

#1375 The Militia Movement is Having a Moment

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:00:00] Welcome to this episode of the award winning Best of the Left podcast, in which we shall learn about the American militia movement from the history and origins, right up to the recent plot to kidnap the governor of Michigan, the likelihood of more violence and the high probability that they will show up at polling places on election day. Clips today are from a Democracy Now, a local report from WBNS, the Takeaway, CounterSpin. Re-education, the Zero Hour with RJ Eskow, the Truth Report with Chauncey DeVega, and the Thom Hartmann program.

FBI Foils Right-Wing Plot to Kidnap Michigan Gov. Months After Trump Urged "Liberation" of State - Democracy Now! - Air Date 10-9-20

RUSS McNAMARA: [00:00:34] The guys that were arrested the other night, they got together online in various groups, Facebook groups, and that caught the attention of the FBI. Plus, when some of the plotting started to involve the attack on law enforcement, somebody got cold feet and became an informant to the FBI, and that gave them a better idea of what was going on.

These guys are amateurs, essentially, but some had explosive training and knew how to make a bomb with shrapnel that actually tested it out. And they had tested it out and figured out which bridge they wanted to blow up to help in the kidnap of Governor Whitmer. So, it was fairly along in the planning stages, and they were set to go and take . . . go through with their plot right before the election. [crosstalk]

AMY GOODMAN - HOST DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:01:28] So, when you talk about blowing up a bridge, explain what we're talking about here, to prevent authorities to come to the aid of Governor Whitmer, whom they also had talked about lynching.

RUSS McNAMARA: [00:01:38] Yes, The misogynistic undertones have been there all along. That includes in the protests back in April and May, lots of nooses, lots of nazi imagery when it comes to Governor Whitmer. So that was always there. They wanted to draw law enforcement away from the Governor in one plot. They wanted a direct assault on the capitol building itself in another of the two plots.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:02:04] And talk about the weapons that they were charged with using, for example, an IED.

RUSS McNAMARA: [00:02:10] Yeah, they did have explosives. They wanted to cause as much havoc as possible, in part to draw away attention from their overall goal of kidnapping the Governor, but also in causing death and destruction. You don't set up to blow up and make it anti-personnel and not try to take out and kill people.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:02:34] Kyra Harris Bolden, you're a Democratic Michigan State Representative. A number of these men who were charged yesterday with terrorism were actually at your workplace right earlier months ago, as they

were taking over the Michigan legislature. Where were you, and can you describe the scene that ultimately President Trump would endorse?

REP. KYRA HARRIS BOLDEN: [00:03:00] Yes. Thank you for having me this morning to talk about this very important topic. It's very important to note that this could have been prevented. The Michigan House Democrats have been sounding the alarm since operation gridlock.

That happened in mid-April. And there was actually an Operation Judgment Day of which they actually canceled sessions because they, I don't know, perhaps didn't know what was going to happen. The actual day that we were there, where the capitol was stormed by domestic terrorists. We know now, it was surreal. Our offices are actually across the street from the Capitol, and from my office, I could see confederate flags. I could see Nazi swastika paraphernalia. There were signs that say, "Tyrant, get the noose," in reference to our governor, Gretchen Whitmer. There was actually a truck with a noose hanging off of the back, a life-size noose. And so, it didn't take much to know that these threats had nothing to do with the Governor's so-called lockdown or stay-home, stay-safe orders. This was a very dangerous situation that we were entering. And I will also share with you something that many people probably don't know. They were actually not allowed in the capitol until minutes before we were called to vote.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:04:21] And explain when this was.

REP. KYRA HARRIS BOLDEN: [00:04:24] This was mid-April, and so kind of the height of the "stay-home, stay-safe" orders. And obviously there was a lot of angst. There were a lot of businesses closed. But, you know, I think it was just also kind of used as an excuse to rally. We also saw a lot of Trump flags which seemed out of place for a rally against stay-home, stay-safe orders. But this happened in mid-April at height of COVID. Visitors were not allowed in the capitol building until minutes before we were called in to vote. And so, it was a purposeful action that we would have to be confronted with the same people that were armed, had Nazi paraphernalia, that had nooses, that had confederate flags. And fortunately, our gallery was closed, but the Senate's wasn't. And you may have seen a picture going around the internet where it was actually confirmed that two of the men arrested had previously been standing armed above the Senate chamber. And that picture was taken by Senator Polehanki. Some of the senators actually have bulletproof vests because of this situation. It was not safe. And I will also note it was during the height of COVID, and many of these people were not wearing masks. And they were crowded in our state house. And so, that added an extra layer of terror for us. We were dealing with the global pandemic, and we were dealing with what we know now to be domestic terrorists.

So, in April, that's when President Trump, the time you're describing now, tweeted, "LIBERATE MICHIGAN!"

AMY GOODMAN - HOST DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:06:04] Yes.

REP. KYRA HARRIS BOLDEN: [00:06:04] And then, in May, he wrote, "These are very good people."

AMY GOODMAN - HOST DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:06:11] I want to go to Washington Congressman Pramila Jayapal who was questioning Attorney General William Barr during

a House Judiciary Committee hearing in July about the threats to Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer. It was a contentious exchange. Jayapal noted the discrepancy between Barr's militarized response to Black Lives Matter protesters and armed White militia members who displayed White nationalist symbols and threatened Michigan's governor.

REP. PRAMILA JAYAPAL: [00:06:42] On two separate occasions, after President Trump tweeted "LIBERATE MICHIGAN!" to subvert stay-home orders to protect the public health of people in Michigan, protesters swarmed the Michigan capitol carrying guns, some with swastikas, confederate flags, and one even with a dark-haired doll with a noose around its neck. Are you aware that these protesters called for the Governor to be lynched, shot and beheaded?

ATTORNEY GENERAL WILLIAM BARR: [00:07:13] No.

REP. PRAMILA JAYAPAL: [00:07:14] You're not aware of that?

ATTORNEY GENERAL WILLIAM BARR: [00:07:15] I was not aware.

REP. PRAMILA JAYAPAL: [00:07:16] Major protests in Michigan, you're the Attorney General, and you didn't know that the protesters called for the Governor to be lynched, shot and beheaded.

ATTORNEY GENERAL WILLIAM BARR: [00:07:25] Well —

REP. PRAMILA JAYAPAL: [00:07:25] So, obviously, you couldn't be concerned about that. You didn't —

ATTORNEY GENERAL WILLIAM BARR: [00:07:27] Well, there are a lot of protests around the United States. And on June 1st, I was worried about the District of Columbia, which is federal.

REP. PRAMILA JAYAPAL: [00:07:34] Attorney General Barr, you seem to be engaging in protests in certain parts of the country. You're very aware of those. But when protesters with guns and swastikas —

ATTORNEY GENERAL WILLIAM BARR: [00:07:42] I'm very — I am aware of protesters in the federal government.

REP. PRAMILA JAYAPAL: [00:07:45] — and Confederate flags — excuse me, Mr. Barr, this is my time, and I control it. You are aware of certain kinds of protesters, but in Michigan, when protesters carry guns and confederate flags and swastikas and call for the Governor of Michigan to be beheaded and shot and lynched, somehow you're not aware of that?

AMY GOODMAN - HOST DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:08:03] So, that's Congressmember Pramila Jayapal questioning Attorney General William Barr. Remember, the attorney general is in charge of the Justice Department. It's the FBI, the U.S. Attorney and state officials who have now charged 13 men with various domestic terrorism charges. I want to go back to Russ McNamara and talk about the groups that are involved. This is not just a disparate group of individuals. We're talking about "boogaloo," and we're talking about, well, tell us about, this group called the Wolverines, the Wolverine Watchmen.

RUSS McNAMARA: [00:08:38] Yeah, The Wolverine

Watchmen.

Yeah, and they're just part of one of the many groups that have popped up over the last decade or so. Even over the weekend, a man involved in the anti-government "boogaloo" movement, Eric Allport was shot and killed by federal agents in a parking lot of a suburban Detroit restaurant.

Following a shootout, Robert Snell, the great Detroit news reporter here figured out that he played a small role in the disastrous Ruby Ridge standoff, but he was still active within the militia and anti-government movement. So we've seen all of these individual. Groups pop up over the last decade, partially fueled because it's easier to get together via social media.

So whether or not it's a private Facebook group or an online forum, these guys are getting together. But if you look at these guys and their trail in social media, they are a collective, but they're fairly well fractured, and they have their own ideals and ideology and they've got piecemeal equipment. their tactical gear is not anything that you would consider professional, but their firearms for the most part are.

