

#1366 The Great Unhousing of America

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: Welcome to this episode of the award-winning Best of the Left podcast, in which we shall learn about the easily predictable yet growing eviction crisis in America, that is entirely thanks to a political and economic system that is structurally incapable of functioning for the benefit of people over profit. Clips today come from MSNBC, Off Kilter, the Michael Brook Show, The Rational National, NowThis, and The Brian Lehrer Show.

Ali Velshi Explains The Looming Eviction Crisis - MSNBC - Air Date 7-21-20

ALI VELSHI - HOST: Now, back in April, labor experts warned that people would be on the hook for months of missed rent or mortgage payments, a kind of bill that would be far too much for many households to pay, especially if someone's been out of work.

The Census Bureau found that nearly 50% of renter households in America were so-called "cost burdened." That means they spend more than a third of their income on housing costs, total income for the house. Between the federal and state protections ending, and all the other stresses on households, 20 to 28 million people could be forced from their homes by September. 20 to 28 million. Let me give you some context.

That's three to four times as many people who lost their homes to foreclosure following the last financial crisis. And that took nine years, not two months. This is one of the most pressing problems facing our country. And the clock is ticking. Some states and localities are extending eviction protections like Massachusetts, where the governor, Charlie Baker, extended that state's eviction freeze until mid-October. New York City is going to start mediation between landlords and tenants to try and stop a massive eviction crisis in that city. And in Congress, the Emergency Housing Protection and Relief Act, providing rental assistance along with eviction and foreclosure protections, passed the house--with zero Republican support.

The Evictions Cliff Part 1, The Cost of Housing - Off Kilter - Air Date 7-18-20

REBECCA VALLAS - HOST, OFF KILTER: The coronavirus pandemic has made it abundantly clear that housing is healthcare. Yet while the pandemic is far from over, in communities across the country, rent is coming due as a growing number of eviction moratoria that've been keeping people in their homes are coming to an end. The numbers of people at risk of going over what some are calling an eviction cliff are staggering. According to the Census Bureau, an estimated 45 percent of adults live in renter households affected by recent job or income losses, and nearly half of all renter households were struggling to make ends meet even before the virus hit.

Meanwhile, a new report from the National Low Income Housing Coalition put new numbers to just how out of reach housing was for U.S. workers even before the pandemic. In 2020,

the report finds a U.S. worker would need to work three full-time jobs at the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour in order to earn enough to afford a modest apartment at fair market rent. The National Low Income Housing Coalition, who updates this analysis every year, calls this the national “housing wage.” It’s effectively what a worker needs to earn to afford rental housing in the country. This year, that housing wage rings in nearly \$24/hour.

Whether millions of renters fall off the evictions cliff and lose their homes during a pandemic is a choice. It will, in part, be determined by our federal, state, and local policymakers through timely policy choices, like whether to renew or end local eviction moratoria and whether Congress opts to extend the \$600/week in supplemental unemployment insurance benefits passed July 25th or allows this lifeline to expire for 30-some million Americans desperately trying to stay afloat.

There are other choices as well that Congress and other policymakers have to make, but importantly, it’s not just a lack of money that will prevent many renters impacted by the pandemic and attendant downturn from staying in their homes. It’s also America’s broken and overburdened civil legal system, which allows people in this country to be evicted from their homes simply because they can’t afford a lawyer.

So, this week, I’m thrilled to sit down with Dan Threet, author of the Out of Reach report I mentioned before, from the National Low Income Housing Coalition, where he is a research analyst, and Jay Willis, a senior contributor at The Appeal, who’s recently been reporting on the intersection of this access to justice gap that we have in this country and how it’s fueling our eviction tsunami or eviction crisis, eviction cliff, whatever we want to call it.

Dan, Jay, thank you so much for taking the time to join the show. I’m struggling for the right words to describe what we’re currently seeing play out in this country amid the pandemic. And Jay, I think that’s really kind of where we need to start right now. Talk to us about how we’re seeing families on the brink of homelessness right now in tremendous numbers as eviction moratoria lapse. Where do things stand right now? Give us some of the numbers about what we know.

JAY WILLIS: Yeah. Thank you so much for having me. And none of these numbers that we can discuss to describe this problem are good. About a third of households missed their July housing payments. And it’s important to understand that not everybody who is at risk of homelessness will experience homelessness in the months to come, right? But the bigger the numbers of people who are at risk, the more dire the problem that we could experience down the road. So, for example, one analysis put out by a team at UCLA says that in Los Angeles County, I believe it’s even if just a third of those who are at risk of homelessness eventually experience it, that’s still 120,000 households, and those include about 184,000 children.

If you can’t pay rent, sometimes for several months in a row, there’s probably not going to be money to hire a lawyer to defend you in eviction court. So, what you’re going to see is a lot of people going into court without legal representation, without any knowledge of their rights, the process, what’s going to happen. This already overburdened civil legal system, it’s just not prepared for just sort of the scope of human suffering that it’s about to encounter. We’ve seen these evictions moratoriums, you know, well intended, trying to prevent a housing crisis in the middle of a pandemic. But as you said, the pandemic’s not over, and it

turns out that unless there's further action taken, these moratoriums may have just delayed that crisis by a few months.

REBECCA VALLAS - HOST, OFF KILTER: And Dan, I want to bring you in here, because I mentioned up top, you authored a report that actually just came out this week. It's an annual report. To me, it's one of the more important reports that comes out of organizations that do work on poverty, on housing, on homelessness, and related issues. And that report, which comes out every year, as I mentioned, it updates a number, that housing wage, that really, it sort of puts numbers to the gap between housing prices, which have been skyrocketing, and wages, which have been staying flat or even declining in real terms for particularly low-wage workers, but median workers as well. Talk a little bit about that report and what it tells us about what things looked like before COVID and before we were talking about an eviction cliff caused by a pandemic.

DAN THREET: Certainly. And thanks for having me on and for your kind words about Out of Reach. Out of Reach is an annual publication that we put out at the National Low Income Housing Coalition. And each year, it highlights the gulf between what wages people actually earn and the price of decent rental housing. And we show this for every state, every metropolitan area, and every county in the United States. And that central statistic, the housing wage that you mentioned, it represents what a full-time worker would need to earn in order to be able to pay for both rent and utilities at a fair market rent. And this year, as you pointed out, the two-bedroom housing wage nationally is \$23.96/hour. And the one-bedroom housing wage is \$19.56/hour. The average hourly wage for renters, however, is just \$18.22/hour. And of course, the minimum wages across the country are even lower.

