

#1378 Bracing for Impact (Election 2020, #AllVotesMatter)

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:00:00] Welcome to this episode of the award-winning Best of the Left podcast, which we shall use to brace ourselves for the election, consider what may come after it, and prepare for the role we may need to play in the coming weeks. Clips today are from a *Ted Talk* from Van Jones, *Amicas* from Slate, the *Michael Brooks Show*, the *Truth Report* with Chauncey DeVega, a talk from AOC, *Deadline White House* on MSNBC and *Strange Days* with Fernand Amandi.

What if a US presidential candidate refuses to concede after an election? - TED - Air Date 10-26-20 **VAN JONES:**

[00:00:27] OK, as an attorney, as a political commentator, and frankly, as a former White House official, I used to think I knew a lot about how America picks a president. I was wrong, I did not know.

And this year, I've been doing some research into some of the fine print and all the different things in our constitution that we never talk about, and I've discovered some legal loopholes that shocked me, I guarantee will shock you, and could determine the way that the presidential election of 2020 turns out.

For instance, did you know that under our constitution a presidential candidate could actually lose the popular vote, fail to get a majority in the electoral college, refuse to concede, manipulate hidden mechanisms in our government and still get sworn in as the President of the United States of America? That's a true fact. I know it sounds like some crazy "House of Cards" episode, and I wish it was, because then we could just change the channel, but I just described to you a real-world, real-life possibility that could occur this year, the year I'm talking, in 2020, or in some other year, if we don't fix some of these glitches in our system.

So if you think, though, that the American people's choice in a US presidential election should actually be sworn in to become President of the United States, please pay attention to this talk. I'm going to teach you how to stop a coup, OK?

Now, where to begin? Alright, how about this: It turns out that one of the main safeguards of US democracy is not in the constitution at all. It's not in the law at all. It's actually just a little tradition, it's a little custom. And yet, this one voluntary gesture is one of the main reasons that you almost never have riots and bloodshed and strife after a US election. What I'm talking about is a concession speech. OK, it's ironic, it's the one speech no presidential candidate ever wants to give, and yet, it is that public address that is most important for the health and the well-being of our nation. It's that speech, you know, when a presidential contender gives, it's after the advisers come and the media tells them, "Look, you're not going to get enough votes to be able to hit that magic number of 270 electoral college votes. You're just not going to get there."

At that moment -- you don't think about this, but the fate of the entire republic is in the hands of a single politician and their willingness to walk out there and stand in front of their family and stand in front of the cameras and stand in front of the whole nation and say, " I am conceding the race, voluntarily. Thank you to my supporters. The other person has won now, congratulations to them, let's unite behind them, let's move on, let's be one country. God bless America." You've seen it a thousand times.

Make no mistake, this is a remarkable tradition in our country. Because at that moment, that candidate still has at her command a nationwide army of campaign activists, of die-hard partisans, tens of thousands of people. They could just as easily take up arms, take to the streets, they could do whatever they want to. But that concession speech instantly demobilizes all of them. It says, "Hey, guys, stand down. Folks, it's over." Moreover, that concession speech helps the tens of millions of people who voted for that person to accept the outcome. Acknowledge the winner, however begrudgingly, and then just get up the next morning, go to work, go to school, maybe disappointed but not disloyal to America's government.

And even more importantly, that concession speech has a technical function in that it kind of allows all the other stuff that our constitution requires after the voting, and there are a bunch of steps like, you've got the electoral college that has got to meet, you've got Congress who's got to ratify this thing, you've got an inauguration to be had, all that stuff can just move ahead on automatic pilot because after the concession speech, every subsequent step to either reinstate the president or elevate a new president just happens on a rubber-stamp basis. The constitution requires it, but it's a rubber stamp.

But we sometimes forget, candidates do not have to concede. There's nothing that makes them concede. It's just a norm in a year in which nothing is normal. So what if a losing candidate simply refuses to concede? What if there is no concession speech? Well, what could happen might terrify you. I think it should.

First, to give you the background, let's make sure we're on the same page, let me give you this analogy. Think about a presidential election as a baseball game. The end of the ninth inning, whoever is ahead wins, whoever is behind loses. That's baseball. But could you imagine a different world in which, in baseball, there were actually 13 innings, or 14 innings, not just nine. But we just had a weird tradition. If you are behind in the ninth inning, you just come out and concede. Alright? So all those other innings don't matter. That's really how the presidential elections work in America. Because the constitution actually spells out two different sets of innings.

You've got the popular election process that everybody pays attention to. And then you've got the elite selection process that everybody essentially ignores. But in a close election, if nobody concedes, the second invisible process, these extra innings if you will, they actually matter a whole lot. Let me explain.

That first set of innings, popular election, it's what you think about when you think about the presidential election. It's the primaries, the caucuses, the debates, the conventions, it's election night, it's all that stuff. Most of the time, the loser on election night at that point just concedes. Why? " The American people have spoken." All that. But according to the constitution, the game is technically not over.

After the cameras go away, after the confetti's swept away, the constitution requires this whole other set of innings. This elite selection process stuff, and this is all behind closed doors, it's among government officials. And this process goes from the end of the vote counting in November, through December all the way and then January. You just never think about it, because for so many generations, these extra innings haven't mattered much because the election-night loser just concedes. So this other stuff is just a formality.

Even in 2000, vice president Al Gore gave up as soon as the Supreme Court ordered an end to the vote counting. Gore did not continue the fight into the state legislatures, into the electoral college, into Congress, he didn't try to discredit the results in the press. Frankly, he didn't send his supporters out into the streets with protest signs or pitchforks or long guns. As soon as the court said the vote count is done, he just conceded to George W. Bush. Because that's what we do, that's just kind of how we do things around here. You don't fight in the extra innings.

Until maybe 2020, when one major candidate is already saying he may not accept the results of the vote counting. Curse you 2020.

So what can happen instead? Instead of conceding, a losing candidate could launch a ferocious fight to grab power anyway. Or to hold onto power anyway. In the courts, yes. But also in the state houses, electoral college, even in Congress. They could file, for instance, dozens of lawsuits attempting to block the counting of millions of, like, mail-in ballots, saying they should all be thrown out, they're all fraudulent. Then, they could demand that the states refuse to certify the election because of all this alleged fraud, or interference from a foreign power. Or the loser's party could send a rival slate of electors to the electoral college or to Congress, and say, "We're the real electors," and create a whole situation with that. Any of this stuff could create such a mess in the electoral college and the Congress, that the whole matter just winds up in front of the House of Representatives for the first time since the 1800s.

Now, here's where it gets totally crazy. If the presidential election winds up in the House of Representatives, they don't have to pay any attention at all to the popular vote or the electoral vote. It's like the election never happened. And then it gets even crazier. The final tally in the House is taken not by delegates but by delegation. In other words, individual congresspeople don't get to vote. It's done by states.

Now, get your head wrapped around this. In 2020, the majority of Americans live in blue states, but there are more red states. So there's a possibility that the Republicans in the House of Representatives could just anoint their candidate to be president, even without the popular vote, or a majority in electoral college. That could happen.

Now some people would call that outcome a perfectly legal, perfectly constitutional coup against the very idea of majority rule in the United States. That is possible under our constitution, and it can happen this year.

So what can you do about it? OK now, keep in mind, if the margin of the victory is so massive, it's truly massive, the losing candidate's political party is going to walk away and just let their leader go down. Nobody is going to risk a constitutional crisis to save somebody who is super unpopular.

But if the race is close, all bets are off. And then the fight could continue long past election night. You could be, you know, trying to deal impact this whole other process you never heard of before. You're going to have to be lobbying, protesting, speaking out, contacting lawmakers, a whole other process you've never done before.

So landing in this completely unfamiliar scenario, what can you do? How are we supposed to act? What are we supposed to do in this situation? There's basically three things that matter.

Number one, get informed. A number of progressive organizations are already working hard to warn Americans about this growing threat to our democracy. Some organizations you could look into and research for yourself: choosedemocracy.us, electiontaskforce.org, protectdemocracy.org, mobilize.us, allamericans.org, civicalliance.com and the Fight Back table at demos.org. All these groups are working on this. Now, on the right, if that's your cup of tea, you could also check out The Heritage Foundation or the Government Accountability Institute. They are focused on voter fraud. But you've got to get informed, no matter what side you're on.

Also, number two, you've got to get loud. You've got to get loud. Situation like this, these days, everybody is a media channel. You are the media. So use your own voice. And when you do, my advice: speak to universal American values, not the partisan stuff, OK? Speak to the American values that every American should be down with, no matter what party they're in. The idea that every voter counts and that every vote should be counted, that's an American value, period. The notion that the majority should rule in America, that's an American value. The idea that an incumbent president should concede honorably and graciously and ensure a peaceful transfer of power, rather than trying to use every trick in the book to hang on to power, that's an American value too. If you stick with those values, you're going to be heard by a lot more people and help bring the country together.

And lastly, sorry folks, voting is not enough, You're going to have to get active, get involved. You could join and support with your money. Some existing organizations, powerful groups, like the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the ACLU, NAACP, Legal Defense Fund, Indivisible, ColorOfChange.org, these groups are going to be fighting in the courts, fighting in Congress, to try to make sure that we have a fair outcome. Those groups could use your help and your donations.

But if it gets to the point where you feel that you have to take it to the streets, that you're going to have to go outside and demonstrate and march and protest, please do it peacefully. This is not just philosophy or morality. A lot of studies have shown that it's the peaceful protests that are more successful at challenging these would-be dictators and reversing coup attempts. It's the peaceful ones, why? Because when the protests turn violent, all that chaos and carnage actually chases away supporters. So rather than demonstrations getting bigger, and the protests getting bigger, they start to shrink. Then the government looks reasonable when it cracks down.

