

#1401 That is a Texas-Sized Climate Disaster You Got There

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 climate-fueled disaster in Texas from almost every angle, from the strictly scientific to the purely political and all of the disaster capitalism in between. And I just want to point out something about this first clip you're going to hear today. This conversation was published on February 2nd of this year before the winter weather hit Texas. And it's so on-point that you'd be forgiven for thinking that they're responding to the disaster. But no, they're predicting it. So, clips today are from Weathered, the David Pakman Show, All In with Chris Hayes, Democracy Now!, Warm Regards, Strange Days with Fernand Amandi and For the Wild.

Why on Earth are Winters Getting Worse if the Planet is Getting Warmer - Weathered - Air Date 2-1-21

MAIYA MAY - HOST, WEATHERED: [00:00:50] Extreme cold is by far the leading cause of weather related deaths. In the U S each year, according to the CDC around 1300 people die each year from cold exposure.

And that doesn't even take into account the over 1800 traffic fatalities from snow and ice on the roadways. So even though snow is fun, winter weather is worth preparing for, for public health officials and transportation managers, a silver lining of a warming climate. Seem to be milder winters and hopefully fewer deaths, but then something happened that surprised even the most astute scientists,

DR. JUDAH COHEN: [00:01:23] no back in the nineties, but the models that we use to try to anticipate climate change or showed a decrease in snowfall.

And, you know, those are very famous, even New York times articles at the end of snow, how places like New York city. Well smell

MAIYA MAY - HOST, WEATHERED: [00:01:36] anymore. And in much of the world, that's exactly what happened. Snowpack in the West has been declining for decades. Nearly every glacier on earth is receding. But then in the winter of 2011, a very confusing trend began to take shape.

The new year started out with a historic storm and in the North Eastern us, the blizzards kept coming year after year. The most severe snow storms are given a rating category from one through five. And looking at the frequency of these storms can give us an idea of climate trends. If you look

DR. JUDAH COHEN: [00:02:06] at by decade since 1958, there were eight. Or less per decade over the most recent decade, there've been 27 of these disruptive snow storms. So more than a tripling of any other previous the decade,

MAIYA MAY - HOST, WEATHERED: [00:02:18] it will become the snowiest decade for the region. And within that decade, 2015 exceeded all predictions. It was Stephanie Pollack. First year as secretary of the Massachusetts department of transportation.

STEPHANIE POLLACK: [00:02:30] We had 110 inches in a single season, which was the most we've ever had in Massachusetts. And it was also cold and it didn't warm up in between. And so we didn't melt and the piles just got higher and higher,

MAIYA MAY - HOST, WEATHERED: [00:02:44] 110 inches is more than double the previous average annual snowfall of 48 inches. And it's not just the Northeast.

What's your storms are getting more severe in the great lakes, Northern Europe and central and East Asia.

STEPHANIE POLLACK: [00:02:56] It was really hard to clear the sidewalks. And then the other big issue was our transit system to the point where he had to shut the system down. And so we had the people who we now call essential workers, but we didn't even have that word in 2015.

You know, we were, we were trying to run buses for them, but we couldn't run the subways. And it took weeks to get back to the point where we could run the entire transit system. I think of the winter of 2015 as one indication that the climate is changing and we have to be prepared to live in a different world.

MAIYA MAY - HOST, WEATHERED: [00:03:27] If you're confused about this, that makes sense. It's why most people use terms like climate change or even global weirding rather than global warming. First, let's talk about what conditions you need to get a big snow storm on the East coast, like a nor'easter or a bomb cyclone.

DR. JUDAH COHEN: [00:03:41] To get these big snow storms here in the Northeastern us a really neat confluence of events.

You need a northerly Florida bring in the cold air. You need a southerly flow to bring in the moisture. You need strong high pressure, uh, blocking to the North to kind of lock it in along the coast, to

MAIYA MAY - HOST, WEATHERED: [00:03:57] put it in the simplest way possible air around an area of low pressure spins counter-clockwise and air around an area of high pressure spins clockwise.

When these two meet along with enough cold air and moisture, they work together like years to bat or the East coast. But historically these systems aren't extremely cold, just a few degrees below freezing. So you think that. The two degree Fahrenheit rise in global temperatures would make more of these storms, simply turn into rain, but that's not what we're seeing.

Instead. There's been more snow and more outbreaks of cold air dipping down until the U S Dr. Cohen told us that a leading theory to explain the increase of cold air from the Arctic has to do with Arctic amplification. You might remember from our hurricane episode that the Arctic is warming much faster than the global average, twice as fast, actually that's because of dark water and land.

Surfaces absorb more of the sun's energy than white reflective ice. So as ice melts, more of these dark surfaces are exposed, amplifies, warming, and, uh, quickly warming Arctic DC. The jet stream. The jet stream is a fast moving, being high altitude, wind current that forms where cold and warm air meet the greater the temperature difference between these air masses.

The stronger the jet stream becomes. But when that difference decreases the jet stream can slow dramatically and dip further South. There's also a giant mass of swirling cold air high over the Arctic called the polar vortex. When everything's stable, we don't really notice it. But destabilize the jet stream and the polar vortex becomes wobbly like a top as its rotation

DR. JUDAH COHEN: [00:05:30] slows, just sitting there spinning quietly on the top of the global for the Northern pole.

Now it starts to meander starts to wander around when you have this disruptions or the polar vortex, there's like a dam breaking and the cold air just rushes out until you go through the low latitudes and mid-latitudes you get more amplify flow and more opportunities for snowstorms.

MAIYA MAY - HOST, WEATHERED: [00:05:50] None of this is new, but it's happening more frequently.

And a growing number of scientists like Judah believe are warming. Climate is driving the process that provides Boston with enough cold air and moisture to set snowfall records. Boston is relatively well prepared to deal with harsh winters and there are very few cold exposure deaths. Each year, but these polar vortex events can push cold and even snow into cities that aren't accustomed to it, which is actually more dangerous.