Ohio has long history with militias; 2020 saw a surge in activity - WBNS 10TV - Air Date 10-9-20

ANCHOR: [00:09:49] A terrifying plot in Michigan, allegedly planned in central Ohio. And today we're hearing from those who know the suspects. These men, six of them, are charged with trying to kidnap Michigan governor Gretchen Whitmer. Seven others are accused of trying to help. Adam Fox was allegedly the leader; investigators say he wanted to recruit 200 men to storm Michigan's Capitol. They allegedly met to talk about the plot in Dublin. We're told they trained with firearms and explosives.

MILITIA MEMBER: [00:10:19] I knew he was with the militia, but I didn't know that he was, you know, this into it. It's not illegal though. Weapons or ammo. It's when you cross that line, like he did, you need to be punished.

ANCHOR: [00:10:32] This man says Fox was kicked out of one militia, so he started his own. But exactly what is a militia and how dangerous is it? 10-TV's Brittany Bailey talked with a local expert in domestic terrorism.

MARK PITCAVAGE: [00:10:46] The militia movement is basically anti-government anger plus conspiracy theories plus guns.

BRITTANY BAILEY - REPORTER: [00:10:51] Mark Pitcavage is a senior research fellow with the Anti-Defamation League. He's been studying domestic terrorism for a quarter century.

MARK PITCAVAGE: [00:10:59] The militia movement does have a long history of criminal activity, ranging from illegal weapons and explosives, up to deadly standoffs with law enforcement, up to terrorist plots and attacks.

BRITTANY BAILEY - REPORTER: [00:11:11] The militia movement -- and that's an important distinction here; we're not talking a generic paramilitary group -- took root around 1993 to 1994. That was after Ruby Ridge, Waco and two new federal gun laws.

MARK PITCAVAGE: [00:11:24] The combination of all of those things, plus the election of Bill Clinton and NAFTA and a couple other little things, all sort of combined to cause this resurgence of anti-government extremism in the United States, and the formation of, specifically of, the militia movement.

BRITTANY BAILEY - REPORTER: [00:11:39] But 2020 served up a new landscape with more talk of gun control laws followed by the pandemic and lockdowns.

MARK PITCAVAGE: [00:11:46] The militia movement was very much opposed any of those restrictions and came out to protest. In fact, one of the very first anti-lockdown protests was organized by anti-government extremists here, right here in central Ohio. We had the very first one.

BRITTANY BAILEY - REPORTER: [00:11:59] The Southern Poverty Law Center tracked anti-government groups last year, citing 32 in Ohio, 13 considered malicious. The government's own Homeland Threat Assessment, released just this month, calls domestic violent extremism a threat, and at least one former neoNazi agrees.

FORMER NEO-NAZI: [00:12:18] I'm telling you the, this is going to happen. States like Michigan. States like Wisconsin, the northern states that have some wilderness area. There have been militias from other states training up there. They are waiting and hoping that something does go wrong because they want to hold up in them Hills.

MARK PITCAVAGE: [00:12:38] So it doesn't take very many people intent on doing harm to cause a whole lot of misery for a community. That's why we are concerned about extremist violence.

Rise of Violent Militias Prompts National Fears After Foiled Kidnapping Plot - The Takeaway - Air Date 10-12-20

TANZINA VEGA: [00:12:46] Daryl, We've heard about the Proud Boys and the Boogaloo movement, here in 2020. Curious what makes those groups different from what else we've been hearing about with these militias, for example?

DARYL JOHNSON: [00:12:59] So the Proud Boys are basically a group that like to agitate at different protests. They can devolve into street fighting between protesters and counter-protesters. So that's more of a state-local problem. It's not rises to the level of a terrorist group. Whereas the Boogaloo movement, we've had a number of incidents recently, despite the fact this movement only existed for about a year or less, we've had shootings, fatal shootings of police officers out in California. We've had terrorist plotting in Las Vegas. We had an individual in Michigan and Madison Heights that got gunned down by the FBI for pulling out a weapon on them when they attempted to arrest him. So this is a movement that wants to basically take advantage of the civil unrest that's ongoing and try to exploit it and try to cause more civil unrest and destabilize society to hopefully start a civil war, basically.

TANZINA VEGA: [00:14:00] Heidi, I was hearing about the potential for a "race war" back in 2008 after President Barack Obama was elected. To Daryl's earlier point here. But this--let 's take a look back at Michigan here because polling is showing that a lot of Michiganders are actually supportive of Governor Whitmer's restrictions, for example, on the coronavirus. So where is all this anti-government sentiment coming from?

HEIDI BEIRICH: [00:14:23] Well it's been around for a long time and we can trace this back to the 1990s, there's always been a segment of folks, especially in Michigan, that have been vehemently anti-government, don't like the federal government, although that's changed with the rise of President Trump, and that view any kind of measures like Governor Whitmer's taken, as restrictions on their constitutional freedoms and something that they should fight back against.

We saw very quickly just after a few weeks of lock-down, these massive protests in several states, including Michigan, against the quarantines and the lockdowns.

TANZINA VEGA: [00:14:58] Heidi, one of the big concerns here as we head into this very contentious presidential election, just a couple of weeks away, is what's going to happen at the polls. I want to play a clip from President Trump right now.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: [00:15:10] I'm urging my supporters to go into the polls and watch very carefully because that's what has to happen. I am urging them to do it.

TANZINA VEGA: [00:15:19] Heidi that was President Trump saying he's urging his supporters to go into the polls and watch very carefully. What can we take away from that? Heidi, is the president inciting some of these militias to do "poll-watching" ?

HEIDI BEIRICH: [00:15:33] I'm quite worried about exactly that, that Trump is signaling to his supporters like he did back in late April with those liberate North Carolina, liberate Virginia, liberate Michigan tweets, to say to them that they should be at the polls. Heavily armed folks standing in front of poll areas will be extremely intimidating and quite scary. And you have to worry also about people who will be activated into acts of domestic terrorism. I think people forget that we have four such acts around the 2018 elections and this is an even more fraught environment than that year. So this is kind of scary.

TANZINA VEGA: [00:16:10] Daryl to that point, one of the things that we're hearing is that the president is really sowing doubt about the legitimacy of the election results. He's been doing this for quite some time, as he's begun to consistently trail in the polls. Could violent militias, Daryl, act on this and interfere with the transition of power, if in fact, the president continues sow this type of doubt?

DARYL JOHNSON: [00:16:34] That is definitely a possibility. And we're entering a period of heightened risk of things like this happening, because these narratives of potential voter fraud, rigged election, these are code words that the militia interprets as the president being illegally taken out of power or something like that.

And so if the Republicans end up losing the White House, then there may be people on the outer fringes, because they've been told this fearful narrative, may turn that into action.

TANZINA VEGA: [00:17:12] Heidi, I want to just close here by a little... Michigan attorney general Dana Nessel last week said that what she's witnessing, what she's seeing in

Michigan, and I'm quoting right now, is not just a Michigan problem. It's an American problem. What does she mean by that, Heidi?

HEIDI BEIRICH: [00:17:29] We have had an incredible amount of terrorism coming, both from militia type groups and white supremacists, over the last several months. This is something that's widespread all across the nation. Daryl mentioned the possible attack on social justice movement in Las Vegas by Boogaloo Boys, cops being killed by Boogaloo Boys. This group had connections to that particular movement. That is happening all across the United States. This is such a fraught period. It is very possible that we're going to see even more violence. Thank God this plot was broken up, but we don't know what's to come.

Check Your Blindspot 10-16-20

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:18:04] Now it's time to take a break from today's topic to play another round of America's favorite political game show.

studio audience: [00:18:11] Check Your Blindspot!

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:18:19] That's right! It's Check Your Blindspot powered by Ground News, the first ever news comparison platform that provides readers with objective data about the underlying political bias in all published news stories and the ground news app features the blind spot, which highlights news stories that just aren't being covered by one end of the political spectrum or the other. So, I use the blind spot to quiz contestants on theirs.

With us today is our reigning champion, Amanda from Boston. Welcome back to the show.

AMANDA HOFFMAN - CONTESTANT: [00:18:47] Thank you. Glad to be here.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:18:49] Now, let's dive right in and get ready for round one.

In whose political blind spot is this story? French Genghis Khan exhibit put off over interference claims. So, a French museum has postponed an exhibit about Mongol Emperor Genghis Khan citing interference by the Chinese government which it accuses of trying to rewrite history. And it comes at a time in which the Communist party is hardening discrimination against ethnic Mongols within China.

AMANDA HOFFMAN - CONTESTANT: [00:19:26] Oh boy. So, the interference is from China.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:19:30] That's correct.

AMANDA HOFFMAN - CONTESTANT: [00:19:31] Okay. Well, I'm going to guess this is in the left's blind spot because the right has been doing everything they can to try to point to all the bad things they think China is doing.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:19:43] Good. Yes.

AMANDA HOFFMAN - CONTESTANT: [00:19:47] Oh no. [buzzer indicates wrong answer]

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:19:48] You are not correct.

