

#1388 The Cathartic, Angry Description of Our COVID Response That You Need to Hear

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:00:00] Welcome to this episode of the award-winning Best of the Left podcast, in which we shall learn about the abysmal response to the pandemic in the US, the unavoidable racial overtones inherent in that failed response, the lasting trauma the pandemic has inflicted, and why nothing short of systemic change will suffice.

Before we get started, though, another quick reminder.

Just want to catch anyone up who missed out on the news. We were sort of in a "break glass in case of emergency" financial situation. Things are getting better, but we very recently lost a huge chunk of money. Our Amazon affiliate funding disappeared. And it's like losing 400 members all at once -- a financial blow we were not prepared to take. Remarkably, after just a few weeks of explaining the situation and losing those 400 members -- you know, the equivalent of, as I said -- we've regained the equivalent of about 300 members. In other words, about 75% of the way back to that sustainability point that we had been at before.

So if you can become a member or want to gift a membership to someone to help get us back to sustainability, please do. We also gratefully accept one-time donations, if that is more your style. We also have a new merch store where you can buy our designs, and we've launched our Refer-o-Matic campaign that you can use to earn rewards just for sharing the show and helping to grow the audience. Links to all of that of course, are in the show notes.

And now onto the show! Clips today are from the Damage Report, All In with Chris Hayes, Politics with Amy Walter, the David Pakman Show, an episode of Check Your Blindspot, Late Night with Seth Meyers, Democracy Now!, The Humanist Report, the United States of Anxiety, and The Majority Report.

AOC Calls Out McConnell's B***S**T Stimulus Excuse - The Damage Report - Air Date 12-11-20

JOHN IADAROLA - HOST, THE DAMAGE REPORT: [00:02:00] Got an insult and injury sort of situation here with the injury being that Mitch McConnell has spent the past year desperately trying to stop you from getting any assistance from the government during the worst domestic crisis of the last century. The insult will be his characterization of the ongoing negotiations in this video clip.

SEN. MITCH MCCONNELL: [00:02:19] If my friends actually oppose PPP funding, vaccine distribution money, or extending some expiring unemployment aid, let's hear why. But if they do not oppose these things, let's get them out the door.

JOHN IADAROLA - HOST, THE DAMAGE REPORT: [00:02:39] When I see that just want to be like, this is why people don't like politics and I don't like it anymore when I see that, Brett. That was a little bit disingenuous from the Senate majority leader.

BRETT ERLICH: [00:02:52] It's just so boring. It's so boring. It is so callous and so boring.

So here's the conclusion I've come to. Dear Republicans in Georgia, which has a lot of economic woes they're in the throws of: Donald Trump, your president, wants a COVID aid package with some sort of direct payments to individuals -- everyone, Republicans out there, Democrats, whom your state has voted for recently, and currently, they want some kind of COVID aid -- money, checks to you, dollar bills in the mail for you. The only person, and who's standing there shaking his fist saying, no, we need to send that money to your boss, is Mitch McConnell. So the only way to get what Donald Trump wants and what everybody else, if you ask them, wants, is to vote for two Democrats in Senate, because then you get rid of Mitch McConnell and you can still filibuster whatever you want.

But in this situation, you get people out of the way that are standing between you and the money you need to feed your family.

JOHN IADAROLA - HOST, THE DAMAGE REPORT: [00:04:09] But thankfully we do have some people are going to communicate about the actual roadblock, which is not the Democrats not wanting the money. It's him, basically just Mitch McConnell at this point, wanting there to be this shield against lawsuits for corporations that puts you in an incredibly dangerous situations.

That was explained very well in a much more casual setting yesterday in a live stream by representative Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, as you'll see in this clip,

REP. ALEXANDRIA OCASIO CORTEZ: [00:04:34] What Mitch McConnell said is that we want to give big corporations total immunity for five years from COVID-related lawsuits. Now, if we do that, if we accept that for a one time \$1,200 check or a super short expansion of unemployment insurance, the deal is that you're going to end up behind, because you may get one \$1,200 check on one hand, but you may also get a multi-million dollar hospital bill, with no recourse and no ability to protect yourself from a negligent corporation or employer. And so that's not worth it, right? Your check is not worth your life.

JOHN IADAROLA - HOST, THE DAMAGE REPORT: [00:05:27] Exactly. And we know about some of these lawsuits and some lawsuits have already been filed and this would of course be a retroactive shield that he wants, so it would nullify some of those, but there are so many that we don't even yet know about because a lot of people are still going to be endangered over the next few months to the next year. And others will find out about long-term health problems that they might not yet be fully aware of. Of course Mitch McConnell is like rushing to get out in front of those. And he might in the end actually succeed, but at least along the way, we have some politicians who are trying to do the right thing.

BRETT ERLICH: [00:05:57] Yes. That is a very good way to put it, what AOC did, which is they want to -- we're not going to trade. The two options from the Republicans are starving you and killing you. That's it. They either want to starve you out and not give you anything. Or they want to allow your employer to just send you into whatever dangerous situation. And this is the skill of the Republicans is to remove any common sense from the equation, any deep -- they're trying to paint Democrats, progressives, and most Republicans at this point, because there is a bipartisan attempt to actually get you checks.

They're trying to paint that as, "Well they just want to lock you up and and throw away the key, take away your freedoms." It's no, we want to keep you safe and keep food on your

table for now, until we get through this. In the meantime, all that they're trying to do on the Republican side is give your boss money and squeeze you to die. That's it.

Chris Hayes: I'm Enraged Over America's 'Depraved' Covid Indifference - All In with Chris Hayes - Air Date 12-9-20

CHRIS HAYES - HOST, ALL IN: [00:07:06] As the coronavirus continues to devastate this country, I am just finding it hard to hold my rage and my anguish together.

We are watching a lack of action by the federal leadership in this country that feels almost criminal. It is depraved indifference at a level I can't not quite articulate.

Do you remember where you were in 9/11? I do. I think we all do. I would say, take a moment now to commit to memory where you are at this moment. We lost more Americans today than we lost in 9/11, an event that transformed our country and our government and the world.

Today was just a Wednesday. We are now at a point where the nation's COVID response has descended into chaos. Just chaos, catastrophe and calamity, and everyone is mad at everyone else. People are mad at each other. People are texting each other about the jerk at the store who wasn't wearing a mask properly. And the person on Instagram, what a big party and big group on Thanksgiving, or the people mobilizing in this town or that to protest the restrictions meant to save lives, and the hypocritical local leaders, and the governors who won't act, were closing schools and playgrounds, but not bars and gyms?

All the while a record number of people in the US remain hospitalized with COVID. More than 3000 deaths were recorded today for the first time ever. That's a record here and a record for the world.

We have without question the worst response of any rich country in the world. And you can really make the case that is just the worst in the world period. There are many points of failure. But do not lose sight of the fact that it starts from the top and it has from the beginning. There is no country on earth that has successfully suppressed the coronavirus in a distributed, privatized, federalized way. Nowhere on earth where the government just told localities and individuals to make choices for themselves.

