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Marshall Poe [00:00:00] Hello, everybody, this is Marshall, I'm the editor of the NBN. You're listening to a special podcast we're doing in conjunction with our friends at Princeton University Press. We call it the Princeton University Press Ideas podcast. In the podcast will be publishing two interviews with Princeton authors every month. If you're interested in following along, you can subscribe to the Princeton University Press Ideas podcast on the NBN or on your favorite podcast app. The podcast includes not only interviews in the series, but all the interviews we've ever done with Princeton authors, hundreds of them. We hope you enjoy this series and we hope you visit our friends at Princeton University Press on the Web.

[00:00:40] Welcome to the New Books Network.

[00:00:44] Hello, everybody, this is Marshall Poe and I'm the editor of the New Books Network, and I'd like to welcome you to another episode in the Princeton University Press Ideas podcast today. We're very lucky to have Eddie Cole on the show and we talking about his book, *The Campus Color Line: College Presidents and the Struggle for Black Freedom*. It's out from Princeton University Press just this year in 2020. Welcome to the show, Eddie.

Eddie Cole [00:01:08] Hey, thanks for having me, Marshall. Thanks.

Marshall Poe [00:01:10] Absolutely. Could you begin the interview by telling us a little bit about yourself?

Eddie Cole [00:01:14] Yeah, absolutely. I'm an associate professor at UCLA, particularly in the Department of Education within the Higher Education Division. And, primarily I focus on higher education history during the mid 20th century. It's just been fascinating work to dive into as currently in this moment of 2020, we're asking so many questions that have historical background to them. We're grappling with things that I've been thinking about for years, and it's always exciting to be with you and chat about my most recent work.

Marshall Poe [00:01:49] Yeah, it is kind of the moment for higher education right now. It is the moment. So let me begin by asking you, why did you write *The Campus Color Line*?

Eddie Cole [00:01:57] I have both a professional and a personal motivation behind writing this book. From a professional standpoint, when I first started to formally study higher education history and want to know more about college presidents, two major things were unfolding nationally in higher education. One, initially there was the Occupy Wall Street movement, if you remember, and during that moment there were numerous instances of student unrest unfolding on college campuses, challenging academic administrators and academic leaders to grapple with broader questions around capitalism and the role of higher education in that. That caught my attention because once those protests were unfolding on college campuses, people looked to college presidents. I thought that was interesting. Of all the people to address, you look toward the president.

[00:02:50] Then a few years later, what more people may remember, is the black student protests at the University in Missouri. One of the demands that emerged at the students were protesting at Mizzou focused on if racism and campus racial incidents were not going to be addressed by the system president and the campus chancellor, one demand was for them to resign. And that also caught my attention. Once student athletes on the football

team said they were going to potentially boycott a game, both the president and chancellor resign. In both of those instances, the Occupy Wall Street movement, as well as the black student protests in 2015, that really got me going around saying, there's got to be more history here that we just don't know enough about around the role of college presidents in these conversations. So that's the clean, professional motivation behind the book.

[00:03:56] But something else that really got me even thinking about educational leaders was really my hometown. I grew up in Boligee, Alabama, and growing up in west central Alabama in Greene County. I'm from a family of educators. So my parents were small town in west Alabama schoolteachers and my father's parents were also small town west Alabama schoolteachers. They were also members of black teacher associations. Even growing up, I had some sense of understanding of the role of education in the overall black freedom movement. By the time I came through the public school system in Greene County, Alabama, the remnants of past decisions were still there in the sense that my public high school was around the corner from a segregation academy, predominantly white segregation academy, with my high school being ninety-nine percent black student enrollment.

[00:04:53] So even as a teenager, I had questions about past educational leaders and their decisions and how those decisions still had an impact on the present. So that ultimately pushed me to think about this book that if school leaders in my small rural hometown had this sort of impact, imagine the impact that college presidents have had throughout time.

Marshall Poe [00:05:17] Well, thank you for that, I'm always glad to meet somebody else from Alabama. I was actually born in Huntsville. My sister still lives in Alabama. I've lost the accent. You still have yours. One of the things I learned from your book -- and I was a professor for a long time -- but I never really understood what university presidents did beyond raising money, and maybe that's a new role for them. But I think the listeners would be interested to know why the focus on university presidents. What exactly have university presidents done and what could they do to address issues of race in higher ed? What exactly is a university president?