AMANDA HOFFMAN - CONTESTANT: [00:19:50] This is my first wrong answer.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:19:56] So, this is primarily in the right's blind spot. I think your reasoning was solid, but the catch here is that we're talking about rewriting history, something that the left is particularly against and the right is not so much against at this moment in time, and that it's, you know, it's about a museum in France. I mean, they probably didn't even catch on.

Let's get ready for round two.

In whose political blind spot is this story? Senator Hirono asks Judge Amy Coney Barrett if she's ever sexually assaulted anyone during her confirmation hearing. So, the story goes like this: Senator Hirono said that she began asking nominees the questions about sexual assault and harassment in January, 2018. She tweeted at the time, Starting today, I'm asking nominees to our courts under oath whether or not they have a history of sexual assault or harassment. Like in other industries, our judges are in positions of power and #time's up. So then, she just asked Barrett, "I asked each nominee these two questions, and I will ask them to you. Since you became a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?"

studio audience: [00:21:22] Oh, my goodness! [crowd murmuring]

AMANDA HOFFMAN - CONTESTANT: [00:21:25] I'm assuming she said no,

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:21:27] That's correct.

AMANDA HOFFMAN - CONTESTANT: [00:21:29] Well, the way you frame the actual story, I'm going to say this is in the right's blind spot because that sounds like a really reasonable thing to ask someone if you made it a standard question. You're asking every nominee, so that that's going to be my guess.

studio audience: [00:21:48] [sound effect indicating wrong answer] Oh, no!

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:21:53] So, it's in the left's blind spot because it's so reasonable but it's not worth commenting on, whereas the right is writing headlines like, "Senator actually goes there. Absolute idiocy. Hirono cements her insanity." And then my favorite, "Democratic Senator torched online for asking Amy Coney Barrett if she's ever committed sexual assault." That's my favorite because the story isn't what happened or why she asked the question, it's that she got torched online.

AMANDA HOFFMAN - CONTESTANT: [00:22:28] That was sort of it's tricky because the framing really sounded like we were talking about how reasonable Hirono was, but, okay. Okay. Cause my instinct was like, well, the people losing their minds over that would definitely be the right, but

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:22:43] I just wanted to give the full framing of the story.

And finally, in whose political blind spot is this story?

You may recall that the UN food agency won the 2020 Nobel peace prize. Well, about four days later, it was announced that the world food program said it needs \$6.8 billion over the next six months to avert famine.

AMANDA HOFFMAN - CONTESTANT: [00:23:10] So that peace prize money isn't really doing the trick.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:23:15] I think the peace prize might come with \$10 million, but

AMANDA HOFFMAN - CONTESTANT: [00:23:18] But yea. Not enough. Okay. I mean, this is my last one. Gettin' nervous, but I would, I would guess this is in the right's blind spot because very . . . well, ah, man, you know, wait, hold on, hmm. I'm going to go out on a limb and say this is in the left's blind spot because the right is so against and upset over the economic impact of the virus they're willing to try to say it doesn't exist or isn't dangerous or whatever. And so, they constantly are pointing to the economic casualties or the financial losses, which the left also cares about but it's a different angle. That's what I'm going with.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:24:02] Very well argued.

studio audience: [00:24:03] [wrong answer buzzer and audience booing]

AMANDA HOFFMAN - CONTESTANT: [00:24:07] Man, our audience is so harsh.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:24:11] They will turn on No, the correct answer is that it was in America's blind spot. The correct answer is America.

AMANDA HOFFMAN - CONTESTANT: [00:24:19] Oh, this is . . .Umm

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:24:23] So, it turns out that no American news agencies have reported on this with the exception — I had to dig for I — US news and world report had had a mention of it, but Reuters from the UK, a German outlet, an outlet from Singapore, South Africa, Al Jazeera from Qatar, the Jerusalem post and outlets from Malaysia and Turkey all wrote about this, and that's about it.

And so, I'm sorry to say, you have lost the game handily.

AMANDA HOFFMAN - CONTESTANT: [00:25:00] Oh, it was not a good showing. I'm no longer the reigning champion. What are we going to do Do I still get to come back next time? We may have to have you back to see if you could redeem yourself. So as always, Amanda from Boston, thanks for playing that wraps that wraps it up for today.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:25:17] It's important to mention that all of today's commentary and analysis is ours alone and definitely not that of the staunchly unopinionated ground news. If you'd like to try their service, get a discount on their premium features and let them know we sent you, go to ground.news/best. As always, whether for traffic safety or media literacy, never forget to

studio audience: [00:25:39] [crowd] Check your blind spot!

Mary McCord on Unlawful Militias - CounterSpin - Air

Date 10-9-20

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: [00:26:08] A major worry in an electoral season that has enough of them, is the prospect of people in military garb and armed with lethal weapons showing up at polling stations, marching around and minimally staring menacingly at people. Some of those would be part of self-declared militias, a term we've heard thrown around, but news reporting on militia intervention in the election, for example, reads a bit like that of an oncoming storm cloud. It's not good, but what are you going to do? The thing is there are laws and we can have a public conversation around the fact that people in camo with guns are showing up at social justice protests and threatening people, claiming they have a constitutional right to do so.

Addressing a concern starts with understanding it, and that's what our guests does. Mary McCord is legal director at the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection and a visiting law professor at Georgetown University. She joins us now by phone. Welcome to CounterSpin, Mary McCord.

MARY McCORD: [00:27:18] Thank you. It's good to be here.

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: [00:27:19] Let's start, I guess, with some definition. I mean, what defines a militia? And what makes a militia unlawful?

MARY McCORD: [00:27:29] Right. Well, it's a good question because oftentimes these unauthorized armed groups of individuals will point to the Constitution's use of the word "militia" as their authority to exist.

But militia, as used in both federal and state law, simply refers to all able-bodied residents between certain ages -- it's usually like 17 to 45 or some States, 17 to 55 -- who are available to be called forth by the government in defense of the state. So in the case of the US Constitution, Congress has that authority to call them forth through statutory enactments, and then they would report up to the President. And in the States, it's the governor who has the authority to call them forth. But there's no authority under federal or state law for groups of armed individuals to sort of self-activate as a militia and undertake what are typically law enforcement functions or even functions of actual state-sponsored militias. So the only law for militia is the militia that's been called forth by the state. For example, the state national guards. Those are what the Constitution refers to as the state militias. Those are official military organizations that report up through the governor or the governor's deputize person.

So there's no authority for just this sort of self-deployment.

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: [00:28:47] Well, I wonder if we could talk a little bit about DC versus Heller, because the Second Amendment is this kind of zombie idea, it's this idea that just won't let go. The invocation of it. And even news media present it as kind of, well, some people interpret the Second Amendment as giving them the right to organize and do this, but the law actually did speak on this. Yeah?

MARY McCORD: [00:29:14] Yes. In fact, the Supreme Court has been very clear about this. There's a lot of gray area in the Second Amendment; this is not one of those gray areas.

So I'll get to Heller in a minute, but Heller actually reiterated an opinion that the Supreme Court issued in 1886. In that case, it actually upheld a state statute, which exists on the books of 29 states, even to this day, a state statute that bars bodies of men from associating together as a military unit or parading or drilling in firearms with public. Now mind you, this dates to post-Civil War that's when these statutes were passed. And you can imagine the last thing that states wanted to have to reckon with were rogue militias that might threaten their own authority. So in that case in 1886, the Supreme Court thought it without question that states must be able to ban paramilitary organizations in order to preserve peace and good order.

2008, in District of Columbia versus Heller, the Supreme Court decided for the first time that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to bear arms for individual self defense. And it actually pointedly contrasted that right with things that are not protected. And it restated its decision from 1886, that the Second Amendment does not prevent states from prohibiting paramilitary organizations. And in fact, all States do.

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: [00:30:44] You know, the law is just words on a page until it's activated, and the group that you work with, the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection at Georgetown University, activated the law in the wake of the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, in which listeners will know James Fields drove his car into people who showed up to oppose this Tiki torch, Nazi evoking march, and Heather Heyer was killed and many were injured. What did you see in that suggested a response that you could use with existing legal and policy tools, and what came out of that?

MARY McCORD: [00:31:29] Yeah. That's where the sort of strange niche expertise I've developed an anti-militia law; that's really where it first started. So in the immediate aftermath of that really horrendous event, a lot of commentators were a little bit shrugging and saying so, well, what can be done? There's a First Amendment right to engage in free speech and assembly. And there's a Second Amendment right to bear firearms. And Virginia is an open carry state. And, you know, it was kind of like, wow, what can be done? But as lawyers -- and particularly those I'd spent most of my career at the Department of Justice until early 2017 -- and as lawyers, myself and my colleagues, we thought, well, the First Amendment does not protect violence and it doesn't protect incitement to imminent violence.