That didn't work for anyone. In fact, it's the opposite that's been successful looking at Australia. Yes, it doesn't share land border with another country. Yes, they have a lot going for them. And they also adopted really strict measures. Australia even stopped people traveling between provinces completely. Imagine if you couldn't travel between States here. You know, a few times teenagers in Australia broke quarantine and traveled between provinces and it was -- no joke -- it was national news there. The country undertook a fully nationalized efforts to suppress the virus and it was strict and it was hard and you know what? It worked.

They have almost no cases. And this is what it looks like in Australia now, doesn't that look nice? People greeting each other at the end of the travel ban, which just was announced.

They're having outdoor concerts. People are eating in Sydney and Melbourne. This is what success looks like.

If the US had Australia's per capita death rate, more than 270,000 Americans would be alive today, more than 90% of all the Americans who have died of COVID would still be here.

Okay, you say Australia is, is a weird case. It's it's an Island. It's got a relatively small population. It's a part of the world that dealt with SARS and had some practice. Let's look at Germany. Germany had one of the best performers performances in the EU. And then, because the virus is implacable, as we know, it doesn't stop. It doesn't go away. The numbers started spiking again in the fall. And so like other EU countries, they had to take fairly drastic measures to shut back down, to suppress the virus and get it under control. Now, Germany is actually quite a federalized system. There is a lot of regional autonomy in their government, but this was a national effort, led by a national leader who spoke to her nation like a grownup.

Just today, chancellor Angela Merkel was explaining why the country's traditional Christmas markets couldn't stay open, saying that the current death rate in Germany is just too high. [Recording of Angela Merkel in German]

Hear what she said? She said, I am really sorry from the bottom of my heart. But if the price we pay is 590 deaths a day, and that is unacceptable in my view, and they applauded. 590 deaths today, which is what Merkel will not abide in Germany, is the equivalent, population-wise, to 2300 people a day here, less than the number of people dying here every day.

Now, Donald Trump has never come out surrounded by members of his party and given a passionate public speech in which he says from the bottom of my heart to Americans, 2300 Americans dying a day is a completely fine price to pay. It's fine if you all die at that number, and get applause from the people that support him.

But just because he hasn't given that speech doesn't mean that isn't the policy. That is the policy. The policy is: you guys all figure it out. Everyone is left on their own with no White House leadership on anything, not public health policy and not a relief deal to offset the worst economic effects of the pandemic. And it is a mess.

How the Economic Downturn has Hurt Vulnerable Americans - Politics with Amy Walter - Air Date 12-11-20

AMY WALTER - HOST, POLITICS WITH AMY WALTER: [00:12:17] It's pretty clear that the structural inequities that have been part of the US economy for some time now -- have always been there -- were just really laid bare in this, COVID era and seem to be getting even worse. Where do you see things?

WILLIAM SPRIGGS: [00:12:37] Well, I see the turn in the virus in part influenced by a sense that it had racially disparate effects. That Black workers who are dying far higher rates than other workers somehow or another, I believe, gave us a sense that this was not as critical as everybody thought it would be. And that's part of what I believe turned this into a partisan

issue as opposed to understanding it as this national crisis since we're about to lose more people from this virus than our casualties during World War II. And I am fearful because what should have been unifying. This should have been like all the science fiction movies that everybody grew up on, where the aliens come to earth and try and kill us, and the world comes together and beats the aliens. Well, the virus is the alien. And so, I worry because this has become partisan and because the pain is not equally felt in all communities. There will be this tendency to accept the pain and the suffering and the loss, and attempts to solve the problem become a partisan issue and make it difficult to pull together, do the right thing on the virus so we can do the right thing on the economy. And part of doing the right thing in the economy is making sure that we are unified, that we see this as this outside force that has attacked our economy. And that we understand if households can't go to grocery stores, if people aren't paying rent, this affects the whole economy.

And so supporting people becomes important for the economy. Instead, in this partisan world, it's become the typical whether people are worthy, and our sliding scale on worthy has become disturbing. It used to be well, you know, there's the deserving poor. Now it's the deserving workers. We accept poor workers. We accept that. Now, now we're into, you have to be a deserving worker.

Electoral College Votes, Trump STILL Won't Stop - The David Pakman Show - Air Date 12-14-20

DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, THE DAVID PAKMAN SHOW: [00:15:07] It's truly a tragedy what's going on in this country in general, but I'm talking right now about coronavirus. I get that we're a huge country geographically. We have 330 million people. I get that, but we're some of the worst of the worst in the world. And we are now having a 9/11's-worth of deaths on one day regularly, and the numbers are potentially going to get much worse before they get any better. Now, I know many people on the right, including Donald Trump, like to say, well, everyone is seeing the same thing. That could not be further from the truth, and I want to examine that with you today because we really need to understand just how terribly we are doing.

The claim is everyone is seeing the same thing. Cases are spiking here; cases are spiking there: Italy, Sweden, whatever. That's mostly based on this spike in mid-October that we started seeing just like many other European countries. But there are two really important differences to understand here. The first is that when the US started seeing its October spike, that was already our third spike because we had spike no. 1 in April and spike no. 2 in July. So, middle of October, we're on spike no. 3. That's a key difference because in Italy, for example, their mid-October spike was only their second spike. In other words, Italy successfully suppressed the virus throughout May, June, July, August, September, early October. So, when we were entering spike 3, and they were also spiking, they were only on their second spike. So, that's a huge difference, and that applies to just about all of these European countries that did not have the second spike we had. Just as importantly, these European countries that started getting a spike when we did in mid-October, most of them have already suppressed the spike. And they've seen a decline from the highs of about 50% of new cases per day. So, as an example, we look at Spain, and you see that yes, Spain started having spike no. 2 at the same time that we started having spike no. 3, but their

trend line for the seven-day case average is already down by half from where it peaked. If you look at another example like France, you also see that while they spiked in mid-October like we did, their cases are already way down. But when you look at the United States, we have this spike that started at the same time, but we are reaching new records just about every day.

This has been one of the biggest failures of any presidential administration ever. It's globally shameful, but it is a tragedy in terms of its toll on human life and suffering. And it's going to take time to fix this now. There's no way around it. And we know that on January 21st, every coronavirus death will be blamed on Joe Biden by these Republicans. All I care is that we fix it. If now they want to start wearing masks and social distancing because Biden is President, then do it in order to show. I don't know what. I don't think that that's going to be their reaction. And of course, it's too late for the 300,000 people that died already. It's too late for the many that recovered from serious cases of the virus and still have symptoms and unknown long-term effects that we don't yet understand.

But this is a cautionary tale about what not to do. This is not about taking . . . You know, it's so depressing. Don Jr., early in this entire fiasco, said, Oh, Democrats want people to die to make Trump look bad. No, I have not found a single person on the left or a Democrat who wants people to die. What we do want is that those responsible for the failed leadership be held accountable. In a sense, Trump was because he lost the election, but this is really a cautionary tale about what not to do. And part of what not to do is don't elect a buffoonish, incompetent clown to be President of the United States.

Check Your Blindspot - Air Date 12-18-20

ANNOUNCER: [00:19:06] It's time once again, to play America's favorite political game show.