Eddie Cole [00:05:58] That's a great question, Marshall. The book focuses on 1948 to 1968, so the 1940s through the 1960s, and it is important coming out of World War two to understand that just a tremendous amount of influence that these university leaders inherited. And I say that because it's well noted how college enrollment simply exploded after the war. It tripled and quadrupled in many cases, and it really outpaced the physical space that these campuses had. So with that said, with more people enrolling in college, more people started paying attention to college campuses. On top of that, coming out of World War Two, the interest in the Cold War made a number of federal officials, state level officials, as well as business leaders, take a more global competitive perspective on things. And in turn, they also look to our colleges and universities. Something that I always like to stress is that in this moment where the United States is grappling with the contradictions of democracy in the sense of going to World War Two and fighting a global fight for democracy, yet black veterans returning home from World War Two being treated like second class citizens, it becomes a national image issue. One of the leading issues, obviously, is based around race in the United States. And so if colleges and universities, even then, are supposed to have the brilliant scientists and social scientists that can address the nation's problems, in turn, college presidents inherit, like I said, a tremendous amount of influence because they led the institutions which were expected to help solve the nation's problems. So you see college presidents end up on a number of federal level

commissions, state level advisory roles, as well as major corporations and foundations look to college presidents as well, and national media. I mean, I found so many beautiful gems in the archives of college presidents at banquets sitting next to the editors at The New York Times and Newsweek, all these sort of things that really shifted the role in the scope of the college presidency after World War Two in ways that weren't quite the case before World War Two.

Marshall Poe [00:08:33] The status of university presidents rose after World War Two. More important people became presidents of universities, that can be said. Let me ask another kind of background question, and that is about university presidents and their constituencies, because I imagine that it's kind of a hard job. I don't think I would want it personally because you have to serve the students and the faculty and the donors and the alums and then there's the community and everything comes with with the job. What sort of dilemmas do they face in trying to serve these different constituencies while working on issues of race? Is there any generality you can make about that?

Eddie Cole [00:09:11] It is almost everything you can imagine, Marshall. I mean, you just listed some of the highlights, right? And then if you lead a state-supported, a public institution, you've also got elected officials. So one particular dilemma, as you can imagine when it comes to race during this time frame, is when you've got segregationists as elected officials across the US south. What does it mean when you've got Supreme Court decisions, as well as federal pressure, to desegregate some of these campuses? Talk about a dilemma, and I grapple with this in the book through a couple of the chapters specifically. But when it comes to constituencies you got on-campus worries and you've got off-campus worries, and I think one of the more obvious challenges that these university leaders had to balance was the pressure put on by students and student activists, particularly when their civil rights-related protests and demonstrations went off campus and focused on local businesses. So you can imagine a college president who may have something sponsored on campus or advertised on campus from a local business owners at the same time as those students who are causing those same businesses to lose money. But at the same time, students, again, have a tremendous amount of influence, particularly as enrollments grow because they're more and more students than ever before. It is what I've come to call the impossible job. People do ask me about my interest in the presidency, and I say no way after writing this book. But I've also come to realize that I characterize these presidents in reality, really, in a way they function like elected officials themselves because they have to answer to so many different constituencies.

Marshall Poe [00:11:18] I think that's exactly right. I was reminded while reading the book just how difficult the job is because they they have to serve all of these these interests and they're often conflicting. So let's get right into the book. In the first chapter of the book, you talk about the work of black college presidents in addressing issues of race. Could you expand a little bit on that?

Eddie Cole [00:11:38] Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I was so excited to open up the book, in particular to focus on the presidents of black colleges during this time frame, because I think is important to center black colleges and center these black college leaders, because this is a book about the black freedom movement as seen through the actions of college presidents. So it's important to kick off the book and looking at those individuals. The first thing I just have to emphasize is that their work was dangerous work, right? I mean, in not just risky, but I mean, not to overstate it but life and death sort of things, because at this time, lynchings are a common aspect of American society. That is not something that's

unheard of. We talk about leading institutions that have a role and responsibility to educate black students and also to try to educate black students in a way that is focused on black liberation and expansiveness within the community and fighting for equal rights.