And in general, 20 of 2014, the polar vortex was a major catalyst in the winter weather event that brought just 2.6 inches of snow to Atlanta crippling. One of the nation's largest cities for days, children were stuck at school. Interstates were clogged. Thousands were stuck in their cars for him. Ours, one mother even gave birth on the side of the highway.

This was a true disaster, all because the lack of timely preparation, but who could blame them, right? The South just isn't accustomed to dealing with winter weather. So it doesn't take much for it to become disruptive, to get some tips on how to stay safe. In big snow events. We talked to Peter Murphy from the Oregon department of transportation.

You

PETER MURPHY: [00:06:56] can go from dry bare pavement to black eyes in a matter of feet here. And if you're not prepared for that, You really can end up in a, in a sideways situation. And in some cases it can be fatal. And so consciousness of the direction, the vehicles going in, the conditions that we're driving in is critical, whether you're in New York city, whether you're in Atlanta, whether you're in San Diego or in Portland, Oregon, to be ready with the right equipment, the right gear, just make sure your car is equipped for the right kind of.

Tires. We like to know that you've done what you can to get a full tank of gas before you headed out on the road. Make sure you have that extra stopping distance between yourself and the other car in

MAIYA MAY - HOST, WEATHERED: [00:07:36] front of you. If you're traveling during winter weather, it makes sure to have food and water in your car.

It's also smart to prepare a kit. That includes things like an ice scraper, a shovel gloves. Warm clothing, a blanket or sleeping bag, a flashlight chains for your tires, and even a spare cell phone battery,

PETER MURPHY: [00:07:54] large, you know, we're in a society that has learned how to stay in place. You know, COVID has taught us many things.

That's one of them. So it, it is always in our power to not go someplace.

MAIYA MAY - HOST, WEATHERED: [00:08:10] You know, I'm in Atlanta. So we're seeing a lot more, um, you know, these extreme cold events dip further down to the South, what can people do to best prepare themselves for extreme cold weather?

So

DR. JUDAH COHEN: [00:08:22] you're exactly right. It's the climate changes. You know, what you thought was normal in Atlanta or Texas or Virginia is not going to be. It is critical that we're, uh, prepared the appropriate clothing that you're being thoughtful about how you travel, that you're adequately hydrated and have access to food.

Or these are things that we need to be mindful of.

Power Outages Becomes Propaganda Nexus - The David Pakman Show - Air Date 2-17-21

DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, THE DAVID PAKMAN SHOW: [00:08:45] The reason that they are so desperate to lie about this is that it's not just a matter of accountability for the fact that there are now millions without power and without heat in Texas, during some of the coldest weather that they've seen in a long time, but their entire political ideology is tied up in government.

Doesn't really need to do stuff. Meaning infrastructure spending green energy is bad, their entire ideology. Is crumbling. And so now they are telling the lie that windmills are the reason that what's going on in Texas is now taking place. And these people include Republican governor, Greg Abbott. Not telling the truth.

It includes Tucker Carlson. It includes many others. The problem in Texas is not wind energy, and we're going to go through it today. And out of this tragedy, there is the opportunity to inform about what happens. When you ignore climate science. So here's, what's going on. Uh, more than 2 million people are or have been without power in Texas.

Why extremely low temperatures and snow are affecting the Texas power grid. Now Republicans are saying the problem is wind power. Here is Tucker Carlson making the case welcome

TUCKER CARLSON: [00:10:00] to Tucker Carlson side. Happy Monday will the green new deal has come believe it or not. So the state of Texas and we're here with the Report, how's it working out so far?

Well, the good news is all that alternative energy seems to have had a remarkable effect on the climate. As intended last night, parts of Texas got to temperatures that we see in Alaska. In fact, they were the same as they were in Alaska. So global warming is no longer a pressing concern in Houston. We've solved that problem.

The bad news is they don't have electricity. The windmills froze. So the

DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, THE DAVID PAKMAN SHOW: [00:10:33] power grid failed. Now, there are two big lies there. The first is that cold weather in Texas disproves so-called global warming. This is an old one climate science predicts, not just warmer global average temperatures, but localized record highs and record lows, more erratic weather.

What we would call unseasonable. Temperatures high and low. So Tucker's first point is terrible. The fact that it's cold in Texas doesn't disprove anything. In fact, it's predicted by, by climate science. But second, secondly, excuse me, Tucker says the reason for the blackouts is that the windmills froze and this is so, so, so not true as a reason for what happened.

And it's important to have the facts ice has. Forced some wind turbines to shut down. That's true. But wind power is only between 10 and 25% of the Texas energy mix. At this time of year, the majority of the outages were caused by frozen instruments at natural gas, coal and nuclear plants that were not prepared for such cold weather, even though they could have been.

And again, cold weather predicted by climate science models for decades as meteorologists Quinsy, Miguel pointed out on Twitter. The power outages in Texas are in areas predominantly powered by natural gas. This was not caused by going green with some of Texas energy supply, but Republicans in Texas, desperate to blame someone else.

Are blaming wind power. Here is Republican Texas, governor Greg Abbott on Fox news last night, saying what we're seeing in Texas right now is a preview of the green new deal. What good is it?

GOV. GREG ABBOTT: [00:12:30] So on this shows how the green new deal would be a deadly deal for the United States of America. Texas is blessed with multiple sources of energy, such as natural gas and oil and nuclear, as well as, uh, solar and wind.

Uh, but you saw from what trace said, uh, and that is our wind and our solar. They got shut down and, and they were, uh, collectively more than 10% of our power grid. And that thrust Texas into a situation where it was lacking power in a statewide basis. That was power that was spread out by that ERCOT organization or organization that you were talking about.

DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, THE DAVID PAKMAN SHOW: [00:13:03] And then here is Fox and friends this morning.

FOX AND FRIENDS: [00:13:06] He said for the first time, he's seeing a little bit of California now with what happened with the weather and the wind turbines.

DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, THE DAVID PAKMAN SHOW: [00:13:12] One of the things that the climate denial industry does is to sow doubt and to claim that there are controversies and unknowns, where there are not, this is a really old playbook it's described in the book.