STUDIO AUDIENCE: [00:19:13] Check! Your! Blindspot! [Cheers]

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:19:22] That's right. It's Check Your Blindspot, brought to you and powered by our sponsor, the Ground News app, the first ever news comparison platform that provides readers with objective data about the underlying political bias in all published news stories. The Ground News app features the Blindspot, which highlights news stories that just aren't being covered by one end of the political spectrum or the other. So I use the Blindspot to quiz contestants on theirs.

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

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:19:54] Thank you. Glad to be here.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:19:56] I am going to be telling you about news stories and you're going to tell me which side of the political spectrum is blind to them. Are you ready?

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:20:04] Yes.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:20:05] Excellent. Let's get ready for round one!

In whose political blindspot is this story? Tucker Carlson warns that Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez could win the presidency in 2024 if the wealth gap keeps expanding, and goes on to say that the ruling class is giving capitalism a bad name and elites are participating in a closed game for their own benefit. So--

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:20:36] Including Tucker Carlson.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:20:38] So Tucker's clearly been reading from Bernie Sanders' crib notes. Who's paying attention to this?

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:20:45] That's. Hmm. I'm going to guess that it's in the left's blindspot, but there's some fuzzy area there.

STUDIO AUDIENCE: [00:20:55] [Dings] Yay!

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:21:00] Yeah. I think we were witnessing the beginning of something because this reminds me of another recent headline from Marco Rubio saying the GOP must rebrand as the party of multi-ethnic multi-racial working class voters.

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:21:15] Oh, good Lord. Good luck with that.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:21:17] Yeah. So basically they see an opening.

The Democrats are not covering their working class wing. And the Republicans, in fear of losing any capacity to win an election, are going for it.

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:21:33] If that happens, oh my dear Lord. If the Republicans can fill the spot that we've been begging Democrats to fill for years, I will cry. Forever.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:21:46] Yeah. The Democrats would really have to be caught sleeping to allow that to happen. And what are the chances?

STUDIO AUDIENCE: [00:21:57] Oh! Jeez.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:21:59] All right. Nice work. Let's hear round two!

In whose political blindspot is this story? A list of Chinese communist party members has been revealed showing that they have been working around the world in various corporations and governments.

So your just quick overview, amid simmering tensions between Australia and China, the media in Melbourne on Monday reported a major data leak containing official records, like party position, birth date, national ID number, and ethnicity of nearly 2 million alleged members of the communist party of China living and working across the world.

The data leak obtained by The Australian newspaper has revealed how the alleged CPC members are employed with some of the world's biggest corporations in the areas of

defense, banks and pharmaceutical giants, manufacturing coronavirus vaccines. Who is not aware of this?

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:23:02] I'm going to go and say it's in the left's blindspot.

ANNOUNCER: [00:23:07] Correct! [Applause]

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:23:11] Also, we could get into a whole discussion. I'm not sure what that means exactly. Just because they're members of the party.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:23:18] I'll tell you that it was exactly where I was headed. So to be clear, there is no evidence so far of espionage or wrongdoing. It's just a list of names and details. But the problem, according to one article says, quote, CPC members must swear an oath of loyalty and secrecy to the party, including a vow to "never betray the party".

And so as you correctly pointed out, the right is talking about this the left, not so much. So a former conservative party leader in the UK, Ian Duncan Smith said CPC members must not be allowed to work in British consulates. And says, "The government must now move to expel and remove any members of the communist party from our consuls throughout China", Duncan Smith wrote in a commentary in The Mail on Sunday. Continuing, "They can either serve the UK or the Chinese communist party. They cannot do both." And so, that's a government job at a kind of consul. The corporations, that's a whole trickier thing, but it is causing an uproar.

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:24:32] Hmm. Interesting. Could do a whole episode on that.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:24:35] Indeed.

Now after two successful rounds, let's see if you can go three for three!

In whose political blindspot is this story: On Fox News, Stephen Miller says an alternate set of electors will certify Trump as the winner.

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:24:56] Well, I heard about the story because it was trending on Twitter. So. It can't be too far in one camp or the other, I don't think. But I'm going to say it's in the right's blindspot, just cause I've heard of it.

STUDIO AUDIENCE: [00:25:08] [Dings]

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:25:09] Yay!

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:25:11] That is correct. And to be honest --

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:25:12] I'm surprised, that surprises me.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:25:15] This one is a bit of a puzzle for me. There is a dribble of coverage over on the right. Not much. There is a flood of it on the left.

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:25:23] It's because they just know that this isn't --

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:25:26] I genuinely don't know. I was going to ask you that; this one's a puzzle. I don't know why the right isn't--

Well, I'd seen a few things where people were trying to make it sound like, because some electors in some States voted for Trump that people were turning. And that's not the case, and it depends on a whole other slew of things. So I don't know. I think they're distracted by other stuff, other fake stuff.

Maybe so, maybe so. Miller was pressed on Fox News by Brian Kilmeade about the Trump campaign's repeated failures to prove election fraud in court, asking, " Your legal team in almost every state, 50 times, lost -- some with Trump judges. So do you have the worst legal team?"

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:26:15] Yes. The answer is yes.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:26:18] "Or are you just too late, and this case should have been brought before the election?" And Miller's response was that the judges are caving to the corrupt corporate media pressuring them.

STUDIO AUDIENCE: [00:26:30] Ooh! Ahh! Oh my God.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:26:43] So once again, three for three! Winner and still champion, Amanda from Boston. Thank you for playing.

AMANDA FROM BOSTON - CONTESTANT: [00:26:47] Thank you!

STUDIO AUDIENCE: [00:26:48] Yay! [Clapping]

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, CHECK YOUR BLINDSPOT: [00:26:50] That wraps it up for today. It's important to mention that all of today's commentary and analysis is ours alone, and definitely not that of the staunchly unopinionated Ground News. If you'd like to try their service, get a discount on their premium features and let them know we sent you, go to ground.news/best.

As always, whether for traffic safety or media literacy, never forget to

STUDIO AUDIENCE: [00:27:14] Check! Your! Blindspot! [Cheers]

Trump Joins New Election Lawsuit as U.S. Hits Record COVID Deaths: A Closer Look - Late Night with Seth Meyers - Air Date 12-10-20

SETH MEYERS - HOST, LATE NIGHT WITH SETH MEYERS: [00:27:42] Every day, it gets harder and harder to articulate just how shocking and devastating and unbearable this situation is and how sick and depraved and sadistic our leaders are. At some point, you just run out of words. If when this whole thing started, you'd invested in Purell, Lysol and thesaurus.com, you would have made a fortune, a king's ransom, a tiny nest egg, racks on racks. The point is

we're in the midst of a national calamity unlike anything most of us has seen in our lifetimes. It's an ongoing emergency with over 200,000 new cases every day and 100,000 Americans in the hospital as we speak. Republicans spent over \$7 million in 2 1/2 years investigating four American deaths in Benghazi in order to, by their own admission, drag down Hillary Clinton's poll numbers. But when you bring up COVID, they act like it's a new TikTok trend they've never heard of before. Is that the one where you eat cereal out of someone else's mouth?