Oftentimes, these black college presidents, whether they led a private institution or a state-supported institution, still had to answer to some sort of white power structure. So even if you led a private black college, most oftentimes those institutions were largely supported by numerous white missionary groups. You can go down a list. So that's for the private institutions. But if you're public, like I just mentioned, you still have to answer to white state legislators. It's such a tricky, tricky job for these individuals. But what I notice in the book and try to lay out with a nice amount of care and nuance is that those black presidents were quite courageous in that they still press forward toward black liberation.

[00:13:37] One particular issue that I cover in the book is the question of governance over black colleges. Ultimately, who gets to make decisions about black institutions of higher education? Is it the white state legislators, white donors, white philanthropists, or should it be the black community, black educators, black academics as well? In Maryland, of all states, I spent a lot of time focused on Morgan State College, which is now Morgan State University in Baltimore, taking a different approach to looking at black colleges in the South by looking at Upper South as opposed to black colleges in the Deep South and just looking at the tremendous amount of savvy in their use of networks, these quiet, silent networks among themselves, to support students without oftentimes publicly supporting students, but doing a number of things that were continuing to push the envelope, to push harder to racial equality. Martin Jenkins is the president of Morgan State, and he does everything from testifying before Congress to writing letters to the editor and op-eds in The Washington Post, as well as being influential and going all throughout the South and delivering speeches on black college campuses in the Deep South, where those presidents did not have the leeway that Martin Jenkins had in Maryland. So I think it is just a fascinating amount of work that these black college presidents had to do to address issues of race.

Marshall Poe [00:15:09] Yeah, I think it's very difficult for people to remember ... that in the 1950s and into the '60s, segregationism was a popular plank in the platform of elected officials. You could get elected on a segregationist ticket. It's just almost impossible for us to imagine that today, but it was definitely the case. This made it very difficult for these black college presidents to negotiate, especially if they were in public institutions, their relationship with the legislature, the people who actually write the checks.

Eddie Cole [00:15:50] That's a great point. We're talking about, like you said, people's entire campaign is built upon maintaining segregation.

Marshall Poe [00:15:59] And it was people voted. I mean, democracy, right? Let's go on a little bit. You talk about the role of presidents in urban areas, and urban areas are particularly important, as many people know, a lot of campuses are in urban areas. And this was during and after the period of white flight. So those areas became predominantly African American and this became kind of an issue. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Eddie Cole [00:16:25] I think that was one of the more fascinating chapters to really dig into, looking at urban universities in major cities. So think about Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, New York. I mean, these these cities have notable universities, but as you see population shifts in these same cities, white flight being notable and also the next wave of a great migration post-World War II where so many black citizens from the US now have had enough and they migrate to the Northeast, Midwest, and out West, so forth. So in that

regard, you see what I call black encroachment, to where black neighborhoods due to housing discrimination are overflowing because these new black residents to these cities don't have an unlimited number of options on where they can live because they have such a narrow number of neighborhoods to move into. They become overcrowded, and oftentimes these neighborhoods are close to major universities such as University of Pennsylvania, University of Chicago, Harvard, and the list goes on. With that said, these college presidents, particularly Lawrence Kimpton, who is the chancellor of the University of Chicago, notices that enrollment is actually dropping at the University of Chicago. This is sort of counter to the dominant narrative around this era in college enrollments increasing, University of Chicago is struggling when even some of the smallest colleges in America are growing rapidly. The University of Chicago is having enrollment issues as well as falling retention issues, largely because of its proximity to the Woodlawn community, which is predominately black, just south of Hyde Park, and Washington Park community, which is also predominately black, just to the west of campus. And in 1977, Lawrence Kimpton actually calls a meeting with some other urban university presidents, including MIT, Harvard, Columbia, Yale, and the University of Pennsylvania, and these six men come together and they devise a plan among themselves on how they can stop this encroachment. One of their methods of approach is to actually go to Washington, D.C., turn our attention to our federal legislators, and start to get federal dollars that are earmarked for urban renewal, which is a federal program which was designed to toward overall this idea of slum clearance and getting that federal money earmarked for higher education. Congress votes for almost a three dollars to one ratio to where if a University of Chicago, put a one dollar they would get three federal dollars toward buying up property near campus, largely in these black neighborhoods, and displacing thousands of disproportionately black residents in the name of keeping their neighborhood safe. This just makes me think about, say, Khalil Gibran Muhammad's work around the combination of blackness and the way crime has been used throughout American history to justify certain decisions. This has becomes another example of it, and so even though it is well-documented that housing discrimination and urban renewal largely displaced black households, it is really interesting to add a new element to that, to see the role of college presidents and intertwining higher education with those decisions as well.

