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Adam Goodman Interview

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Bucknell: Occupied

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Jennifer Thomson, interviewer (JT)

Adam Goodman, interviewee (AG)

JT: All right. So tonight I am talking to Adam Goodman assistant professor of history and Latin American and Latino studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago who is an expert on recent us Mexican and Central American history migration history and policy and Mexican American and Latino history. He is currently writing a book examining the history of deportation from the United States. So I thank you for talking with us tonight at.

AG: Thanks so much for having me.

JT: So we're going to have a bit of a sort of packed conversation both about the recent executive orders as well as about sanctuary and then hopefully we will get a chance to talk at some point during that about the possible future of DACA. So during his campaign Donald Trump obviously made very extreme promises concerning the construction of a wall. On our border with Mexico that the deportation of large numbers of what he terms illegal immigrants as well as the creation of the Muslim ban and a possible Muslim registry and so over the past week we've of course seen him begin to make good on some of those promises. So I'm wondering if you can start us off by talking about the executive orders that have come out this week.

AG: Sure. And they've been wide-ranging and incredibly draconian and I'll try to give some historical perspective as well. But just to kind of summarize and brief: the executive orders that Trump has signed in the past week call for the construction of a wall along the US/Mexico border. They would increase the size of the border patrol and immigration and customs and enforcement forces who police immigrant communities in the interior and establish communities throughout the nation. It would increase the number of deportations and in turn detention of migrants. It would potentially cut Federal funding from sanctuary cities or at least try to do so. As you mentioned, one of the executive orders banned the immigration of Syrian refugees and also immigrants from seven other countries--Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, and Syria--as I mentioned, so they were kind of broad and wide-ranging, but anti-immigrant across the board. And I think in some ways it's important to recognize how bold they are and important to recognize that they do represent a break from US policy in important ways but they also show some historical continuity. You know, the United States as one political theorist put it, has always been a nation by design. The country has always controlled who enters, who can stay, and who is forced to go. In the late 19th century, the Chinese were singled out and excluded. They were the first and only immigrant group to be excluded by nationality and they were excluded from 1882 until the 1940s. A 60-year period. There were restriction Acts in the 1910s and 1920s that limited the number of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. And beyond there were many concerted efforts to deport en masse Mexicans who were providing labor but also who were established members of communities in the country. So we see a lot of continuity in addition to some of the important changes.

JT: So, I'm wondering if you can talk about the extent to which all of these executive orders really fit together. Right? I mean, what do they seem to indicate about the Trump administration's general

stance towards the distinction between citizen and non-citizen right? And if you if you have some thoughts about you know, where they might be headed

[SOUND]

AG: It's a great question, it's a little bit difficult to say. The listeners guess is as good as mine, in terms of where this is all headed, but I think we can draw some conclusions from the executive orders. You know, they're incredibly restrictive. They're very clear in that, you know, Mexicans for example or immigrants from Arab countries or predominately Muslim countries are not considered to be members of the US society of you know, the polity, and people that could come here and integrate or be incorporated into this country. I think from the Trump administration's perspective that it's a very clear message...

JT: MmHm.

AG: ...the wall if anything is symbolic now, the rhetoric about the wall, about creating this impossible, impermeable division between the United States and Mexico is powerful symbolically as it has been since calls for a wall started many many decades ago. And just as a side note, you know the thing about the wall is that anyone that's been to the US/Mexico border knows that hundreds of miles of wall already exists.

JT: Right.

AG: There are 650 miles of wall that line the US/Mexico border, and that has been you know, mostly constructed in the last 20-25 years mostly under democratic administrations.

JT: MmHm.

AG: I can say that the wall and a lot of the rhetoric around immigration enforcement has been entirely bipartisan.

JT: Yeah.

AG: That's something that both Democrats and Republicans have agreed on. I don't think that you know today we're seeing bipartisanship around the executive orders, but there's some amount of double speak as well as hypocrisy about candidates or I guess presidential candidates from the Democratic party.

JT: MmHm.

AG: Also, Senators who voted in favor of enhanced enforcement policy,

JT: Right. So, I mean really, you know looking at the rhetoric both which characterize the campaign but which has, you know, certainly persisted over the last 10 days. There's very strident talk of criminals and terrorists, and so the framing of these restrictions and bans on immigration as a way of keeping the so-called American public safe. I mean, do you see the mobilization of these these

terms the criminal and the terrorist as being any sort of radical break or is this just you know more of the same.

AG: I think it's a little bit of both. You know, I think there are a couple of important misconceptions here that we should get on the table. You know, the first as you bring up is that immigrants are criminals.

JT: Yeah.

AG: That is the kind of direct connection Donald Trump has tried to make throughout the campaign, and since assuming the presidency and it has served as the base for his attack on immigrants. It's been a way to divide and to try to quell any kind of broad base organizing on behalf of their community and it's just not true. I mean, it's simply not true. The facts, don't bear it out. You know, at least not how most people I think would define a quote-unquote criminal. So in that sense, it's somewhat new cause he's just harped on it so much, and focused on it so much. But at the same time the Obama Administration the Bush Administration also reportedly focused their immigration enforcement on criminals in their launch of the Secure Communities program and continued it under Obama. You know it's since been phased out, but now Trump says that it's coming back and Secure Communities is a very detrimental program to different cities, municipalities, and counties across the country in that it links local law enforcement databases with Federal immigration databases...