Merchants of doubt. They did it with smoking when they couldn't do it with smoking, they shifted to doing it with secondhand smoke. They did it with acid rain. They did it with the pesticide DDT. They did it with the hole in the ozone layer. They've been doing it with various elements of climate change, create doubt and manufacture a controversy where there isn't one.

And I saw lots of people on online saying, I don't know, you know, there's just, it's hard to know what the truth is about what's going on in Texas, because each side has their view. We're going to have to wait. It's going to take time to figure out what the truth is about the role of green energy or not in what is taking place.

No. We have the facts, making it confusing is the playbook that they use. A wind is not even close to the main issue. And wind is actually outperforming energy output expectations for this time of year in Texas, blaming the problems of frozen instruments at coal, natural gas and nuclear plants on wind turbine, freezing shows two things.

Number one, they're lying to you. And number two, these are problems that have been solved in other States, but Texas has refused to actually deal with it. If in Texas, they had accepted climate science, they would know number one, we should expect more erratic weather. And because that can mean really cold weather.

It means that we should weather proof, not only the wind turbines, but the coal plant instruments, the gas plant instruments and the nuclear plant instruments. Many other States have done this. Listen, it gets cold in Wyoming and Montana. They have wind power as well. There are known solutions to this.

We're going to look in the next segment at a Report from a decade ago, based on prior power outages in Texas saying here's the things you have to do to protect yourselves from this in the future. Extremely cold weather affects natural gas and oil pipelines because it changes pressure. It affects instruments at nuclear plants.

This is not, uh, this is not new information and this is not unique to Texas. Texas could have chosen to weatherproof, not just wind nuclear and nuclear, uh, wind nuclear, natural gas. Which are mostly their sources of energy, but also the wind turbines and Texas got crushed because its operators and its politicians chose not to be prepared for cold weather.

That's the story.

Chris Hayes To Ted Cruz: Governance Is Not Just 'Performative Trolling' - All In - Air Date 2-18-21

CHRIS HAYES - HOST, ALL IN: [00:15:46] Yesterday evening, these pictures started to trickle out online, showing what we appear to be Ted Cruz and his family at the Houston airport. Taking an outbound flight to Cancun, Mexico as millions of his constituents were freezing

huddling around fire pits, fueled by anything. They could get their hands on to burn social media sluice matched the mask ring glasses and the photos of those worn by crews.

None of the timing coincided with the 4:44 PM United flight. NBC news confirmed the Cruz's staff even called up Houston police officers to a score them through the airport as if they didn't have anything better to do Chris's wife, Heidi reportedly sent text messages to friends saying their house was all caps freezing, which I imagine it was and invited others to join them at the Ritz Carlton in Cancun, where they had stayed many times.

Amidst the ensuing firestorm at 6:00 AM today. Cruise booked a new return flight from Ken Cuno Houston, a source telling NBC that he was initially booked on a flight returning on Saturday. Late this evening, the center gave an impromptu interview in front of some shrubs at his home and came clean about the whole thing.

SEN. TED CRUZ: [00:16:54] We Left yesterday, that plan had been to stay through the weekend with the family. Um, that, that, that was the plan. And, and, you know, I have to admit it was the last week been tough on a lot of folks, our girls, when they got the news, that school was canceled this week, uh, they said, look, why don't we, why don't we take a trip?

Let's go somewhere where it's not so cold and okay. And Heidi and I, this has been a tough week and it's been a tough year for kids, kids all across the state of Texas. And so we were trying to be good parents and said, okay, uh, we'll do it. And so we booked the flight and I have to admit, I started having second thoughts almost the moment I sat down on the plane.

CHRIS HAYES - HOST, ALL IN: [00:17:42] Yeah, I can imagine that some second thoughts. He's right. It has been hard on kids this year. At some level, you can almost understand that from Ted Cruz's perspective, what exactly is the big deal? I mean, Ted Cruz sees his job as basically being a guy who records a podcast, goes on Fox news and tweets snarky jokes.

And increasingly that's what being a conservative politician is. It's a form of performative trolling. And what is he supposed to do about a frozen pipeline anyway? I get that it's bad optics for Ted Cruz to take his family on vacation to Conklin right now, are you doing sounds bad, but let's be real about this for just one second.

This is one of the stupidest aspects of our politics. Like what exactly. It's not a real time of crisis that Ted Cruz at the Senator from Texas can do anything about. Did they expect Ted to go there with like a blowtorch and start defrosting? All of the pipelines just. And amazingly revealing statement from a conservative professional talker about what conservatives think governance.

Yeah. It's like, w what's he supposed to do centers have constituent service. As they have deep networks of powerful people, they can liaison between different levels of government. They can marshal resources, they can highlight problems to federal officials. There are a million things a Senator can do in the middle of a disaster.

They don't know what to do. Just go door to door and check on people in a mask. But none of that appears to interest a politician like Ted Cruz, who sees himself as basically rush Limbaugh at the Senate office. And it's not just Ted Cruz, it's bigger than him. We saw the apotheosis of this with Donald Trump's management of COVID, where he turned the

pandemic into basically a daily television show doing none of the actual work to make the crisis better.

In fact, making it worse at every turn, getting people killed, but it was simply another platform for the former president. In fact, at one point he was actually thinking of starting a white house radio show, but he decided he didn't want to compete with Rush Limbaugh governing is not posting. It's not podcasting.

It's not cable news. Anchoring. Believe me, both. My parents worked as civil servants in city government, and I have a cable news show and they had harder jobs than I do. But we've seen this week in Texas is a total failure of governance. But it's not just Ted Cruz. I mean, the way to climb the ladder and Republican politics as Donald Trump showed is not to be good at governing that doesn't get you anywhere.

It is to performatively troll the libs. And that is exactly what Republicans in Texas have been doing for much of the last decade since the last time of crisis. Like this happened instead of preparing for this foreseeable catastrophe, they've been doing things like regulating, who can use what bathroom.

Attacking Planned Parenthood, considering the death penalty for them, women who get abortions, removing discrimination protection. So social workers could turn away LGBTQ disabled clients protecting Chick-fil-A from religious discrimination, removing drugs voting. Dropboxes trying to make Texas a second amendment sanctuary state, and most recently, and perhaps most importantly, fighting with sports teams, overplaying the national Anthem.