Marshall Poe [00:19:58] Yeah, I found this chapter fascinating, and I know that it was at this point that several colleges and universities I've been associated with, at this point they entered the property market and they sold huge amounts of their endowment into the neighborhoods that were around the universities in order to monitor what we're doing here. Thinking about it from the perspective of the University of Chicago, people in business talk about key indicators and if your enrollment is dropping there's not a more serious key indicator than that. They were in a bad position and felt that they didn't have a lot of good choices.

Eddie Cole [00:20:41] We're talking about millions of dollars, even by 1950s standards. The University of Chicago ends up in the urban renewal program around one hundred and ninety million. Imagine that announcement today that a university has one hundred and ninety million dollar initiative there.

Marshall Poe [00:21:01] Universities are bureaucratic. I don't know about UCLA, but all the ones that I worked at are very bureaucratic. You talk about administrative resistance to these kinds of reforms on campus. Can you expand a little bit on that?

Eddie Cole [00:21:17] I think that question speaks directly to the title of the book in the sense of the campus color line, because the book covers so far, in the first few chapters

obvious color lines. But outside of those normal perceptions of how the color line is held, administrative structure is extremely surprising finding for me in how organizational hierarchy can find ways to delay reforms that happen too swiftly. If you just take the University of California system where I am a professor at UCLA, it is one of the more complicated issues today. It was also quite complicated during the mid-20th century. One particular issue that shows how you can have administrative resistance to reforms on campus is that in 1960 the University of California hired Franklin Murphy to be the chancellor of UCLA. UCLA then is by no means even remotely close to what it is today. It is a southern branch of Berkeley at that point. But frankly, Murphy's hired to build UCLA out into its very own strong, reputable university. And one top priority for Franklin Murphy as the new chancellor at UCLA is to support ending all forms of discrimination on campus and in the immediate neighborhood. This is important because throughout the 1950s, before Murphy arrives as chancellor, the campus chapter of the NAACP would not be recognized by the previous administration as a formal student organization. So they had no access to resources to organize and that sort of stuff. They were just left out on their own. But one of the first things that Murphy does upon getting to campus is recognizes and acknowledges the campus NAACP as a formal chapter. And that's just a little snippet of some of the things that he did right away. Now, with that said, UCLA students soon also participate the next year in 1961 in the Freedom Rides, which are intentional on challenging segregated public highway facilities in the US South. And because Murphy is such a supporter, the University of California system has a president that each chancellor reports to. So for the first time, Murphy has to report directly to another president, and another administrator, as opposed to directly to a board of regents. You see the conflict unfold onto just how bureaucracy and organizational structure. Clark Kerr, who's the president of the University of California system and was a notable figure in higher education industry himself, pushes back on many of Murphy's most defiant efforts to push quickly in support of the black freedom movement. And it really show that how even organizational structures can at times stifle even the most ambitious university chancellor.

Eddie Cole [00:24:26] This leads me into my next question, and that's about public universities. The University of California system is public and they occupy obviously a special place in American higher education because they're state-funded. Can you talk a little bit about how they, or rather their presidents as a group, dealt with issues of race on campus?

