the things that I think was so valuable about Ida Wells in the late 19th Century was that she was, you know, an important anti-lynching activist. And one of the things that she tried to do through her journalism was point out the ways in which specific instances of racial violence, whether it was, you know, lynching against Black citizens in the South or White militias trying to overtake basically successful Black towns—the Wilmington massacre, for example—what was so striking was that many of these White citizens, in engaging in these activities, saw themselves as enacting love connected to rage. You know, there are these really striking examples of Senators Ben Tillman, for example, gets in front of the Senate floor and proclaims that racial violence is justified because it's an act of love.

And so I think that it's crucial to have a historical perspective on the ways in which we're talking about the inequality of kind of dispensing emotion in public for political gain, the ways in which even emotions like rage are imagined to have kind of different textures depending on the kinds of citizens who who deploy them. And so, you know, from the perspective of history, thinking about the way civility has been deployed, that's one notable kind of—and clear thing. Which is when Black citizens, when Black activists deploy civility, there's an attempt to criminalize, demonize, police. When White activists engage in it, there's an attempt to understand, to empathize, to ask what the roots of that frustration might be. So it's not simply that forms of civility work to police expressions of indignation and anger. It's also that the kind of national discussion and the political conversation after these moments turns in radically different directions depending on the group.

**Myisha Cherry:** That's fascinating. I'm thinking about a famous line by Cornell West where he says, I'm kind of paraphrasing here, in a White supremacist world, Black love is a crime. And so it could be the case that your anger is interpreted as, "oh, you have Black love." In the White supremacist society, the Black love is a crime, so you're still doing something wrong, right?

Thinking about you know, I talked about how anger makes claims about the world, right? So it exposes a wrongdoing and is a person valuable. But one of the things that I think is important is that we learn a lot about what a person values when they're angry, but you also learn a lot about what people believe

and what people value in their response to anger. And as we're talking now, I'm thinking about in the transcripts with Darren Wilson, for example, when he's describing what happens as he shoots Michael Brown. You know, he basically says, and I'm paraphrasing here, he says, you know, "he was looking up at me as if he was possessed with something." And then he says something along the lines of "as if he was angry that I was shooting at him." I want you to think about that for a moment. This unarmed Black man is being shot by the police, and the police can't understand his anger. And I think that's a perfect example of when you can no longer understand someone's anger when you're torturing them, when you're killing them. It says a lot about your beliefs and about your values. And I think it shows a lot about how far we've come, how far we've got to go.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Myisha. That's such a poignant example. I'm going to keep us moving in this conversation. I think we could spend a lot of time here. You all have really seized up—I think, one of you said the texture of anger. And that is what I really feel like we're getting at here. Before we come back to anger and Myisha, your vision for Lordean anger, which I'm really excited for you to share with our audience today, I want to talk about and sometimes I'm thinking about alternatives to silence, civility and the monopoly White rage. And one of our audience members has asked a question I think that really gets us moving in this conversation. Are there contexts in which civility for empathy's sake is good, and are there forms of civility potentially that are useful and have political efficacy and justice related to it? And so, Alex, you write about civic radicalism, and I really would love for you to talk through what civic radicalism is, what its relationship to civility is, and what its relationship to rage is.

**Alex Zamalin:** Yeah. You know, I think this is an important question. I try to be careful about the way I imagine civility in the political process, and I try to highlight the ways in which a politics based on civility is a politics that tries to moralize. It's a politics that tries to create easy oppositions. It's a politics that tries to silence righteous indignation, rage, protest, and all of the emotions that we've been talking about that historically have real positive value. And it's not just a philosophical argument, it's an empirical one. You can look at every single social movement, specifically every anti-racist movement, from the anti-slavery movement to the civil rights movement, to the Black feminist movement, to the prison abolition movement. What you see over and over again is that they enact a politics that is based on what I call civic radicalism. And by civic radicalism I mean a politics that focuses on engaging in disruptive activity, that tries to make a claim about what matters, about whose lives are



being denigrated, and who is in a position of power and who is dominated.