None of that's going to help you when the power's out and it's freezing. And there's no water. Then your performative owning of the libs looks really irrelevant and really dumb.

Failed State Texas Power Grid Collapse Impacts Millions. Black & Brown Communities Are Worst Hit - Democracy Now! - Air Date 2-18-21

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: [00:20:56] We go to Houston, Texas, where we're joined by one of those Texans who went without electricity. Robert Bullard is a distinguished professor at Texas Southern University known as the father of environmental justice. He's the author of many books, including the wrong complexion for protection and confronting environmental racism, voices from the grassroots.

He's also the co-chair of the national Black Environmental Justice Network. Dr. Bullard, welcome back to Democracy Now. Can you describe your own experience and the situation of people in Texas right now, this devastating state collapse, which seems traceable back to just, they didn't want to be federally regulated and how it's disparately affected Texans.

ROBERT BULLARD: [00:21:43] Really glad that my power is back on and can have this interview. I was out of power for two days. The lights came back on yesterday.

The temperature had dropped. Outside, I think it was 11 degrees. Inside my house was — had gotten low, a low 40s, 41, something like that, very cold. We Texans are not used to that.

And I've gotten calls from some folks in Houston. There, the temperatures in their homes went down in the 30s.

To hear elected officials talking about we are proud to be off the grid in terms of the U.S. and Texans pride themselves as being the Lone Star State, but when it comes to this cold spell and this failure, we are alone. We are the Alone Star State.

The impact of this storm is more than just power outages and inconveniences for those communities that historically have been impacted by energy insecurity, energy poverty, having to pay a larger portion of their household income for energy. And this kind of disruption, with this cold spell and with people having to raise the thermostat to keep warm, will mean, after this power outage has been restored, people are going to have high bills, utility bills, and some won't be able to pay, and some will get shutoffs. That's the inequity that's piled on top of the inequity. And we see this happening all across the city, as well as the state.

And we are also dealing with the era of COVID. No power, no lights, no water. There's no way for you to boil water if you don't have electricity. And there's no way to wash your hands and deal with COVID if you don't have water. So, it's a pandemic, it's a catastrophe, piled and converging, which is technically a mess.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: [00:24:27] know, talking about the issue of environmental justice, we were in Houston and interviewed you, Dr. Bullard, after one of the major hurricanes. And we were looking at the frontline communities who were so hard hit by these hurricanes, disparately affected, much worse than other communities.

Then, as you said, you have COVID. You have some heating centers, if people are lucky enough to get into one —

ROBERT BULLARD: [00:24:58] Yeah.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: [00:24:58] — because the electricity is out in so many places. But I don't know if it's lucky, because they're packed in like sardines when we're dealing with the pandemic.

And then you have this issue of renewable energy. It looks like Governor Abbott went on Fox, on Hannity, to say this is about the Green New Deal, which hasn't even been passed yet. But then, locally, knowing no one would buy it, in the Petro Metro, where you live, in Houston, or anywhere else in Texas, he walked it back. But that got out there into the right-wing blogosphere and Twittersphere, and that's what they're blaming, when we're talking about something like 10% wind turbines, when they were supposed to be updated and they weren't, but so much more. The vast majority of the energy sources are not renewable.

Can you talk about why you see this as an environmental justice issue? And you're so famous for saying "depends on who's at the table," in deciding how we move forward. You have a complete failed state right now. How do the right people get at the table?

ROBERT BULLARD: [00:26:08] Well, it's important that we take a comprehensive view of what is happening here on the ground. The very communities that were hit especially hard during Harvey and the flooding, and as you map that, you can see it's the same communities, overlaid, that were hit the hardest — Black and Brown communities — by COVID. If you

overlay the power outages and the rolling blackouts, etc., and you start to look at the releases from these refineries and plants because of unstable power — and the releases, over 300,000 pounds of pollution was released during this, I guess, three days or so, that created lots of problems in terms of potential health impacts, releasing of benzene, which is a known carcinogen. So, we're talking about environmental. We're talking about health. We're talking about energy. We're talking about issues related to access to food and healthcare. All those things are rolled up in one.

And when we talk about a solution, that means that we need to have the right people at the table when decisions are being made as to how we come out of this catastrophe with a solid plan and not assume that, well, we can just paste it over and say we can go on as business as usual and not expect to have something like this to reoccur. Lessons unlearned. You know, we had a major power outage — I think it was 2011 or so. And there were no lessons learned from that. There were no lessons that we could have taken forward and strengthened our system, our grid, and to talk about building something that is solid, sustainable and resilient for everybody.

Now, there are some people that have not missed a beat. If you have a generator that's pumping in your backyard, or if you have a credit card and can drive to a hotel and wait it out, your hurt and pain may be less than those who feel the hurt and pain first, worst and longest. So we have to come through this with more people in those rooms in Austin talking about solutions and not the same people who created the problem.

We can't expect them to solve the problem.

Fossil Fuel Shock Doctrine: Naomi Klein on Deadly Deregulation & Why Texas Needs the Green New Deal - Democracy Now! - Air Date 2-22-21

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: [00:28:54] Naomi, welcome back to Democracy Now! talk about. The Republican leadership of Texas blaming this catastrophe on what hasn't even happened yet. And that is the green new deal.

NAOMI KLEIN: [00:29:11] Yeah, it's just been a symphony of voices, from the Republican Party pointing the finger at something that doesn't actually exist anywhere really but on paper, certainly doesn't exist in Texas. Texas is about as far from a Green New Deal as you can possibly get, seeing as a Green New Deal is a plan to bring together the need to get off fossil fuels in the next decade to radically decarbonize our energy system, and, as we know, fossil fuels are still king in Texas. It's a plan to marry that huge infrastructure investment in the next green economy with a plan to battle poverty, to create huge numbers of good, union, green jobs, to take care of people. It's a plan to have universal public healthcare and child care and a jobs guarantee. So it's all the things that are not happening in Texas, because there isn't just this extreme weather, which many scientists believe is linked to our warming planet — you know, you can't link one storm with climate change, but the patterns are very clear, and this should be a wake-up call — but Texas is also suffering a pandemic of poverty, of exclusion, of racial injustice. It certainly doesn't have a Green New Deal.