And the Second Amendment, thanks to the decision in Heller, we know, protects an individual right to bear arms for self-defense, but it doesn't allow groups to organize together as private armies. And so that's what led us to the state anti-paramilitary activity laws in Virginia, which is where the Unite the Right rally took place. And that's what also eventually led us to learn that all 50 states include provisions either in their state constitutions or in state statutes, that bar private, unauthorized paramilitary activity. And so we relied on those state -- and in Virginia, it's a constitutional provision as well as a criminal statute. And also an additional couple sections that bars individuals from falsely assuming the functions of law enforcement, as we see some of these militias do. So we relied on all of those laws to seek court orders to prohibit these groups from returning in the future and

engaging in that kind of armed coordinated use of force or projection of the ability to use force. We weren't seeking damages for injuries in the past. There's other lawsuits doing this. This was purely forward-looking relief. And we represented the city of Charlottesville. Local businesses and local residential association too, were concerned that the white nationalists were going to return with their heavy militarization and cause similar violence in the future. And that case was successful. We won on all of our theories against a motion to dismiss the case. And then after that, actually it resolved before trial because every one of the 23 different individuals and organizations who were defendants ended up agreeing by consent decree to court orders that would be prohibit them permanently from returning to Charlottesville as part of units of two or more people acting in concert with weapons during any rally protest demonstration, or march.

And so that work is what caused us to do then ultimately a 50-state catalog of the laws that prohibit private paramilitary activity. That's what's led to us to actually partner up with the district attorney in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in another similar case against an unlawful militia there. And it's what led us to do the 50 back sheets that we've recently published, separate one for every state, to help people know what to do if they see groups of armed individuals around polling places, and that's not just so that voters will know that that's can be intimidating and that it's illegal, but it's so that election officials will know and so local law enforcement will know, and state elected officials will know, the state attorney general, the secretaries of state. Because there's been such a mythology about the Second Amendment that so many people actually believe it protects this activity, and it does not.

So part of this was just to make sure to get that word out there, that corrects the record; this is not constitutionally protected.

Great Replacement Theory - RE-EDUCATION - Air Date 8-16-19

HOST - RE-EDUCATION: [00:35:10] One of the aspects that a lot of these fascists, these Nazis like to project is the idea of "the great replacement". Now the great replacement is basically when a group of people, it doesn't have to be race, is replaced by another group of people. That's kind of how this conspiracy theory goes. A lot of the time though it is tied to race and traditionally it's the idea that White people are being replaced by minorities. And because more and more nowadays, the media tends to follow in the direction of these professional reactionaries and continues to have a more propagandistic, more fascistic leaning, we tend to see a lot of this stuff being projected in the news as things that are virtually innocuous, like immigrants replacing you at your job. You know the old meme, they took your job.

Well, not only are they taking your jobs, they're also sneaking into your bedrooms and having sex with all the White women and diluting the White race, turning it into a mongrel race that is eventually going to create a genocide, meaning no longer will there ever be any White babies again. This is kind of the mentality that goes along with this great replacement theory.

It takes the "they took our jobs" meme to its natural conclusion—an ethnostate. So every other minority, every other race that exists within Western civilization is inevitably trying to fuck the White race out of existence. It wouldn't make any logical sense if it wasn't for "the

Jews". Because clearly the Jews are the ones that are convincing all of these minorities that they have to use social justice to fuck the White race out of existence. See, that's what it is. That's what it is. Jews have decided to weaponize social justice to use minority groups as a weapon to genocide the United States and completely destroy Western culture, AKA White culture.

The funny thing is that I'm making a joke about this, but I'm not actually exaggerating. This is literally what they believe. This whole thing is, this is part of the JQ, the Jewish question. I think that there is an organized group of Jews that are out there that have conspired to weaponize immigrants and social justice to literally destroy the White race.

And the funny thing about this, actually none of it is funny, but it's all kind of funny, like in a weird Orwellian dystopic, fucking crazy type of funny, is that the mainstream media and a lot of mainstream right wing propagandists are following suit with this whole idea. And they're dog whistling the idea just as hard as anybody that's a White nationalist, only they're saying things like "multiculturalism will destroy Western civilization", which is a literal dog whistle for "race mixing will destroy White culture." It's just using slightly different words. They will not replace us, literally means Jews will not replace the White man. This is all dog whistled, even further in the mainstream media when they talk about "those immigrants taking your jobs" or the idea that they're flooding across the border so you need to "build that wall".

They want to turn everybody away from the actual problem, which is the system, and direct everyone's attention towards a scapegoat, towards the immigrants, towards the minorities. They're making it seem like those are the people that are the enemy and not the ones that are sitting at the top profiting off of all of this while having a good deep belly laugh.

The great replacement theory is a fascistic theory, it always has been. And the elites have absolutely no problem propagating such a theory, as long as it gets some of the attention off of their back and puts it onto somebody else, preferably someone with no money and no power.

Voting Is Not Enough: Protect the Election Results - Best of the Left

AMANDA HOFFMAN - ACTIVISM, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:39:37] You've reached the activism portion of today's show. Now that you're informed and angry, here's what you can do about it. Today's activism: Voting is not enough: protect the election results.

We're less than 3 weeks out from Election Day, just 18 days left. And while we'd rather be encouraging you to join a get out the vote campaign and make sure your friends and family are registered and have a voting plan, instead we have to talk today about the big fascist elephant in the room.

We all know that we have severe structural issues to address when it comes to American elections, from voter suppression laws to gerrymandering to the Electoral College. But this year, the threat includes all of those things and something more: the calculated efforts by Trump and the GOP to do everything they possibly can to subvert and sow doubt about the electoral process...and therefore the results.

Trump is loud about his accusations and aspersions, but the GOP is a whole lot quieter -- working behind the scenes at the state level and through their judicial picks to manipulate and pull levers we didn't even know existed until now.

It's not pleasant to think about worse case scenarios, but the best case is sadly unlikely. We need to prepare now for the reality that things will get messy and understand what our role will need to be as citizens in that moment.

First, we'll talk about prevention. The nonpartisan anti-corruption organization RepresentUs has launched "Save the Vote", which includes 6 steps you can take to protect democracy and the first two are key...

Step 1 is to tell your state's top election official to count every vote before declaring a winner. An unprecedented number of Americans are voting by mail and we are already seeing record breaking voting. Counting every vote may take a while and at no point should it be stopped before completion. Make sure your state isn't planning to jump the gun before all of the results are in.

Step 2: Demand your state lawmakers respect the vote count. The Atlantic reported that Trump's campaign has spoken to state legislatures about trying to bypass the vote tally. State lawmakers can prevent this by committing on record to only choosing a winner based on the vote count.

To take immediate action on these steps, go to represent.us and click "save the vote" under their 2020 Election tab. There you'll also find the other four steps, which include a toolkit to help fight disinformation and lies about safe voting options, confirming you are registered to vote, signing up to be a poll worker, and encouraging everyone to vote as early as possible.

But Trump has already said he'll only accept the results if he wins, so what do we do if Trump loses but won't concede?

Protect the Results is a coalition of organizations lead by Indivisible and StandUp America, laying the groundwork for voters to mobilize if Trump does not accept the results of the election. Events are already being organized by voters across the country on November 4th and you can find one near you or plan one yourself. Go to protecttheresults.com to learn more.

And finally, Sunrise Movement has launched "Count on Us", a plan to defeat Trump and Defend the Election. The campaign is one part get out the vote effort and one part trainings and direct action. And if Trump tries to steal the election, they're calling for a mass strike, with the idea that Trump can't govern if the nation's people are not going to work or school.

Go to wecountonus.org to sign up and learn more.

In an article from Waging Nonviolence called "10 things you need to know stop a coup" ... because that's popular reading right now...they point out that "we have to be ready to declare loudly and strongly: this is a coup." Power grabs don't have to look like a military coup with the opposition being arrested. If votes stop being counted or the person who lost tries to take or hold power, we have to call it what it is and not shy away from it.

Look, we all hope it doesn't come to this, but we must be prepared because mass direct action might be our only shot at stopping an attempted coup. Steeling ourselves to be ready gives us a shot if things begin to fall apart.

Every day it just gets more clear: voting is not enough. It's just not.

The segment notes include all the links to this information as well as additional resources, and, once again, this segment is available on the "Voting is Not Enough" page at BestoftheLeft.com/2020action.

So, if stopping an attempted coup in America is important to you -- I sure hope it is -- be sure to spread the word about "Voting Is Not Enough: Protect the election results" so that others in your network can spread the word too.

Protests Put Spotlight on the Relationship Between Armed White Vigilantes, Militia Groups, and Law Enforcement - The Takeaway - Air Date 8-31-20

TANZINA VEGA: [00:43:36] There's been a lot of speculation about the ideology of Kyle Rittenhouse and whether he was connected to any specific far-right groups. What do we know so far?