I want to say two things about what that housing wage represents to answer some common questions that people frequently have about what we mean by the housing wage. So, built into that are two important assumptions. First, when we talk about what a household can afford, we're relying on the assumption, which is also reflected in federal housing policy, that no more than 30 percent of a household's gross income should be consumed by housing costs. And second, when we talk about the price of decent or modest housing, that reflects that we rely on HUD's fair market rents, or FMRs, to estimate what a household moving today could expect to pay for rents that are at the median cost or below for an area. So, each year HUD produces new FMRs, and they set those base rents for the FMR in each area at roughly the 40th percentile of standard quality gross rents. So, the rents that are represented in these housing wages are for homes below the middle of the market, not for luxury housing.

So, we found this year, just like we've found in previous years, that there are millions of low-wage workers who don't earn enough to be able to afford their housing. These households, low-wage households, are in a precarious position every year. And of course, with the precipitous collapse of the job market this spring, many of them are going to be severely housing-cost burdened and unable to hold onto their housing without some immediate interventions.

**There Is An Eviction Crisis, How Can We Fight Back? -
The Michael Brooks Show - Air Date 7-11-20**

DAVID GRISCOM - HOST, THE MICHAEL BROOKS SHOW: Well we're facing and are going to see a much worse eviction crisis going on with you United States. The CARES Act was supposed to protect people from evictions if their landlord benefited from federal subsidies, and all across the country, but I know specifically in Texas, it seems like a lot of landlords are just filing evictions against people, regardless.

So, there's a piece in *The Texas Observer* by a Meghan Kimball which found that there was no real enforcement behind that provision in CARES, and now landlords are going forward pursuing evictions against people who have not been able to pay the rent since the crisis started. So, in Harris County, 10% of the evictions, actually, in Harris County were found to be in violation of the CARES Act, but still, they're just going forward. And people are going into court; they don't know their rights. Because there's been such a backlog of cases, judges are essentially just rubber stamping things at the moment.

And this isn't isolated to Texas; this is a fundamental problem across the country. People were relying on unemployment benefits. They're . . . Not only are they scraping by, but a lot of people are having to take care of family members who are unable to work. And now we're months away from the initial stimulus check, and many Americans are without money. And, as the virus is especially flying through the state of Texas, people are seeing their sources of income dry up and some cities have come forward with plans. Like Austin, for example, has a plan: your landlord has to alert you 60 days before, I believe, they can evict you, so, it sort of gives you a little bit of grace period in between that time. But even still, then you're responsible to pay back all of this rent in the first place. So then you're in a situation where you owe \$4,000 for the past few months.

So, there's a real crisis when it comes to housing, and specifically evictions, as landlords are now gearing up to start coming after people who have been unable to pay rent since the beginning of this crisis. They're using the court system; they're using the fear and weakness of lower-income people who don't really have access to strong lawyers to be able to defend them in these situations. And this is a nationwide problem. *The Washington Post*, citing the COVID Eviction Defense Project, found that 20% of the 110 million of Americans who rent units are at risk of eviction by September 30th. And that's for a myriad of different reasons, but fundamentally the fact that most people are unable to earn a viable income during this time.

So, this is not only just a moral crisis. This is a fundamental capitalist crisis. So, people are going to say the term 'housing crisis,' and I'm not trying to be nitpicky here, but let's like really talk about what that means. Overnight, did houses and apartments all over the country just become filled or did we see the housing stock just evaporate or disappear? No, what we are seeing is landlords who prey upon the labor of the vast majority of people, and in this country are finding it difficult to extract money from those people so they're using the arms of the state, oftentimes illegally and illicitly, to try to corral and force those people into paying absurd amounts of money, including late fees, which a whole other conversation. So, that's going on, and the state basically is supporting it.

So, we don't have a housing crisis in this country. We have a capitalism crisis. We have a crisis that is going on and has been agitated because of the Coronavirus, but it's fundamentally a problem of the defense of private property, the defense of private property over the kind of very basic decisions of humanity that we should be making now, which is: We have houses;

we have people who need to be housed. We need people not to be out in public right now, not working right now because we need to prevent this virus from happening. We need a national rent freeze. We need forgiveness on all of these evictions. We need forgiveness on back rent since the beginning of this crisis.

There has been a complete failure on a state level. And now we're [at] a question of, on people level, are we going to be able to stand up as a group of people -- as I just said, 110 million of us who were threatened by landlords -- against the system that's going to try to throw people out on the street through no fault of their own. Because we are all going through this crisis together right now, and we need to be prepared and fighting back. Because it's something that touches so many people, and it's so it's so basic a problem. We have the housing, we have the ability to house folks, and our system is actually the problem. It is the reason that there's attention here.

MICHAEL BROOKS - HOST, THE MICHAEL BROOKS SHOW: Dude, I have nothing to add to that. And I'll just say, I don't like to lean into this shit too much, but I know what losing your house is like and not knowing where a house is going to be. And the idea that we allow this to happen to anybody could not be more grotesque and disgusting. And the scale that we're about to hit unless there's a serious intervention, people doing rent strikes, policy intervention, whatever, is totally fucked.

Heartbreaking CNN Segment Highlights Eviction Crisis - The Rational National - Air Date 9-3-20

REPORTER: At this apartment, the tenant is an elderly woman who can no longer afford the rent.

DAVID DOEL - HOST, THE RATIONAL NATIONAL: Thanks largely to Trump's mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic, more and more Americans are being hit with evictions. Now, CNN did a great piece on this. I want to share this segment with you, and then I'll dive a little more into the details and also explain a piece of news that came out recently about Trump putting a moratorium on evictions, except it's not exactly what it seems. First, here's the CNN piece.

DEPUTY CONSTABLE BENNY GANT: [knocking] Constable, you need to come to the door!

REPORTER: From one Houston home [knocking sound in background] to the next

DEPUTY CONSTABLE BENNY GANT: [knocking] hellooo, Constable!

REPORTER: Deputy Benny Gant with the Harris County Constable's Office executes judges' orders to evict.

DEPUTY CONSTABLE BENNY GANT: [knocking] hello-o-o, Constable!

TENANT ISRAEL RODRIGUEZ: We ain't got nowhere to go.

REPORTER: Israel Rodriguez is the tenant at this apartment, but he's not alone. 20-month old Israel, his brother, four year old Fabian and their mother are some of the estimated 40 million Americans facing eviction and the downward spiral of the COVID economy.

TENANT ISRAEL RODRIGUEZ: They didn't rush us, but they was like, get everything you need.

REPORTER: Rodriguez admits he hasn't been paying rent, behind thousands of dollars.

TENANT ISRAEL RODRIGUEZ: It's my fault, the eviction. It was a lot going on there during the corona, when it hit, I lost my job. So it took me like a month to get it another job. This is my check, but I ain't making it with \$300. It's literally 300 dollars.

REPORTER: Their stroller now carries their possessions.