So it's actually a lot better to follow the guidance of the late great Gene Sharp. Now he has written beautifully and well about how strategically you can roll back a coup just using very smart, very disciplined, very nonviolent protest. And a lot of his best ideas, and people have been influenced by that, are available in a new guidebook called *Hold the Line*. You can look it up, it's called *Hold the Line, The Guide to Defending Democracy*. You can get that at

holdthelineguide.com. And that can give you a real good framework to move forward in a smart, peaceful way if you feel that you've got to take it to the streets.

Now look, I know all this stuff is overwhelming, and I've got to admit, some of these steps may not be enough. A truly rogue president could call on private armed militia to try to intimidate lawmakers into keeping him or her in power. Or they could just abuse their emergency powers and try to stay in office indefinitely. So we've got some real problems in our system.

The best way to stop a coup is to update and strengthen our democratic system as soon as this election is over. Maybe we need to rethink, reimagine or just get rid of this whole electoral college, extra innings thing in the first place. I know for sure we've got to do a better job of protecting voter rights, of prosecuting voter intimidation, and also making sure we've got the technology that nobody needs to be afraid of voter fraud. These are the steps that we're going to have to take to make sure that we have a democracy and the democracy endures. Because never forget this: in the long sweep of human history, a democratic republic is the rarest form of government on earth. Democracies are fragile. Democracies can fail. And what citizens do or fail to do in a moment of crisis can determine the final fate of government of, by and for the people.

So let's do our best, vote, but this time, we've got to stay vigilant and active, even after the ballots have been counted. We've got to stay active all the way through to inauguration day. But I want to say to you, I will support the winner of a free and fair election, no matter which candidate wins. And I will oppose any so-called winner who prevails by twisting the process beyond recognition.

Because any American should be willing to concede an election, but no American should concede the core principles of democracy itself.

Thank you.

The American Contest - Law, justice, and the courts:

Amicus With Dahlia Lithwick - Air Date 10-24-20DAHLIA

LITHWICK - HOST, AMICUS: [00:15:05] Before we leave the structural question of minority rule, I think I want to ask, I have been saying for probably three years now that there is clearly a design flaw when you have gerrymandered legislative districts that are not apportioned one person, one vote, then you have a wildly malapportioned Senate in which if you're in California or Wyoming, you have the same amount of representation. And then you have a president who did not win the majority of the vote. So it seems as though the entire structure is existing to preserve minority rule. And I know, as you've said, that's not always been the case, and we can talk about that. But then larded up over that, now you have a Supreme Court that is five justices appointed by a minority majority president. It just feels as though, unless I'm missing something, this is a profound design flaw where there is no way that you're going to have anything close to majority rule because it feels as though, at least in this moment, every branch of government has been designed to suppress majority will. I

know I'm wrong somewhere in there, but that's certainly the moment we seem to be in right now.

HEATHER COX RICHARDSON: [00:16:25] The only place you're wrong is in the word "design". The system itself is not necessarily baked to do that, and I'm hitting here again on the idea of a political project. We are absolutely in a moment when we have gotten to a place where we have minority rule and it is baked into the system that we currently have. But the system itself doesn't have to do that, and there are times when it has not. But one of the things that that has happened at least three times in American history is we go from a period where there is a focus on equality and on rights, and when that happens, when people, ordinary people start to have political power, they do, in fact, guarantee that they retain more of the value that they produce. And they want what they have done, they don't want what anybody else has done, but they actually want what they have produced.

And when that happens, the people who have tended to be able to accumulate wealth into their own hands start to worry that they are going to lose that power. And they're very really quite articulate about this. In the 19th century, we've got people like James Henry Hammond in 1858 giving a speech in front of the Senate in which he says, listen, the way this country should work is that the vast majority of people are kind of dumb and they're kind of dull and they're hard workers and they make a lot of money. I'm not making this up, by the way. He actually calls them "mudsills", which is the part of the wood that gets hammered into the dirt to support a plantation home, which is where he lived, he was a South Carolina senator. And those people produce a lot. They work hard, they produce a lot, but the problem is if you let them keep what they produce they're just going to waste it, they're going to fritter it away on stuff like food, and that's not going to move society forward. So what you really want to do is let that wealth accumulate at the top, and people like me, he says, are going to go ahead, and we've got connections and we have educations and we know how to do things and we will move society forward. And this is obviously the way things should be, because, look, we got beautiful paintings on our walls and God obviously favors us, unlike those people at the bottom of society. And he argues, of course, this point with regard to the African-American neighbors he enslaves, but he also that to the north and he says you guys are idiots because you've also got this same group of mudsills, but you let them vote. And if you let them vote, they're going to ask for more of what they're producing. And if they do that, they're going to redistribute wealth, and that means people like us aren't going to have as much money and we're not going to be able to move society forward.

Andrew Carnegie says something very, very similar in 1890, and obviously you see the same thing nowadays with the concept of makers and takers, and I know only the best people, it's a way of thinking, it's a philosophy itself. But what happens when they begin to fear the idea of widespread voting is in each of the periods that I'm talking about, the 1850s, the 1890s, and now the present is leaders start to claw back who gets to vote.

First they start to suppress the vote either through nowadays making the lines long or in the 1890s having grandfather clauses or understanding clauses in the Constitution or in the 1850s making voting dependent on property. Then when even that isn't enough, they begin to change the media system so that people only get access to their version of the facts. And that happened in all three of the periods I'm talking about. And then they actually start to game the system like they are nowadays, saying, well, we'll gerrymander the states to the point that the Democrats basically can't win.

So first they start with suppressing the vote, then they start with changing the media landscape, and then they go forward and say, I'm just going to change the way things are. And when even that doesn't work, in all three of the periods I'm talking about, they say, OK, we're really in trouble now, we better make sure that nobody can change the way the system works by baking it into the Supreme Court.

So in the 1850s you have the Taney Court, the Roger Taney Court, going ahead and saying we're just going to go ahead and advance the interests of the elite slaveholders through the courts, even though they absolutely do not have the numbers, they're only about one percent of even the southern population, let alone the American population. In the 1890s you have the Melville Fuller Court, which has just such contorted decisions that the only ones that have still stood are the insular cases, which I think should be on the table now. *Lochner*, which says that the state can't limit a worker's hours. It's *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which is a railroad case. I mean, we look at as a racial case, it's a railroad case. It's *In re Debs*, it's *Pollock v. Farmers' Loan* saying that the state isn't strong enough to have an income tax. You know, they try and bake their vision into the Supreme Court. And I will point out that we don't retain the decisions from the Taney Court or the Fuller Court, and I expect the decisions of the Roberts court will also, in 20 to 30 years, be largely replaced.

DAHLIA LITHWICK - HOST, AMICUS: [00:21:15] So this is actually really why I needed to talk to you today, is because I think we forget and Justice Ginsburg used to always say it's a pendulum, it swings back and forth. And I think for an awful lot of folks who listen to this show, this is an apocalyptic, once in a lifetime abuse of the levers of government and the court that we've never seen before. And what you're saying is, oh, buddy, no, no, no, by capturing the court and getting the court on board with this plan, this is something that happens and it's corrected.

And I guess my question is it's corrected in some sense by a move back to that first vision of democracy you describe, which is you pass H.R. 1, you give statehood to DC and Puerto Rico, you make sure everybody can vote. You do all the things that should have been done. By the way, after *Bush v. Gore* and the motor voter law to ensure that voting is easy as opposed to difficult. This is correctable. What other big structural changes have to happen to get the pendulum? I think a lot of people want to see the pendulum, where it's going to go. What other big structural reforms happen?

HEATHER COX RICHARDSON: [00:22:21] Well, so first of all, to go back to the project of democracy, which I think is really where we need to be. I hear this all the time, this is it, it's over, we're done, they've got the court, it's going to be over here. And I just want to put that as an intellectual problem. If we are a democracy, how does a small minority retain power? I mean, what does that look like? And I'm not being philosophical here. What does that look like? What does it look like if, in fact, we have a Supreme Court that takes away things that 80 percent of us want? Does that mean we all go, OK, it's over now?

I just don't see Americans saying, OK, yeah, I'm going to do exactly what the justices say. And a great example of this, of course, is the *Dred Scott* decision of 1857, which was enormously unpopular for various reasons that I won't go into here. But Americans didn't go, oh yeah, that's right. No, a small minority of Americans went, yeah, that's right, we're going to abide by the Supreme Court and the vast majority of Americans were like "ain't happening here".

So the question is, first of all, what does that look like? And I think it's not sustainable. And this is one of the things I keep hammering on. It is not sustainable for us to have a president who is in power with only a minority of the popular vote. And I think it's really astonishing where we are right now in America that we have somebody running for re-election who is making no pretense to winning a majority. He is simply trying to game the system, and that's never happened before, and that's really important. The Supreme Court is not reflecting where the majority of Americans are—that is not sustainable. Gerrymandering does not reflect where people are—that is not sustainable. The Electoral College doesn't reflect where people are—that is not sustainable. The Senate does not reflect America—that is not sustainable. So where does the change come from? And the answer to that depends on how you see the world.

I am an idealist, so I believe that the world changes according to the way people think and the pressure that we put on our representatives, because if we vote them out, the people that we elect to make our laws are going to reflect more what we want them to do. And I think one of the problems that we've had since the Warren Court, since the Burger Court and really since the New Deal, a lot of Americans thought our system was done, that we were going to have Social Security, we were going to have Medicare, we were going to have basic protections for minorities, for women, those things just were there.

I remember students saying to me 20 years ago when I talked about attacks on women's reproductive rights and them saying to me, oh, you're just an old feminist. These are never going away, no one's going to put up with it. And I kind of wish I had the list of those students in front of me to say, "should we talk again?" But I think now that Americans recognize that they need to put skin in the game. And every time that I've talked about the 1950s and the 1960s, the 1890s and the 19 aughts, and the 1860s and the 1870s, what changed the American government was the American people stepping up to the plate and saying, this is what democracy means, this is what we stand for. And I see that happening now.