MICHAEL GERMAN: [00:43:44] Not very much, frankly. One thing that people have to understand is that there is basically no obstacle to joining these groups. If you wanted to put on a Hawaiian shirt and a flak jacket over that and carry some heavy weapons in public, you would automatically be representing the Boogaloo movement.

These organizations don't have top-down, organizational structure and, heavy membership requirements. They're pretty fluid and that's both by design, a practice called leaderless resistance that they use because they understand that they're under police scrutiny, but also because need members, they need people who will contribute or participate in these events. So if they start having any kind of rigorous screening process, they'll not have very many people showing up with them.

TANZINA VEGA: [00:44:42] Michael, in the video of Rittenhouse, one of the videos at least, he clearly says that he's there to protect businesses, this in his words. Michael, who has deputized these folks, and we're talking largely about White men in these militias who are armed, who has deputized them to come around the country and in their own words, protect people and businesses?

MICHAEL GERMAN: [00:45:07] That's just it, nobody has, and these militants are acting as vigilantes, claiming to have a positive mission during the protests, but again, they're completely unregulated. They have no legal authority to be there, and as we see in many of these cases it's not just a business hiring a security guard.

Most States have licensing requirements for security guards, particularly armed security guards, because number one, you don't want people who aren't allowed to have weapons to

be carrying out those duties, but also you want to make sure they have proper liability insurance for when they make a mistake.

This is not any a legal operation at all, which is what's troubling about the police allowing this activity to happen. They've done it so much for so long, over the last couple of years, that it's not surprising that people believe that they're authorized to go out and do that. And that's because law enforcement has not been aggressive in tackling the legal violations these militants engage in while they're out at these protests.

TANZINA VEGA: [00:46:22] Alicia, when we see the video of Rittenhouse, which we described at the very top of the segment here, he again is walking hands up in the air, has just shot multiple people, killed two people, and these armored vehicles are just driving right past him. I mean, this was a stunning display of how law enforcement, either willingly or not, just ignored this threat. How common is that, Alice?

ALICE SPERI: [00:46:49] I think law enforcement is quite comfortable with the presence of individuals like this and groups like this. In fact, government has known about the threat posed by far-right, White supremacist, right-wing extremists for a long time. And it hasn't really done a whole lot to address it. And not only that, but we also know that the government institutions and, the FBI for instance, have been very much aware of the close ties between these groups and these individuals, and law enforcement itself. And that's something that the public has rarely been made aware of. It's something that the FBI certainly not discussing publicly, even though they are very much on alert about this threat.

We actually published a report in 2017, a leaked FBI internal document, that warned that White supremacist groups and far-right groups where we're actively seeking to infiltrate law enforcement. The document basically noted that domestic terrorism investigations often identified active links between these White supremacist extremists, militia extremists, sovereign citizen extremists, and law enforcement officers.

Other than that, and this again was a leaked document, there hasn't been a whole lot of public discussion about this. There's a reason for that, and that is a political reason. There were reports in the past that raised the alarm around this threat, and they were condemned. There was a big upheaval in response to those reports, the government was forced to basically walk them back, and that's why we aren't seeing a lot of public discussions about this yet,

TANZINA VEGA: [00:48:17] Michael, to Alicia's point, I want to play a clip here from FBI director last year, Christopher Wray, talking about the threat of White supremacist violence in the US.

CHRISTOPHER WRAY: [00:48:27] I will say that a majority of the Domestic terrorism cases that we've investigated, are motivated by some version of what you might call White supremacist violence, but it includes other things as well.

TANZINA VEGA: [00:48:44] Michael, are these militia groups part of what Wray is describing there in terms of domestic terror threats and White supremacist, domestic terror threats in particular?

MICHAEL GERMAN: [00:48:55] FBI divides their domestic terrorism portfolio into a number of different categories, and had a separate category for White supremacists. When I was working undercover, in the 1990s, they were one category, White supremacists and far-right militants because there's a lot of overlap between these groups, again, with the low barriers of entry. But they changed that over time and had separate groups for White supremacists and far-right Militants. And it's an interesting way that Wray frames that, because what we have to understand is that White supremacists and far-right Militants are far more active than any of other categories of domestic terrorists the FBI designates so it's a bit of a subterfuge to say we do more investigations against these groups.

And that's why in 2017, Senator Durbin introduced a bill, the Domestic Terrorism Protection Act, that would have required the FBI to produce the data showing the number of what they're considering terrorism incidents, and particularly the deaths from those incidents, on one side of the ledger and the number of investigations the FBI has initiated in each category. So as a result of that bill being introduced, it hadn't even passed, the FBI collapsed its categories so that White supremacists and what the FBI had previously called Black Identity Extremist, were shoved into one category so it would be unclear which group was more active and which group had the most investigations opened against them.

I think that was a way of hiding the fact that even though White supremacists and far-right militants are far more active than any other group, the FBI actually had a disproportionate number of investigation, targeting groups like what the FBI calls ecoterrorists, even though there's no homicides relating to environmental activism in the United States or these so-called Black Identity Extremists, which again, there isn't really a Black Identity movement out there. It was a fictitious category created to basically lump any Black militant into a single category to try to build up the idea that there was this movement that doesn't actually exist.

Robert Evans Are We In a Second Civil War? - The Zero Hour with RJ Eskow - Air Date 10-13-20

ROBERT EVANS: [00:51:21] The thing that's important to me is not that people have any loyalty or feel tied to the state or to their political leaders. It tends to be my belief that basically all of them are trash. I'm not a fan of anybody in politics. It's that Americans don't hate each other and want to kill each other. Right? That's what's important. I don't care if people want, and in fact, I support people wanting, massive sweeping political change. 'Cause there's a lot of things that need to change. The problem is people who shouldn't want to kill each other. Because they have needs and desires and problems in common and it can help each other. It's that. And I think social media, I think kind of the growth of right wing media, starting in like the early nineties. I grew up very conservative. So I'm familiar with what kind of right wing talk radio does to people. Fox News. I think all of this has substantially divided people in artificial ways.

And I think if we're going to pull back from the precipice in the long run, it's a matter of actually building bridges. And that doesn't mean accepting homophobia or whatever. It doesn't mean like letting people continue to get their way on things that are shitty. But it does mean trying to understand. For example, in California, white people who live in rural agricultural areas, maybe shouldn't be subject to the kind of gas taxes that people in the

cities are, because it's an undue burden on their way of life, which requires them to drive around a lot more and use a lot more fuel because they're making our food.

And like maybe the fact that we have a such a system in this country wherein all of these blue States are able to have basically cities that govern the rural red areas, makes people rightfully angry, just as we on the left are angry at being governed by a far right person in the White House.

People don't like that. Maybe there are ways in which to alter the system we live under that allows for kind of more regional autonomy, and also the reduces the power that people get to have over folks who don't live near them and whose needs they don't really understand.

There are some other things that I think are vaguely hopeful, both hopeful and potentially calamitous. So like right now in the United States, since the start of the coronavirus, we've seen an unprecedented expansion in the number of people buying firearms, to the point where the United States is basically out of ammunition, because it's all been sold, like an unbelievable amount of guns have been sold in the last six months.

And that's very frightening in some ways, because obviously we already have so many guns, and the fact that people are arming at such a pace, could portend mass violence.

There's also a level in which it might eventually help to reduce tensions, because one of the things that is one of the major dividing issues in this country, right up there with abortion, is gun rights. And while I don't see a lot of hope for getting people who are antiabortion to kind of come across the aisle because of what they believe abortion is. I think you can actually get people to meet on gun rights. Because when you actually poll the majority of American gun owners, most of them are in favor of some pretty reasonable measures. It's just a matter of the rhetoric around the gun issue has gotten so mad. But now you have huge unprecedented numbers of liberals and people on the left buying firearms for the first time. And maybe that will better enable them. Maybe if they actually get into shooting, it will better enable them to communicate with people on the right about that issue. And also with might reduce paranoia on the right about that issue, about the idea that the left is coming for their guns. And so, I don't know, it's one of those things, like I say, we're kind of on the edge of tragedy and hope here, because I can see positive things coming out of some of the changes that have happened this year, and I can see calamity. And we just don't really know where the cards are gonna fall.

RJ ESKOW - HOST, THE ZERO HOUR: [00:55:22] I got that perspective from your podcast as well, this notion that maybe we need to do a better job understanding, for example, the needs and wishes of a rural people rather than just dismissing them. And I think it's an important perspective. And I think that while we don't tend to be nearly as violent on the left, as on the right, there is certainly a tendency to dismiss and demean people who don't agree with us. I'm not saying I do it or you do it, but a lot of people do do it on the left broadly speaking. And I think that while that's not extremism in the same sense as Boogaloo Boys, it's starting on the road to dehumanization. It's not like the Tutsis and the Hutu or the Bosnians and the Serbs, but it ain't good to dismiss the full dimensionality of any human group of human beings, rather than trying to figure out, well, I don't like the way they vote, but maybe they've got legitimate grievances that aren't being addressed by my agenda. How do I figure that out?