Eddie Cole [00:24:43] Great question. Those presidents were oftentimes, you know, a rock in a hard place for an obvious analogy in the sense that oftentimes leading a public university, you have to obviously respond to the demands of the state House, the elected officials in your state and who represent your district, those sort of people. But also what you see, though, in this moment is an increased amount of federal influence on public higher education in the sense that particularly as you get into the Kennedy administration, John F. Kennedy has campaigned on the idea of stronger civil rights legislation, you see more accountability being pressed forward from federal officials in the sense that are these universities, particularly public universities, that had benefit from taxpayer dollars, really adhering to the idea that segregation is not the law of the land, even though it's obviously in place. So one of the issues that really emerges here for the universities and for the university presidents of public institutions is just how do you have that balance between trying to adhere to your local norms and even in the University of California in this era has the same sort of issues that same academic leaders in Alabama or Mississippi have, not necessarily in a sense of racial violence in the same kind of way but certainly there's a very pro-segregation conservative streak that's prominent in California. This is obviously bubbling up to just before Ronald Reagan emerges as a governor in California. So you see

these president really trying to do this delicate dance, if you will, right between what's happening at the state level and what's happening at the federal level and where they see their university standing between those really conflicting pressures at times.

Marshall Poe [00:26:55] Yeah, this was a tough fight, particularly in the South, because. Again, to go back to a previous point that we made, people were getting elected on segregationist tickets. A politician, they may be many things, but they want one thing above all others and that's to get reelected. You can't step on too many toes to get reelected so the university presidents really did have to walk a very fine line when dealing with these groups, especially in the universities in the south. So let's move on. And so in particular areas of the country and notably in the south, there was obviously strong resistance to this kind of racial reform on campuses. This is the kind of thing that springs to people's mind because people have seen the pictures at Ole Miss and places like Mizzou or ... the University of Alabama. They have seen the pictures and they know about the National Guard on campus in these things. But could you take us a little bit deeper in how university professors respond to this resistance?

Eddie Cole [00:28:05] One one focus in my book, which I think anyone hopefully will find of interest, is just how public relations meets civil rights? And ultimately, during this era, as enrollments grow wider. Also, media coverage has grown significantly during this era, including television. So we get images from the 1950s and 1960s that we just don't have from the 1920s and 1930s. For these college presidents, when you talk about resistance in the South and how these college presidents responded to this white resistance in particular, there's also this trying to form a public image. So one particular issue when we talk about the University of Alabama in this desegregation in 1963 is that that comes a matter of months after the University of Mississippi has racial riot on campus when James Meredith enrolls. This is significant because as soon as the firebombs and the two people end up killed on campus at the University of Mississippi, that really kicks off how the University of Alabama President Frank Rose, approached desegregation there because that was one of a horrible global international image of the United States that was really bad for higher education in general. And what Frank Rose became immediately committed to was making sure that the University of Alabama did not have that image unfold in Tuscaloosa when the desegregation question came to that campus.

Marshall Poe [00:29:53] You're probably about to talk about this, but how did he do that? That's what I'm interested in.

Eddie Cole [00:30:01] Absolutely. So he realizes that is bad for business. What happens is he has a number of meetings with influential business leaders in the state of Alabama, and with these business leaders he pushes for this state-wide call for peace and he wants business leaders to tell their supporters to maintain peace. He tells influential church leaders, ministers and preachers and so forth throughout the state that they issue public statements calling for peace. He does the same thing with local alumni chapters throughout the state of Alabama, as well as the University of Alabama national alumni chapter issues public statements calling for peace. And ultimately, he travels around the state trying to convey to people, if you even remotely care about the university in the way you say you care about the university, you won't show up in Tuscaloosa and cause violence and have an actual resistance to desegregation whenever that moment comes, because it's already happened in Mississippi in 1962, is already happening in Georgia in 1961, and in Alabama is right in between those places. So in a lot of ways he sees the writing on the wall and says that, well, how do you combat this resistance in advance? It really became a matter of messaging. So you get the the major newspapers in the state

that also sign on to it, particularly where you are from up in northern Alabama, Huntsville, a newspaper up there actually says, it is probably in our best interest to desegregate the University of Alabama peacefully. And so that really becomes a pure strategy all at the hands of the president. This surely did not come because of George Wallace, who was the governor. So it wasn't your elected segregationist officials doing so. This was significantly at the hands of Frank Rose, who was the president of the University of Alabama. That's notable because, again, it shows that even in moments of conflict where you have counter resistance, if you will, to the overall push for black freedom, presidents still can be influential even if they have to do so silently. I think one of the most notable things, this is probably what I was just blown away to find is in the archives, is that Frank Rose coordinated some white business leaders in Alabama to fly to Anderson, South Carolina, to meet with university leaders from Clemson because Clemson had also successfully desegregated without media attention and without violence. And so this is him coordinating with the president of Clemson also to figure out what's his strategy and what can we do in Tuscaloosa. So even though we still get to symbolic, powerful image of George Wallace standing in the schoolhouse door, behind the scenes it was pretty straightforward about how that day was going to go, even though Wallace had his photo.