DAHILIA LITHWICK - HOST, AMICUS: [00:25:24] So, as I bring you my worries, help me, hold my worries. But as I bring them to you, one of the things I do worry about, you've talked around this, but let's just put it out there, is the great American reverence for the court. The court is our secular church. It is designed that way. They shuffle around in black robes for that reason. And even when we see the popularity of the other branches tanking, the court is held in really high esteem. And by design, right? That's the Federalist Papers, neither the purse nor the sword. We love them, we need them, and we believe in them.

An amazing piece this week, I think in New York Magazine, saying even as we're seeing a court quite literally being packed to the dismay of Americans, they still love the court. They can't disaggregate the politicization of the court and the aggressive attempts by the court to distort democracy with this idea that they revere the court. And I don't say that to say Americans are stupid, I just think we need that. We need to believe that this third branch of government is oracular and different.

And so when I worry and what I think about is I think we are careening into a moment where the court may just hand down some 6-3 per curiam, Bush v. Gore style, something, something. Maybe they won't even include a reasoning, they haven't included reasoning all summer on these voter suppression cases. But I think that the court is both the solution and

the problem, Heather. I think that we rely on it to solve the moment we're in, and also because of that deep affection, reliance regard, we're almost completely unaware of the peril it's putting the country in. And so I don't even know what the question is except to say I feel fairly confident that if there is a 6-3 decision saying we're tossing ballots in Michigan or Pennsylvania. And it's Bush v. Gore, one ride only, we're not even going to attempt to put this, whatever this equal protection argument is, in ways that make sense, that there's a deep fear I have, that the American public will go, yeah, well, that's the court. That's what we did in 2000.

HEATHER COX RICHARDSON: [00:27:34] Well, it's probably why I study politics and you study the courts because we've had this moment happen before in America. And I disagree, I don't think Americans will say, oh, yeah, never mind, we're perfectly happy for the courts to have gone ahead and destroyed something we care a lot about. And I think you can see this with the reaction to the ACA and the idea that it's going before the courts a week after the election. Americans care a lot about the ACA and they have not paid attention to the courts because for many Americans, it does not seem to really be part of their lives.

I mean, you talk about them being oracular, and for sure they are, but they're also not on the same schedule anybody else is, and they seem to deliberate in private, and they're all six hundred years old, and, you know, no one's really paying that close attention. And I think they are paying attention now. And I don't think, I don't think that you can divorce the reaction to the court from the reaction to what seems to be the machinations of Republicans across the country to go ahead and stay in power even though they are so radically unpopular right now. I think a bigger concern for me is that, and I actually think this is probably a concern of chief justice Roberts as well, is that respect for the court and the idea that if they pull stuff that is too out there, the standing of the court is going to fail. And if the standing of the court fails, that puts us into a real problem.

What If Trump Doesn't Accept The Election Results? ft. Joshua Kahn Russell - The Michael Brooks Show - Air

Date 10-22-20 **LISHA BROOKS - HOST, TMBS:** [00:28:53] So what are you proposing individuals do in a situation where people have been out on the streets already and where some people, obviously not the majority of people have to be out working because of whatever, but a lot of people are home. How do you see people resisting or going on some sort of mass strike?

JOSHUA KAHN RUSSELL: [00:29:14] So the first thing that we're doing, so at the website, ChooseDemocracy.us, which is built to be non-partisan, it's built so tha your mom can get involved. This isn't actually like a left...

LISHA BROOKS - HOST, TMBS: [00:29:25] My mom is not non-partisan.

JOSHUA KAHN RUSSELL: [00:29:27] Well, we're very explicitly trying to get out of activist mode, get out of fighting Trump mode. And we've built a pledge, which is an organizing tool, and so the pledge has four parts. The first is we're going to vote, we're gonna participate in the process. The second is that we are going to refuse to accept any results until all the votes

are counted. And then the third is that we are going to nonviolently take to the streets if a coup is attempted. And the fourth is that we're willing to shut down the country if necessary, if they tried to give the presidency to someone who didn't win all the votes, even within the context of the electoral college. And so what take to the streets looks like to us is not the typical protest kind of scenario that if we go out in the streets and it ends up being, I can't remember, can I curse?

LISHA BROOKS - HOST, TMBS: [00:30:18] You can, we just might get demonitized. Is that the rule?

JOSHUA KAHN RUSSELL: [00:30:21] If we end up in the streets, just protesting aimlessly, saying F Trump over and over again, all that we're just going to be playing into the existing narrative of polarization. Right? And so if that's all we're doing, we are not talking about some individual moral expression of outrage, we're not trying to mobilize a small margin of self identified activists. We are in the category of what's called noncompliance, which is withdrawing our participation in a system. So that looks like, if we get to it, it looks like certainly mass strikes from the perspective of labor, but also there's a number of groups organizing things like youth strikes and various kinds of walkouts. We are talking about varying levels of shutting down corporations, shutting down the mail, shutting down transit, shutting down trash or maintenance, basically not allowing the society to function.

So what we've learned from other coups and we have, well, let me actually talk a little bit more about Choose Democracy and then I'll talk more about the strategy. Which is that, so, we're just getting going, it's taking off, we already have almost 30,000 people who have signed the pledge. And it's not just about signing an abstract pledge, it's then, once folks signed the pledge, they are on a list where we are doing trainings and the trainings include direct action planning. They include some political education to psychologically and emotionally prepare people that, yes, it can happen here.

Part of our project is just breaking through the American exceptionalism. The idea that like, this is all going to be taken care of, and to really say, we can't count on the Democrats to fight here. We couldn't count on them in 2000. In that psychological and logistical preparation, we were training every two days or so, we're doing mass trainings where there's a few thousand people in every training. So we've trained many thousands of people so far. A lot of our trainers come out of the civil rights movements. Our lead trainer was one of the coordinators of Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964, where they also faced extreme violence. So just as people are afraid of everyone from the militias to the proud boys and violence that can erupt, they were also dealing with Klan violence and police violence, and so it's experientially grounded.

And then they're also all of these historical case studies that are actually, our strategic perspective on this is not actually ideological at all, it's just about trying to figure out well, what works? And the main thing that works, Whether that is, in the context of, Thailand in 1992, or Argentina in 1987, or Germany in 1920, is when people refuse to go along with the coup plotters.

So the pledge is an organizing tool where people are now, for example, we're not waiting. So group people who go to the trainings are trying to organize other sectors of society to commit to the pledge. So it's like an easy way to start organizing. So they're trying to get politicians to commit to the pledge, etc. And, then in addition to that, we're going to be

having, to be clear, we were like a ragtag group of grassroots, direct action trainers, we don't have a lot of capacity. We're not trying to organize the resistance against this. But what we are trying to do is seed a framework that can be picked up by other groups. And so far, a lot of groups are picking it up.

And for example, with labor, recently the central labor council in Rochester, the Rochester AFL-CIO, made this commitment that they are going to not only go on strike if they try to steal the election, but they're going to call for a general strike. And they're going to advocate within the AFL-CIO that other regionals do the same. The Seattle Educators Association passed a resolution that within seven days of the election, if there's interference, they're going to vote on a work stoppage. Today actually, and I didn't watch this, but the Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee, which is a collaboration between the electrical workers and the DSA, had this discussion among labor leaders, which included, the flight attendants union president, Sarah Nelson, about what workers are going to do is stop Trump. Similarly, the Detroit postal workers, are starting to organize there. They're passing out flyers with their official union letterhead, with the Choose Democracy pledge.

So there's a lot of stuff getting into motion. And then also on the kind of independent social movement side, for example, in a lot of different swing states, there's groups that are starting to organize. So groups like the Dream Defenders in Florida are collaborating with groups like Sunrise, where they're doing several things. First, what they're doing is doing a series of deescalation trainings to have them show up to the polls so that if there is a presence of Proud Boys or militias or whoever that they can protect people's ability to vote, particularly in Florida, in working class Black neighborhoods. And then, and then from there starting to organize within universities and high schools to organize a youth strike cause that's their base. And so there's a lot of different groups and certainly in DC, there's a group called Shut Down DC that is doing all of this training. They're doing trainings almost every day with different kinds of scenario planning about how they're going to shut down Washington DC.

There's a lot of different groups doing a lot of different things. And, what our hope is with Choose Democracy is to, offer a framework that's data driven, about strategy, that says, when we come out where we're going to be focusing on noncompliance. We're going to be focusing not just on protest, number one. And then, in our trainings, we go down the line of what are the lessons of success from other moments, other defeated coups, where they've been able to stop them. And then one of the main kind of central lessons is that they were able to pull a broad base of society into the streets.

And what this is about, I think for our part of the left, is actually pretty counterintuitive. So I spent my whole life being very frustrated at the way that, for example, the Democrats constantly want to appeal to some mythologized center instead of paying attention to a progressive base. And we get very frustrated about tacking to the center. This is a moment where we actually need to push an uncertain center off the fence.

And so to do so we need to be as accessible as possible, which is also one of the reasons why non-violence is part of our agreements, which I know is controversial, on the left, and we could talk more about that, but the one thing I'll say about it, is that there's an active debate on the left right now in "normal" social change moments, about the role of violence, about

the role of property destruction. We're not weighing in on that debate. I think it's an interesting debate. I have a pretty nuanced opinion on it.

What we're talking about right now is when you're in a very specific, acute scenario of a contest for legitimacy, if we agree that's our goal, then we, number one, needs to create a framework that can be as inviting to as many people as possible, and so nonviolence is part of that. And then number two, so that we can draw as strong of a contrast as possible of our behavior and the paramilitary, fascist street movements that these militias represents. And so for those and other kinds of strategic reasons, that's why that's part of our tenets, but we're also not trying to police other groups in terms of what they want to do or anything like that.

But we really are trying to shift people into a different mindset and understand that typically in social movements, it's like you have a long-standing grievance and you build a base and then you pick a target and you vilify that target. And then you leverage the pressure of that base and you heighten the contradictions in that kind of way. And we're playing a different game right now, at least for the next couple of months, where we're just trying to not fall backwards on the erosion of our institutions so that then, we can move forwards and come out swinging next year.