So, I really appreciate your point of view on that. And, if I may, before I let you go Robert Evans, I would also say that one of the things you do in the podcast is you point out that -- it's a strange way to put it, I guess -- but one of the upsides of civil war, as horrible as it is, is that it can give people a sense of purpose and a sense that their lives have meaning.

And so for me, the challenge is how do we address that unique human need for purpose and meaning in a more constructive way that doesn't involve violence or division, but causes us, as blues skies as it sounds, to work together toward common goals. Because to me, that's the best cure for civil war.

Kathleen Belew Explains the Long History of the White Power Movement and its Global Plans for "Race War" - The Truth Report w. Chauncey DeVega - Air Date 5-26-19

CHAUNCEY DeVEGA - HOST, THE TRUTH REPORT: [00:57:13] The Republican party is the country's largest White identity organization and it's been so at least since the sixties and the Southern strategy, but then the rhetorical shift is that White supremacists are those people over there, Kluxers, and Nazis, and people want to blow folks up and shoot up mosques. It can't possibly be day to day racism by otherwise well-meaning White folks, because we're getting to dangerous thinking now. These are dangerous ideas cause now you're implicating a whole culture.

KATHLEEN BELEW: [00:57:37] And I think it does implicate large portions of our culture. I mean, I think White supremacists is simply a system that seeks to benefit White people above other people and people who believe that that system should be made that way.

So there are people who do that overtly and there are people who benefit from it without interrogating what that means, but both of them are participating in a system of White supremacy. The other thing I would just say is, I think that this is one place where the history of the White power movement actually reveals something about broader American society and the shifts that we've seen in the last short stretch.

So my book is about the period from the end of the Vietnam war to the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, which is the period when this movement really cohered and radicalized. And I talk about people like Klansmen, neo-Nazis, skinheads, silent tax resisters, Christian identity proponents, Odinists, and others who kind of all came together under this flexible ideology that connected them in the White power movement. And one of the interesting things about this is that this story gives us a piece of the history that had been missing from many people's common understanding. Because there was sort of an idea on both the left and the right about kind of a myth of being beyond race. So, on the left we talked a lot about the post-racial moment and what the Obama presidency meant for our country. People sort of thought we were moving past some of this. And I think even on the right, a lot of people sort of had it belief system around this. And you can look at things like colorblind conservatism or multiculturalism, people really were invested in the idea that there was a progress narrative in the United States about race. In that moment when people were so

invested in that feeling of progress, actually, there was this very violent fringe movement where overt racism and racist violence had relocated and were mobilizing both people and ideas and resources on the fringes. And it's a through line that can kind of explain how we got from one of those things to our present moment.

CHAUNCEY DeVEGA - HOST, THE TRUTH REPORT: [00:59:34] So Charlottesville. When you saw a young White men chanting, "the Jews will not replace us", or "they will not replace us" the Odinists and others, cause I told folks this, this is not funny. Like somebody who's sending out these images, "Oh, they're dressed like teenage mutant turtles", I was like, well, the clan are dressed like Confederate ghosts. Those symbols have meaning for people in that community. You have to understand what they're signaling. But when you saw Charlottesville, was it confirmation of what you'd been studying? Were you shocked to be like, Oh my goodness, this is right out of the literature? I mean, what was going through your mind?

KATHLEEN BELEW: [01:00:03] When we see an event like Charlottesville, I think that the sort of performative nature of it and the uniformed nature of it, and the highly photogenic nature of it, tell us that this is a planned event that's highly organized. We should think about it as part of a public facing strata of White power activity.

I think the historical archive makes me ask two questions. One of them is where are the women? Because in Charlottesville we saw almost, I think exclusively, or maybe only a few women, but in every other moment of White power activism, and even in Klan activism going back before the Vietnam war, women have done an incredibly important set of jobs for the movement that range from the reproductive work of bearing the White children that are required to avoid racial annihilation, to the symbolic work of signaling purity and virtue, to real activism of disguising people and driving getaway cars, to the social network stuff like marriages and taking care of each other's children. And all of that stuff has been very, very important, to the movement.

So my second question—in the period that I look at, the archive shows us two different spheres of White power organizing. One of them is this public facing, above board, outward. So I would include things like Charlottesville, rallies, marches, political campaigns, recruitment drives, public events, screenings of *Birth of a Nation*. And then at the same time in the period of my study, there's this complicated and very violent underground that's doing all kinds of other stuff. Paramilitary camp training, amassing weapons and material from armories and military posts, assassinating enemies, robbing armored cars and distributing millions of dollars to other groups around the country, training people in how to use the early internet. So those two spheres are usually conducted in the earlier period by the same people. And people are very, very flexible about circulating through legal and illegal activity. But the thing is that illegal part, the underground, is hardly ever visible at the time that it's happening. Right? So as a historian to get the archive that you need to really look at that it's going to take another 10 to 20 years cause you need court cases, and FBI surveillance files, and all kinds of other documentation. So I think one thing to think about is just that when I see that public facing stuff, I assume that the underground is also active. The wave of violence we're now in seems to confirm that.

CHAUNCEY DeVEGA - HOST, THE TRUTH REPORT: [01:02:24] So you have this horrific event in New Zealand. Well this didn't happen last week, it didn't kind of plan three weeks ago,

there's a lag. So you're going to see more and more of these events, and because the mainstream news media is conditioned to the now, the immediate present, that the format doesn't allow for a sustained discussion. So how do we understand this as an example of the global color line? Thinking about what are these international networks and connections.

KATHLEEN BELEW: [01:02:47] On the one hand, I think that we can trace inflows to the United States and in the earlier period, the kind of most visible examples might be the way that British Israelism came into the United States through Canada in the 1920s and 30s and then became Christian identity, or the skinhead culture which came to us from Great Britain and then became sort of a hyper racialized phenomenon in urban centers in the late eighties in the U.S.. But then, groups in the U.S. are also, in that same period, sending things out. So like Aryan Nations did mailings to all kinds of different countries, the *Turner Diaries* shows up in bookstores as far away as South Africa.

And then some groups, Wotansvolk and World Church of the Creator, have chapters in, I think 41, countries for Wotansvolk and then World Church of the Creator definitely was in Australia. So if you're an activist in Australia, you can access things on the internet but you can also read reprinted, American White power materials, like newspapers. You can send away for mail order sermons. It really is a milieu of stuff going around and connecting these places.

And then back to your question about the transnational color line. I mean, this movement sees violence as a step in eventual global race war, but it wants to start in the communities and countries that it thinks it can salvage from racial others. So this movement has, through this entire period, been focused on the United States, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Southern Africa, and Europe as places that are "White enough" to still be saved through the kind of warfare that they are planning.

CHAUNCEY DeVEGA - HOST, THE TRUTH REPORT: [01:04:22] Which are not coincidentally White racial settler States, at least three of them.

KATHLEEN BELEW: [01:04:25] Not coincidentally, these are settler colonial states often, yes. Minority rule places like Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, have special significance in that way as well. The way that this color line thing is important is also connected to one of the main things that people need to understand about an event like the shooting at Christchurch, which is that the spectacular moment of violence is not in itself the end goal of that action. He's not done. What he wants is for that moment of action to inspire other people, to awaken other White people, to create political risks that spur government action, that will then awaken other White people. And this is all part of a long game that is meant to awaken White people in seizing White homelands, seizing different White nations that I just described, and then eventually annihilating people of color around the world.

CHAUNCEY DeVEGA - HOST, THE TRUTH REPORT: [01:05:16] How is the internet being used to radicalize this generation? Basically, his manifesto is a set of memes.

KATHLEEN BELEW: [01:05:22] So I do think that the technology seems new to us but actually is not new to this movement. So because the White power movement went online in proto internet, computer message boards in 1983/84 with Liberty Net, and on those message boards was posting content, including not only assassination lists, but also things like personal ads and recipes. So it was precisely doing the work of Facebook before Facebook.

They've been doing that for decades. I think they've been effectively motivating social network activism since before the rest of us were familiar with that as an idea.

But I think the new part of this is more in a viral and first person shooter game aesthetic, and in a series of memes. I will say that the manifesto to me also calls back to some essay collections published in the prior movement. Sort of the short, topical essays is a format that many other White power writers have used. The Klan and the White power movement both have used a method of activism that has attempted to mobilize existing cultural form to appeal to and recruit people.

So, when I teach this to undergraduates I like to show a picture of what a women's Klan road looked like in the 1920s, because they're very fashionable and streamlined and showing some ankle, and it was a very, for that moment, a cool thing to do. Right?