And we've heard this messaging, I think, because of panic, frankly, because the Green New Deal is a plan that could solve so many of Texas's problems and the problems across the country, and Republicans have absolutely nothing to offer except for more deregulation, more privatization, more austerity. And so they have been frantically seeking to deflect from the real causes of this crisis, which is an intersection of extreme weather, of the kind that we are seeing more of because of climate change, intersecting with a deregulated, fossil fuel-based energy system. And that is the truly catastrophic intersection. And layered on that, you have all of the injustices and inequalities that mean that this doesn't impact everybody equally by any means. It's an extremely racially unjust catastrophe, as every catastrophe in the United States is.

JUAN GONZALEZ - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: [00:31:36] And, Naomi, could you talk a little bit about the — it's basically a right-wing extremism when it comes to energy policy that's been practiced in Texas — the origins of the deregulation movement that Texas pioneered? And also, the other wrinkle in this —

NAOMI KLEIN: [00:31:52] Sure.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: — is this notorious independence streak, that Texas not only wants the United States to be energy independent, the state of Texas wants to be independent from the rest of the U.S. electrical grid, so that other states couldn't come to its support in this time of crisis.

Sure. You know, in headlines, I heard you playing a clip of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's trip to Texas and the fact that she raised — helped raise, I believe, \$5 million, to this point. And, you know, she's been very clear that she doesn't believe that charity is the solution to these systemic failures. And, of course, she is probably the person who's most closely associated with the calls for a Green New Deal in government. But I think that what she is trying to show with this action is that government should be there to take care of people, that we should have each other's backs, particularly in a crisis.

The ideology that has governed Texas now for at least four decades is an ideology, I think, best encapsulated by Ronald Reagan's famous phrase, "The nine most dangerous words in the English are 'I am from government, and I'm here to help.'" And, you know, I think it is worth pausing over that, because that sort of glib slogan, that people should be afraid of a government that's there to help, when you have a catastrophe like the one that is unfolding in Texas, but, more broadly, the pandemic everywhere, it's really quite chilling, because people need a government that is there to help. And so, in Texas, they just took this to the extreme.

And so, it goes back further than the 1990s, but a series of fateful decisions were made in the late 1990s, when Enron — blast from the past, and now defunct, but this scandal-plagued energy company headed by the late Ken Lay — led this successful push, under then-Governor George W. Bush, to radically deregulate Texas's electricity sector. And they won, is the bottom line. And as a result, decisions about the generation and distribution of power were stripped from regulators in Texas and handed over to private energy companies, on the basis of this logic that what's good for industry will be good for everyone else, prices will be lower, there will be maximum competition. So you have all of these private players competing with each other, and, as you said, Juan, they are, quote-unquote, "independent" from the rest of the grid.

You know, I see some really interesting parallels with what has happened with COVID, because when you hand over essential functions of the state to private companies, whether they're healthcare companies or whether they're energy companies, what they seek to do is make maximum profits, and you do that through, quote-unquote, "efficiency." Now, what does "efficiency" mean in practice? It means you take out all the slack in the system, because you're wringing out profits, maximum profits, at every turn. So, when it comes to something like healthcare or elder care, that means you don't want to have a single empty hospital bed or a single empty bed in an elder care facility, because that's an inefficiency. But then, if you have a shock, like a pandemic, you have no slack in the system to absorb that shock, and you have disaster, right?

What we've seen in Texas is something very similar with energy, right? There's no slack in the system. There's no built-in redundancies, because if you're plugged into the national grid, if you have a shock in your state or in one location, then energy from somewhere else that is not having a shock is able to come in and cover for you. In Texas, they took out all of those redundancies, and so then you have a weather shock that puts stress on the system, knocks out capacity. And also there's a surge in demand because it's freezing and everybody wants more energy and it just blows the whole system out in the same way that the pandemic blew out any capacity in the healthcare system.

So unsurprisingly, these private companies prioritized short-term profit over costly investments in maintaining the grid, in winterizing the grid for an extreme event. They took out all the built-in redundancies. And today, Texans are at the mercy of regulation-allergic politicians who failed to require that energy companies plan for shocks, like the one they're experiencing right now.

And like the ones, frankly, we are going to see more and more of, because of our destabilized climate.

Adapting and Moving in a Warming World, with Beth Gibbons and Dr. Jola Ajibade - Warm Regards - Air Date 2-8-21

JACQUELYN GILL - HOST, WARM REGARDS: [00:36:47] One of my favorites. Television shows is the expanse, which just ended its fifth season. It's based on a series of novels by James Cory about a near future struggle between a beleaguered, but habitable earth. A militant Mars, still harboring dreams of terraforming and the blue collar. Second-class citizens of the far off asteroid belt upon whom both earth and Mars rely for water and metals.

There's so much to love about this show from its phenomenal and diverse cast to the constant buildup of suspense. But one of my favorite things is sort of tucked away in the background. The show is set around the year 2350 further from today than we are from the industrial revolution. But it's a world that for all its technological achievements is one where the impacts of climate change are very much a reality.

Humans have spread to every corner of our solar system, but on earth, The value of the Eastern seaboard at night shows a vastly retracted coastline and shots of New York show the

statue of Liberty, surrounded by barriers, keeping the ocean from swallowing the city. There's something about how these kinds of details are just quietly there.

Matter of fact, unremarked, that's such a gut punch for me. Rising sea levels and tensions over limited resources are presented as a simple reality. The one that technology has not been able to cope with so far, this is no star Trek universe where you can order anything you want from a replicator. Coffee is rare and water is more precious than gold.

This is a world where climate change is a reality and people have had to cope from adjusting our infrastructure to migrating off the planet, to seek new lives fraught with uncertainty, danger, and hope.