LISHA BROOKS - HOST, TMBS: [00:38:05] And is ChooseDemocracy.org, a good resource for people who want to read and get more into the nitty gritty of the legal side of all of this?

JOSHUA KAHN RUSSELL: [00:38:13] Yeah, absolutely. So the website's ChooseDemocracy.us, on the website, there's both the pledge that people can sign up on. There's a number of resources. We have case studies about coups from all over the world there, that are actually pretty digestible. We also have trainings to plug into and not just our trainings, but also trainings that other people are doing as well. And then pretty soon we're going to have an action hub where, like I said, is that the point of the action hub is not to be a clearing house for everything that's going to happen, but as things come online we're going to try to filter through, at least the actions that are happening, that are public, that people can be invited into, that are aligned with these principles, will be there.

So people who sign up do have a way of plugging in and, it's the kind of thing where it's I really hope we don't have to do this. We're not saying that it's going to need to get to this point, but what we are saying is that most coups are planned in a clandestine way where there's no warning.

LISHA BROOKS - HOST, TMBS: [00:39:10] They're not tweeted about publicly?

JOSHUA KAHN RUSSELL: [00:39:12] Exactly, for months and months. And still, they're often defeated in a matter of days. And that's the thing that's interesting, like when you look at for example, Argentina, which is like a particularly interesting case study where they, within a matter of days, pulled 400,000 people out into the streets. They had people invading the military bases. They had all kinds of every base. Churches were refusing to comply. Postal workers were refusing to comply. And they were able to do that in a matter of days because they were better organized than we are in the U.S.

It was what you were talking about before, Grisco, of the victory that just happened on Bolivia is the results of a well organized labor movement, for example, and a well-organized

indigenous sovereignty movement. We don't have a lot of that infrastructure, like we don't have the infrastructure to call a general strike tomorrow, but at the same time, if we start building the groundwork so that if it ends up swinging this way, we have a direction to head in.

Things can move, the tectonic shifts that can happen in a society when a majority of people realize that a red line is being crossed, that democratic norms are being violated, and that's why we define the coup in those three ways, because they're very easy for most people to understand. Most Americans agree that all votes should be counted. And we might find ourselves in a situation where that we're able to build alliances that we never could build before.

And the upside of it is that if it does go in this direction, it will, of course, build momentum that if we're able to actually stand by a broader principle that most people in this country can get behind and we defend the ground we stand on and then we win, we can lean into that infrastructure come January to fight for what we really need.

And that's also a great lesson of other coups and so to use the Argentina example again. So Argentina was having military coups up and down, back and forth, since the 1930s. And in the late eighties, they got sick of it, people came, poured out, noncompliance, stop the coup, and then after that, of course they, they've had lots of problems since then, but their labor movement got way stronger. The occupation and democratization of empty factories, the whole horizontalism movement, their whole left got revitalized by it, even though the work to stop a coup isn't of the left. This is the first project I've worked on that's not really of the left. Like, we are a part of a center left coalition. We are working with groups like Protect the Results, which includes a lot of big mass organizations because we need everybody on board. And so that's the moment that we see ourselves in.

Timothy Snyder Warns That as Election Day 2020 Approaches America is in The Midst of a Slow-Motion Reichstag Fire Emergency - The Truth Report w.

Chauncey DeVega - Air Date 10-18-20 **TIMOTHY SNYDER:** [00:41:52]

Part of that is successful tactic. The thing that I call the politic eternity in the Road to Unfreedom that you have an unceasing stream of small to medium level provocations. The idea is that these things will give a hit, positive hit to your supporters and a negative hit to your opponents. Everyone gets addicted to the hit, whether it's a pleasant hit, or whether it's an unpleasant hit, the addiction can be pleasant or unpleasant, but either way you're addicted.

Now when you're describing that, you wait for Trump to do the latest outrageous thing, and then you report it as outrageous, and you've had your little hit and then you wait for your next hit, but you're not actually going anywhere with that. This is why theory and thinking is so important.

People who say they believe in freedom and democracy and things like this, a lot of them have gotten themselves caught up in these kinds of mechanical ways of thinking that we have the right institutions, or the market's going to solve the problem for us, or history is on our side or American exceptionalism.

If you don't have some way of theorizing what Trump is, and I'm not saying you have to agree with my theories or your theories or anybody else's theories, but if you don't have some theory of what it is, every empirical accident is a surprise to you. And if you don't have some theory of what it is, then you also don't have some theory of how you push back against it. And you're helpless.

I mean, the discussion about Trump is basically what he is not. So he's not fulfilling this function. He's not doing this. What we need to be able to do is to say what Trump is, to say what he is. And then once you say what he is, then you can start to fight it.

We talk about the pandemic as though it were a series of failures. No, it's not a series of failures. It's the achievement he's going to be most remembered for: that 300,000 Americans died in 2020 for no particular reason. That's an achievement. I mean, it took real work to bring that off. And I'm not saying that he intended it from beginning to end. I'm not saying that there was a plot in January that 300,000 will be dead in December. But I am saying that is a result of decisions that were made by him that have structural explanations. If we keep seeing Trump in terms of omissions -- that he's not a normal "politician" or he's not a Democrat -- then we don't see that from him for what he is, whatever that might be.

I think that's also the problem. He's a white guy, he's old, he wears a tie. What could he possibly be, except somewhere in the zone of normal. And so we just allow ourselves to be surprised, as you say, with every little thing. So I admire the few people who are out there, even when I don't agree with them, who were trying to say, well, look, Trump is actually this, this is actually an oligarchy. Or this is actually government by entertainment. Or Ruth Ben-Ghiat's new book, this is a "strongmen" phenomenon. Try to get some purchase on it intellectually, because if you don't have purchase on it intellectually, then that's when you get surprised and thrown off by every little thing.

CHAUNCEY DEVEGA - HOST, THE CHAUNCEY DEVEGA SHOW: [00:44:31] That is terrifying for people of a certain political class to admit that they're, number one, dealing with evil, I mean, objectively evil. There's no moral good through this man's policies. Because if you admit you're dealing with evil, then you got to do something about it. So psychologically it's a lot easier to not name the thing for whatever it may be, because it keeps you safe; but it doesn't really keep you safe. Those are public voices.

I think a lot of them are scared to death, but they don't want to name the thing. Cause then that's even more frightening. Cause then they got to say, my God, what am I have to do? What's my responsibility?

TIMOTHY SNYDER: [00:45:02] I think evil is a good word. It's one that I've been using in our malady. My definition of our malady at the beginning is: not necessary illness and death, and the political evil that surrounds it.

And I think you're right. There is a almost taboo-like hesitation to move into truly ethical judgment; that is ethical judgment, which actually relies upon a metaphysic of something is

good and something is evil. And that is on the safe plane because if so long as you're not making the metaphysical judgment, you're normalizing it in some way. And you're offering other people hope that somehow this will turn back to normal. We don't have to face up to it.

There's a psychological tendency as well here, which is that if you didn't name it right off the bat, it's hard for you to name it later on. It goes back to your question of why is it so hard to convince people; it's because [you] didn't get it right in 2016, then you're probably not getting it right now. Or you're spending a lot of time explaining why it is you didn't get right before. I mean, that's a big problem.

The rallies were obviously fascistic in 2016. But if you didn't say that then, what word are you going to use now? I think that's also part of the problem.

I think your word fear though, is very well taken. I'd push that out in a different direction. He's running now on fear. More so than 2016. 2016 was a mix. In 2016, they were talking about infrastructure. They were trying to go to the left of the Democrats on some issues. Whereas this time it's just pure fear: that black people are going to rape you in the suburbs, and they're going to burn down the cities. Pandemic is either their fault or it's a conspiracy, or it's not happening. Fear consciously created, and then manipulated.

The Democrats are in the situation now where they're running against the Reichstag fire. They're not really running against the political party. They're not really running against another campaign. And it would be really nice if they were, that would be a much more comfortable place for them to be.

CHAUNCEY DEVEGA - HOST, THE CHAUNCEY DEVEGA SHOW: [00:46:50] How can we try to explain to the public, maybe to the Democrats, that you're up against a movement, but you're still practicing normal politics. So give me an example, all the hand wringing about institutions. All the upset. Oh, Trump doesn't follow the rules. He doesn't obey subpoenas. He's threatening people. He's publicly threatening to not leave. All the militias. And it's deeply troubling to see folks who don't realize they're up against a movement. These folks don't care about the rules. How can we explain to them what's really going on? What sort of lessons can we draw from history?

TIMOTHY SNYDER: [00:47:17] What one wants to think if one is a late 20th century, early 21st century centrist Democrat, or maybe even liberal conservative, what one wants to think is that people are basically rational and they're making choices based upon their interests. And politics is just one flavor of interest. That would make phenomena like Trump much less likely.

History shows that people also can learn to like pain and they can also learn to like inflicting pain on others. And that that's something that you're up against. I think the Democrats are up against that right now. This is a president who happily circulates as much pain as he can within the system on the rationale that his people are going to suffer for him. And they're going to enjoy suffering because of their idea that other people are suffering more. Their suffering has a point; they're suffering for something. And other people, you know, the blacks, the immigrants, whatever, they're suffering more than we are.

The enlightened ideas that democracy is based on are a constant fight. They are constantly at stake. They're precisely what you can't take for granted. It doesn't follow from that do you therefore imitate the other side?

The fact that there is a Trump death cult now, which there clearly is, doesn't mean that you then have a Biden death cult; that would be absurd on a number of levels.

It does mean that you have to recognize that you're fighting in two ways. You're fighting to win votes and you're fighting for the righteousness of the system.

And that fight for the righteousness of the system is not a defensive fight. If it's an offensive fight, you lose because if it's a defensive fight, then all the emotion, no matter how crazy that emotion might seem to you, no matter how crazy the idea of dying for Trump by not wearing a mask might seem to you, it's still emotion and it's still real and still has its own logic and its own power. Can't fight for the righteousness of the system by assuming that the system is appealing or that it's going to work. You have to fight for the righteousness of the system by making big ethical claims on its behalf and big claims about the future on its behalf. You have to be radical yourself, but in a different way.