The Klan in the twenties was about joining clubs and going out in your new motor car and having something to do with all of the time that you now have in the transformed American economy and the man who founded the second Klan was also in his, let me see if I can remember them all, the Knight's Templar, the Pythians, the Odd Fellows, and I think two churches as well as the Klan.

So the Klan is, everything we have learned about it, it's a violent, vigilante, hyper-nationalist group in the twenties, but it's also just a cool thing to do in the twenties.

CHAUNCEY DeVEGA - HOST, THE TRUTH REPORT: [01:07:08] It's a civil society organization for social capital.

KATHLEEN BELEW: [01:07:11] I use the word cool actually, because in the eighties you see the same thing in that it's a very serious and para militarized thing, but part of the reason it's able to do that is because paramilitary culture is cool in the eighties. The moment of paintball in camo fatigues and early video games. So we're seeing something similar again now when this first person shooter/viral culture, there's a new aesthetic for this generation of White power activists.

CHAUNCEY DeVEGA - HOST, THE TRUTH REPORT: [01:07:36] The general public does still not understand about the Oklahoma City bombing because that's another story. When you want to connect some dots and start drawing arrows, and think about connective tissue in a way that these movements mobilize and how deadly they are. Why are we still getting that story wrong?

KATHLEEN BELEW: [01:07:49] It's especially striking to me as an absence because the Oklahoma City bombing is the largest domestic mass casualty event in the United States between Pearl Harbor and 9/11. Those are huge events, and we spend an enormous amount of cultural energy and high school history curricula in understanding the others. We spend a lot of time on Pearl Harbor and 9/11. But people still have a understanding of the Oklahoma City bombing as the work of one or a few people, and it's that lone wolf narrative again. It's understood as the work of a lone wolf or a madman or a few bad apples.

When we do that, it is detached from the decades of organizing that shaped and conscripted that act of violence. I think that that is important also, because as I said before, the violence isn't the end point. McVeigh wasn't just going for a single mass casualty event, he wanted to

awaken and inspire other activists. And in our present moment, we have this emergent hagiography of McVeigh, a worship of what he has done and what he has carried out.

I think it's very important to understand that action and what it meant, not only within the history of the White power movement that I studied, but also what it means to activists that are being radicalized today.

CHAUNCEY DeVEGA - HOST, THE TRUTH REPORT: [01:08:57] During the PBS interview, when you actually talked about it, explained race war, the host look shocked, and I'm sure that she's not the only one who's actually shocked that these people are serious. I've actually interviewed and talked to White supremacists in person one on one, and they are very, very serious, this is not a game, this is not empty rhetoric.

Why do you think people are surprised when they hear race war and they actually don't understand that it's real? Like what's going on cognitively or is it emotionally or both? We have a lot of folks, journalists and others, general public, who thinks that's something other than what it actually described.

KATHLEEN BELEW: [01:09:29] First of all, because I think there's a whole lot of dissembling about this on the part of White power activists, but this is what is so important about understanding the *Turner Diaries*, because it answers the question that is fundamentally important to taking serious, "what does activism mean?".

The *Turner Diaries* answers the question of how could a tiny fringe movement possibly think they could do this and pull it off. How did they think that they could face off against the most militarized super-state in the history of the world and win? I think in the *Turner Diaries* they use a quote, like a gnat trying to assassinate an elephant. But what the *Turner Diaries* is and why it becomes such a central text in this movement, I can tell you is not because it's compelling read or something, it's because it lays out an answer to this question. It lays out a way that a very small and embattled group could, perhaps they think in this book, figure out how to wage asymmetrical combat, guerrilla warfare, on a state. Significantly, they do it through baiting the Soviet Union into a counter strike and then how to seize nuclear weapons and then use them to take over the nation and then the world. And it lays out a imaginative map that people could believe that they could do this.

And taking seriously that belief I think is very, very difficult, but very important. It's much easier and much more simple to just say these are only a few people, these are crazy people, these are despicable people, but I have to say you can't get to an understanding of the ideology without exercising some historical empathy to understanding what these actions mean within the worldview espoused by these people and figuring out from there, what they think might be possible.

Did Trump's "Liberate Michigan" Result in Kidnapped Governor? - Thom Hartmann Program - Air Date 10-8-20

THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THE THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM: [01:11:12] This is a cancer in the United States. This is a cancer that we have had in this country for a long, long time,

domestic terrorism that is fundamentally based in racism well, to some extent even sexism, misogyny, but in particular on racism. We had the Klan back in the 19th century and through the 20th century and now we've got -- the Klan has been reinvented under a variety of names as these right-wing militia groups. And the idea is, as Mike Lee said, we're not a democracy, we're a republic. We're run by a small group of people. We're actually a representative republic which is one of the definitions of a democracy.

But anyway, this is extraordinarily destructive stuff. This is very, very dangerous stuff. And you go back, you look at what Tim McVeigh did when he blew up the Oklahoma City Federal Building. In my humble opinion, I mean, you know, just two years before that, you had Waco with David Koresh and I believe it was a year before that you had, Randy Weaver getting killed by federal officers. Koresh and Weaver were both basically right-wing, hardcore White supremacists, armed insurrectionists.

And the book that these people were reading back then, the book that actually animated Tim McVeigh, according to Tim McVeigh, was a book called *The Turner Diaries*. And *The Turner Diaries* is a novel. It's a rather poorly written novel. It's kind of on par with Ayn Rand's writing, you know, it's juvenile. It's the kind of stuff that you would expect coming out of a high school student or a first attempt by a young person. It's worldview is so simplistic. But basically, in *The Turner Diaries* you've got this story of White people who are, well, actually, they're trying to rebel against government. Where it starts is they blow up a federal building. And I believe it was in Oklahoma City; it's been 20 years since I read the book. it might've been someplace else. It might've been in the Midwest. But they blow up a federal building, and in response to that, the Administration — and this was not a partisan book, it's not Democrats or Republicans. It's just, you know, like White nationalist versus America — and in response to this group, this militia group blowing up this federal building, the President and the federal government pass laws banning all guns and start taking guns away from people.

And as a result of that, militias get activated. They rise up. The guys who have got 10, 15 assault weapons in their basement and a thousand rounds of ammunition, they rise up. They go out in the streets, and they start killing people a second civil war erupts, and the book is devoted to that. And then at the end of the book, the White-guy militia men, the members, the guys with their assault weapons and all the bullets have succeeded in killing almost all of the people of color in this country, African Americans, Hispanics Jews, he's throwing them into that category in *Turner Diaries* — and at the very end the strong, proud White men are standing there holding their guns and saying we have taken back our country.

Summary

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:14:59] We've just heard clips today, starting with Democracy Now, laying out the details of the kidnapping plot. WBNS did a local report on the history of militias. The Takeaway compared multiple groups, including the Proud Boys, the Boogaloo movement and militias. CounterSpin spoke with Mary McCord about why militias are very explicitly not protected by law as they seem to believe. RE-EDUCATION on YouTube explained the "great replacement" conspiracy theory.

Members then heard three bonus clips, including the Takeaway, explaining the somewhat friendly dynamic between police, FBI enforcement, and right-wing militias. The Zero Hour with RJ Eskow had on Robert Evans to discuss strategies for avoiding a second civil war. And

Chauncey Devega on the Truth Report spoke with Kathleen Belew about long history of the white power movement often linked to militias and their plans for a global race war.

Then we all came back together and all heard Thom Hartmann explaining the plot of the *Turner Diaries*, which is basically the fantasy manual for how white supremacists could win a race war. For non-members those bonus clips I mentioned are linked in the show notes and are part of the transcript for today's episode. So you can still find them if you make the effort, but to hear that and all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly into your podcast feed, sign up to support the show at bestoftheleft.com/support or request a financial hardship membership, because we hate the idea of a lack of funds as being a barrier to you, hearing more information. So every request, is granted, no questions asked.

And now, we'll hear from you.

In response to Craig's progressive myth and identity politics - Alex

VOICEDMAILER: ALEX: [01:16:46] Hello Jay, this is Alex.

VOICEDMAILER: ALEX: [01:16:47] Regarding this discussion over the need for a new national myth, I'm a little surprised no one else said this:

I forget the caller's name but someone argued for a progressive narrative of American history, whereby rights and inclusion gradually expand which benefits everyone.

VOICEMAILER: CRAIG FROM OHIO: [01:17:02] Hey, Jay, it's Craig from Ohio. I for, I guess about 25 years since I've been paying close attention to politics, have believed that what that myth should be is what I call the progressive myth. Everyone for everyone, you know, would you fight for your neighbor? Everyone's in it together, we leave no one behind. Progress is for everyone, not just for individuals or various groups.