The expanse is of course fictional, imagining just one possible climate future out of many. But to me, it illustrates the ways in which even with our best efforts, we will need to live with some impacts of climate change. I don't mean to be pessimistic. We can still avoid the worst impacts if we act swiftly and decisively.

The story of our climate future is not yet written. We may not need to build sea walls around the statue of Liberty in the end, but we do know that prevention can't be our only strategy. We need to think beyond the binaries of mitigation and adaptation mitigation focuses on the root causes of climate change.

It's all the things we do to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions mitigation strategies can be big or small. Think things like switching to an electric car, eating less beef, developing renewable energy, or even restoring natural habitats like forests or grasslands to store more carbon, whatever the pathway, the ultimate goal of mitigation is to minimize the amount of warming we have to deal with in the first place.

And this is historically where the vast majority of our climate actions have focused on. Of course, we know that those efforts haven't been enough and people are already living with the impacts of climate change for more frequent floods, to disruptions, to our food systems, to heat waves or the expansion of disease, vectors like ticks or mosquitoes.

That's why we also need adaptation. Those are the things that minimize the impact of climate change. Adaptation includes things like moving an electrical substation out of a flood zone, planting trees or green walls and cities to minimize heat waves, or even moving entire communities out of high risk.

Coastal zones for years, adaptation was seen as something of a bad word in the climate community. A lot of folks thought adaptation implied that we should just live with the impacts of climate change either by giving up and living with it, or just sort of innovating our way around the problem when we should be focusing on preventing the impacts in the first place through mitigation.

But in recent years, it's become obvious that the impacts of climate change are already here. We don't have the option of a future where we won't need to adapt to climate change. In many communities, we've already fallen behind scrambling to do the work that should have been started decades ago,

but we don't have to grow up in the dark here. This season, we've shown a spotlight on the large diverse community, working to understand Earth's climate system forecasting, future

scenarios with sophisticated models or identifying the impacts of warming on people and ecosystems. The adaptation planning community takes all of that diverse data and asks, what should we do next?

Because there's no one size fits all approach to climate adaptation. Every community faces its own unique risks. Think about where you were born. Did you live near water or did your water come from somewhere else, far away? Were you by the ocean? Did you ever worry about tornadoes, ice storms or hurricanes?

Did your family work the land or travel or spend time outside for their jobs? Now think about where you live today. What's the difference from where you grew up or the climate threats at the same? What's changed since you were a child. What worries do you carry with you about climate change in your own community?

What impacts are you already noticing on your own doorstep? Chances are there are adaptation planners grappling with exactly these kinds of questions right now. And while they're obviously important, this work has received a lot less funding and adaptation has largely been sidelined in the climate conversation.

We've spent a lot of time talking about why climate change is happening and what the impact our adaptation planners take the where, when and how of climate impacts and find ways to reduce the risks and costs of those impacts to cities and towns. They're the climate risk managers, helping communities to become more resilient so that we can bounce back from acute shocks, like severe hurricanes or heat waves while addressing the chronic stresses that undermine resilience like poor infrastructure or poverty.

In other words, climate adaptation, isn't about giving up or giving in it's about taking care of one another. While we do the critical work of mitigation. If your house is on fire, you don't just sit on the couch, waiting for the firefighters to put out the blaze, you grab the baby photos and your go-bag and you get to safety.

So you can assess and rebuild.

How to Prepare for Climate Change -Strange Days with Fernand Amandi - Air Date 2-5-21

FERNAND AMANDI - HOST, STRANGE DAYS: [00:43:07] David w when you think also about just. Changes that one should make to their own life and lifestyle. I mean, even I'm going to, I'm going to lay out a hypothetical scenario, which you and I acknowledged will never happen, unfortunately, but even if the world tomorrow iron Ryan style was able to kind of work in conjunction with one another and do everything that needed to be done, going forward to reverse the effects as far climate change.

We're not going to be able to escape some of the after-effects with that. Not happening. When do you think, and how do you think people should start to most importantly and prioritize their change of behavior going

DAVID POGUE: [00:43:43] forward? Uh, well, there's this fantastic quote. It actually appears in the beginning of this book, um, it was by Barack Obama's.

One of the science advisors, John Holdren, and he told the New York times in 2007, when it comes to climate change, we have three responses. There's mitigation, which means trying to stop it there's adaptation, which means trying to cope with it and they're suffering and how much we do have the first two.

Determines how much we're going to do with third one. So to my amazement, literally everything I've ever seen or heard about climate change is about the first one. It's about how to stop it, fly less, eat, less red meat, um, you know, carpool, um, turn down the thermostat. All of that kind of has changed your light bulbs and that's all super important.

And we need to keep doing that. But what I think almost nobody pays attention to is the second part of his formula. The adaptation. It is. I mean, we're not going to reverse climate change to 1990 levels in our lifetimes or our kids' lifetimes. It's done. I mean, we can still head off the worst of the, of the nightmare scenarios by mitigating now, but we have to understand that.

It's it's this, this last 10 years has not been a freak, you know, last year was the hottest year ever recorded. Um, last year was the hottest temperature one day ever recorded on or 130 degrees in death Valley. Last year, we had so many hurricanes that we went through the alphabet of men's and women's names and had to start using Greek letters, alpha beta.

So. The answer is the question is now we need to start preparing now because look, it's a disaster and you know, it's coming. It's not like some disasters that take you by surprise. It's not a cancer diagnosis. You know, it's coming 25 million Americans a year are hit with extreme weather disasters and suffer because of it.

And so if you could take a few steps. To prepare yourself now, it really has two effects. First of all, it prepares you when the disaster comes, both keeping your house and your family intact and saving your money, saving money when the Saster comes. But secondly, you feel better, right? Like knowing you're prepared, knowing you've taken action against the depressing reality makes you sleep better at night.

It's a known psychological fact that seizing control over your situation. Gives you a better sense of peace. David

FERNAND AMANDI - HOST, STRANGE DAYS: [00:46:24] for those of us listening that have children or care about children, we all cherish our children's future and their children's future. And that's why it was, it was a very tough, but poignant read your chapter where you talk about protecting your children.