CHAUNCEY DEVEGA - HOST, THE CHAUNCEY DEVEGA SHOW: [00:49:23] Corona, fascism, we've got more than one thing happening simultaneously. So if you've got, okay, this virus, we've got a plutocracy, we've got authoritarianism, we've got all this suffering, but they're not discrete things. They're all part of one big problem. So how are you working through that?

TIMOTHY SNYDER: [00:49:37] In a hospital system or pretty much anywhere else, [I] show up in America as a privileged person, a middle-aged articulate white male. But from a position of being in the hospital for a long time and emergency hospitals for a long time in an emergency room for a long time, I did see some things that I'd seen before and including some things that happen to some people who are close to me. And because I think I was so close to death, the significance of them was brought home to me more than it would have been otherwise. The racial and economic inequality, which is all the more obvious, means life or death situations, did make it easier for me to write about kinds of overlaps you're talking about.

The way that Corona layers on what Americans expect from health anyway, even before 2020 starts, we're in a system where we don't have universal access to healthcare because there's this practical, everyday consensus, which says it's okay to have bad health care so long as your bad healthcare is not as bad as your neighbor's healthcare; already in that situation. And it's racial because, you know, we can't treat healthcare as a right, because if we treat it as a right then that would just mean, so goes the argument, that all those black people and those Hispanics and those immigrants and so on would just abuse it. So we can't give it to them. They're just going to abuse it.

And the other argument that's made to white people is: and by the way, you white people, you're the frontiersmen, you're the rugged individualists. You're tough. You know not to talk about pain or disease. You don't need healthcare, right? And so you have the sadism of some people being pleased because they suffer less than other people. And you have the masochism of being willing to suffer, basically for nothing. Even before we get to Coronavirus, we have white people bringing down their own standard of living. You compare

when I was 10 in 1980 with now, we've lost three years conservatively compared to comparable countries. A lot of that is precisely white people basically choosing through their political choices to live shorter lives. We're already there. And then Coronavirus layers on top of that, because what is COVID? COVID is a disease. When the first reports come in in March, April, it's clear that it's taking the lives of blacks and Hispanics and Native Americans at a much higher rate than whites. White people live longer than black people. Once that's politically known, it's normal, the good liberals and the media are going to decry this and rightly so. But the way it feels to a lot of Americans is, Oh, okay, well, this is something where Black people and Brown people are suffering more. Then that's okay. It's normal for me to suffer so long as Black people and Brown people suffer more. That's normal, because that was the normal even before we got to COVID, and COVID just reinforces that.

And so that helps to explain this strange dynamic where a lot of white people are willing to risk their own life. If they spread it, their idea is, well it's other people who are going to bear the brunt of this, not people like me.

So this dynamic of I'm going to be the heroic, rugged individual who sacrifices his life in effect for nothing, except for the feeling it's sacrifice, I'm going to feel good about that, but I'm also going to secretly feel good about the fact that in this disease environment, it's really those other people who are much more likely to die than I am.

CHAUNCEY DEVEGA - HOST, THE CHAUNCEY DEVEGA SHOW: [00:52:54] What do we know about the connections between a humane society and authoritarianism?

TIMOTHY SNYDER: [00:52:57] I'm strongly convinced that it does.

The one thing I'm trying to do in the new book is get health and freedom together. Freedom is the most important category to me. I mean, very broadly, if you look at it from an individual level, which I now feel like I can do, you realize that when you can't talk, you don't have freedom of speech, and when you can't move you don't have freedom of assembly. When you don't think you're going to have a future and freedom is no longer [a] meaningful concept to you, because freedom can only involve your agency as it's directed towards the future social level, if you can't afford health care, you're afraid. If you're ashamed to talk about healthcare, you're less free. If you are aware of that, the access to healthcare is going to be competitive and somebody who's less sick than you might come ahead of you because they have better insurance or better connections or whatever it might be. All of that, whether there's a pandemic or not, all of that creates a situation where there's that totally unnecessary reservoir of anxiety and fear, and that totally unnecessary reservoir of anxiety and fear can be directed in other places. And that's what we have. The people who were afraid of Black Lives Matter, they don't generally have any reason to be afraid of Black Lives Matter. But they do have reasons to be afraid. They are afraid of things. The talent that Trump has is to generate the anxiety or to take American anxiety and fear that already exists and direct it in the ways that he wants it to be directed. Right? More police officers have died of COVID that they caught on duty than of all other causes put together this year. So that's what you have to be afraid of. Three hundred thousand Americans are going to die this year from COVID; that's the real thing to be afraid of. And yet partly because Americans don't expect to be treated well about health, this has now become the next level of that, where we've just gotten used to the abuse. You take the abuse, but the trauma that goes along with the abuse is then available to be pushed in other directions. And that is a way for

authoritarianism to work. You can imagine a society where that fear and anxiety doesn't exist because most democracies that have our level of wealth, don't actually have that anxiety.

I do think there's a direct connection. And I think pointed towards November, Trump understands that he can't win a democratic election. And I think he understands that the pandemic and the economic downturn give him the sources of energy that he just might be able to use to push through some different way.

I think he's in the worst, the better territory now, because he understands these things. Evil understands evil. He understands that the more anxiety and fear is out there, the bigger the chances he has to somehow turn it into his direction and pick up the pieces.

CHAUNCEY DEVEGA - HOST, THE CHAUNCEY DEVEGA SHOW: [00:55:26] What do you say to folks, being timely, you say you guys were talking about, or Timothy Snyder, you were talking about a Reichstag fire. Where is it? You guys are alarmists. You've been saying all these bad things are going to happen. There's going to be a coup, a Reichstag fire. It didn't happen. You were wrong. What do you tell those folks?

TIMOTHY SNYDER: [00:55:41] Obviously, we are in a slow motion Reichstag fire right now. That's what's happening. Trump is not as skilled as Hitler. He doesn't work as hard as Hitler. He doesn't have the same level of confidence as Hitler. But he's clearly looking for that emergency; has tried to make Black Lives Matter into that emergency. The language of the left and anarchists and thugs and so on is very similar to the language which was used after the Reichstag fire. He keeps trying to make the Reichstag fire work. If it doesn't work, that's to the credit of the people who realize that there's a problem and are working against it.

Really understand how, at this point in September, 2020, you could look at this general situation and say, this is just a political campaign. It's not a political campaign. It's emergency politics in the constant search of an emergency. And you know, whether they can line up the emergency politics with the emergency, I don't know. But it's all they've got, all they're going to have through November.

Incredibly powerful video from Sunrise NYC featuring words from Representative Alexandria Ocasio Cortez - Sunrise Movement

REP. ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ: [00:56:39] One of the most common questions that people ask me is where do you get the courage? Like, where do you get courage to do things?

You know, I always, I was taken aback by that question because it doesn't feel like courage to me. I'm scared all the time too. And this moment, and these moments are not about ignoring your fear.

Let this moment radicalize you. Let this moment really put everything into stark focus. This is a seventh generation moment. This is our present moment. And are we going to allow our fear to paralyze us and to make us give in? Or are we going to turn our fear into fuel?

This election, voting for Joe Biden, is not about whether you agree with him. It's a vote to let our democracy live another day. That's what this is about. And so I'm not here to say that any one politician is the answer, because no one politician is the answer. No one president is the answer. You are the answer. Mass movements are the answer. Millions of people are the answer. You are the answer.

And so I need you. We need you. Because we all recognize that November -- frankly, I wish it wasn't like this, and it only serves to highlight the brokenness of our entire system, but whether we like it or not -- November is about survival.

And I have moments where I'm terrified. But what you do with that fear is that you look at that fear and you turn it into fuel. Because fear, what does fear do? Even on a physical level, take a step back, feel how it's making your heart beat faster, because it's telling you to act, to leap, to jump. That's what you need to do right now. That's how you use your fear. And there are moments where, looking back, on the outside people call it courageous, but on the inside, how I felt they were the moments that I was the most scared in my entire life. I didn't feel courageous.

But courage is a funny thing. Because at least in my experience, courage is just something that you just see when you play the tape back. Courage is something that you just see in retrospect. When you ask people, what drove you to that moment? What gave you that courage? They will almost always tell you I wasn't being courageous. I was just doing what I thought was the right thing to do. And when you're propelled by either that fear or the concentration of that moment, you can turn it into focus. You turn fear into fuel.

Right now we need to focus on this election. That's what we need to do. Focus on organizing. We need to focus on voting for Joe Biden. I don't care if you like him or not. That's not what this is about. This is not about our opinion on personalities at this juncture. This is about the preservation of our democracy.

And so what I'm asking you to do is that maybe you don't ask other people, what do I do? Maybe you ask yourself, what do I want to give. And that is where your actions will be the most passionate and be the most impactful. You will find a way. I know you will find a way.

Weissmann Thinks We Could See Trump Self-Pardon If He Doesn't Win Reelection - Deadline White House -

Air Date 10-9-20 **NICHOLE WALLACE - HOST, MSNBC:** [01:00:04] David, let me start with you. Take me through your reporting and sort of what it adds to the bigger picture.

DAVID FAHRENTHOLD: [01:00:09] Well, you probably know that the Trump Organization and President Trump are facing two pretty significant state level investigations. One from the Manhattan DA and one from the New York Attorney General. So these aren't going to be things that are gonna get anybody arrested, I don't think, before election day, but if Trump loses or even if he wins, there'll be real headaches next year. And I think it also gives you more of a sense of what the Trump Organization looked like before Trump went into office.

And so we wanted to understand why the New York Attorney General was focusing on this kind of obscure piece of Trump's portfolio, this Seven Springs mansion outside of New York City. He rarely even goes there. Why is it at the center of this big state investigation? And the reason is \$21 million. Trump got a \$21 million tax break for saying he would conserve land on that property. And the reason he got such a big tax break was that he said the land was really valuable, had lots of development rights.