In other words, civic radicalism is a vision that is less about trying to create moments of compromise than it is linking instances of groups into coalition, uniting through acts of solidarity, naming the frustration that you see, being able to act against it. In other words, any anti-racist movement that you can point to throughout American history, I would argue, did not engage in a politics of civility. It engaged in a politics of civic radicalism. Even the classic example, the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King was accused of being angry. And it was partly a response to that anger and frustration and being deemed criminal, that King penned letter from a Birmingham jail. And one of the things that he says, which I think again, is so important to remember, is, you know, the greatest stumbling block is the White moderate, because the White moderate hides behind civility and hides behind this neutral playing field, whereas the Klansman, at the very least, despite King's vociferous opposition to him, still makes a stand and is able to identify their commitment. So King himself in the Civil Rights Movement, it's a nonviolent movement, but it's a movement of civic radicalism because it relies on a politics of disruption, direct action, engagement, and a desire to build coalition with the willing, rather than necessarily reaching across the line to those who dehumanize you and oppose you.

**Koki Mendis:** So to summarize, I think what I'm hearing is that's sort of the idea of disruption, but with positive political good as the motivating, like that's the civic part of the radicalism, right? That this is a positive political project and disruption is a necessary component. And I think that's an excellent orientation to show the mobilization of rage that we see in the anti-racist movements.

Davin, You also look at other forms of mobilizing emotions in your work. You look at enthusiasm, hope, and pride and the role that they play in the political mobilization and agency of Americans of color? Can you talk us through your argument here?

**Davin Phoenix:** Sure. I don't want to say at the outset that this isn't going to shift the conversation away from anger, right, because these need not be looked at as like the opposite end of the spectrum. Right? People can feel these positive emotions at the same time that they feel their anger because we are complex and layered and multifaceted. So I think that's a really important disclaimer for me to make.

But, you know, a lot of the influential political psychology work I was drawing from kind of lumps together positive emotions under this umbrella of enthusiasm. And I wanted to unpack that a little bit. I think, okay, these discrete

emotions of like hope, right, which is a sense of “I have this kind of confidence that something that would benefit me or benefit us is possible. It looms in the horizon,” and then this discrete, positive emotional pride, which is a very distinct emotion, is very self-reflective, right? Pride is like guilt and shame. It’s a feedback mechanism that we receive based on what we do. And so when you’re proud, you know you individually or collectively right, did something that animates us sense of we got this right?

Which I found when Black people have a concrete sense of hope, like a I call it credible hope, right, they’re more active in politics, right? They’re more likely to vote and more likely to talk about this issue with others. They’re more likely to kind of do the whole host of actions that might make that hope a reality. Now, when people are feeling proud and then some follow work, they show that, you know, kind of specifically pride in Black people’s achievements or even pride in, you know, Black elected officials that they think are, you know, doing right by the group, that is a very strong mobilizer of a wide set of actions. From actions tied to elections, to contacting officials to even, you know, protest and boycotting. That in my analyses, pride is kind of having this universal push towards action for African-Americans, that anger is for White Americans.

I’m also finding that, you know, we’ve kind of talked about when we’re defining anger, you know, a big part of anger that distinguishes it from these other negative emotions, is that you feel a great sense of agency, right? You not only feel that violation of that norm, but you feel confident you can do something about it. Right. If you don’t feel confident, maybe you’re more anxious or despairing. Right. Or frustrated. But anger is really takes that sense of agency. But in my work, I’m finding that the traditional ways we view political agency, right, like my input matters, you know, my voice actually affects change, then I find that actually being more tied to pride than to anger. So again, I don’t want to posit that the key is like, “Oh, it’s okay that they’re not feeling license to express their anger because you can also be hopeful about” like, we need all of these emotions right in concert. But I do find that these positive emotions can be more, I think, effective at generating engagement, particularly for marginalized group members, than I think that conventional literature, you know, scholarship will suggest it.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you. I appreciate that I really found your work on pride to be really interesting and similar to what Myisha was starting us off with in today’s conversation. Right. Pride also is a value statement. You are proud of yourself because you believe you have value. And I think that that—and going to your point that these are not mutually exclusive ways to orient oneself. Knowing one’s value and being mobilized by it seems to be really key here.