And as grotesque and sociopathic as the indifference and incompetence from the Trump administration and Republican party have been, there's also plenty of blame to go around: from confusing decisions by local officials to close playgrounds but keep gyms and bars open; to hypocrites, like the mayor of Austin, who told people to stay home while he was on vacation in Cabo. I mean, I'm sure it's a wonderful place, but just being in Cabo sounds like an admission of guilt. If someone started a sentence, Let me explain, I was in Cabo, you would just say shut up. Unless of course you were in Cancun, in which case, you know, you'd have to hear them out.

The response to the coronavirus has been a total failure of American governance from the top down, and leadership is desperately needed. The President and his aides could be on TV every single day asking people to stay home for their own sake and for the health of their friends, family, and fellow Americans. They could be leading the charge to get direct payments to Americans and small businesses to help them through the crisis. Instead, Mitch McConnell has been holding up an aid package in order to get a liability shield for corporations to put workers in harm's way while the White House proposed lowering the federal unemployment benefit, a situation that has clearly infuriated Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders.

SEN. BERNIE SANDERS: [00:29:43] Unemployment is higher. We have a record level of hunger in America. Millions of people are facing eviction. This is an emergency. Congress has got to respond aggressively to help working families. You know, Stephanie, I always got a kick . . . Here in Washington, when we go to war, there's endless amounts of money; tax breaks for billionaires, endless amounts of money; corporate welfare, endless amounts of money. When children are going hungry in America today, suddenly we don't have enough money. That's crap. That's wrong.

SETH MEYERS - HOST, LATE NIGHT WITH SETH MEYERS: [00:30:13] Can Bernie be the new host of Jeopardy? That would be fantastic.

SEN. BERNIE SANDERS: [00:30:18] That's crap. That's wrong.

SETH MEYERS - HOST, LATE NIGHT WITH SETH MEYERS: [00:30:21] Bernie is right. And there's no better way to say it. This situation should be just as outrageous to you as seeing a BMW parked in a fire lane or getting skipped in line at the deli. And you do not want to skip Bernie at the deli.

Whoa, Whoa. Excuse me. I have number seven. I've been waiting here impatiently for 20 minutes, and you just serve him because he walks up to the counter like he owns the place. That's wrong. That's crap. Now I got to go. I got tickets to Jersey Boys. Sanders and many other progressives like Congressman Katie Porter want direct payments to Americans. And in an interview last week, Porter took issue with the fact that such payments are often referred to as stimulus.

Rep. Katie Porter: [00:30:55] One of the things that's making me really frustrated right now is when I hear people talk about this as stimulus. Let's be clear. It is not stimulus money to give people money so they can feed themselves, so that they can keep heat on in the winter, so that they can avoid eviction. That's not stimulus. That is basic needs that we're talking about meeting, and you're absolutely right, that it's not enough to just do some unemployment. It's not enough to do more with food assistance. People need that direct assistance.

SETH MEYERS - HOST, LATE NIGHT WITH SETH MEYERS: [00:31:25] She's right, too. All that was missing was a, that's crap or, you know, a few other swears. Next time, she should feel free to say one of the many things that makes me really upset at these [expletive bleeped out] is when I hear their bitch mouths talk about a stimulus. It's not stimulus it's money for people to eat and pay for housing and utilities, things Mitch McConnell doesn't have to worry about because according to the Center for Responsive Politics, he has a net worth of over \$34 million, money I assume he made doing narration for Kentucky Ghost Stories.

Porter's right. That we shouldn't call this stimulus. It's not about stimulating the economy. It's about keeping people alive. If you see someone on the side of the road next to a car wreck, you don't pull over and say, Yo! So, you want me to call AAA? What's next to tourniquet for your leg? Eh, everybody wants a handout. And the richest country on earth should have a political system that sees the dire situation we're in: 3,000 dead in a day, 100,000 hospitalized, millions facing eviction, unemployment and hunger -- and rushes to do something about it. Instead, here's what the leader of the White House Coronavirus Task Force was talking about yesterday as the US set a new daily record for coronavirus deaths :

VP MIKE PENCE: [00:32:35] Space itself represents a war fighting domain, and we will be prepared to defend our nation and defend our freedom in space.

SETH MEYERS - HOST, LATE NIGHT WITH SETH MEYERS: [00:32:46] I mean, sure. Why not? After all, we're at a place now where going to space and going to Applebee's are equally dangerous, but maybe that's their COVID plan. Quarantine everyone in space. We'll be launching people into orbit to keep the coronavirus from spreading. And Rudy, please keep your helmet on. When I cough in the helmet, the spit comes right back at me.

Oh no, my teeth are floating away again. No, though, to be honest, I wish Trump had been talking about space and maybe, you know, going there. Instead, he spent his entire day as thousands of Americans were dying alone in overwhelmed hospitals, scream-tweeting unhinged nonsense about the election he lost trying to get the result overturned and, of course, watching Fox News. This is what Trump and the Republican party obsessively focused on as thousands of Americans die every day from a pandemic they clearly don't care about. As I said before, at some point you just run out of words, all you can really say is

That's

SEN. BERNIE SANDERS: [00:33:36] crap. That's wrong.

SETH MEYERS - HOST, LATE NIGHT WITH SETH MEYERS: [00:33:38] This has been A Closer Look.

As COVID Surges Behind Bars in California, Why Is San Quentin Transferring Hundreds of Prisoners? - Democracy Now! - Air Date 12-15-20

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: [00:33:39] For the first time in the pandemic's history, the state prison system is battling COVID-19 in all of the state's prisons, all 34. Can you talk about what is happening and what people are describing as the chaos inside San Quentin? What needs to be done?

JAMES KING: [00:33:58] Yes. And good to see you again, Amy.

The outbreak throughout the 34 prisons is surging in a way that shows that overcrowded, unventilated prisons throughout the state are not safe to protect people from COVID-19, something that public health officials have been saying for the past nine months. The public health officials have called for San Quentin itself to be depopulated to 50%. And throughout the state, there are calls for each of our massively overcrowded prisons to be decarcerated in the same manner. Throughout the state, there is no capacity to physically distance within our prisons. There are no proper hygiene and personal protection equipment that is passed out. And the buildings themselves are poorly ventilated, as you heard from Juan.

Last October, there was a 1st District Court of Appeals ruling, which ruled that San Quentin should reduce its population to 1,775 people either by transfers or releases, and gave the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation the option to decide which to do. They're choosing transfers of over 300 of their most elderly, medically vulnerable people out of the prison throughout the state, even though cases are surging throughout the state prison system.

JUAN GONZALES - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: [00:35:28] And what has been the response of state officials to possible releases, either of the most elderly or vulnerable patients or of those who have been convicted of nonviolent crimes?

JAMES KING: [00:35:45] You know, we haven't heard from Governor Newsom on this in months. As your reporting detailed, there was a 130% surge in cases just last week within our state prison system. There's close to 10,000 active confirmed cases throughout the state right now within our 34 prisons. And the governor is radio silent. So we don't know what their response will be.

We can see from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, they want to keep everyone in. They want to transfer the most medically vulnerable to other dangerous living conditions, as opposed to just releasing the 300 people throughout the state to their homes and to transitional housing.

JUAN GONZALES - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: [00:36:26] And what about the issue of vaccinations? We're not hearing from any major public officials of prioritizing inmates in the prison systems across the country. Could you talk about your sense of how the vaccinations should be handled, and also what the response of inmates would be to the vaccinations?