It turns out he misled, he appears to have misled people about how much development rights he had. He'd actually applied to build houses, but didn't succeed. So he didn't have those permissions in hand, yet he was still claiming credit for them, inflating the value of the property and thus inflating his tax breaks.

NICHOLE WALLACE - HOST, MSNBC: [01:01:12] You know, Andrew Weissmann, it reminds me we have the conversation you and I had just about how leveraged he is when the first installment of the New York Times tax investigation came out because, and you write in your book, I pulled this because I read your book and this is the part that, that stays with me.

" (Reading from book) In the end, we found in the areas in which we chose to look particularly in the one Russian financial deal we examined as a result of Cohen's cooperation, left me with a deeply unsatisfying feeling about what else was out there that we did not examine. One of my strengths and simultaneously one of my flaws as an investigator is a desire to turn over every rock, go down every rabbit hole, try to master every detail. In this investigation that tenacity was as much an asset as a curse. The inability to chase down all financial leads or to examine all crimes gnawed at me and still does."

I think about that, what you wrote there, when I read all these stories as a potential new place where Trump, who is by every standard, a rich man, but he seems in all of these revelations, like he was always needing help from someone about being over leveraged.

ANDREW WEISSMANN: [01:02:18] Well to follow up on what David said, I think that the president, if he is not reelected is going to be very busy. I think there's sort of three buckets of things he has to worry about. At the federal level, they'll be the decision of the new attorney general, whether he should be charged with obstruction of justice for the matters relating to the special counsel investigation. And I think we may see the president do something we've never seen any president to, which is try to self pardon. But that will at least delay any sort of federal decision.

But at the state level you have a criminal investigation and the Manhattan DA's office, and that is, it looks like to be a classic follow the money investigation, reminds me very much of what we did with Paul Manafort. They're clearly going after just the right things, which is they need the internal accounting documents. And that's a criminal investigation. And then as David pointed out the Latisha James Attorney General investigation, that is currently a civil investigation and it may or may not proceed, but it's important to note that a civil investigation at the attorney general level can turn into a criminal investigation if they find sufficient proof and can prove intent.

And what David talked about is one of, at least four transactions worth hundreds of millions of dollars that the attorney general in New York is looking at. So, this president is going to be

quite busy, and obviously I should probably point it out, the president cannot pardon his way out of state investigations, whether they are civil or criminal.

NICHOLE WALLACE - HOST, MSNBC: [01:03:59] You know, David, can you put some broader context around that? I mean, it seems like there's never a revelation that says Donald Trump did X, Y, or Z by the book. There's never a business deal that when under scrutiny says this was a model for how to buy a casino in Atlantic city, or this was a model for how to take money out of your businesses and invest in a campaign. There's not a single example of any of that. And it says a couple of things to me: one, he's he's shady; two, he didn't think he was gonna win; and three, to what Andrew Weissmann saying, should he lose he faces a lot of legal exposure.

DAVID FAHRENTHOLD: [01:04:37] I think that's right about his legal exposure. Look, the Trump Organization, before he got into politics, it was just not that big of a company. He had this sort of famous name, but it was not that big of an enterprise. And I think, and he also was very difficult to deal with. So a lot of folks, I think just didn't bother trying to sort of dig into his businesses. There was one notable exception, which was the Trump University investigation, which Trump fought tooth and nail ended up having to settle for \$25 million.

To me, the most instructive sort of case study of this is actually the Trump Foundation. This really small charity to Trump ran, I wrote about a little bit in 2016. It had been going on forever and it had been breaking the law forever, but nobody, there was not enough money, not enough whatever for people that dig into it. But once they did, once the New York Attorney General dug into it, it found all kinds of really blatant violations of the law.

And to me, it was the same executives at Trump's organization, it was the same accountants at Mazars that handled that foundation that handle all of Trump's other financial dealings at his company. So if those people could screw up on that scale and break the law that many times on the Trump Foundation, it doesn't bode well for their ability to withstand the scrutiny of a New York AG and a Manhattan DA at the same time.

NICHOLE WALLACE - HOST, MSNBC: [01:05:44] And Andrew Weissmann, it doesn't bode well for the country that he leads because it would appear, based on what we know, and a lot of it we know from your investigation, he imported a lot of those guiding principles to the presidency. I'm not going to let you leave though, without pressing you on what you said in your last answer. You could imagine himself pardoning? Do tell.

ANDREW WEISSMANN: [01:06:04] Well there's no question that the constitution has conferred on the president, the power to pardon that, and it's incredibly broad, and even though lots of people think it can be abused, but no president has ever tried to actually pardon himself. And you could imagine this president saying, " why not give it a try? What's the downside?" The downside is it doesn't work. The Supreme Court says you know what you can't. Well then, so what? He's back in the same place that he would have been, except it brings him delay. So why not try it? So I do expect if he's not reelected that that's something we will see him try.

NICHOLE WALLACE - HOST, MSNBC: [01:06:49] And let me, I just, I just have to press you on this. Do you think that would be like a prophylactic protection from charges being brought? Can you pardon yourself before you've been charged?

ANDREW WEISSMANN: [01:06:59] Uh, yes you can. And leaving the part about self pardoning, but can you pardon somebody who has not been charged? Yeah. Look at Gerald Ford with the spectre Richard Nixon. You can, in this country, do that. There are debates in other countries that have the pardon power, whether you can do it, but here it is not necessary to first be charged and convicted before you can get a pardon.

Hope for the best, prepare for the worst - Strange Days with Fernand Amandi - Air Date 10-12-20

FERNAND AMANDI - HOST, STRANGE DAYS: [01:07:30] Frank, let's go back now to the other element of this, which is a president who I think in his actions has been clear that he is sabotaging the United States in every way, shape and form. And what that might mean in terms of external influence or an external price that he would be willing to offer up for the selling of national secrets, the selling of classified information, even during his tenure as president, before the term expires on January 20th. I know you've spoken about this in the past. Go a little bit deeper into what you think this might mean in terms of a threat to the nation's security.

FRANK FIGLIUZZI: [01:08:08] Yeah, I'm glad you asked. I wrote a piece for this recently in NBC Think, which is NBC's digital platform. And if people want to dig deeply into this, they should check that out. Here's the deal. Ask any corporate security director about the threat posed by fired, retired or resigned employees who possess trade secrets, company secrets and strategies in their head when they walk out the door. They will tell you it is a significant threat. Some of them go to competitors with the knowledge in their head. Some of them go to foreign powers with the knowledge in their head.

Now let's move that to the Oval Office and let's understand what a president is privy to in terms of sensitive knowledge.

I know this is a president who doesn't read his daily brief, but he does get briefings. And Jared reads everything, is my understanding in terms of the briefings.

Here's what's in those briefings. Hey, we know the following intelligence because we've installed a microphone in a foreign leader's office. Hey, we found out this prime minister is suffering from cancer and not telling anybody because we've recruited his physician.

FERNAND AMANDI - HOST, STRANGE DAYS: [01:09:20] I'm sorry, Frank. I don't mean to interrupt, but to that degree of specificity is in the PDB?

FRANK FIGLIUZZI: [01:09:24] If you look at footnotes, if you understand that something is top secret versus secret, you realize that the top secret designation is sources and methods. If you get more into the classification letters and codes, you'll understand this is coming from a human source. This is coming from a technical source. This is coming from an intercept. And if you had a real normal president situation, you'd actually have an Oval Office in-person briefing where the president would say, Hey, how do we know that this guy said this at this time? And the briefer would look up and say, because we have a microphone in his office, we've recruited his secretary. We've gotten this or that position. The president knows how long it would take to respond to incoming ballistic missiles. The president knows what the

plan is to defend Taiwan if China invades. All of that is in his head, including how it works with nuclear launch codes and what the timeframe would be.

So now he walks out the door. If he hasn't given this up already, because we know that he's already passed classified in the Oval Office to a Russian delegation early in his presidency. And that came, that information came from an ally and he gave it up. So what's that worth if you're \$421 million in debt, all coming due in the next four years, much of it for which you are personally on the hook for, don't you think he would accept help in return for advice?

I can tell you that in my counter-intelligence days, we would have salivated over a foreign target, a foreign recruitment target that had this much debt coming due this quickly, who needed our help to dig out of it and restore his reputation.

So, he poses a threat, not only right now, but he poses a continuing threat after he leaves office because of his financial situation. And that's why I believe the counter-intelligence investigation that kicked this whole special counsel thing off needs to get resolved, whether he wins or not.

FERNAND AMANDI - HOST, STRANGE DAYS: [01:11:29] You know, it's so funny you say that. Well, not funny. It's horrifying again, that's the theme of today's podcast, horrifying, which I guess is apropos. And in the month of October with Halloween.

But Frank, with what you're saying, the logical conclusion, as far as the next step is, even if he loses the election and walks away, however reluctant, this man cannot be allowed to go back to being Joe private citizen with that information and that degree of demonstrated recklessness out there. Wouldn't it require potentially the detention of this national security threat who would have that information that cannot be undone, or he will leave the office of the presidency?

FRANK FIGLIUZZI: [01:12:07] I think he needs to... I don't like detention because that's going to get all, all those people, you know, people are going to start going, Oh my gosh, Fernand and Frank are talking about locking up a former president. What I'm talking about is we need to resolve the counterintelligence question. It might involve continued investigative work on this president, his compromise, how much vulnerability there is because of his debt and his entanglements with foreign powers. And the fact that he's paid far more income tax to the Philippines and Turkey than he has to the United States and, comma, don't forget, once he leaves office, he is likely facing prosecution by at least the Manhattan district attorney's office, if not the state attorney general of New York, if not other States as well. So he's not going to return to normalcy. But all of that points back to the fact that we essentially have a president who needs to get reelected in order to avoid prosecution. In the FBI we called this unlawful flight to avoid prosecution. That's what we got.