JT: Right.

AG: ...any time an immigrant contact with a local law enforcement officer... local law enforcement system that could potentially lead to you know, that individuals detention and deportation Trump is--He's bringing that back. And that was a program that was launched under Bush and you know expanded under Obama. It again was to target criminals.

JT: Right.

AG: Studies have shown that three-quarters of the quote-unquote criminals that were targeted by Secure Communities were minor offenders if that, you know could have been an administrative offences like immigration offenses, violations, and having been deported and then coming back to this country. Traffic violation, small possession charges, not the same notions or images that come to mind when Trump is propagating this false stereotype of immigrants as violent offenders.

JT: Yeah.

AG: But it does a lot of work for him in trying to sell these policies and incredibly draconian practices of limiting who can enter the country and regulating very aggressively who can remain. And the other important point to recognize here is that you know, he doesn't have support for this from the American public. The public supports legalizing immigrants here who do not have current status as permanent residents or citizens. Three out of every five Americans is in favor of a path to

citizenship for those individuals. Three out of every five Americans opposes repealing DACA in the deferred action...

JT: MmHm. MmHm

AG: ...for childhood arrivals and around 3/4 or 75 percent are in favor of allowing undocumented immigrants to stay in the country. You know, you wouldn't you ever get that sense if you just listen to the president. Like in so many other issues, the facts just don't bear out.

JT: Right. So I mean he has no... as you've talked about here, right? He's inherited a tremendous deportation machine, right? which has been under construction for many many decades and I'm wondering I mean, do you... as you raise this issue of public perception as well as you know, what the public has actually been demonstrated to want. I mean is his aggressive push for detention and deportation--I mean is that really an attempt to satisfy as base as it is so often been represented in the news or is that about satisfying some other set of interests?

AG: I think it's about satisfying some of the his base or a portion of his base perhaps, but it's also a convenient way to fight off all of the real economic pressures and stresses and challenges that this country faces and that so many people individually and as families and communities have felt in recent years, you know immigrants conveniently throughout US History have always been used as scapegoats, and I think we've seen that throughout the last year and a half in the campaign. And and in the first weeks of Donald Trump's presidency that immigrants continued to be scapegoats for problems that are much more complex or much deeper and a lot harder to fix, you know, simply by banning some people from entering the country or by deporting an increasing number of immigrants that are supposedly taking the jobs of US citizens that's not going to fix a lot of the problems that Trump has claimed that it will and I think the executive orders and the anti-immigrant campaign that he is waged, it's in large part, you know as he's made clear in an effort to create fear in immigrant communities. And an effort to let others perhaps employers or US citizens themselves off the hook.

JT: MmHm.

AG: ...and that's that's something that a lot of people don't necessarily want to hear but I think that's what it boils down to.

JT: Right. You know we have a few minutes remaining in the in our conversation and I'd like to really pivot into an issue that has, you know, been growing in importance but really--catapulted into the spotlight recently, which is that of cities and then campuses--University campuses--as well declaring themselves to be Sanctuary. So I'm wondering if you can talk to us a little bit about what it means for a city to call itself a Sanctuary city and then particularly now given the recent executive order against Sanctuary cities.

AG: Of course. Yeah, and this is an important part of a lot of the energy and activism that we have seen across the country, which I think has been really encouraging in many ways and put you know in stark contrast some of these executive orders. Compared to what the vast majority of the people across the country want and feel. The sanctuary movement in cities and on campuses is part of a

longer trajectory, a longer history, building on previous efforts for sanctuary, dating back to the 1980s for Central American migrants who were fleeing civil war and violence in that region, which should be noted was in part funded by billions of dollars in US Aid to right-wing governments and government death squads in Central American countries that forced people to leave. But in the 1980s migrants, refugees, religious leaders, and legal advocates came together on behalf of people who were seeking asylum in this country, in the United States, and protected them and advocated on their behalf. And we're seeing kind of a Revival of that. A new Sanctuary movement which isn't it a product of just the last several months, but it has been around now for a few years or at least a handful of years. And since we've seen the uptick in Central American refugees coming to this country, and now we're seeing it very actively as a way to defy Donald Trump and his anti-immigrant policies. So the first thing that's important to note is that there is no formal, universally accepted definition of what constitutes a Sanctuary city or Sanctuary campus for that matter, you know, and I guess generally it might refer to a city or campus that says that they're not going to cooperate with Federal authorities and trying to apprehend or collect information on or deport members of their community. So a few different kind of general things have been put forth by different cities across the country, and an increasing number have declared themselves Sanctuaries. I think it's more than three dozen now, cities across the country of have declared themselves sanctuaries, and more than two hundred counties perhaps. Not just I should mention not just on the coast not just in the major cities, but you know in other states like North Dakota and Georgia.