Alright. Let us get into rage and Lordean rage. As I mentioned up top, Myisha, your book was the impetus for today's conversation. Religion Dispatches editor Evan Derkacz was really excited to engage with you on the political potential of rage. And then it sort of blossomed into this amazing panel. So tell us, what is Lordean Rage and what is its political possibility?

**Myisha Cherry:** Yeah, so to even say there's a kind of a distinct kind of anger suggests that there are other kinds that we're probably not talking about. And I think it's important to understand these other kinds, because one of the things that I think that I'm trying to do in my work is to kind of get us away from the idea that anger is one thing. And usually when we think that we say anger bad or anger types of bad. I mean not in a case of like having it at all or White men, but we think all encounters or all manifestations of anger is bad. And so I get people to kind of refrain from painting anger in broad strokes. And a lot of that depends on answering several questions. For example, what is the anger directed at? What is one aiming to do? What kind of perspective kind of influences that anger? And so the answer those questions are very, very, very important.

And so before I even talk about Lordean rage, I want to talk about kind of rage that arises in the context of political injustice. Something I call White rage, which is something that we saw in the Capitol. And I contrast even narcissistic rage that seems kind of virtuous, but it only—one only wants justice for oneself, one's class of folks. And it's a variety of kinds. And I want to kind of lead us towards kind of living out the life in which when we are angry, we have this more positive kind.

So Lordean rage named after the poet and essayist Audre Lorde. And it was tremendously inspired by her popular essays "Uses of Anger." She motivated the book, motivated me to get back into grad school because I just wanted to really dive deep into what this emotion was that I just was doing myself in response to racial injustice. And when I was seeing other people feel as well. And it's kind of inspired by her account of anger. And the way that I see it is contrasted with White rage. One of the aims is change. I mean, she talks about kind of use of anger and for radical transformation of our world. Which is quite different when you have kind of other types of anger.

So in the case of White rage, one uses that anger, particularly because it's directed at racial others, when it uses that anger to get rid of, to exclude, to bring about the societal death of other individuals. But with Lordean rage, if it's directed at race and racism, if it's aiming—if it's aiming for change or radical transformation of our world, then, well, one actually engages in particular actions. When it's less prone to storming the Capitol and rather storming to a

voting booth, for example. Right. So it has kind of positive features, the kind of dimensions that I think that any and all of us would say, is in line with kind of democratic and liberal values.

But just because it isn't necessarily mean that we're more open to it. And so the challenge is, is not only to have this Lordean rage, but to—kind of this—kind of archaic kind of notion, traditional notion that we have about just being scared of anger in general. And when I want to say, if your anger is directed at race and racism, if who you're thinking about having a better life includes not just yourself but all people, if you're aiming for change and not just like a cozy kind of change but you're willing to engage in and accept kind of a radical world—or a kind of a radical transformation so that people gets justice. If you don't want justice just for yourself but with everyone else is a zero sum game, then you have what I'm referring to as Lordean rage. And I want to encourage you to keep it, not allowing the anger police to get rid of it. I want to encourage you to continue to use it to expand values to last and continue to allow it to motivate you, to engage in action. And don't be ashamed of it, but walk around with it with pride. And that's kind of the spirit of the account.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you. I found it a really inspiring concept and a really succinct and moving way to talk about productive, meaningful rage. You touched a little bit on this, sort of there are other forms of rage, and you talked about White rage. And I want to stay with this for a second. We're going to come back to—our final discussion is going to be on like how do we deploy Lordean rage and what are your recommendations as our esteemed panelists for how to do this well, right? And how to do this in a really well-thought out way.