TENANT ISRAEL RODRIGUEZ: It's mainly the kids' clothes because me and her just wear the same clothes almost every day. Make sure we got, you know, toilet paper, a little bit of snacks for the kids.

REPORTER: What are you going to do with all of your stuff?

TENANT ISRAEL RODRIGUEZ: That's trash. They could throw it in the trash because we don't have a car; we don't have help. We don't have nobody that can come help us out right now. Nobody. We've got ourselves, me and the kids and her, we . . . That's it.

REPORTER: How do you as law enforcement feel about seeing that family have to go . . .

DEPUTY CONSTABLE BENNY GANT: Oh, that's a tough situation. I've got six kids, six children. And, um, you know, when the kids see the mom and dad in a desperate situation, it's tough.

REPORTER: Deputy Gant, an officer for 35 years, is just starting his day. [pounding loudly on door] Eight evictions are on his list.

DEPUTY CONSTABLE BENNY GANT: A codefendant is here, two of 'em.

REPORTER: At each stop, people behind on rent are ordered to leave, possessions pulled out.

Where are you guys gonna go now?

SECOND TENANT: We're off to the hotel

REPORTER: You can go to a hotel?

DEPUTY CONSTABLE BENNY GANT: Constable!

REPORTER: As Deputy Gant works through his list, we get word that 200 eviction orders have come through the Harris County courts for this week. That's double what they normally saw for an entire month before COVID.

Two hundred on Monday. What does that

DEPUTY CONSTABLE BENNY GANT: Well, that's a lot, yeah.

REPORTER: What does that say to you?

DEPUTY CONSTABLE BENNY GANT: Well, what that means is, is that they're ready to start having people removed from properties.

REPORTER: It is a backlog. But it's also just one precinct in one of America's hardest hit cities in evictions. The job takes its toll.

DEPUTY CONSTABLE BENNY GANT: I don't really want to put her out here, but I have to under this judge's order.

REPORTER: At this apartment, the tenant is an elderly woman who can no longer afford the rent. The landlord's mover Francisco Munez works, though he doesn't want to.

FRANCISCO MUNEZ: I have a family; I have a sister. I have a, I love my mom, but we never know. Maybe tomorrow it's me, you know.

REPORTER: Midway through the eviction, Deputy Gant decides it's too dangerous to evict her in the Houston summer heat . . .

DEPUTY CONSTABLE BENNY GANT: I'm not going to put her out here in this heat

REPORTER: . . . and will call social services instead.

DEPUTY CONSTABLE BENNY GANT: You stay today but tomorrow you're leaving.

REPORTER: A one day reprieve with an uncertain tomorrow.

DEPUTY CONSTABLE BENNY GANT: You have a situation where people aren't working, they don't have the money, and they're desperate.

DAVID DOEL - HOST, THE RATIONAL NATIONAL: Alright, it is completely . . . It is stunning what we allow in society. Think how much wealth people at the top of society have. And really, it's hard to even think about it. Most people truly don't grasp how much a million dollars is, let alone a billion dollars, let alone hundreds of billions of dollars. We allow that kind of wealth to amass while this is going on. While an elderly lady is being evicted from her home.

And you see here, this isn't an issue with even just jobs. That one guy at the beginning, he got another job. The problem is wages. These jobs don't pay enough. So, even with a job, he's being evicted; his family is being evicted, and we allow this to go on. We think this is normal.

The media calls Bernie Sanders a radical, AOC a radical from wanting a wealth tax, from wanting wages to be raised, from wanting workers to have a voice on corporate boards. That's radical.

As mentioned here in that piece, 30 to 40 million people in America could be evicted from their homes by the end of 2020 while America's billionaires added \$282 billion. Oh wait, sorry, this is the first 23 days. Added \$434 billion during the pandemic. Oh, wait, sorry. This is me. Here we go: \$637 billion richer during the pandemic. And this is a month ago. So, there's probably an update to this. This is what we allow. While families, elderly people get evicted. Completely insane.

Now, recently the CDC issued this eviction ban, temporary halt on evictions, except of course, the devil's in the details. So, while this was being treated in the press as, Oh, the Trump administration is issuing a . . . is halting the evictions, you know, helping people

during this crisis by halting the eviction of qualified renters. Oh, good job, Trump. Yeah, of course, it's not Trump. And of course, there's some actual issues with this that clearly does not make it into an actual ban on evictions. So, to give you more details here: to become eligible, renters would have to sign a declaration form and present it to their landlord. It states that the renters earn less than ninety-nine grand a year or one \$198,000 for joint households and that they're unable to pay full rent despite making efforts to obtain rental assistance. They also need to declare that they will make a full effort at partial payments and would become homeless if they were evicted.

Also keeping in mind here, this has . . . Homeowners, who also have payments not included in this, but even, as I'll go on, you'll see, this is not an actual, a true ban. So, the last section of the declaration is crucial, "I understand that any false or misleading statements or omissions may result in criminal and civil actions for fines, penalties, damages, or imprisonment. Who knows what landlords might do to prove that a renter lied on their form, hire a private investigator, take the tenant to court. This could put a lot of renters in legal jeopardy, and just the intimidation of criminal and civil penalties could be enough to keep renters from triggering this. And obviously not all landlords are like this, but many people have experience with horrible landlords that absolutely would take the step to hire private investigator, follow them around, do whatever they can to try and prove that they were lying on this form.

Which, by the way, who is moving into these properties? Like that family being evicted out, that old lady being evicted, who's moving in, who has the money? It really, the entire situation is completely stunning. It doesn't make any sense from any point of view. Going on here though, the order does not, and could not cancel rents or relieve people of the obligation to pay, nor does it provide rental assistance for past due amounts. CDC simply doesn't have that authority. Of course, if Trump tried to do anything or Congress tried to do anything, that may help. But the CDC doesn't have the authority here. Landlords could still charge fees and interest on unpaid rent, and after the order runs out on December 31st, ask for all of the past due payments upon threat of eviction. At best, this delays the reckoning, which is good but not a sustainable solution.

Perhaps the most important [thing], tenants could still be evicted under the eviction moratorium. Any evictions for something other than nonpayment of rent would it be allowable. This is precisely the issue housing advocates have with California's eviction moratorium passed on Monday, meaning that you can, of course, envision a situation where a landlord is going to use something else to evict you. So, they won't say that it's because of lack of payment, they'll say it's because, Oh, you played music too loud one night. They have some examples here. So, they could use any pretext: claiming loud music or structural damage or some other violation of the lease. Renters usually don't have the expertise or the resources to defend themselves in housing courts "landlords will figure out non-payment reasons to kick out non-paying tenants." Exactly. So, on the surface, this appears like a helping hand here during a crisis when in reality it's not. And landlords can and will do what they can to kick people out and continue these evictions. It is just stunning, the complete lack of help for people.