JAMES KING: [00:36:50] California has a very aging prison population. And so, you see elderly people throughout our state prisons who are living in these highly dense, congregate settings. We think the vaccine should be available to them as soon as possible. At the same time, the public health conditions that make prison living so dangerous existed way before coronavirus came onto the scene this year. Studies show that being in prison itself will age you 10 to 15 years older than people who are not incarcerated. So we don't see the vaccines as a substitute for releases by any stretch of the imagination, but it should be available as soon as possible to keep people safe.

Nurse Caring for COVID-19 Patients RIPS Anti-Maskers They're "Entitled Aholes" - The Humanist Report - Air Date 11-28-20**

WILLIAM SPRIGGS: [00:37:36] So, last week on the program, we talked about a gut-wrenching story from South Dakota where a nurse who is caring for COVID-19 patients describes how they are in denial of the virus as they literally die from it, because they believe Donald Trump's lies. They believe that this is a hoax and that what they're experiencing, the illness that they feel, is not from the virus. It's from something else.

Now, another story has emerged featuring another nurse who's working on the front lines caring for COVID-19 patients. And what she says is genuinely just heartbreaking. And I wanted to share her story because I think that these types of stories from nurses are really important. So she writes:

I am tired. I spent the last eight months caring for COVID patients. I've missed my family and friends. I've missed birthdays and my own wedding anniversary. I've coded nurses and doctors who worked in the same hospital as I when they contracted coronavirus. I kept going. I believed my country needed my skills to save American lives, so I dropped everything and flew to New York. I've worked in South Jersey, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Chester, Pennsylvania. And now I'm back in Texas. We were making gains. The numbers were dropping. The curve was flattening. I was able to leave the COVID ICU. I was assigned to a non-COVID floor. I was finally able to go home. My toddler had stopped crying every time I leave the room because she was scared I wasn't coming back. It's heartbreaking to watch a happy child gets sad because she thinks her momma is leaving again. Children don't understand their parents being gone for months at a time. We were finally settling in and getting back out to the new normal. But then, Donald Trump and his followers started this anti-mask bullshit. Now, our numbers are climbing again, actually they are worse in my hospital than the first wave. I'm going back to the COVID unit. I'm going back to a small, cold one-bedroom apartment and leaving my home. I'm going back to an uncertain future. I'm going back except now I'm losing hope. The worst part of it all is my little one. She is so happy that her mama is home. Now I have to leave again. I dread the holidays, not one of these selfish anti-maskers is going to care that I'll spend my holidays alone so they can be assholes and not wear masks. They don't have to see my child's tears. They wouldn't care, anyway. She won't get to eat my sweet potato pie on Friendship and Fellowship Day. This will be the first year that she's excited about our tree and the gifts under it. I'm going to miss it all. This is what I have to give up so these horribly selfish people can go to their grandma's house and infect her with COVID. Then they'll bring her to my hospital. They're not kind.

They're entitled assholes who think someone else got grandma sick. They're the ones that will follow you to another patient's room to tell you their grandmother is more important than the patient you're going to see. They're the ones that will take out their Airvote to blame China for the China virus. They're the ones that call me "girl." They tell me how admirable it is that I speak good English and managed to overcome to get a college degree. They are racist COVidiots, and they refuse to acknowledge the harm they cause. I deserve a break. I deserve to watch my baby open her gifts on Christmas. I deserve to work without fear that today might be the day I contract coronavirus. I am fucking tired.

Now, hearing this story, it, like the last story, brought tears to my eyes because, in the last story, the South Dakota nurse talked about how painful it is to see patients who she cares for in denial. But this story, it really gives you the perspective of a nurse. And this just reinforces the reality that, when this is all said and done, these nurses are going to have PTSD. They're going to have decades of trauma from this experience. They're putting everything on the line, sacrificing their own lives, to care for people in a country that don't seem to take the virus seriously.

Tell It To Me Straight, Doc - The United States of Anxiety - Air Date 12-14-20

KAI WRIGHT - HOST, THE UNITED STATES OF ANXIETY: [00:41:39] I am personally very ready to take the COVID-19 vaccine. I'm not a health worker, and I'm not particularly at risk personally, so I will have to wait some time for it, which is right and just, but when it is my turn, trust that I will be getting the shot which is a notable fact only because I am Black.

While there are lots and lots of types of people who are uneasy about the vaccine, survey data does suggest that Black Americans are uniquely worried about it, which is a problem because we are also uniquely likely to both, catch the virus, and get seriously ill from it. A lot of people are talking about this dynamic and I want to start this week's show by bringing you all into a conversation that I have been having with our associate producer, Carolyn Adams, about a viral Twitter thread she saw. Take a listen. Hey, Carolyn.

CAROLYN ADAMS: [00:42:32] Hey, Kai.

KAI WRIGHT - HOST, THE UNITED STATES OF ANXIETY: [00:42:34] This Twitter thread, you showed me a Twitter thread. What is this you're trying to get me to see?

CAROLYN ADAMS: [00:42:39] I found this thread on Twitter last week by Dr. Brittani James. She's a family practitioner in the southside of Chicago and the co-founder of the Institute for Antiracism in Medicine. She was addressing apprehension in the Black community. This idea that a lot of us are skeptical about taking the vaccine for pretty valid reasons.

KAI WRIGHT - HOST, THE UNITED STATES OF ANXIETY: [00:43:00] A lot of us, meaning including you.

CAROLYN ADAMS: [00:43:02] I would say it's fair to include me. I certainly am open to taking the vaccine. I'm not opposed to it. Would I be the first person in line? Probably not, but I also, like she said, understand where people are coming from.

KAI WRIGHT - HOST, THE UNITED STATES OF ANXIETY: [00:43:16] She has this line in that Twitter thread that really hit me, too. She says, and let me quote this, "I'm a physician myself, and I even don't trust y'all. Being a doctor has made me less trusting of the medical institution as a whole, not more." There is just so much embedded in that sentence, right? Of course, it makes me think about these surveys that we've seen showing how Americans think about COVID and the vaccine, and in particular, there's the one from the Pew Center, and we can put a link to it in the show notes for this episode.

What jumped out at me is that 71% of Black people said they know somebody who is either hospitalized or killed by COVID, 71%. Then on the questions that we're sort of meant to see how seriously people are taking the pandemic, Black people were always in the lead on stuff like wearing the masks, or accepting restrictions on our behavior, right? Yet, at the same time, we were far and away the most likely to voice reluctance about taking the vaccine.

We take this thing more seriously than everyone else because we have plenty of lived experience with how dangerous it can be, and yet, we're the least likely to trust the vaccine. There are tons of reasons for that, but Dr. James' Twitter thread certainly seems to have resonated with a lot of people. Carolyn, you suggested we call Dr. James and get her to explain where she was coming from with this thread.

DR. BRITTANI M. JAMES: [00:44:48] It's so interesting that that tweet went viral because I consider myself rage tweeting. Especially on matters of race, for better or worse by Twitter. Writing for me has been such an outlet for emotion and frustration. What's probably hard for people to understand is, if you're not a health care worker, to understand what's happening on the ground, for us, we feel like we're in a battle, the depth of suffering that we're around is so profound.