But before we do that, I want to make sure that we understand the terrain of rage, of anger and the dangers it can pose. Are there moments, contacts or movements? Are there individuals where politically valuable rage becomes destructive or impotent? Are there conditions under which it is not politically expeditious to forswear stability? Like, what is the strategy here? Are there limits to who can rage and under what conditions? And the answer can be no. Or the answer can be yes, there are some helpful parameters, and I'd be really interested to get into the strategy question with all three of you. So whomever would like to start.

**Myisha Cherry:** So I would just say there's a lot of ways in which you can go wrong, as in with love, for example. But there's another ways it can go right. Right. And I think I really believe in, and maybe this is just when I think about the human being and our ability to ration and to reason that we can

ask ourselves questions and assess when our anger has gone towards the bad spectrum of this and when it's done to the good spectrum. And one of the things that I want to say in the book is that, you know, we were talking about kind of calls for civility, if you allow other people to lay out or to accept your anger for you, your anger is always going to be bad. So I kind of provide some tools, some questions for people to ask so they can figure out for themselves when it has gone down the bad end of the spectrum.

I think one of the important questions is, and this is a question to ask when it goes wrong is who are you thinking about with your anger. So I mentioned the example that there's a difference between Lordean rage and narcissistic rage. And with narcissistic rage, you kind of have all the similar features that Lordean rage has, but it's only focused on your particular group. And bell hooks talks about this example in her book *Killing Rage*, she talks about kind of elite Black folk who get pulled over by the police, and it's only in that moment that they realize the police is unjust. But even then they're only concerned that the police don't treat them like they treat poor Black folk. That's narcissism. Right. And I think, you know, when we think about Black Lives Matter. Right. Created to ascribe values to all folk, not just straight Black men. Right. So I think I think it can go wrong, even though it has like the features that we've talked about. When your focus is only on your particular people, or your particular gender, or your particularly—people that you think is most, most oppressed. And it can go terribly wrong in that in that particular way and I caution people to kind of be aware when that happens. And a way that you can transition out of that is just to be reminded again that you're not the only individual that suffers harm. But it's just a change of perspective is going to allow that allow that to happen. I do believe that in our capacity to assess ourselves and ask questions that I like to lay out what does indeed go wrong and how indeed it can go—it can go right.

**Koki Mendis:** I think those are really illuminating examples. Davin, Alex. Would either of you like to jump in here.

**Davin Phoenix:** I'll say very quickly. Well, I just want affirm like what Myisha said was so on point, it dovetails with my past work, my ongoing work. I just wanted to emphasize the importance of an anger and rage that's rooted in community as opposed to in isolation. I think about—you know, I was grappling a lot when I was writing the book with the Baldwin quote. And I always see the first part of the quote. I rarely see the second part, right. "To be a Negro in this country, and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time." I see that part. I don't see the rest of it, right? "So that the first problem is how to control that rage so that it won't destroy you." I feel like that part really

resonated with when I would have Black people giving space to their feelings about anger over politics. And so many of them would kind of end on the note of, “well, you know, since there’s really nothing we can do, we just got to kind of police ourselves.” Going back to the idea of self-policing, that Myisha talked about earlier. And I thought about how, you know, kind of heartbreaking, right? An endpoint that is. And like, well, what is the way in which to not feel as though you have no productive or healthy outlook. I think it’s a combination of introspection and reflection and also understanding that you are not alone in this. We often see marginalized people kind of taking actions that they might not otherwise take. It’s when they really appreciate that this thing that makes them angry, isn’t just a quirk of them? Right. But this is an injustice that is systematically affecting other folks in their community, real or imagined. And so understanding that you are part of something bigger than yourself can really be mobilized.

And I think about how we can distinguish among many dimensions of anger and rage, like the rage that is felt in a community, right, broadly defined. As opposed to rage is felt in isolation. And a rage that’s felt like only with this particular set of people, right, that I’m going to align with. And you can make that connection. Hey, this community feels that too. Then we can have something really powerful.