No country got this perfect, of course, whether it's Canada, [where] there's a CERB, two grand a month; most people, except for students, were able to apply for that and get that help. Countries in Europe have either, you know, whether it's wage subsidies or a UBI, there's

been real financial help for people. There could have been a universal, basic income here, and the one was proposed by Bernie Sanders and Kamala Harris in the Senate. Now, of course the Biden campaign doesn't back that. And of course the GOP would go nowhere near anything like that. But it shows you that even though there have been ideas presented, they don't take it seriously. Neither party takes it seriously. And even that wouldn't be enough. You would need a UBI on top of also banning evictions, on top of also help with rent. There would have to be a multi-pronged approach here to actually help people. But instead, what we get is billionaires increasing their wealth while everyone else gets screwed.

The Evictions Cliff Part 2, Cancel Rent and Consider Housing a Human Right - Off Kilter - Air Date 7-18-20

TARA RAGHUVVEER: I think tenants are better off in Kansas city for our organization existing because there's now a place that tenants can point to tenants can go to where they get to relate to other people who are experiencing or have experienced exactly what they have. And there's power in that. There's power in individuals understanding that their eviction or their homelessness is not a product of their creation, but rather connected to a much, much larger story that has its roots in systemic racism and capitalism and politicizing people along those lines is where, where we see that power of translating what is really painful and personal into something around which we can build tenant power for the long haul.

We need to ground ourselves in the reality that, for not just decades but really centuries, American housing and land policy has been built around racial capitalism. And at every step along the way, we've seen certain communities benefit from government intervention and other communities consistently excluded from access to land, access to capital, access to wealth building opportunities. And all of that lays the groundwork for a massive crisis and failure in the private rental market and the looming, growing eviction crisis across the country. And as you said, it's important that we recognize that was a crisis pre-COVID, of course, and I think there's no better place to understand the magnitude of that crisis than the Out of Reach reports that the National Low Income Housing Coalition puts out every year. I've been staring at those numbers for basically the last decade of my life, and while they help us contextualize the state of affairs, it's really a sad story that's getting more and more sad with every passing year. And I think in the last couple of years the statistic that they've put out there that's really stuck in my mind is this statistic that allows us to understand that a minimum wage worker working full-time cannot afford a two-bedroom apartment in any county in the United States. And I think this has been true for several years at this point. This means urban counties, suburban counties and rural counties. This country is just not affordable. And I think the important thing is that we complete that sentence. That is a story of market failure. The free market, the private market, where we have relegated the provision of housing, especially for the lowest income and most vulnerable people in our country, has simply failed. Period.

And that failure existed long before the pandemic hit. And then in the context of the pandemic, we have always known, since March, right, since the very earliest days of this pandemic, we knew that this eviction cliff, eviction avalanche, tidal wave, whatever you want to call it, we knew it was coming. Organizers were talking about it. Tenants knew that it was coming because the stark reality was before the pandemic 12 million households were

having trouble paying the rent or were extremely cost-burdened paying over 50% of their income to rent. Then in the context of the pandemic, those and tens of millions of more households lost their work completely. And then their ability to pay the rent went from minimal to zero, sub zero, right? And so for the past several months, we've seen people making decisions -- forced to make decisions -- between putting food on the table or paying rent, paying for prescriptions or paying rent, using their stimulus check on their rent when they simply shouldn't have had to.

So, I think it's important that we recognize we knew that this eviction and homelessness crisis was coming, and it was avoidable, which is why from the beginning of the pandemic, groups -- all of the groups that I organized with -- have been calling for rent cancellation, not a bandaid, not kicking the can down the road, but just cancel rents. We could have done it. We could still do it, and that would save so many households so much anguish during this period of time.

REBECCA VALLAS - HOST, OFF KILTER: Talk a little bit about the policy that you guys are pushing for, given that a lot of the folks who listen to this show are nerds. [giggling] I say that with great love, but I think there's probably a lot of people going, okay, cool, lots of momentum, but what are they actually asking for?

TARA RAGHUVVEER: Yeah. So, it's a big emphasis on transitioning housing from relegated to the private market and considered a commodity to guaranteed as a public good or a human right. And the way that we go about doing that through our policy proposal is by making a massive investment in what we call social housing, which is to say, housing that is built and managed and permanently held off of the private market, not for profit and by the communities that exist within it, that live within it, right. And social housing is a popular concept across the globe. Some models are more successful than others, and there's a particular way that we think it would need to look in the United States which we spell out in our briefing book.

So, we call for 12 million new units of social housing across the country, and we want this to be not only housing for people but also a jobs program, and not just a jobs program but a green jobs program, because we would want these buildings, of course, to be built to the highest standards of sustainability and resilience for our communities.

So, that's one piece of it. Now, I will say that in the wake of, or in the midst of, I should say, the pandemic and the economic crisis that has followed, that 12 million figure all of a sudden looks quite conservative. And we have been in talks about making that ask even bigger than what it was when we put it out last fall.

Another big element of the homes guarantee is a massive reinvestment in existing public housing. So, we have about 1.1 or 1.2 million units of public housing across the country which of course have been vastly disinvested in the last several decades as we've prioritized to the private market and housing assistance and solutions that live within the realm of the private market. And as a result, public housing is completely in a state of disrepair and crisis and even more so now during the pandemic. So, we want to see a massive reinvestment to the tune of \$150 billion into public housing to pay back the capital needs and the operation needs that have built up over time, but then also to make public housing climate resilient and to make it a decent and great place for people to live as it once was frankly, back in the day, when public housing was first constructed.

And then, a couple of other elements of the homes guarantee vision, we've got a big piece on tenants and protections. We feel strongly that in the transition from housing as commodity to housing as public good, we can't lose sight of the fact that many, many tenants, tens of millions of tenants, still rent from private landlords. So, we want to protect tenants in that instance by using policies like a universal rent control across the country and just-cause evictions and first-right-of-purchase so that tenants can have protections even in the economy and in the world as it is today.

And then finally, a couple elements that I feel really strongly about. One is around ending the practice of real estate and land speculation which comes at a huge detriment to communities like mine in Kansas City, which is now mostly owned by out-of-state, massive private equity firms, foreign capital, that really do nothing to contribute to our community but do everything to extract from and exploit my neighbors. And then, there's a piece of the homes guarantee vision that's about reparations. It's about acknowledging that we can't just start from today thinking about universal policies ignoring the fact that for centuries we have excluded whole communities and in particular Black and Native communities from the land and from housing. So, we actually have to think about a home guarantee as reparative at the same time as it's forward-looking. And then finally, a vision that's knit throughout our vision for the homes guarantee is the ways in which you would intersect with a Green New Deal and be part of a Green New Deal and really core to what a Green New Deal could deliver for America.