FERNAND AMANDI - HOST, STRANGE DAYS: [01:13:10] Frank, in closing, I am sure at Quantico, you did not take trainings in prophecy and psychic abilities, but I'm going to put you on the spot because you've been so right over these last several years, and we've documented every step of the way here in your many interviews on the Strange Days podcast.

But you remember that old show with Monte Hall, Let's Make a Deal? Remember that one, Frank? So there are doors number one, two, and three. And behind each of those doors,

Frank, I want you to paint the three most likely scenarios that you see transpiring between now and 12:30 PM on January 20th, 2021. And then take us away from the interview by telling us of those three likely scenarios is the one you think will happen.

FRANK FIGLIUZZI: [01:13:54] My crystal ball is in the closet, but I will do my best here. So let's, let's go with, um, scary scenario number one, which is that the president and his cronies continued to erode complete trust, any trust in the outcome of the election. There's massive voter suppression. There's intimidation at the physical polling places because people with long weapons show up, because he's told them to be observers at the polls and here comes the Proud Boys and extremist militia groups and QAnon quacks with long weapons and people don't want to go cause they're watching it on TV and they're too afraid, and we have vote suppression, like we've never seen before.

Then he claims there's valid fraud and he manages in court to get many of the ballots disqualified and/or his governors end up having it done through their registrars of voters. And now we don't believe the outcome of the election, and that results in street protests that turn violent throughout the country. And we have civil unrest that perhaps rivals the 1960s Vietnam protests and civil rights movement. That concerns me from the security standpoint as well. And we have not only a divided country, but a divided law enforcement that could kick in, and the courts end up doing this in a way that takes forever. That's one of the worst case scenarios.

Number two. It's linked to voter suppression, but now we have a foreign adversary involved. And the foreign adversary -- and this is already happening with regards to social media propaganda -- but now let's throw in proven hacking. Our trusted people in the intelligence community come out and go, Name your country, North Korea, Iran, China, Russia, came in and literally changed votes or blocked the transmission of voting results electronically. Don't forget while that's going on, the mail-in ballots can't be counted because they're being challenged in courts as fraudulent or inappropriate. So now we may have an outcome, some election result has been announced, but now we realize a foreign country just picked our president. And we somehow need to have a do over. That's a disaster.

FERNAND AMANDI - HOST, STRANGE DAYS: [01:16:12] My God, Frank, I didn't think you could do it. You scared the shit out of me now. I didn't even think of that scenario. You're absolutely right. Wow. I don't want to know what's behind door number three, Frank. Don't tell me.

FRANK FIGLIUZZI: [01:16:25] I'm going to end it. I'm going to end on a positive note, which was behind door number three is a massive turnout. At this point, it doesn't even matter from a security standpoint, it doesn't matter who wins in the massive turnout, but a massive turnout results in a very trusted, valid outcome that ends up certified. And we go, okay, I guess the system helped. And I'm crossing my fingers. And as we say in my line of work, prepare for the worst, but work toward the best possible outcome.

FERNAND AMANDI - HOST, STRANGE DAYS: [01:16:57] But now having said that, Frank, forgive me for putting you on the spot. I just trust you too much. Which of the scenarios, not what you hope for, are you planning and anticipating for, because you think it is the most likely to transpire?

FRANK FIGLIUZZI: [01:17:11] Yeah. If you're forcing me to pick and it's tough, but because of my knowledge of what's going on in the law enforcement intelligence community, with regard to literally a 24/7 battle against our cyber adversaries, really knocking out attempts to hack, knocking down sites that are engaged in social media propaganda, I go to scenario number one as more likely. The president and his cronies and governors result in massive, end up with massive voter suppression. And we can't trust the outcome.

Summary **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** [01:17:39] We've just heard clips today, starting with a *Ted Talk* from Van Jones, laying out the inner workings of elections we don't usually see. *Amicus* discussed why minority rule is ultimately unsustainable in the U.S. *The Michael Brook Show* explained the tactics and strategies needed to garner the largest group of allies possible to prevent a coup. Chauncey DeVega talked with Timothy Snyder on *the Truth Report* about the slow motion Reichstag fire we're in the middle of. And AOC explained why we need to turn our fear into energy.

That's what everyone heard, but members got a couple of bonus clips, including *Deadline White House* on MSNBC explaining why the legal troubles hanging over Trump's head will likely lead him to be the first president in history to self pardon and *Strange Days* discussed why Trump's massive debt and knowledge of classified information makes him a genuine national security threat.

For non-members, of course, those bonus clips are linked in the show notes and they're part of the transcript for today's episode. So you can find them if you still want to 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 bestoftheleft.com/support, or request a financial hardship membership. We don't make a lack of funds a barrier to hearing more information, and every request is granted, no questions asked.

And now, we'll hear from you.

Busting myths above and below the 49th - Orrett from

Vancouver, BC **VOICEMAILER: ORRETT FROM VANCOUVER, BC:** [01:19:03] Hey, Jay, it's Orrett from Vancouver again. I just wanted to just make a comment about how the podcast is affecting my view on what's happening here, north in the 49th. The episode about busting myths was very interesting and insightful, and it led me to the realization that here in Canada, there's several similarly told myths that we believe, and one of the myths of multiculturalism and also built on benevolence as it relates to race relations in Canada's sort of view in the world that, you know, they were the ending point for the underground railroad and the house slaves and all this. And while some of that is true, the history is completely washed of other things that the States took part in.

So I just wanted to mention that yeah, those episodes that are focused on the United States, I think have significance globally and are generally pretty good. So thanks again. And see ya.

Blindspots on the left - Mike from Toronto VOICEMAILER: MIKE

FROM TORONTO: [01:20:00] Hi, Jay, this is Mike from Toronto. I'd like to start by saying that I really enjoy the show. And I agree with the majority of your takes and the content you provide. That being said, I find it a big concern that you largely ignore some major segments of left-wing media. You might say that you have some blind spots on the left.

Anyways. I never hear the voices of Jimmy Dore, Aaron Maté, Max Blumenthal, Chris Hedges, Krystal Ball, Matt Taibbi, Katie Halper, Glenn Greenwald, or Kyle Kulinsky. I suspect a major reason is that they are all critics of Russiagate, which has been debunked as an evidence-free conspiracy theory. This is also one of your blind spots, as you seem to support Russiagate.

Anyways. Not only that, but they also report and discuss other crucial issues that have largely gone unreported on your show and left-wing media in general. One recent example is a suppression of OPCW whistleblowers who exposes hearing government gas attacks of 2018 as being staged.

They also put forth the point of view that the Democrats and Republicans are essentially just two wings of the same party. Jimmy Dore and Chris Hedges in particular put forth an interesting and convincing position on voting third party, rather than voting for Joe Biden. Can't fully explain the position here, but essentially argues that the Democratic party will never adapt, adopt, and enact progressive policies if progressives just agree to vote for them no matter what. Just think about the Republican policies of Obama. The ACA was essentially Romneycare. He deported more immigrants in his first term than Trump eventually does in his first term. He turned two wars into seven. He bailed at the banks while allowing them to evict millions. He committed countless drone strikes. The list goes on.

Progressives should therefore unite before the election, demand Joe Biden adopt some basic policies to earn their vote -- universal healthcare, and a universal basic income comes to mind -- rather than just vote-shaming people and telling just vote for Biden no matter what.

Yes, Trump won't be pushed left, but Obama was never pushed left either. See the Occupy Wall Street movement. And there is no reason to think that Biden can either. Push him before the election by threatening your vote.

Anyways. I know that this message might seem a little overly critical, but we have been talking about blind spots recently, so I just thought it's something to ponder.

Okay. Take care, Jay.

Final comments on you not being more radical than Angela Davis and a new frame for coalition governments in the US JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:22:03]

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 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@bestoftheleft.com.

So to respond to the the caller from Toronto, I'm assuming that's Toronto, Canada since he didn't specify and he didn't pronounce his last T. I have a lot of issues with his message. The first, I'll just go in order, the first is that it's wrong that I don't use material from all the people he listed. I just went and checked archives and within the last six months I used clips from Chris Hedges. I love Chris Hedges whenever he pops up in my research on a given topic. I know that he's going to say something good and interesting. So I used something from him back in June. Same with Glenn Greenwald, I used something from Glenn back in June. And Katie Halper, that was another one he mentioned. I used a Katie Halper clip like two weeks ago.

So, just a little annoyed to be accused of, "no, I never hear these people and here's probably why," which brings us to whatever blind spots I may have. I mean, I certainly have blind spots, but a blind spot is something you don't know about. You're not aware; you're blind to it. With what the caller is referring to, it's not so much a blind spot as me being aware of something and choosing not to air it. That is not a blind spot. The show is called Best of the Left. If I'm not presenting a perspective, it is either because maybe I'm completely unaware of it, which certainly happens, or I'm aware of it and disagree, and do not think it qualifies as being part of the Best of the Left.

Again, supporting Russiagate, I don't know where that's even coming from. I love when someone chimes in and accuses me of that. When, first of all, when was the last time I talked about Russiagate, and more importantly, which iteration of that story are you even talking about? If someone says Russiagate, I genuinely have no idea what they're talking about. I don't know which version of that story they're referring to.

And then finally he made reference to there being an interesting and convincing argument for not voting for Joe Biden. He mentioned Jimmy Dore, who I didn't bother looking up because he's been saying the same thing for five years and I know what his argument is. It is exactly what the caller described in short, but he also said that Chris Hedges also has an argument and maybe it's the same as Jimmy Dore's and maybe it's not, but I looked into it and it turns out Chris Hedges, first of all, lives in Princeton, New Jersey, if my quick little search is correct, so he doesn't live in a swing state. My argument for how to vote, I'm talking about swing states. If you don't live in a swing state, then the discussion about that is completely different. So if Chris Hedges doesn't want to vote for the Democratic Party in New Jersey, I don't care at all, and that's a completely different conversation. But here's what Chris Hedges had to say, his own argument for why he's not voting for the Democrat in this election.

KATIE HALPER - HOST, THE KATIE HALPER SHOW: [01:25:34] You made the case that that Trump will be more damaging.