There’s a recent book in the discipline that talks about the role of outgroup empathy in politics, which has been really underexplored. But, you know, when people can really put themselves in the position of other people going through harm, they’re willing to go to bat for those folks. And not surprisingly, who do they find is most empathetic people of color, women, LGBT folks, folks that know firsthand what it’s like. They’re able to say, “oh, if there is an account of other people feeling marginalization, I don’t need to dismiss that. Because I know what it’s like to feel it and be dismissed. Let me extend myself.” I think that’s another—they’re not talking about anger within that work but I think there’s a role there, right, for collective communal rage to emerge from that. That isn’t just transformative, but I think can also be a vital part in the healing, right. Because we’re not just feeling the hurt and anger. I know someone talked about this in the chat. We’re feeling the pain, and the grief, and oftentimes the depression, the isolation. Right. And so how do we find ways to not let that ball of feelings destroy us but translate that so we can work to chip away until we destroy, right, those systems and sets of relationships that harm us.

**Myisha Cherry:** If I may add, and I have a feeling that Alex is going to say this because he’s a historian. I mean as much as our answers may seem abstract at this point, I think those who’ve come before us really lay out and are exemplars



of how to put this stuff in practice. We've mentioned Sojourner Truth. We've mentioned Ida B. Wells, we mentioned King, we mentioned James Baldwin. But I really want to invite the audience to really dive deep into their work, because I think their work and their life really provides kind of a guide and example of how to do the kind of things that we're talking about.

**Koki Mendis:** Alex, I think that was an invitation to hear more from you.

**Alex Zamalin:** Well, you know, I was thinking about Myisha's comments about Lorde. And in my book, I talk about this encounter that she actually had with James Baldwin where they were having a lecture. They were invited to a panel in New England. And at some point, they had this kind of contested disagreement. And Lorde turned to Baldwin and said, when you talk about race, are you actually considering Black women or do you think race can simply be reduced to Black men? And in that moment, Baldwin was kind of frustrated, but he opened up. He was able to listen to Lorde. And similarly, when Lorde gave her famous speech in 1980, when she basically said that the women's movement needed to account for intersectional oppression and domination, her expectation was that the rage, the frustration would create common ground and space. And part of what I'm trying to kind of articulate from this idea of civic radicalism, I think, is that civility presupposes that we know that the rules are normal, egalitarian, that everything is okay, and so we just lower the temperature, everything will be just fine. And whereas all these activists historically recognize not only are things not fine, but the only way to realize that they're not fine, Baldwin's message of awakening from our moral slumber, is to kind of shake people out of their complacency. And one of the things that rage is so effective at is being able to open up ways of seeing the world in a different light, of seeing reality in a way that you can't avoid it.

So when civic radicals go out on the streets, when they engage in boycotts, when they try to engage in lunch counter protest, sit ins in Greensboro, all of them are trying to make it inescapable for the White moderate or the person who believes that they are simply, you know, progressive and okay with change to confront those feelings. And I think that rage has this real advantage of pushing, as King says, folks to consider what it is that they care about, what it is that they feel, and in doing that allows for the continuation of conversation, allows for the explosion of what is civil and normal and perhaps a reconstruction of the world.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you. Really well said. What I'm hearing from all of you is that—and we've talked about this where that rage of community. Solidarity and

rage is the combination that pushes us forward and creates actual change. And I think that's one of the you know, one of the biggest takeaways for our sort of movement audience, for our partners doing the work on the ground and also sort of the way in which to avoid defeatism, narcissism, to prevent against the ways in which rage can be destructive when not in community, when not in solidarity with an intersectional lens. And, you know, I really appreciate the way that the three of you really mapped that out so clearly.

Moving sort of in this vein and moving through this line of thinking, how can our contemporary movement leaders harness rage and who should we be looking to for our audience members, for the folks who are going to get, you know, this in follow up emails, who should we be looking to for models, for who is doing this work really well? Who comes to mind when you think about somebody who's deploying rage in a way that is actually creating change and working towards justice?