Voting Is Not Enough: Help Unhoused, Poor and Low-Income Voters Access the Ballot - Best of the Left

AMANDA HOFFMAN - ACTIVISM, BEST OF THE LEFT: You've reached the activism portion of today's show. Now that you're informed angry, here's what you can do about it. Today's activism, voting is not enough. Help unhoused, poor, and low income voters access the ballot. As of the publishing of this episode, there are exactly 53 days until election day, that's seven and a half weeks, less than two months. To make sure every one of those days count, we've launched our 2020 election action guide, which we're calling *Voting is Not Enough*, because it's just not. From now until election day, we'll be highlighting different ways you can be spending time and or money to support free and fair elections as well as Democrats down the ballot and all the way up to the Biden/Harris ticket.

As a reminder, we've already encouraged you to become a poll worker by heading to workelections.com and made the case for getting involved in the *Get Out the Vote* ground game now. All of this information can be accessed from the Voting is Not Enough banner at bestoftheleft.com or directly at bestoftheleft.com/2020action.

Today, we're talking about the many hurdles that face unhoused and low-income voters across the country and the organizations trying to help them access the ballot. As you've heard in today's episode, the country is facing a massive eviction crisis that will disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

There is no question that when fixing the trauma of eviction and food insecurity, the last thing people are thinking about is their voter registration. But these communities are the

most vulnerable among us and therefore most impacted by the heartless decisions of Republicans and the Trump administration.

While their present is being upended, they should have a voice when it comes to their future. That's why the Poor People's Campaign has launched. We Must Do M.O.R.E., M.O.R.E. In this case stands for mobilizing, organizing, registering, and educating people for a movement that votes. This roll out, which began a hundred days before election day, is an expansive effort of base building, voter registration and protection, town halls and forums, and nationally coordinated days of action. Their goal is to reach out to the 140 million poor and low income people across America and change the political calculus in this country to form a new electorate. Visit poorpeoplescampaign.org/voting to learn more and find out how you can get involved as well as download the digital toolkit. You can also donate to support their important work. Be sure to tune in to the poor people's campaign Facebook account on September 14th at 7:00 PM eastern for the Moral Monday Mass Assembly to learn more about the, We Must Do M.O.R.E. effort.

It's important to note that someone who is unhoused can still register and vote in all 50 States. Unhoused registrants can list a shelter as an address, or they can denote a street corner or a park as a residence. The nonpartisan organization, Nonprofit VOTE, provides resources to help nonprofits like food pantries, community health centers, and housing organizations with the information and tools they need to help those they serve register and learn their voting rights. We've included links to their, You Don't Need a Home to Vote manual in the show notes.

There was already a disparity between voter participation among high-income people and low income people, and the pandemic is just making things worse . In an interview with Fast Company in July, Joey Lindstrom, Director of Field Organizing with the National Low Income Housing Coalition, put it perfectly, "I think voting is really important to renters, I think voting is really important to low income people, but when the primary issue of your day is 'how are you going to feed your kids?' or 'how are you going to find a place to sleep at night?' the policy concerns of a federal election fade to the background for very understandable." If you're facing eviction, the National Housing Law Project has compiled a comprehensive list of resources specifically related to the current crisis. That link and more can be found in the show notes.

The segment notes include all the links to this information as well as additional resources, and once again, the segment is available on the Voting is Not Enough page bestoftheleft.com/2020action. So if making sure most vulnerable can have their voices heard is important to you, be sure to spread the word about helping unhoused poor and low-income voters access the ballot via social media so that others in your network can spread the word too.

Elizabeth Warren Talks Pending Eviction Crisis in America - NowThis - Air Date 7-25-20

ELIZABETH WARREN: Decades of racist federal policies prevented Black families from becoming homeowners. Black homeownership hit its highest point in 2004. And even then, only about half of Black families own homes. Then thousands of Black families lost their

homes during the Great Recession, wiping out nearly all of the growth in Black home ownership since the Fair Housing Act.

So a direct result of our nation's legacy of racist harmful policies is that Black families are less likely to own homes, and less likely to have generational wealth that comes from home ownership in order to be able to help the next generation afford a down payment. So they are more likely to be renters.

Now the latest census survey shows that more than 30% of renters say they have little or no confidence that they can make their next housing payment. But for White renters, that number drops closer to 20%, while more than 40% of Black renters and LatinX renters aren't sure they'll be able to make rent.

And the census data are disaggregated by race and income, but we also know, according to the most recent survey, the majority of people who couldn't make their last rent payment or had it deferred have a household income of less than \$35,000. So in other words, this coming eviction crisis is a racial justice crisis. And failing to put safeguards in place to keep people in their homes is most likely to harm the most economically vulnerable Americans and to harm communities of color.

This coming eviction crisis is a racial justice crisis, and failing to put safeguards in place to keep people in their homes is most likely to harm the most economically vulnerable Americans and to harm communities of color.

Can Trump Really 'Stop Evictions?' - The Brian Lehrer Show - Air Date 9-2-20

BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW: So did you pay your rent yesterday? Yesterday was the first of the month. And we know that many of you are still unemployed, obviously. And there is national news on this front. Last night, we got word that the Centers for Disease Control under President Trump issued a directive active to extend eviction relief for certain renters until the end of the year, December 31st, in an effort to slow the spread of coronavirus.

Now. That's why it came from the CDC. So we'll try to explain that this has to do with slowing the spread of the coronavirus, as they're concerned, not just slowing the spread of economic desperation and homelessness. But the CDC has wording only protects certain renters, such as in regulated units, among other qualifications that we'll go over now. Joining us to discuss the new federal protections [is] Judith Goldiner, attorney in charge at the Legal Aid Society's, civil law reform unit. Judith, thanks so much for coming on with us today. Hi.

JUDITH GOLDINER: It's always a pleasure, Brian,

BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW: Can you explain the CDC eviction protections? Who's covered and who's not?

JUDITH GOLDINER: Sure. Although this acknowledges how horrible the evictions would be and how horrible evictions would be in the health crisis we're in. And unfortunately it doesn't go far enough. So it requires tenants to produce a sworn declaration to their

landlords that says certain things. So it says that they've tried to get government help, that they have income of less than a hundred thousand dollars, that they can't pay the rent due to their income loss or extraordinarily out-of-pocket medical expenses, that they would become homeless or be doubled up if they're evicted, and that they will pay their landlord as much as they can, taking in account their other expenses, and that they are obligated to pay their rent and comply with their lease.