Marshall Poe [00:33:09] You wouldn't happen to know how Frank Rose is remembered today at the University of Alabama, because that's a pretty stellar performance?

Eddie Cole [00:33:20] When I talk to archivists when I'm down on campus and looking on campus, he's revered in a way. He did hire Bear Bryant, who is the legendary football coach, for those who are unaware. Frank Rose also had a significant football hire, but as important is he also saves the university from racial violence. So people on campus are aware of Frank Rose and his legacy. But we often like to think when historians not from Alabama write about that sort of George Wallace moment, they often focus on sort of the conflict between Wallace and Kennedy, as opposed to what Frank Rose was doing week in and week out, day in and day out.

Marshall Poe [00:34:16] That's a remarkable story actually about Rose. Then you go on to talk about free speech and how it intersects with these issues. And of course universities are supposed to be bastions of free speech, and we've seen this a lot in the news recently because that means you have to listen to people that you don't really want to listen to. And this is the case in the late 1950s and in the 1960s, when, as I said, there was open segregation. How do the presidents deal with with the issue of free speech on campus?

Eddie Cole [00:34:58] Yeah, that's a great question. The free speech conversation happens after the Mississippi and Alabama episode that I focus on in the book, particularly because what happens when you have a George Wallace having this phenomenal photo op that goes all over the world these governors from down south end up on speaking tours across the nation because people just want to hear more about who these individuals are for some reason. So one particular episode that I cover quite a good amount of detail in the book is Ross Barnett, who was the governor of Mississippi, been invited to speak at Princeton University. And this is two weeks after the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, that resulted in four little black girls being killed. So this just gives you some context of what's going on in the United States at the moment. And so to invite a segregationist governor to your campus after something like that happens is in direct conflict with Princeton University's new initiative to actively go out and find and recruit black students. And when you think of Ivy League universities, this idea of the big three that historians has written about --Harvard, Princeton and Yale -- Harvard and Yale at this point are much more successful in recruiting black students to campus. An argument is

because they're in urban areas and those students can at least find some some relief in the community and in the cities that they can't get in on campus. But Princeton doesn't have that in central New Jersey. So what you see is Ross Barnett come into Princeton, and that is President Robert Goheen at Princeton's conflict before him. And he had often had this ethos around welcoming a variety of speakers to campus. Ross Barnett is not the first controversial person that Goheen welcomes to the campus. Martin Luther King comes, Fidel Castro comes. Malcolm X is on campus. I mean, the list goes on. So that's notable about Princeton, but it's the timing of Ross Barnett with what's going on nationally ... really the message that Ross Barnett has, that black people are second-class citizens and aren't worthy of being given equal treatment at the same time that Princeton is actively trying to recruit black students.

Marshall Poe [00:37:42] Yes, that's not good messaging.

Eddie Cole [00:37:48] That is horrible. So Goheen's approach, which is notable and quite remarkable and who also has quite a storied reputation at Princeton even today, is that Barnett comes to campus and Barnett gives his usual segregationist speech before a packed auditorium, I mean, everybody in that part of New Jersey must have showed up for this speech. And what was notable is that Robert Goheen as president after the speech goes out and meets with numerous black leaders in the Princeton Township. And he starts working on a plan and says it's one thing to condemn a Ross Barnett as a white supremacist speaker coming to campus. But it's another thing to actually show how Princeton as a university can condemn a speaker like that. So he actually uses Barnett's appearance to launch a number of initiatives on campus, focused on addressing racial inequities, one of which being, if you are a local landlord and were discriminatory in your rent practices, you were removed from Princeton potential rent housing list. If you were a contractor doing work on Princeton campus, you had to have a nondiscriminatory clauses about who you hired in your construction companies and whatnot. And the same thing for hiring practices within certain offices on campus. He made sure that black people were given opportunities to be even interviewed for these positions and hired in these positions. He even hires Carl Fields, who ends up being sort of the first black high-level administrator at Princeton, and there are about five or six things like that that are launched within a month after Barnett comes to campus. And so that's one particular way that Robert Goheen as president of Princeton was able to, one, adhere to this idea of free speech on a college campus, but at the same time almost model behavior that condemn Barnett speech in a way that no public statement could condemn him.