**Davin Phoenix:** So I can get us started. I think of two directions in response to that question. One is I feel like the question that you asked to kick us off, right? You know, what makes you feel rage, right. You allowed us to say in our own language, right, whatever area of focus you wanted, what kind of really moves us to have that expression. And I wonder the degree to which doing some work with some community organizations throughout the country, they're working with like justice impacted folks, and when they create space for folks to start the conversation as opposed to imposing upon them. "Look at this threat to your well-being, and this threat and this threat right from this political party, this official." Like they're aware of those threats, but it's just bombarded by it, as we all are. Right. We're so bombarded with all these threats and there's an intent behind that. Right. We talked about the cycle of kind of White grievance that is continuously renewed. I think that's intended to both kind of whip that base into a constant frenzy, but also, I think, to overwhelm everyone else so that we're just numb to it all. And so I think disrupting that pattern of imposing upon people, "this is all you have to be mobilized by" and saying, well, let me give you some space to talk about it. Right. What moves you? Right? What are you thinking? What are you feeling? I think that can create a sense of the kind of communal rage, right, as people link together what it is they're saying, and what they're seeing and their observations and allow some of that agency to manifest. Right. Because now I get to define the parameters, right, or the scope, or the moment, you know, the urgency.

When I think about contemporary examples—when I think about—what year was this? Not this time around, but the first time Stacey Abrams ran for governor and she lost very narrowly to Jack Kemp, who as secretary of state

was in control of the rules of the election and did a lot of vote purging. She, right, in a very broad stage—Obviously, she was not just on the statewide stage, but on national stage at that point—in her speech after the results were official, she said this is not a concession speech. She, I think, to use Myisha’s language, really did break the rules. Right. Was willing to embrace her anger. Right. And I think about the ways in which I feel like that really did signal to Black Georgian voters throughout the state, right, the value of their votes and the real significance that there was concern that their votes were not counted to the extent that they were.

And so that’s, you know, prior to the 2020 election, that means that 2018. Right. She and organizers throughout the state, I think, were very effectively able to engender a sense amongst Black prospective voters. Right. Look, they won’t keep doing this to us, right? This is our chance. This is opportunity. And the numbers of Black folks being registered and turning out in the 2020 election, as we all know, were significant in game changing. And so I think about the ways in which there was a public Black woman breaking that rule and really signifying not only am I angry about this for me, I’m not just angry because I’m not going to the state house, right, but I’m angry for us, really displaying that model. Right. We see it as the point is—we kind of see it. And that’s one kind of immediate instance that comes to my mind where, yeah, there’s that real possibility of generating the kind of rage that really does mobilize people collectively to feel we’re valued and our grievances legitimate, and we’re going to act.

**Myisha Cherry:** For my answer, I want to kind of combine a thought that I didn’t really we didn’t probably—I didn’t elaborate on too much, and Davin had brought it up. But one of the things that he alluded to is that anger and other so-called positive emotions, they’re not mutually exclusive. And I would even say it is the case, it typically is the case that if you have anger, there’s no way that you can have anger without having compassion toward someone who you’re angry has been wronged. There’s no way that you can love Black people and not be angry that they’re being mistreated. Right. So all that stuff usually goes together and just in the lives of human beings, we don’t just experience one emotion. That’s just an inaccurate picture of our psychological mass, Right. So they usually go hand in hand. Or at least that’s—that’s my view.

So considering that, right, if someone wants to answer the question and say, “hey, let me imagine a group or a person who predominately has this angry emotion, and then we see what they’re doing in the world,” I think that would just be a very difficult question to answer, given that these emotions usually coexist with each other. And at certain points and political moments one