And it requires them to acknowledge that they owe all the rent and that they can pay it as of the first of the year. So, it doesn't cover in any way, people who are sued in what we call "hold over" cases, as opposed to non-payment cases. And not to get too technical about this, but the reason why that's important is for a lot of tenants in both New York City and elsewhere in New York state, they don't have current leases and they're not protected by rent regulation or other laws.

And for those tenants, nothing is stopping their landlord from suing them in what we call hold over, and you can get evicted for that.

So we have been calling for both the governor and for the legislature to pass, for the governor to issue an executive order and for the legislature to pass a true eviction moratorium that will not just go until December 31st, but will go until the crisis that we're in is over. And that will protect all tenants because we're in this public health crisis and not just tenants who happen to find out about this and are able to send their landlord, this kind of sworn declaration.

BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW: So staying on the CDC policy for a minute, how would a renter demonstrate these things? Because as I look at the list of qualifications or requirements, as you laid them out, and as I'm reading them on the Associated Press right now, people for one thing would have to demonstrate that they have sought government assistance to make their rental payments. I don't know what that means. And also they would need to affirm that they are likely to become homeless if they are evicted. I don't know how somebody proves that.

JUDITH GOLDINER: Well, exactly Brian, I think the problem is, is this is also being sworn to under penalty of perjury, with threats of possible criminal penalties if they find that you have not been truthful in this and what does that mean to not have been truthful? My concern is it's going to lead to a lot of litigation because landlords are gonna probably challenge every part of this. And, even going to court in the time of a pandemic, isn't we think a good way forward.

I mean, that's why we've recommended a moratorium that stops court cases, and that puts a pause on really all housing court cases while we work through these problems.

BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW: Well, how--just to close the loop on this and then we'll talk about other aspects.- -I realize this is less than 24 hours old, but how would you advise there at the Legal Aid Society, people to go about applying for this form of eviction protection, if they want to try to take advantage of it?

JUDITH GOLDINER: We are advising everyone should consult with an attorney. You know, if you can call 311, you will be referred to us, a free legal services attorney, if you're income

eligible. And that attorney can help advise you on whether this applies to you and whether it makes sense for you, because it may not make sense for everyone.

And it's really going to be an individual determination that I do think people need some legal advice to figure out.

BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW: So ask a lawyer before you try to do this, but free legal advice is available through 311 in this area, if you're in New York City.

And just as a footnote, it is interesting that they say that they're halting residential evictions in these ways to prevent the further spread of COVID-19. This isn't coming from the housing department of the federal government. This is coming from the Centers for Disease Control. So they're fitting a round peg into a square hole to follow the President's orders in some way, but this is the CDC saying that they're issuing eviction protections for the sake of tamping down the spread of the virus. Do you get the connection?

JUDITH GOLDINER: Absolutely. We saw such enormous spread of the disease in our homeless congregate shelters. Fortunately, so many of homeless brothers and sisters were moved into hotels where they are much safer and that infection rate and death rate has gone way down as a result of that. But being out on the street or being in a congregate shelter, that is a great way to spread this disease. And homelessness is a terrible way that this public health crisis has really impacted them.

In addition, if you're going to be doubled up, we've also seen a much greater spread of the disease in households that are multigenerational and that are, kind of forced into tight surroundings. So we definitely see the eviction moratorium as being critical for public health.

We just, I don't think it goes far enough.

There Is No Ethical Capitalism - The Michael Brooks Show - Air Date 9-4-20

DAVID GRISCOM - HOST, THE MICHAEL BROOKS SHOW: We can talk about how unfair and unjust and how evil these systems are, but until we get to the root of them, we're just talking abstractly about a very concrete system and were not able to develop the tools that we need to be able to take it down and to move into a new system of relations with one another.

For example, we know that the policing crisis can't be changed with a culture change or more training. Why is that? It's because the system of policing is used to address social problems like homelessness and poverty with brute force. It's the same kind of thing as when you hear somebody like Joe Biden talk about the evils of climate change or whatever, and says an empty slogan, like "believe science", but then a week later is talking about how he will not ban fracking in the United States.

MATT LECH - COHOST, THE MICHAEL BROOKS SHOW: [Imitating Joe Biden] Come on, man.

DAVID GRISCOM - HOST, THE MICHAEL BROOKS SHOW: Having a strong moral criticism is very motivating and is very important. I think Bernie Sanders really showed the line there of talking about the evils of the system, calling out people like Jeff Bezos by name, but also making that structural criticism of capitalism. But we need to go much, much further.

Capitalism is an evil system, yes, and it makes people do horrible and wicked things, and it leaves the majority of people exploited and oppressed, but we don't make that criticism because we're trying to say, "let's get our bosses to be nice bosses. Let's have a nice friendly capitalism," because fundamentally capitalism is incapable of meeting that basic human demand.

We know things like meritocracy are false and are wrong. And I think what happened with this recent cheating scandal where you had elites basically paying for their children to get into elite universities even though they didn't earn that on their own merit, all of these things that we can focus on the morality, but the people in power understand that this is a system, an economic system, and they know how to play by the rules.

We're at a time right now where the evil is so apparent. It's so apparent what's going on, in a world where we have an abundance of food, that there are people who are, we're hungry. In a country like the United States, where we have abundant housing, we have enough housing to house everybody, but because of property relations to protect the property rights and the profit of the wealthy and the property owners, we have houselessness. That's a capitalist problem. That's a capitalist creative problem. And another example is the needless death in this country when healthcare is widely available.

The police play a role in protecting property. The system plays a role in maintaining these kinds of relations. The government plays a role in maintaining monopoly power for certain corporations. It is fundamental to capitalism the exploitation of the many, for the benefit of the few. All of these are societal failures; they're systematic, but it's not because the system is broken but rather that it is a system that is designed to only serve the people at the very top.

It is only designed to make sure that your labor can be exploited and that you do not have access to the basic commodities that you need to survive. The inability of the United States to meet the needs of the vast majority of people in this pandemic is the direct result of this society where neoliberalism, which in many ways is the fundamental logic of capitalism, has eroded our public systems so thoroughly that even if the government wanted to help directly, the structures of welfare and public distribution of goods and services has been so decimated by years of privatization and cuts that it would have to be rebuilt from the ground up. So, yes, the system is fundamentally evil, but it won't be fixed because one day Jeff Bezos is going to wake up and have a change of heart. Because even in that, fantasy society, another person in another organization in another Amazon would fill in that gap.

The only way that the system is going to change is if people are able to wrest control their workplaces and their governments, and are able to radically reshape the way that we relate to one another and to the world around us. And for that, we need to cultivate and merge our moral outrage with a structural understanding and the structural logic of this global system.