Marshall Poe [00:39:59] Yeah, it was skillfully handled. That's why presidents of colleges like Princeton make the big bucks I guess. It reminds me of Rose again. He reached out to the black community. That's absolutely key if you want to have success. I don't imagine Princeton has a lot of trouble recruiting black students today. So it all worked out, or is working out I should probably say so. Another issue that you deal with in the book is affirmative action. And I have to say that this is a very tough sell for most Americans. This is a very broad brush, but they believe that people should be treated equally. And so it's hard to convince anyone of a program that gives people advantages over others. But the college presidents had to do it, with good cause. How did they go about selling this to their constituents? It's a task.

Eddie Cole [00:41:04] Yeah, it is a task. I equally don't want to offer a broad stroke because I won't say that every college president had their heart in it historically. I think you're spot on in the sense that it's a hard sell to the average American, even in a liberal state like California, where we just found that out. So even in this election in November

2020 Californians voted down affirmative action. That's very telling both historically and in the contemporary context, but particularly for college presidents. This is another fascinating topic that I came across in the book, and this is one that I can admit I wasn't looking for. But it emerged to me as I was making connections, going to so many different universities, doing this archival research. In the Kennedy administration, president Kennedy reaches out to college presidents in the summer of '63. Imagine Birmingham, Alabama, May 1963. The police dogs, waterhoses used on black peaceful demonstrators. Again, this just mars the global image of the United States as the land of the free and democracy. And so Kennedy immediately looks to college presidents and he writes this letter. I was so happy to come across as an archives. He asks university leaders to help come up with, quote, special programs that will address the racial issues in America. The Kennedy administration didn't specify what these special programs should be. Frankly, it seems as if they didn't know what the answers were, but they were looking to university leaders to come up with these programs. And what happens is you get the presidents of both predominantly white institutions and black colleges as well, working together to come up with a series of programs that become the original affirmative action programs in higher education. So today, when we say affirmative action, court cases over and over and over again, because people don't like the idea of considering race in admissions and your race may be giving you a leg up and getting admitted to some highly selective institution. This is where that starts. But also, in addition to race-conscious admissions, also most of these programs these presidents come up with focus on black colleges in the south. I thought that was really interesting point in the sense that you would get these partnerships right. You get University of Michigan will partner with Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, or you get a Indiana University with a partnership with Stillman College or University of Wisconsin in partnership with Texas Southern. So you get these larger, predominantly white, wealthier universities agree to partner with historically black colleges that have been long underfunded and long under-resourced and say, well, what better way to address racial issues in America than to invest in the black colleges that do a disproportionate amount of educating black students in America, which in turn would obviously help the black community at large. Those were the initial plans for affirmative action. What happens is over time as foundation money becomes involved, the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, Rockefeller Foundation and some other smaller regional foundations, start earmarking money to support these programs, several presidents and probably white institutions soon turn their attention away from the majority of the programs focused on black campuses and turn toward how they can better fund programs on their particular campuses. That's one way how college presidents have shaped the overall implementation of affirmative action in higher education by ultimately leaving a legacy to where the emphasis on affirmative action today tends to focus on a select group of highly selective, predominantly white institutions, when in reality, originally these plans should have been toward a broader system-wide change within the US higher education system.

Marshall Poe [00:45:23] I agree with you completely. There's kind of an analogy that spring to mind. I mean, most people actually educated in college in the United States go to community colleges. People don't even know that because you hear about Harvard and Princeton and Yale, UCLA, and Berkeley. But actually where the rubber meets the road is the community colleges. If you want to improve African-American access to higher education, you need to fund these HBCUs. You need to do all these other things as well and that's great. But, you know, suing Harvard University because they don't accept enough of this or enough of that is not really very important to an aspiring African-American college student who wants to go to Spelman and doesn't have the money.