emotion may be more salient than the others, but they usually coexist among each other. So that makes the identification a bit more difficult. But I think it makes the answer more easy to answer. I think if you go into any organization, or any kind of movement that is responding to a kind of wrongdoing, whether that's climate injustice and our apathy towards our climate, climate change, you go to any kind of criminal justice organization, you're going to find people who are working in collaboration with those organizations because they are angry about something, but they're also feel compassion, and they also feel love. And so, you know, one of the things that I end the Break Racial Rules chapter with is, I get us to imagine or reimagine what a resister looks like. And I simply suggest these are everyday people, not just the charismatic leaders. And so my answer to your question is that people who are doing this stuff right and using anger in ways in which we should model, are probably not the popular folk, are probably not the charismatic kind of largely funded organizations. But if we go into our communities, people who are consistently doing this work, work that is challenging the status quo, there we will find anger in collaboration with a whole bunch of emotions, and we'll find great exemplars or people who are still fighting, despite the anger, despite the setbacks. And to me they are models of what this kind of anger could do in a political context.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you. I think you both touched on this here. Sort of—and this is a recurring theme with at least Political Research Associates webinars: what do we do? Deep canvassing, conversations with people on the ground. Those low and slow conversations where we invite. What are you angry about? We build community with sort of one person at a time. And I think this is a really—this conversation on rage really fits into sort of this prescription that keeps coming up and is clearly the way forward, although it is hard and slow work. Alex, what comes to mind here for you?

**Alex Zamalin:** You know, again, in the kind of theme of thinking about history and what lessons we can learn from history, I think it's so important to actually look at the movements that succeeded. And there are through lines. I think that that is, you know, an important thing to take away. I often talk to my students and many of them feel hopeless about racial injustice and confronting it. And yet we have this incredibly rich history of activists who both theorized racial inequality and found ways to creatively struggle against it.

And so, you know, I think the things that come to mind first is the importance of direct action, which we've all been talking about. That is really, you know—rage on some level is about putting yourself out there, making yourself vulnerable, but in making yourself vulnerable, also making

an assertion about yourself. And in many ways, you know, all of the acts of nonviolent disobedience that have inspired kind of movements for racial justice are acts that are rooted in this kind of dual motion. So I think the idea of direct action, action that really centers on issues relating to power, economic power. You know, we talked about elites. We talked about the reason why, you know, the system will respond once the stakes are raised. And those those stakes could be raised in many ways. You know, they can be raised through a call for a beloved community. They can be raised through critique on the street, through protests. But it's important to kind of touch on institutions of power.

And I think, you know, the other lesson that we get from history is that despite the calls that the only way to succeed is to narrow the movement. The only way to succeed is to focus only on narrow sets of identity. What we see time and time again is that the movements that succeed are the movements that are intersectional, the movements that are coalitional and try to build solidarity. What's crucial is that all these movements and this is partly connected to, you know, the image of civic radicalism. They're not trying to reach across the aisle to those who will never understand. The White supremacist, the racist, the misogynist. They're trying to build communities and networks of love, pride, hope within the willing. Those who are willing to get involved, but maybe are not there yet. And I think the whole discourse around change can be really aided by looking at history and how every major anti-racist movement was much more interested in building strength from within so that it can make a claim about justice outside rather than being preoccupied with what the opposition might think, rather than being preoccupied with what critics might think. And I think that that's such an important lesson and it's so valuable for when we talk about this question of rage, you know, it's important to redefine it. We're talking about rage here for justice. And this is a consistent theme that we see throughout the history of anti-racist activism.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you. I think this was a perfect conclusion to a really good conversation. You all did a fabulous job making a compelling case for rage, a compelling case for problematizing the role of emotions in politics and who gets to use them and who doesn't. And if Stacey Abrams and the disenfranchised voters of Georgia flipping the state blue isn't a compelling case for rage, I don't know what is. And so, you know, I really appreciate that. And also, the way that you talk about this is not just movement leaders doing this work. Right. It's all of us in community, harnessing our rage and staying focused and motivated because of it. Y'all this is amazing. This is a really great conversation. I would love to spend another hour with you. I think our audience members might want to continue with their days, but I invite you to stay engaged with Religion

Dispatches and Political Research Associates. We really enjoyed having you on today. And I just want to say the most sincere thank you for spending your Thursday afternoon with us.