Then to end your day and turn on the news and people are debating about, "I don't even want to wear a mask," and on the one hand, it's great to know this vaccine is here. It gives us, the health care frontlines, a renewed sense of hope, but then, for me, it's this other pit in my stomach, knowing that history has told us, and even recent history, the way this pandemic has played out for Black and brown people, it's already predicted that this rollout is not going to be equitable. The tweet was really taking whatever ounce of power and platform I can have to say, "Let's do something about this."

KAI WRIGHT - HOST, THE UNITED STATES OF ANXIETY: [00:45:59] I keep reading these surveys. Most recently, this Pew survey that confirms what you're saying, that there's this huge reluctance amongst Black people relative to everybody else. I keep thinking about previous epidemics, about HIV and rolling out of testing and all of it, and the times we have been reluctant to embrace health care.

DR. BRITTANI M. JAMES: [00:46:22] Yes, my message is that the vaccine is safe. I want people to know that. I probably said that three or four times yesterday at my clinic, too. My clinic is all Black patients, and it's already coming up. They say, "Are you going to take it?" The way they ask me, "What do you think about this, Doc?" I have this relationship with my patients, and this is something of a perk of being a Black doctor, I said, "You know, I read the study," and I'm able to say, "I'm going to do it," but I'm also saying, "I understand why you're hesitating." Because I have seated on the racism of medicine from every angle imaginable, as a Black woman, or as a physician, as a patient myself, things that I will never forget, names I

was called by patients, things I overheard about Black patients or brown patients, things I've lived through.

KAI WRIGHT - HOST, THE UNITED STATES OF ANXIETY: [00:47:13] When did that happen for you? Was it from the beginning? Were you from medical school being like, "Oh, yes, this is-- I don't trust the system"? Or was there a moment where you got to where you were like, "Oh, no, I can't trust this thing"?

DR. BRITTANI M. JAMES: [00:47:26] There were clues from jump. I want to be a medical professor because I thought doctors were superhuman. They're heroes, they can do no wrong, they fix people, you're saving lives, it's very romanticized, right? I saw Grey's Anatomy, Grey's Anatomy was big when I was in pre-med, like Old-school, it's been on. I remember seeing Bailey, and what Shonda Rhimes created. For me, that was my role model.

To me, when I think about that now, that was like confirmation to me, a fictional African American doctor, that maybe I can do this because I'd just never seen it. Thinking about applying to med school, I was like, what 18? You're a kid, you don't know what you're doing. You don't know what you're signing up for. I apply, it would be another what, 11, 12 years until I was done.

I'm a different person. It's still a love/hate relationship because I associate that time with a lot of trauma. Walking down the hall on the first day of med school, and seeing just the faces of all the presidents and all the classes of doctors. It's this rite of passage, this pathway that we all have to walk is lined by white men who look nothing like me. You just don't feel like you belong.

When I started taking up teaching about diseases that disproportionately hurt Black people, instead of saying Black people have higher rates of diabetes because they're more likely to live in food deserts, they're more likely to have barriers to employment that make it harder for them to maintain jobs and have a stable income, it's just taught as being Black is a risk factor for diabetes. It's subtle, but it's different because the way that we're taught was that the Black body itself inherently diseased.

KAI WRIGHT - HOST, THE UNITED STATES OF ANXIETY: [00:49:12] Then we carry that as Black people. This was the same thing again with HIV and so many other things. Then you walk around being like, "Oh, I'm uniquely prone to disease."

DR. BRITTANI M. JAMES: [00:49:24] Exactly, and so I teach on antiracism in medicine and there was a long legacy of this that dates back to slavery, about the ways Black and brown bodies were made into a pathology and tested on and dehumanized. What we were taught in med school was not somehow divorced from that, but very much in the same tradition.

CAROLYN ADAMS: [00:49:46] With all these disparities and problems that seem kind of baked in, do you think that the system can be changed?

DR. BRITTANI M. JAMES: [00:49:53] There is a huge opportunity for change, but it's not enough for a single health care provider to say, "I'm not going to be racist anymore, I'm going to treat all of my patients equally." Okay, I'm glad to hear that, but I think the thing that is so important for people to understand and think about, is that individual change is necessary, but not sufficient to lift people out of oppression.

You have to look at the policies and the structures of the bigger institutions that are creating and manufacturing the inequity. White physicians, and white health care leaders, and white administrators, they're the ones with the checkbooks, they're the ones making the actual decisions. When white people's interests and Black and brown interests converge, things are great.

When Black and brown people who equally they took an oath to protect is an afterthought. Yes, that does something to you. Such a mix of feelings, pride to be a part of the healthcare community that has the capability for great good and great innovation quickly, but shame and detachment, to also know that that is a power that is welded selectively, and not to benefit the people who need it most.

What the Ebola Crisis Tells Us About the Coronavirus Pandemic in the Global South w/ Dr. Paul Farmer - The Majority Report w/ Sam Seder - Air Date 12-15-20

SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT: [00:51:09] Did you learn anything in terms of the idea of having survived a pandemic or an epidemic in terms of maybe predicting how A) individuals, but also B) society, reacts following a pandemic?

DR. PAUL FARMER: [00:51:29] Yeah. There is a huge literature on this, but it's mostly written by historians. Right? Because social historians and medical historians, because in the thick of the epidemic there's enormous confusion and fear. Those are standard features of being in the middle of an epidemic or a pandemic. And that's well described too. And of course we all felt that and are feeling it now around COVID-19, but there are also reliably demonstrated social responses beyond fear and confusion. And what I saw with Ebola was that efforts to contain the disease were trumping efforts to care for the afflicted.

And that, of course, was resonant to me because I'd seen it before. I've seen it across that continent in the post-colonial setting, I knew it was related to a public health paradigm that lessened the value of Black lives. There's book after book, study after study, I knew that, but I never really had studied it or written about it at great length, as much as it disturbed me to see this "control over care" paradigm. And the classic example which you've discussed before is around AIDS, because to develop an effective suppressive therapy for the leading infectious killer of adults, young adults in the world, and then decree that it was not cost effective, feasible, sustainable to use in Africa, the most affected continent, it was very familiar to us and we saw it with every other pandemic as well.

So the general point that I would make, Sam, is that epidemics and pandemics always reveal a great deal about the social pathologies. So why would you give all the credit to the virus? It's unequal social conditions that determine both risks for the infection and then risk for bad outcomes, or good outcomes for some, among the afflicted. And that's another staple of everybody who writes about social responses to pandemics or epidemics—you see it again and again.

SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT: [00:53:51] And this paradigm of "control over care", it functions both within the context of within a society, but also in between a broader society. So in other words, and obviously you write about this quite a bit, is heading to West

Africa and seeing that the idea is less to provide for the patients who are suffering and more to make sure that this doesn't get outside of West Africa.

DR. PAUL FARMER: [00:54:26] There was no question—even if you were only seeing patients you could sense this, but if you were also involved in discussing policy, international or global responses, funding to address - to water the clinical desert. If you were doing that you got it all day long, that the real priority here is containment and if there's a second priority, it's to protect healthcare professionals. And there were so few of them already that they couldn't possibly be the primary caregivers for those afflicted and the primary caregivers were traditional healers and family members.