Eddie Cole [00:46:04] Absolutely. Absolutely. That's a great point. I mean, it really means that we've been left with the most narrow conception of affirmative action. Let's focus on these fifteen universities, right?

Marshall Poe [00:46:21] And statistically speaking it's kind of crazy because community colleges really do all the heavy lifting. If you want to get people into a college track, that's where you should look. And HBCUs are same way. They're also very old institutions. They're very well established. They know what they're doing. So it's not like you're creating a new program. You're just better funding one that's already proven its worth. ... I want to step back just a little bit and ask you about a broader question in our last couple of minutes. What role our college presidents are playing today? You don't have to answer that question if you don't want to know.

Eddie Cole [00:47:09] Oh, no, I love answering that question because the book gives us an opportunity to think differently about educational leadership in the present. And I think that's a fascinating question and particularly in this pandemic moment. I mean, in 2020 we think about college presidents today, you've got the pandemic in its racial implications, as well as this broader racial reckoning that we may or may not be having right now in America. So college presidents still have that level of influence. I think you're right in the sense that the college presidency has evolved so much into being a fundraising position. They're Off campus more than they're on campus. But they're still in the room with all of these influential people that can shape policies and practices that influence how race is addressed in the United States. I love that question because I would love to speak with more and more college presidents about history and the importance for them today to understand the history of their very own office, not just the university history but their office. I would encourage them to have a standing appointment, if you will, with the university archivist and the local historical societies in the same way that they always meet with their development vice president. Their influence still exists today, and they may be physically far removed from campus, but they're very much involved with shaping policies and practices that will impact all things race in the United States. It is not just about higher education and race in these positions. What I try to convey in the book is they are in a position to truly influence a number of the issues that we've been grappling with for decades.

Marshall Poe [00:49:14] I mean, it's funny you mention this, because as I was finishing the book, I thought, Eddie should really be talking to college presidents. I mean, I'm sure they meet, don't they? They have college president meetings and they can invite you to come speak or they could fly you in. It could be a good side gig for you. I'm a historian, too, and I think that the historical perspective on things really does enrich policy decisions. And I can't imagine anybody better than you to go talk to them about how they should move forward. If there are any college presidents listening, invite Eddie to campus, please.

Eddie Cole [00:49:54] I will tell you that next week I've got a meeting with an office of the president. So they're actually popping up on my schedule right now. This is good.

Marshall Poe [00:50:07] That's really good. That's really good. I'm happy to hear that. So we have a traditional closing question on the New Nooks Network, and it's this: what are you working on now other than consulting with college presidents?

Eddie Cole [00:50:22] Something emerged within writing this book, which I think is typical par for the course for people who study history, is that I want to know more about free speech and race in the way we discuss free speech in the present oftentimes seems to be

sort of narrow in how we understand the historical arc of the question of campus speech and race. And so right now, I'm just getting off the ground a larger a longer history focus on higher education in the role of speech alongside parallel efforts to make campuses more racially inclusive. And so I want to make a long history that dates back really a century and a half on this and not just stop it at the free speech movement at Berkeley in '64. I want to go back really, really almost to around the Reconstruction era and understand that you know how someone such as, say, Frederick Douglass, who was speaking on numerous college campuses, how did his message is around race fall in alongside our campus thoughts and prejudices about free speech. That's just a little snippet of what I'm working on and getting off the ground right now. But, stay tuned.

Marshall Poe [00:51:48] Yeah, well, we look forward to that. I think it's a fascinating topic. I think many Americans don't know that in the late 19th century, giving public speeches at universities and town hall was sort of modern television. That's where everybody went to listen to speakers. Mark Twain is the most famous of them, but they were tours of people that went. It's a fascinating history, and then it was kind of blipped by radio and television. But it was a big deal. So, Eddie, let me say thank you very much for being on the show. It's been a fascinating discussion. We've been talking to Eddie for about his book, *The Campus Color Line: College Presidents and the Struggle for Black Liberation* is out from Princeton University Press just this year. Go get your copy. Eddie, thanks very much for your time.

Eddie Cole [00:52:34] Hey, thanks for having me, Marshall. My pleasure.