Summary

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: We've just heard clips today, starting with Ali Velshi on MSNBC giving a quick overview of the coming eviction crisis; Off Kilter discussed the growing gap between wages and the cost of housing; The Michael Brooks s Show, explained how insufficient the CARES act was and the nature of the crisis of capitalism; The

Rational National played the CNN eviction story and commented on the stunning lack of help for people our country is offering; Off Kilter discussed some of the policy demands to help during this crisis and turn housing into a human right; Now This featured Elizabeth Warren explaining why the housing crisis is also a racial justice issue; The Brian Lehrer show discussed the CDC directive to halt some evictions in more detail; and finally, the Michael Brook show explained why there is really no such thing as ethical capitalism.

Members are going to be hearing, get this, a little bit of good news, shocker, as well as Noam Chomsky's take on the state of the nation, which will definitely counterbalance that good news. So to hear that and all of our bonus content sign up to support the show at bestoftheleft.com/support.

And now we'll hear from you.

Thoughts on the frames through which we see the world - Naomi from Canada

CALLER: NAOMI FROM CANADA: Hey Jay!, how's it going? This is Naomi from Atlantic Canada. I just got done listening to the episode on fundamentalist violence a second time, just to make sure I really understood Erin's call in because it was such a good one and I wanted to make sure I made my response to it a proper one, a properly articulated one.

I think I might've mentioned this before to you on other call-ins that I'm majoring in Native Studies here in Canada. One of the first things that I learned going into it was to challenge voting as an institution. One of the first things my prof talked about, one of the first things I read was a document trying to tell the native people in my province, "no, don't participate in the provincial elections, they're not our elections, they're the colonizer's elections," and as a young progressive going into university that blew my mind. The fact that voting could be bad in some sense of the word, could be imposed on someone in a violent or inappropriate way.

And that led into just challenging Canadian identity as a whole. Like, really all we are, we're the people who hold the bully's coat for them while they do their thing elsewhere; the bully being the United States. And it's where I first saw people expressing the idea of putting their First Nations identity above Canadian identity. I'm not Canadian, I'm Makmah. I'm not Canadian. I'm Cree. And that was just completely new to me.

And it's something they made clear too. It's not just native people who should be rejecting the Canadian national identity. It's kind of a shitty one that deserves to be criticized in a lot of ways, as does the American one. It's not something you have to be a part of if you don't want to was a big point they made.

So I tried to think about what that looked like in a settler context for me. What is rejecting the Canadian nationality look like for me? So, I looked into my family history and I found pieces of it that were hidden by genocide, by members of my family being taken away, forcibly baptized into other religions, that sort of thing. Whatever I find behind that, I'll identify as instead of Canadian. I ended up finding a very strong presence of Irish culture, so okay, from now on I'm an Irish nationalist rather than a Canadian.

Minored in Irish studies as well; tried to learn as much as I could about the country and the culture. And one thing I realized was that, and even before coming to school, it was something also easily weaponized as racist and by racist. There's plenty of people in and outside of Ireland who'll staunchly say that only white people can be Irish, and express fear, xenophobia against any nonwhite person who claims that identity. But that's just a false worldview.

I think it ultimately comes down to a problem of linking race to nation. Like Erin's call in was talking about how we need a space for white people. But, if it's exclusively for white people, then it's just repeating the same problem with a different flag, you know?

I'm not invalidating the point, it's a super valid point, but like whatever we're talking about as a solution to give people a new myth, to use your guys's words, it has to be something fully inclusive, if that makes sense. And I think this is exactly why it's tricky; it's a paradox. It leads to the ultimate question of, do we want to try to morph the myths we already have do we want to try to still pursue that American dream in the sense of what it should be, or do you want to try to look for something new? Personally, I got a lot of my new myths looking at radical history, trying to find moments of solidarity between workers. For your listeners, I recommend the book, *Labor's Untold Story* by Richard O. Boyer. It was such a great read, such beautiful moments of worker solidarity across race, gender, national-ethnic lines.

And, while we're talking about books too, I really wanted to thank you for talking about *How to Be an Antiracist* so much. People have this conception of it that it's just, oh, don't do this, don't do that over and over again; it's so not The writer, he lays himself so bare and is so honest with the reader, and so humble about his own experiences. I'm so glad I gave it a chance because it actually absolutely deserves one. Everyone out there should go read it.

But yeah, thanks to you for being awesome, and thanks to Erin for being awesome too; calling in with such an awesome point. See ya.

Final comments on dominant culture, national myths and the dominance of whiteness

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: Thanks for listening everyone. Thanks to Dion Clark and Aaron Clayton for their research work for the show. Thanks to the monosyllabic transcriptionist trio Ben, Dan and Ken for their volunteer work helping put the transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets and activism segments. And thanks to all those who called into the voicemail line. If you'd like to leave a comment or question of your own to be played on the show, you can send us a voice memo by email or simply record a message at 202-999-3991.

So you may be interested to hear the followup from the previous episode. I responded to Zach the theologian's question about voting idealistically versus out of fear. And he responded after hearing my answer. And in short was entirely won over by my argument and very much appreciated the new framing of having a theory of change and specifically says, "I really appreciate your clarification and appeal that this is the first step that Biden is by no means the end of our journey to change our country for the better. This type of language and vision helps me feel better about participating on behalf of Biden."

And I don't think he was the only one; I think I heard maybe murmurings from another, saying that that was clarifying to them. So that's how that went down.

And now to reply to Naomi. And this is following on from a voicemail left by Aaron from Philly about culture and dominant culture and white people in the American myths that we tell ourselves about how mostly white people tends to be the heroes of all the stories, and maybe we should rewrite those myths.

So a couple of thoughts: Since these tie together, I'll just say this about native people opting out of a dominant election. So, Naomi was talking about provincial elections in Canada. There are definitely native people who live in the United States who feel similarly about American elections, state, local, national, whatever. And so, I'm at a point now where I don't have enough information to have a good opinion about that, or to have a discussion about it. I very much would want to hear more from those people. But what I would say is because, as I laid out my methodology in the previous episode, I wouldn't assume that a native person is working against their theory of change by opting out of participating in the elections.

But the only option then is that they had it different theory of change. They have a different end point that they're trying to get to, and they have a different theory of how to get to, or they have an appropriate theory of change of how to get to that. And if that involves not participating in the election, I would love to hear that story and that reasoning, I don't know what it is.

And obviously there's more than one. I mean, I'm sure I would never suggest that, yeah, there's one group of native people who all feel the same about this. That's obviously not the case. I think that's bubbling up a little bit, I heard murmurings that conversations like that are flaring up, maybe on social media. I would say, I would suggest if you find yourself confronted with someone taking that position, the last thing I would do is tell them they're wrong. The first thing I would do is ask them what their theory of change is. Because you might learn something really, really interesting, or they will say, "what's a theory of change? I don't know what that is. Oh, maybe I do need one. That's a good point." I don't know. I genuinely don't know.