So you had the first priority being containment, the second being protect the healthcare professionals, and then the third, it was all too rarely a priority at all, was to make sure the afflicted survived. So that's really an inversion of the idealized social contract that we have with physicians and nurses. The idea that we have embraced, and I think it's embraced all over the world, is that the priority is to take care of the patient in front of you.

But that was not the story with this epidemic, nor with other epidemics - of Ebola or a related pathogen called Marburg - because they happen in Africa where the natives, as they are still called to this day by the way, the natives are less important than protecting the surrounding world, and particularly the rich White world, the post-colonial world.

So that was familiar to me but this time I tried to dig deeper into the roots of that paradigm. And by the way, I would say that is not the paradigm that's at play here in the United States around COVID. What we're seeing here is not "control over care", we're seeing a kind of containment nihilism, where you have the leadership of the central administration of the United States saying we're not going to do contact tracing, we're not going to be able to control this or we're only going to do so after we have a vaccine. And of course that has meant and will continue to mean ongoing loss of life from COVID-19. So either side of those imbalances we need to address, but the ones we see in the post-colonial world are almost always "control over care".

SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT: [00:56:51] I want to get into that because I was going to say the administration is the complete inverse of course, except for the implications of that lack of containment. Except for that level of care seems to end outside of their circle, and so the the only thing that sort of leaks out of that circle is the lack of containment, and then the implications of that spill over.

But I want to talk about just some of the aspects of - because you talk about the the hundreds of years of extraction from this area, starting with the slave trade, working through commodities like latex, wood, diamonds - how does that extraction, or how does that create the structures that inhibit the ability to provide care and for a response in an epidemic?

DR. PAUL FARMER: [00:58:02] That ended up being, as you can tell, the real question I wanted to ask is how do you create a medical desert? And a medical desert is a clinical desert, that is, there are not people to take care of you, certainly not those who are well-trained and well-protected, but it's also a public health desert. So you can't, you don't have this surveillance capacity. And to do those things, both the clinical and public health objectives - to meet those objectives you have to have staff, stuff, space, and systems. So the

question becomes how does extractive colonialism remove the possibility for having the right staff, stuff, space, and systems? And some people aren't interested in that or don't have the patience for it, and it's certainly not the question we were asking in the middle of the epidemic, but it's an important question, nonetheless.

A friend of mine who's now a household figure, Tony Fauci, a mentor of mine, when he read a draft of this last year, he was saying this book is five inches thick, printed out double-sided and you spend so much time on the history. I got that quite a bit, but I came to feel that it was the historical underpinnings of this desiccation and creation of a medical desert that interested me most and the things that I thought, if you're going to write about people like Ibrahim and Yabom, then you need to understand how they got into these dire straights. Ones in which they would lose such a large number of their family members to this disease, which claimed the lives of zero white Americans, as you know, and very few Europeans either.

SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT: [00:59:53] What are the broad structures of that? Because I feel like it is analogous, but obviously the dynamic is very different, but in New York State for instance, over the course of the past 10 years, we've had a closure of nearly 20% of the public hospitals. We've seen a diminution of resources to those hospitals and we can track the deaths of people in March, April, May, in New York. And we can see that that aligns with where resources have been distributed or not. And there's obviously a huge economic and class component to both deaths and contractions, within the context of New York State anyways.

So there's a slight analogy, right? I mean obviously you set a context, but how does this extraction, and I guess maybe you tell me if it's best exemplified by the fact that a complete absence of, or not complete, but an absence of latex gloves in a place that you couldn't have more latex, really, when we talk about West Africa.

DR. PAUL FARMER: [01:01:14] The thing that probably rolled out the red carpet for Ebola in that part of West Africa, which some people call upper West Africa, is probably war, civil war. But the wars were fought over the extractive trades, that's why they call them blood diamonds, the diamonds from Sierra Leone. And Liberia used to be in the United States' latex plantation. That was Firestone that set that up almost a hundred years ago with a famous 99 year long lease of something like a million acres. This is a huge endeavor.

And so there are the ironies, here we're getting diamonds that are blooded and here in a place where there's so much latex you could swim in it, the nurses and doctors called to respond to Ebola don't even have latex gloves. But looking back at the history, first of all, just to stick with the example of Liberia which is the oldest independent Republic on the continent by many accounts and it was founded by Americans, Black Americans, at least it's co coastal reaches, by the time I had set foot in Liberia, some people estimated that there were fewer than 50 practicing physicians, clinically active physicians in the country. And just doing the math and you could say, well, that would be like having six doctors in the city of Boston. I can't walk five feet in the Brigham women's hospital and not bump into five of my colleagues who are physicians. It's just crazy this disparity.

So then you start looking back and saying, well what about training nurses and doctors in this part of West Africa? And you find out that in the European colonies of Guinea and Sierra Leone, the French and the British didn't even bother founding a single medical school in

those countries. And in fact, in Sierra Leone, the oldest European colony in that part of the world, a British colony, not only was there no medical school founded before they left in 1963, I was alive already, but they didn't found a nursing school either. And they took the trouble in 1902 to ban Black doctors from the Colonial Medical Service.

So those are the kinds of details that make a big difference down the line when you start talking about where's the staff, the stuff, the space, and systems to respond to Ebola without even talking about out migration of professionals like experienced nurses to the UK, the United States, other places where they end up. So I thought that was an important part of the history to know. To understand not only why this place is a medical desert, but what we could do to irrigate it. Is it some mysterious cultural problem? No, it's as you said, these are structural problems and that means they need to be addressed structurally as well.

Summary

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:04:27] We've just heard clips today, starting with the damaged report, explaining Mitch McConnell's duplicity all in with Chris Hayes expressed outrage over America's depraved COVID indifference politics with Amy Walter discussed how we've regressed from being only willing to help the deserving poor to now only being.

Willing to help the deserving workers. The David Mackman show explained how the different waves of infection spikes clearly demonstrates how much worse the U S has fared. We heard an episode of check your blind spot late night with Seth Meyers broke down. How it's hard to find the words to describe how terrible Trump's response to the virus has been.

Democracy now looked at the situation inside of California. Prisons fighting the pandemic, the humanist report focused on the trauma being experienced by healthcare workers and the United States of anxiety looked at the legitimate suspicion black people have of our entire healthcare system. That's what everyone heard.

But then members also got a bonus clip from the majority report. A fascinating look at lessons learned from the Ebola outbreak in Africa. And. What that can teach us about the deeply ingrained racism at play in how we're responding to the pandemic for non-members. That bonus clip is linked in the show notes and is part of the transcript for today's episode.

So you can still find it if you 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@thebestoftheleft.com slash support or request a financial hardship membership, because we don't make a lack of funds, a barrier to hearing more information.

Every request is granted. No questions asked. And now we'll hear from you more specifically, we're going to be hearing from Linda in a followup to a previous voicemail. She left. She had previously responded to a clip featuring Rutger, Bregman, class consciousness, colonialist mindsets, and a little bit of Marxism.