[CROSTALK]

JT: Right. And even you know close by to where where we are doing this interview right now. State College, Pennsylvania has recently called themselves sanctuary as well.

AG: Exactly, it is a very broad movement geographically, and there are a number of different things which cities have said that they will and will not do. One thing, for example, is that mayor's have directed their police forces not to inquire about immigration status...

JT: MmHm.

AG: ...of those that they encounter in the streets or they've said that they will not hold immigrants in detention until ICE or immigration customs enforcement can pick them up for deportation.

JT: MmHm.

AG: Basically said that you know, local officials will not serve as de facto immigration agents...

JT: Right.

AG: ...and we will create safer communities. Since, you know, there's, there are important consequences of making local law enforcement officials immigration agents.

JT: MmHm.

AG: Data shows, and when we started rolling out Secure Communities under Bush and Obama if people are afraid to go to the police because they might get deported, then they might not report domestic abuse, that they may not report crime, they might not report other things that without without these links between the local police and the federal immigration officers they would have reported otherwise. Would have in turn made the community safer.

JT: MmHm.

AG: So those are some of the kind of the broad--broad strokes of what different cities are doing and many, you know, New York City, Boston Chicago, California have come out very strong saying they're not going to share information with immigration officials. The mayor of Boston, I think, this week came out and said that not only will they support undocumented immigrants but people can come and take refuge in St. Paul.

JT: Right. Right. Right.

AG: ...if they would like, and they create a legal defense fund as well, which is really important, you know, and providing health services, social services and legal services for undocumented immigrants.

JT: So as I listen to you describe this what I'm what I'm wondering is, you know, particularly for in these locations which are willing so far have shown themselves willing to take an aggressive stand against, you know, using local law enforcement as proxies for immigration officers to what extent do you anticipate cities forcibly resisting the entrance of federal immigration authorities into their boundaries.

AG: That's a hard question to answer. I think it might vary, you know some, some for example have said they're not going to do the different things that I mentioned unless required to by a warrant.

JT: Yes.

AG: And issued by judge so exactly how cities and campuses for that matter are going to react, it is a little bit unclear, it's somewhat difficult to speculate. But I think it's an important question. And that's something that the journalist José Antonio Vargas ended a very, very important op-ed that he wrote in the wake of Trump's election basically saying, you know, what are each and every one of us going to do when deportation raids start. Kind of getting really concrete and I think for campuses, especially, that's important, right? to declare oneself sanctuary to declare a campus sanctuary is symbolically important without a doubt, to know that the opposition is widespread and strong is incredibly important and shouldn't be, you know, underestimated, but it's really important to be declaring campus or city of sanctuary to get into the nitty-gritty of what that means. So. You know openly and publicly supporting and defending students and members of the community is key, right? And not just undocumented students, but Muslim and Arab students.

JT: Exactly.

AG: ...black students...

JT: Yes.

AG: LGBTQ students, those who might have differing or dissenting political opinion. I think that's really important. As we mentioned the promise not to share information with immigration agencies, not allowing immigration officials on campus unless they have a warrant, you know some schools have come out and said they'll do that, and then some things that aren't necessarily thought of at first glance, but are really important for students. I know my students are thinking about some of the biggest worries related to questions of financial-aid--

JT: MmHm.

AG: scholarships, eligibility for work study, and also mental health services counseling, advising. These are really important factors and issues that students and undocumented people throughout the country are facing that should be part of the larger response by Sanctuary cities and by Sanctuary campuses.

JT: So to wrap up. I mean, I know students as well as faculty and staff here on campus have you know asserted a very strong desire for Bucknell to become a sanctuary campus, and the campus is certainly declared itself to be concerned about and ready to protect the status of various individuals on campus, but I'm wondering as a way of pointing us towards next week's conversation with student activists. Are there particular campuses in the United States that you feel of done--really the most aggressive and progressive so far job of protecting their students?

AG: That's a... that's a great question. A couple come to mind, I'm sure there are many more, some of your listeners and certainly members of the community know there are more than 40 colleges and universities across the country, I believe, that have declared themselves Sanctuary. I think there are maybe a hundred or hundred and twenty petitions.

JT: MmHm.

AG: More than a hundred thousand signatures, but you know, I actually thought that the University of Pennsylvania's statement was pretty strong. I think Lewis and Clark College maybe in Portland, Oregon, and I'm sure there are many others as well. So I don't want to leave some out or point your listeners to some over others, but there's a lot of resources out there if people have a few minutes to look up the sanctuary campuses. There are some maps that people have put together online with different schools across the country that started petitions. And I think that a lot of the demands and a lot of the points that student activists and members of the communities are raising are similar, and I think the hardest thing is getting administrations across the country to commit to them and to commit to specific concrete steps and actions that they will do in that they will promise to do if push comes to shove. And I think that's how we should be thinking about this because we need to take the president at his word. We need to, you know, hope for the best but plan for the worst.

JT: Well, I appreciate you joining us today to talk about all of these issues Adam.

AG: Thanks so much for having me on.

JT: Thank you.