And it's why I've sort of been distressed over the past, I don't know, several years, five, 10 years, about identity and struggles between groups taking a more prominent role in our politics. Not because I have any objection to the complaints of women, minorities, immigrants. I think they're all valid. And I think that they need to be called out. But the problem is, it seems to divide us into factions, which is against the progressive myth as I conceive of it.

VOICEDMAILER: ALEX: [01:18:10] Unless I'm misunderstanding here, it seems like they said that focusing too much on oppressed minorities can drive people away and we should instead talk about how things have gotten better. This is a huge problem, and I'm honestly surprised that the only feedback on the most recent episode was generally positive about this vision.

That myth of progressive incrementalism is **already** the myth most Americans cling to. It has a lot of holes:

-It absolves us of the responsibility to make amends for past oppression, and ignores current oppression.

-It coddles us into thinking that things will naturally just get better without us doing anything to make it so.

-It ignores that the prosperity and stability that allows many to feel like they belong is directly based on the oppression and exploitation of others.

And what I feel is the most important criticism:

- the reason the social justice left focuses on oppressed people is *precisely because* they have been ignored, left behind, and exploited. By not listening to them or de-emphasizing their struggles we are merely enabling their continued oppression, and actively preventing the very expansion of rights and inclusion that the caller and others are supposedly celebrating.

Honestly, the caller sounded like they were essentially advocating for “colorblindness,” which as you’ve discussed is counterproductive. Apologies if I’ve mischaracterized the caller’s viewpoint, but this is the way it sounded to me.

Love the show, best wishes.

VOTE on what you know about, VoicedMails™ - Stacy from San Francisco Bay Area

VOICEMAILER: STACY FROM SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: [01:19:27] Hi, Jay, this is Stacy from the Bay area. I'm calling in, not in response to any specific episode, but rather with just a general... message? Plea? Whatever you want to call it, for everybody listening. And that is this: if you don't know about all of the people and all of the propositions on your ballot, you know, there's school board, there's a health board. There are all these things that might be really hard to find information about the candidates running. I'm in California. We have Prop 14 through Prop 25. And so that's a lot of texts to read through. If you're clear on two or three of them, then vote on those. This is what I called to tell you about Vote on the offices that you know about. You know that this presidential election is between Donald the Hut and Joe Biden. And I'm real clear on which one that I'm going to vote for. Obviously it's going to be Biden. Biden was not my first pick in the primary. And I don't mind saying that. But he and Senator Harris are certainly my pick over Donald the Hut and Pence the Dense in the presidential election.

And so back to the point at hand, vote on the offices that you're secure about, that you know you have an idea about. If you don't know about the person running for school board, leave it blank. It's okay. Because your vote will still be counted for the bubbles that you filled in.

Likewise for the propositions that are facing you now, here in California, we've got a bunch of them, and I blame no one for not reading all of the tiny, tiny, tiny, fine print font, on Prop 14, which is the only one that we get in print mail to everyone because by law, we get print mailers of bond measures. Prop 14 is the only bond measure. The others, 15 to 25, are initiatives or legislative ballots. So if you don't feel confident casting your vote yay or nay on any of those, then don't fill it in. Fill in the ones that you are confident on and send your ballot in. Your ballot will be counted. The votes that you cast will be counted.

You know, when we get the results back and we see a tiny percentage on these really obscure little initiatives, these little obscure propositions, that's because people didn't know and didn't vote. But their vote on the top of the ticket was still counted.

Every bubble you fill in will be counted. And if you don't fill in a bubble, it doesn't matter. Send your ballot in. Vote on what you're confident about voting for. Well done, you!

Oh, and Jay, I have to say that I love, love, love, the VoicedMail thing that you're doing now. I'm a voice actor myself. So that's why I'm not using, one of the other very talented VoicedMail things that you offer. But how brilliant is that? I mean, I'm also a depressed person that doesn't like to interact all that much. And I totally get it that people feel insecure about how they sound, and would like very much to have a good voice actor to read their script. That's brilliant. Brilliant. Thank you for doing that.

Anyway, y'all vote. Vote vote, vote, vote, vote on the things that you are confident about and do it.

Thanks Jay. Bye bye.

Final comments on the interesting wrinkle of two Trump-haters being involved in the kidnapping plot

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:24:01] Thanks for listening everyone. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show. Thanks to the monosyllabic transcriptionist trio, Ben, Dan, and Ken for their volunteer work helping put our 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 or wrote in their messages to be played as VoicedMails. If you'd like to leave a comment or question of your own to be played on the show, you can record a message at (202) 999-3991. Or write me a message to jay@bestofleft.com.

I just want to wrap up today by alerting you to the fact that right wing media would very much like for you to know that two, at least two, of the men arrested in connection to the Whitmer kidnapping plot are actually not pro-Trump right wing nut jobs, but are anti-government in general anarchist nut jobs. And so the articles that you would see written if you were to search for something along those lines, is that the mainstream media, and particularly the liberal media, is lying to you and duping you into believing that the whole plot and all the people behind it are Trump-supporting militants who heard him say to liberate Michigan and snapped into action to do the will of their great leader. But as it turns out, a couple of them are anarchists. Therefore, I guess the assumption is, it blows the whole narrative completely out of the water. So, I'm happy to mention that that is the case, that it very much seems to be the case, that a couple of them are anarchists. Which when you think about it, is not really that strange that an anarchist anti-government people are going to find some common cause with extreme right wing anti-government people, especially when the target is a Democrat, because you got the Trump supporters arrested in relation to the kidnapping plot. The vast majority of them by appearances seem to be Trump supporting Republican party-supporting hard right wing conservatives. But for them to make common cause with an anarchist or two, who don't just hate Democrats, but hate everyone in

government, it's really not that surprising. So I just wanted to point out that that is a fact, as far as people can tell at the moment, that a couple of anarchists who the right wing conservative media wants to label and just equate with the left. If you're an anarchist, it means you're on the left. You're basically canvassing for Biden. And so they are framing that as if it throws a wrench in the entire framing of everyone in the media talking about this story and the fact that it just doesn't. It is interesting. It's a wrinkle. It is more nuanced and complicated than many are presenting it as. But it doesn't actually change the broad structures of being anti-government, the structures and mentality behind the militia movement. And what's interesting is that some anarchists are finding common cause with obviously explicitly right-wing militias because the right wing militias are being emboldened as we're describing, emboldened by Trump and everything he said, not just the "liberate the states" tweets. But you know what what's odd is that right wing militias usually spike during Democratic presidencies. But in this instance, they're spiking under a Republican presidency for reasons that should be obvious to anyone.

And so for an anarchist who knows where exactly they would place themselves on the political spectrum, they hate literally everyone in government, and as any good conservative will tell you, the left loves government. We love big government. We love the government doing stuff for us. There's a whole lot to love about the government, if you're on the left.

So to say that anarchists are on the left is going to need a little bit more explanation than that to be convincing. So I'll go as far as to say that it is interesting that anarchists who fall somewhere on the political spectrum are finding common cause with extreme right wing conservative militias who are usually only anti-government when Democrats are in charge, but are kind of anti-government when Trump is in charge because Trump is in charge of the government, but also is against it, but he really is just in favor of anyone who vaguely supports him and people who support him mostly hate the government. So, you know, it's a little complicated. And these groups are finding common cause at a moment when there's heightened stress, there's heightened frustration with the government when the government is trying to respond to a pandemic. And then when the target in question is a Democrat, Oh, here's where all the threads come together. And it's not actually the least bit surprising that all of their motivations align to the point that they can make common cause.

If you want to learn more about all the people arrested as part of this plot, the Detroit Free Press did a good in-depth analysis on all of them, went and talk to their family and their ex-lovers and their neighbors and whatnot. So it's just a piece written by the staff of the Detroit Free Press titled, "13 men charged in alleged kidnapping plot, many with troubled pasts," one of the least-surprising headlines I've read recently. What you will learn when you read that article is that, with the exception of the anarchists who are two out of the 13, the people are pretty much who you expect them to be: they're people who have had troubled lives, who have a lot of alcohol related to their life, a lot of anger, a lot of violence, a lot of guns, poverty, living in rural areas, and getting frustrated at the government and finding each other at pro-gun rallies. Not that complicated.

So if you come across anyone saying that the media is lying to you about who was actually behind the plot, just go ahead and drop a link to that article to them.

As always, keep the comments coming in at (202) 999-3991, or by emailing me to jay@BestoftheLeft.com.

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.

And by the way, a listener wrote in recently saying that, or asking, who the song is, or what the song is, that plays after the activism, which made me realize that I had not been including that in the notes recently. So if you want to find that, the singer's name is Theo Bard and the song is "This Fickle World." But the link is now in the show notes, so you can find out where to buy it -- I think it's only available to purchase on one website on the Internet and not available anywhere else, so you have to go find it there. But I highly recommend it.

So finally, 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.