Talk to us a little bit about what steps those take that you describe in the book, and also what are the best things to do to try and give them as they grow up the sense of quality of life. That we've experienced over the last, uh, three centuries here in the United States. And what can be done specifically to protect that going forward with the climate change that's coming.

DAVID POGUE: [00:47:01] Um, so children. Yeah. So there's, there's really a couple of questions about children.

As a parent of three myself, my gut instinct is to protect them, to protect them from bad news to keep from upsetting them. Um, I'm not an expert. On any of the topics in this book,

by the way, I'm not an insurance experts, a psychological expert, an investment experts. I w I wasn't even a climate change expert when I got into it.

Um, it was done entirely by interviewing people who are experts, uh, around the world. And I spoke to five child psychologists and climate therapists. It's a, it's a whole new field. This ecotherapy, um, sprouted up in the last few years. And they all said the same thing, that if you aren't straight with your kids about the danger and that the severity of what's coming, they will sense that you're lying to them or covering up.

They'll pick it up from YouTube. They'll pick it up from school from friends. They'll hear it. And they'll wonder why you're not talking about it. They'll think you're trying to hide something and that makes it even more terrifying for them. So the key is you have to acknowledge the mess we're in with the climate.

Um, now you can do it with as much reassurance is as is justified, you can say, but the world's best experts and scientists are working on it. We just elected a president. Who's number one priority is fixing it. And you can say, and you know, are you, you and I are, your parents will always be with you. We'll help you through it.

We're going to keep you safe, but you should not try to minimize the climate change problem.

Um, there's this new term called climate refugees. And it means just what it sounds like it's people who have to move because of the effects of climate change. So in Miami for Nan, I mean, this is not going to be news to you, but Miami is probably the most at-risk city in the United States. It's. It's low lying.

It's subject to fierce hurricanes and the worst of the sea level rise. Um, and you can't protect Miami with a seawall because the water actually comes up from through the ground. It's like porous rock. So, uh, there's no way really to save Miami, um, in terms of the long-term 20, 50, 20, 80, that kind of thing.

So. The all of these climate refugees are trying to figure out well on the East coast, you've got these superstorms on the West coast. You've got the wildfires on the South coast. You've got the hurricanes, you know, the entire Western half of the United States is in a perpetual drought. Where can we go?

Where there's enough, fresh water forever and where we don't endure those extreme weather. And the answer is, as you said, Above the 42nd parallel, which is basically this dotted line through the top third of the United States. And what a lot of experts are telling me is that the great lakes area, like the old rust belt cities or the new climate Haven cities, Cleveland, Buffalo, uh, Madison, Wisconsin, uh, these are all going to be, uh, fantastic places to live in the coming century.

Not, not everybody has the means. To move or the ability to move or wants to move. But increasingly climate change is a factor in people deciding where they're going to go. Um, you know, when they graduate or get married or get divorced or comparing jobs. And the answer is above the 42nd parallel. Think North.

And central United States. So

FERNAND AMANDI - HOST, STRANGE DAYS: [00:50:43] David, you said something that I love, because again, you said it unblinkingly, and at the same time, it triggers this notion of this existential game of chicken that everybody's going to be playing with the facts on the crowd as they happen. And it's the idea of. In this century, that was the phrase that you just used.

So thinking about this in this century, dynamic David, and when people need to actually start making those decisions, you argue in the book, Hey, maybe do them now, but really realistically, practically, what is the timetable where these decisions should already be made by.

DAVID POGUE: [00:51:21] Yeah, brilliant question. The answer is, is now in other words, let me put it this way.

I, I interviewed the head of, uh, the fire chiefs at Cal fire. That's the California wildfire departments. And I asked him, so you guys have just had the worst California fire season in recorded history. And it followed last years, which was then the worst one, which followed the previous years, which was then the worst one internally.

At Cal fire. How do you guys think about this as this season draws to an end? Do you, do you say, whew, that's good. That's over, uh, hopefully you have a better year next year. And he said, no, we don't see this as the end. We think of this is the beginning. This is the way it is from now on. And that's true with all of these things that drives the hurricanes, the, the ticks infestation, the mosquito infestation.

All of these changes that are here and with us now. So whether you're a business or a family, if you want to guess what the future is going to be like where you live now in the next 10 years. Well, you start with today. And you can safely assume it's not going to get better. So it's either going to be like this, or it's going to keep getting worse.

And unfortunately that's true, even if we stopped burning fossil fuels tomorrow, which we won't, but even if we did the problem is that 93% of the trapped heat from the greenhouse effect. Has gone into the oceans and the oceans take generations to cool down. So this kind of crazy weather and shifting agricultural patterns.

And, you know, the suffering of, of low lying countries and poorer countries around the world is just getting started.

FERNAND AMANDI - HOST, STRANGE DAYS: [00:53:12] You know, David there's always, of course, even with the scenario you described that I certainly don't doubt at the scientific consensus is aligned around. There's always the idea that.

These aren't going to happen necessarily overnight or literally overnight, but there are trigger events, Canary and coal, mine style events that could very well in and of themselves cause reactions extreme. And I'm just thinking of one in particular, you know, no one argues that Miami is going to be underwater next year, or maybe even in five years or 10 years.

What I feel. And I think you talk about this in your book, the moment that they stop issuing 30 year mortgages on real estate property in Miami, that's going to cause a freak out. So what are those types of trigger events that you think we need to be paying very close

DAVID POGUE: [00:53:58] attention to? Yeah, you, you got it.

The um, the, uh, the, the corporate and business worlds, you know, insurance and banks and mortgages and the re-insurance companies. R the Canary in the coal mine. I mean, they are, they're a Canary, the size of North America. They're big corporate interests, but they are noticing what's happening. And the realtors in Miami will tell you already that a home on the water in Miami in one study was worth 14% less than the identical home.

Up the Hill and in land, in other words, climate change is already affecting real estate values. Um, you know, as a Florida resident that ever since hurricane Andrew in 1992, there is no more flood insurance in, in Florida from private insurers. You can, you can get it from the government. Um, but the, the insurance industry pulled out of flood insurance nationwide.