A second, just a little comment. Naomi's description of people concluding that they would prefer to be seen as native first and Canadian second, if at all, reminded me of one of my favorite scenes--and I'm not a Rick Steves fanatic by any stretch; I've seen a handful of episodes in the past few years, but I watched one where Rick Steves goes to Edinburgh and the Scots have some particular feeling--not all, but a decent number of Scots have some particular feelings--about the English and being part of Great Britain, maybe against their will. And so it just reminded me of this favorite moment from a Rick Steve show--he's talking with a through and through Scot in Edinburgh.

RICK STEVE: So, why are you wearing a kilt?

SCOTSMAN: I wear a kilt because I'm proud to be Scottish and it shows my natural culture and my natural history. And that I'm Scottish and not British.

RICK STEVE: So you're Scottish first or British first?

SCOTSMAN: Scottish.

RICK STEVE: Scottish first, British second.

SCOTSMAN: Second Scottish.

RICK STEVE: The second also!

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: It was just a little thing, but I, yeah, I love that. The presumption that Scots legally are British, but a lot of them, no, no, no, no. I'm Scottish first, and Scottish second. British, not at all.

So here's how I'm going to tell my thoughts on dominant culture and national myths and how it all gets intertwined with race in a very often perverse sort of way. There was a story that I think is a great case study for this. It sort of crystallizes a lot of it.

From just a few months ago, there was--not a poster, there was an infographic--that was on a website exhibit from the National African American Museum of History and Culture. I think I got that name right. It's part of the Smithsonian Institute. It's on the National Mall. So they put up this poster describing, or this infographic describing, "aspects and assumptions of whiteness and white culture in the United States."

And they go on to describe everything you've heard a million times. Every aspect of this is American as apple pie: rugged individualism; nuclear family; 2.3 children; Northern European immigrants; Christianity; seeking status, power and authority; time is money--just on and on. Like everything you think of when you think of, that is what America thinks of itself; that's what this is describing. But it's titled as "White Culture: aspects and assumptions of whiteness and white culture."

And so let me just clarify something about this poster. Nowhere does it say that these things are bad, nor does it say that they are exclusive to white people in any way. It just says, this is how white people often describe themselves, see themselves and the values they hold. There's no judgment. It's just a description of reality. So of course, this got picked up as a news story because conservatives noticed this, caught onto it, completely misunderstood it, lost their minds (as they are wont to do), threw a fit, to the point that the museum took it down and apologized.

And the story in the Washington Post I think does an okay job describing how they apologized and why, but it still leaves a little room for interpretation, but they didn't apologize, like "we did a bad job. This is a bad thing. And now we see the error of our ways." They apologize because they wanted to start a good conversation, but a bad conversation got started instead and they thought, well, this just isn't what we wanted to happen. There's nothing wrong with the infographic. There's nothing inherently incorrect about anything on it. But maybe we didn't do a good enough job giving it context and structure and guiding that conversation. Not that I think there's any way to give it context that would have conservatives understand it and not use it to their political advantage; I'll explain how they do that in a moment. But what it is trying to say is that it's just a description of dominant culture, and whiteness is the dominant race in America. And those two things go hand in hand. The culture of white people is largely shared. There's massive shared culture among white people in America.

And so white-ness and our cultural norms are both seen as the default. We are the default. And everything else is an aberration. And so this poster is trying, or the infographic, is trying to say, white people are a group. Look how much they have in common with each other. Look how much of their cultural norms are shared across this vast swath of whiteness.

So I argue the whole point is to hold culture at sort of arms length so that you can see it more clearly, and see it as neither universal, nor ubiquitous, neither divine, nor evil, just dominant. And white culture, like whiteness in general, to hold it at arms length and see, and to see it as not ubiquitous, and see it as just dominant, means it's being demoted from default to one of many. And that's not saying anything bad about the culture. It's just saying, Hey, let's recognize that it is a culture of a group of people, and other people have different ideas and values and cultures. And there's a hell of a lot of crossover.

Like I said, the things described here are not exclusive to white people. Of course, every culture is going to be a huge Venn diagram with every other. There's going to be a lot of crossover between cultures.

But here's just an example of how conservatives take it. So, mentioned in the Washington Post article, none other than Donald Trump, Jr. on Twitter, took up this story and wanted to clarify something to everyone. Don Trump Jr. just wanted to let everyone know something important that he understands. So he writes: "Important: These aren't white values, they're American values that built the world's greatest civilization. They help you succeed here, no matter your color. So make no mistake: Biden's radicals aren't coming for whites. They're coming for the entire American way of life." and I read that because it is such a beautiful encapsulation of the point the infographic is making: that for people like Donald Trump Jr., it's not enough for it to be white culture and for white culture to be dominant; it has to be American culture, leaving no room for any other culture to exist. And to suggest that it is one culture of many, and that there are other cultures that have value and validity in and of themselves, is seen as an attack and coming for the entire American way of life--as if everything described in the infographic is bad and needs to be torn down. That's how they see it when they completely misunderstand that it is an opinionless description of reality. What I mean is not that we are actually changing anything, it's that we are describing reality in a more accurate way.

We've been describing reality as if white dominant culture is the only culture. And now we're beginning to describe it as one culture of many, which has always been the case. It's just that we're now beginning to recognize it.

So to Aaron's point about creating a national myth that includes white people and make space for them, but doesn't hold them up as the hero, I mean, that's kind of what multiculturalism is. And relegating dominant white culture and the history of white people to be one history of many, and one point of view of many, is exactly how we need to tell the story. It's not that the way white people tell their story is completely wrong, but if you only get one side, then you're clearly getting only a partial view.

So maybe it's not that we need a new story. It's that we need the same story told from multiple perspectives, like one of those cool novels that jumps around between different first-person perspectives. That seems like clearly how history should be written, because if you only have one history written always by the victors, well, you're going to end up with a bunch of bullshit.

So the only way to read history is to get as many sides of the story as possible. So maybe that's what we're already doing.

If that sparks anything in you, I'd love to hear your comments on this. I think it's a really interesting conversation. Keep the comments coming in at (202) 999-3991. That's going to be it for today.

Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at bestoftheleft.com/support. That is absolutely how the program survives. Of course everyone can support the show just by telling everyone you know about it, and leaving us glowing reviews on Apple Podcasts and Facebook to help others find the show. For details on the show itself, including links to all of the sources and music used in this and every episode, all that information can always be found in the show notes on the blog and likely right on the device you're using to listen.

So coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington DC, my name is Jay!, and this has been The Best of the Left podcast, coming to you twice weekly, thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from bestoftheleft.com.