Followup on the structures of right and left-wing populist movements - Lynda from Illinois

VOICEMAILER: LYNDA FROM ILLINOIS: [01:06:36] It's Lynda from Illinois. Thank you SO much for your very thoughtful and thought provoking analysis of my voicemail comments. I appreciate it very much.

I wanted to follow up:

I think that it is very important not to conflate Right Wing populist leaders with Communist populist leaders. Right wing leaders are representing the ruling elite and manipulating the population to follow them using the dictators handbook of lies to continue the oppression of the masses. Communist populist leaders, on the other hand, are at the helm of a groundswell of working class who desire to be liberated from the oppressive rule of the elite ruling class. They desire to have a socialist economy that is owned and operated by the majority of the population and the bounty of that economy is shared fairly. The decision making would be democratic and all forms of social oppression would ultimately be eliminated. Socialism and its ultimate end, communism, is truly democratic. The words have been demonized because they equal an end game that the elites and their hangers on despise.

Final comments on the difference between politics and economics

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:07:32] Thanks to all of those who called into the voicemail line or wrote in their messages to be played as VoicedMails. If you'd like to leave a comment or question of your own to be played on the show, you can record a message at (202) 999-3991 or write me a message to jay@bestoftheleft.com.

So we just heard, as I said, a followup from Lynda. She teed me up so nicely I just wanted to take the opportunity to make this one incredibly important point. I think I made it recently, but a realization I had is that I should repeat myself more often. It's like one of the classic, traditional, go-to strategies for communication is to say the same thing over and over again. So if I repeated myself that's a good thing. So the point is that economic systems are not political systems and political systems are not economic systems. If you learn one thing, have it be that sentence. So especially here in the U.S. thanks to the Cold War, we have been propagandized into thinking that capitalism is practically by definition part of democracy. As if you couldn't have one without the other, but that idea falls apart as soon as you think about it for more than a couple of seconds. Just think, could you have a dictator who allows capitalism to continue under their rule? Yes. Okay. Therefore capitalism and democracy are entirely separate ideas—not inextricably linked in any way.

So we got tricked into thinking that capitalism was equal to democracy and that both are equal to whatever your vision of freedom is because we felt like we needed to define ourselves in overtly simplistic terms to differentiate ourselves from the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and also to demonize them as our enemy. So anything we did was good and anything they did was bad. So we said that we love freedom and the Soviets are against it because they're terrible. And the way that you can tell is that we have capitalism and they have socialism. And what's more, socialism is authoritarian because just look how little freedom they have, so those two things are as inextricably linked as capitalism is with democracy. It's all nonsense, but that's what we were all told.

So you can see how we sort of seamlessly blended those ideas and made them sound like they're all the same, but it took three seconds to establish that economics and politics are not the same and this is what Lynda was getting at, and so I just wanted to put a slightly finer point on it. You should think of these things not just as a left-wing populous versus right-wing populace, but understand that that's a completely different axis on a graph from economics. That left wing politics and right-wing politics are a different axis from socialism versus capitalism or laissez-faire economics.

So on the far left you might have something like Occupy Wall Street. What they would always do is insist that they had no leaders and that everyone's voice carried equal weight. On the far right you will always end up with totalitarianism. You end up with one leader who controls everything. Just if you go far enough in that direction, I mean. And you can think of this as horizontal organization with no hierarchy at all and vertical organization with one person at the top and a long hierarchy flowing down from there. And those are just by definition. Left-wing is more democratic, more horizontal; right-wing is more vertical. That's not debatable, which is why it's so profoundly absurd when people try to make arguments like Hitler had universal healthcare, therefore he was a left winger. You know, something like that. It makes no sense because economic systems or policies are not the same as a political system.

So just like a dictator could decide to implement laissez-faire capitalism, they could also decide to implement an extreme form of communism in which the state owns all the property and businesses, or they could choose anything in between those. And similarly, a horizontally organized community could collectively decide to adopt either of those extremes or anything in between as well. This is why it's so maddening when people assume that any talk of socialism, especially democratic socialism as is the primary focus of conversation in the U.S. today, that they say that that will lead to some sort of dictatorship and political dissidents will be lined up and shot. And I'm not exaggerating by the way. That's exactly what super mainstream commentator Chris Matthews said on MSNBC just a few months ago, when talking about why he was afraid of Bernie Sanders winning the primaries.

So the fact is you can have socialist programs like social security and medicare. You can encourage employee ownership of businesses, making them cooperatives. And you can even implement major regulations on the economy that dramatically changes the rules on how businesses operate. And none of that has anything to do with turning into an authoritarian style government. And the real tip off to this is that if we're talking about Bernie Sanders style politics, it's right there in the name, **democratic** socialism. That's not just a different kind of socialism that's on some slightly different point on the economic spectrum, but still somehow runs the risk of dissidents being lined up and shot. That's authoritarian by definition, whether it be authoritarian socialism or authoritarian fascism, if you're lining up dissidents and shooting them, that is authoritarian. When people like Bernie Sanders are calling for democratic socialism, that's referring to both the political and economic axes. Democratic meaning that it is a run through the popular will of the people, democratically, just like our country is already supposed to be. So we shouldn't be confused or put out by that idea at all. And socialist in reference to all the kinds of programs and policies that are designed to help everyone in the country set a higher floor of wellbeing that no one should be allowed to drop below.

The politics is democratic, the economics is socialist. Those two things are different axes and don't relate to one another, except that you can define what you are asking for in the name

of the term you are using as Bernie Sanders and his supporters do with the term democratic socialism. There should be no fear of authoritarianism with that.

But just a side note as I wrap up, I was just thinking the other day about how thoroughly demonized the term welfare is in the U.S. Like what an amazing job the right has done of making everyone hate that term. And yet that's literally one of the few words used in the constitution to describe what the government has been set up to provide for - the general welfare. But it's the constitution loving conservatives who vomit a little bit in their mouths every time they hear someone suggesting that we should provide for people's welfare through the government. Just a thought on the power of propaganda there.

Okay now, thanks again to everyone who's been signing up for memberships, giving gift memberships or donating to help keep the show going strong, and also to those who've been signing up with the Refer-o-Matic, the fun and exciting way to get rewarded for helping to share the show. Now, just a couple more people to thank who've been making their first referrals, Nicole W and Nick from California, regular caller. Huge thanks to both of you for getting on board the Refer-o-Matic. And don't forget that the reward for referring just five new listeners is something that you cannot get anywhere else for any price we've designed custom artwork, Best of the Left artwork that we absolutely love. It's designed to be used as a phone background or a tablet background. We definitely think that you're going to love it, so sign up for the Refer-o-Matic and pass along the show to at least five people and it's yours.

Of course, the links to all of those, the memberships, merch, Refer-o-Matic are all in the show notes. And of course we take one-time donations as well, you can do that through the support page. As always keep the comments coming in at (202) 999-3991 or by emailing me to jay@bestoftheleft.com. That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. 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 to put our transcripts together. And thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic design, web work, bonus show co-host, game show contestant, everything. She does all the stuff that the other people don't do. And of course, thanks one last time to those purchasing memberships or gift memberships bestoftheleft.com/support as that is absolutely how the program is surviving right now.

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.