CHRIS HEDGES: [01:25:37] Sure, but I am not voting for Biden, I haven't voted for Democrats since 2000. A lot of it's personal. I spent months of my life in Gaza. I am not voting for anybody who arms and funds the apartheid state of Israel. I have taught in the prisons for 10

years. I have very close relationships with my students and their families whose lives were devastated because of Joe Biden and Bill Clinton and the Democratic Party, and my loyalty is to them. I suppose it's not practical, but I don't really care. When I heard Obama give that speech to AIPAC in 2016, it might as well have been written by AIPAC. I just can't betray these people. I spent 20 years overseas, this is personal, and I have to go back to these places. And I at least want to earn the right to ask for their forgiveness.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:26:34] So the key point of that clip is that he says, "It may not be practical". With that one phrase he is conveying that his voting style, his opinion, his strategy, or whatever is not connected to a theory of change. It is not part of a larger scheme to bring about something greater. Based on his story, it's clear that his decision to vote third party is deeply emotional and has nothing to do with making concrete steps that bring us to a better world. He said that he needed to vote that way so that he could go back to Palestine and look people in the eye. That has nothing to do with being in scenario A and acting in action B, which leads us to, hopefully, result C. There's no connection there. That's just so he can feel good about being able to go and speak to people in the Middle East and look them in the eye without feeling like a traitor to their cause. So, as I said, Chris Hedges lives in New Jersey. I don't care if he decides not to vote for the Democratic Party in the general election, because it makes no difference. And apparently he doesn't even seem to be trying to sway the party in one way or the other because as he said, it's not even practical, his decision on how to vote isn't practical.

My argument on how to vote is about practicality. Which brings us to the other argument that the caller brought up, which is this idea that threatening to withhold your vote during the general election may bend politicians like Obama or Biden to the left, and I'm calling this "phantom leverage". It feels like it should be leverage. It seems like the kind of thing that should work, but it doesn't, it's a phantom. And frankly, threatening to withhold your vote during the general election, it's more like when the kid threatens to hold their breath until they die, if they don't get their way. It's not going to work and you're inevitably going to hurt yourself a lot more than the person you're threatening. The establishment Democrat who you're targeting with that strategy is not phased by that argument and the people who you're going to hurt, the people you're holding hostage, are yourself and the most vulnerable people in the country. That is who you are hurting. That is who you're actually targeting with that strategy. Honestly, the idea that that is real leverage, that you could use that and make change in the world, it is as delusional as the flip side of the party, the establishment Democrats, who think that the sum total of all their problems can be laid at Putin's feet and that there is no such thing as systemic problems within the Democratic Party. It's completely delusional on both ends.

So to switch gears and just to point to someone who thinks a little bit more clearly about this, there is an article about Angela Davis voting for Biden, came out a few months ago, titled *Angela Davis is Voting for Biden, But You Think You are Too 'Revolutionary' for That?* And here's just a few paragraphs of it:

"By putting Biden up as the Democratic nominee, the DNC has slapped us all in the face. But another four years of Trump would be a shotgun blast to the belly. Which do you prefer, being slapped or shot with a shotgun in the stomach?"

' There is nothing 'radical' or 'revolutionary' about aiding and abetting Donald Trump. Sitting out this election would be exactly that.

" This is one of the finer points I'd like to imagine a seasoned, wise activist of 5+ decades like Angela Davis could understand. Despite her own personal, ideological principles, Davis has fought enough battles and seen enough victories and losses to know that maintaining a sense of pragmatism is critical. In a recent interview with RT News, Davis made clear that a vote for Biden was a preferable alternative to Trump despite her Marxist-Feminist worldview. She says, ' Biden is far more likely to take mass demands seriously. Far more likely than the current occupant of the White House. So this coming November, the election will ask us not so much to vote for the best candidate, but to vote for or against ourselves.'

" Davis should stand as an example to all 'radicals' that utilitarian approaches are often necessary and that there is no merit in ideological rigidity. If there was ever a time in American history to become practical and un-idealistic, that time is now. People's lives literally depend on it."

So on one hand, we have an activist of 5+ decades and a Marxist-Feminist ideology, Angela Davis, and on the other you have Chris Hedges who lives in Princeton, New Jersey, and says that his voting strategy isn't even practical. I don't think there's a good comparison there.

So, now I just want to touch on something else. I'm going to go long because all this needs to be said before the election, because who knows what's going to happen.

If we lived in a parliamentary system, which I think third party voters sort of dream of, they dream of being able to vote for a non-major party and have their ideology really represented in the person that they vote for. If we lived in a parliamentary system, the Greens and the Democrats would very likely form a coalition in which the Greens would be at the negotiating table. In our system, the Greens opt to cast themselves out entirely where they have no seat at the table. And so I can't help but wonder how much more progressive the Democratic Party would be if the most progressive people in the country made it a point to try to pull that party to the left, the major party that comes closest to representing them, which they would inevitably, I promise you, form a coalition government with if we were in a parliamentary system, rather than abandoning it to the corporatists.

We don't live in a parliamentary system obviously, but what we do live in is effectively a caucus system. And I've never heard anyone talk about this. I'm calling this an original idea on my part, but I'm sure someone else smarter came up with it a long time ago. Each party has a wide variety of caucuses within it that function like minor parties within a coalition government. So on the Democratic side, and I'm just talking about the political caucuses and I'm probably not even going to mention them all, but in broad strokes, there is the Congressional Progressive Caucus, more moderate sort of the centrist Democrats are represented by the New Democrat Coalition. And then the real conservative Democrats formed the Blue Dog Coalition. So those are all caucuses that exist within the Democratic Party. On the Republican side, you've got Liberty caucus and the Freedom caucus and probably others.

The point is that each of these caucuses is effectively like a minor party that have come together to form a coalition government. That is how parliamentary systems work. If you love the idea of third and fourth and fifth party voting, what you are imagining is a

parliamentary system in which no party gets a majority of the vote and therefore multiple parties have to come together in order to form a majority coalition party. Well, in our system, it's just basically already happened. The coalitions are built in. The progressives and the moderates and the conservative Democrats have already formed a coalition.

So each has a voice at the table, and keep in mind just how politics works, people always triangulate between the range of options in front of them. Instinctually, they're trying to find the middle ground, trying to make everyone happy, and so for years, the Democrats have been internally triangulating between hardcore neo-liberalism and super tepid progressivism. And then Bernie and AOC came along and showed that when you bring forceful leftism to the table, the table actually begins to tilt because people are trying to triangulate, but there's a whole new force at play.

So in the end, politics is always about managing factions and the two party system is effectively an illusion that masks the existence of all of America's factions, whereas parliamentary systems put those factions more on display. But there's no reason to think that Democrats are monolithic or that Republicans are monolithic and that because they are monolithic and they don't represent you, you then have to vote third party.

No, there are coalitions within, or caucuses within, the Democratic Party that absolutely represent your interests. And if there aren't, there could be, if more progressive people joined the Democratic Party and insisted on there being a Democratic Socialist caucus or a Communist caucus or whatever. You could build that power inside the Democratic Party and actually have a seat at the table. Whereas now, the most progressive people in the country choose to opt out of the option for power. They have opted out of the option to have a seat at the table.

So on this note, New Zealand just had an election where Labor won a decisive victory, but they also just signed an agreement of cooperation with the Green Party of New Zealand. So they're officially running a Labor government with Green support and the Greens have a seat at the table. And the interesting quirk about the agreement they just signed is that it says that they have agreed to agree to disagree, meaning that the Greens have agreed to join a coalition with the Labor party, they've agreed to work together, but they have insisted on having the right to disagree with things that the government ultimately decides to do should that eventuality arise. And that sounds exactly like what would happen if the Greens had a caucus inside the Democratic Party or the Democratic Socialists had a caucus inside the Democratic Party. They would have this formal agreement to be part of the coalition with the rest of the Democrats, but reserve the right to object and disagree with what the party was doing, or if they were in power, what the government was doing. And that is exactly what a good functioning government would do. There would be this coalition, a functioning government made up of a coalition of people who don't agree on everything.

So the big difference is that in America, you get to name your caucus affiliation, or in a parliamentary system, what would be a minor party, you get to name your party affiliation in the primary election. You vote to support the caucus that you want to support. You get to vote for the most progressive candidate. You get to vote, if there was someone running as a far left Democrat who would otherwise be a Green Party candidate, you can say, that's who I want, I want the Green Party candidate, or I want the Democratic Socialist candidate running

in the Democratic primary. And then, in the general election, you support the coalition that includes your caucus.

And I think that people like Chris Hedges just get too far down in the weeds in the semantic trap where they begin to think of the Democratic Party as a monolith and that Biden is representative of the entire Democratic Party. And Angela Davis just doesn't fall into that trap. Here's another quick line from the article about her. She "voices her support for a Biden vote despite not advocating for Biden himself."

Supporting a vote for Biden without supporting the man or his positions is not much different from supporting the formation of a coalition government while retaining the right to agree to disagree with the government that you're a part of. If you're a Green in the U.S. who insists on staying outside the coalition, you have no seat at the table whatsoever, and the Democratic establishment dismisses you out of hand and makes no effort to get your vote.

Likewise, to those who toothlessly threaten this phantom leverage to withhold their votes: if there is only one lesson that we should learn from the past five years, it is actually that Trump is only a symptom of our problems. But if there are two lessons that we can learn, then the second should be that politicians like Bernie Sanders and AOC and the rest of the Squad have shown us that leverage and power comes from being on the inside, not from making threats while stuck on the outside.

In the coming days, I would love to hear your thoughts by voicemail or email regarding the election and any subsequent protests and literally whatever is happening. We don't really know what episodes are going to sound like right away. We got to see how things go. So send us your thoughts, your messages, if you go to a protest, record some sound, tell us what's happening and send all of that in. Keep the comments coming to the number (202) 999-3991 or by emailing me to jay@bestoftheleft.com.

Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to those who support the show, especially by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at bestoftheleft.com/support, as 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