After that event. And the same exact thing is happening with fire insurance in California and Oregon and Portland now, um, it's, it's, they're dropping hundreds of thousands. Of homeowner's insurance policies like, like you try to renew and they say, the insurance company says, no, sorry, we don't want you as a customer.

Um, and that's because wildfire is a bad bet for insurance companies. They're not going to insure a home in California anymore. Um, because they're not idiots and they want to stay in business. So, um, that's a huge issue what's going to happen. With insurance, they only have three levers. They can pull, they can drop you, they can raise their rates or they can pull out of the state.

And they're doing all three of those things. One of these insurance experts I spoke to said, you know, the future of insurance is likely to become just a luxury for rich people because no one else is going to be able to afford it. And the insurance companies won't offer it at reasonable rates.

Tara Houska and Ruth Breech on Divesting from Toxic Capitalism - For The Wild - Air Date 8-21-19

RUTH BREECH: [00:55:59] So we're seeing right now is that it's, the crisis is happening. It's not something of the future. It's something right now. So it's, it's already happening in coastal communities fires up and down the West coast hurricanes. We're seeing extreme weather events. So it's already here and we are, we're looking at who's underpinning the fossil fuel industry.

So we know the Exxons and. The BPS. We know that they're horrible actors, we notice, um, but they need, they need money. They need permits. They need insurance to do, um, fossil fuel projects. And essentially that's why we've been looking at the banks. For over a decade, but, um, that has come out really more clearly.

I think since standing rock the amount of accountability, public accountability to the banks, because they've been very much kind of behind the scenes in the, in the back rooms. And now what we're seeing is that they're very much at the forefront that people are understanding how complicit they are and being a pillar of support for the fossil fuel industry.

And essentially. Chase bank is a key driver of fossil fuel expansion. And fossil fuels is what is driving the climate change. So it is very fair to say, know, chase bank is a driver of climate

change. You know, one of the things Tara and I were recently at the chase bank shareholder meeting. And, um, one of the things we were looking at was expansions.

So first thing we need to do is stop the harm. There needs to be no additional fossil fuel expansion. I mean, just if we stopped right now and just played out with the fossil fuels that are already in existence and didn't have any additional projects that would still put us out another decade. And chase specifically.

So we're looking at all the different sectors, whether it's, um, tar sands oil or liquified natural gas, uh, fracking. They have a hand in all of them, but one of the, probably most critical areas that we're looking at is, um, expansion projects. Like Enbridge's line three, like trans Canada's, Keystone XL. We recently heard the news around the trans mountain project up in Canada, tech, frontier resources, mine, LNG, along the Gulf coast.

This is happening right now and Chase's right. They're funding all of those companies. So out of the, one of the other like revealing stats coming out of their Report was that they put 67 billion. And expansion specifically. So that is we're beyond our carbon budget. We're on a downward track. And so that's part of our work right now is to really hold them accountable and shift them in a way away from, um, financing fossil fuel industry towards a different path.

And it's really going to take a huge scale to meet the need of what's happening here and to really shift this giant and wake them up and move them away and essentially would be shifting the entire. Um, economic sector for the U S if not the world,

AYANA YOUNG - HOST, FOR THE WILD: [00:58:44] it's really sickening to hear about the expansion. And it kind of reminds me of Justin Trudeau's declaring climate emergency.

And then just what days later. Uh, uh, allowing the trans mountain pipeline to happen. It's like speaking out of both sides of the mouth. It's disgusting, it's disturbing. And I'm so grateful that you both are shedding light to this. And I also want to mention that this year's report also flags banks investment in companies that are active throughout the entire fossil fuel life cycle from exploration to extraction, transportation storage and the generation of fossil fuel electricity.

So I can't help, but wonder, and this may be a lofty question, but what the fossil fuel industry exists at all, if it wasn't for banks, financial support, I

RUTH BREECH: [00:59:31] don't know. You know, some companies are large enough, they can finance, but they initially had to have that initial capital. So without banks, and we're also opening a area of work on insurance companies without money and without permits, they can't get these projects done.

It's just not in the realm of possibility in how. They, they finance them. It just wouldn't be possible.

AYANA YOUNG - HOST, FOR THE WILD: [00:59:55] Well beyond the numbers of resource extraction, the Report also paints a clear picture of the environmental destruction and

human rights abuses wrought by the oil, gas, and coal industries, particularly amongst indigenous communities from the surge of fracking in the.

Permian basin in Texas and New Mexico and the Anadarkos liquified natural gas projects in Mozambique, the case studies reveal a truly dark story of banks, utter complicity and active involvement in our current path towards climate crisis and the calculated violence it took to get there. So you both stood on the front lines, alongside indigenous communities and resistance to pipeline projects, like Dakota access pipeline, Keystone Excel, the Enbridge line three, like what your, you know, where you are right now, Tara.

And in addition to continue direct action and embodied resistance to fossil fuel expansion, I'd like to hear from both of you about. Why you've chosen to focus on divestment as a critical strategic tool to disrupt the partnership between banks and corporations. And why is it imperative that we learn to speak the language of money

TARA HOUSKA: [01:01:02] in terms of the language of money?

I think a very pragmatic and important moment in time for us to look at our organizing and look at our activism and our different channels about Kaseem determine what's most effective. And in my experience so far, it has been. Learning throughout the industry that these private actors who are the people that are most, most responsible for the destruction of the planet.

Do not listen to the morality, but they do listen to the money. That is the language that they operate in. It's the language they understand Best it is there assessment of our resistance. You know, we are in situations like I'm a, we are literally a byline in an assessment of a, of a risk portfolio. Our litigation is a byline in assessment of a risk portfolio.

So they understand that we can cause significant damage to one, their credibility there. The reputational risk is actually quite important as banking institutions, that we are costing the direct corporate actors themselves. Like, you know, they, they lose money when we're engaged in resistance, through, um, changing the court of public opinion through lawsuits for the regulatory process, through all these different mechanisms.

But ultimately I think, you know, when you look at who is weak in the chain, Insurers in particular, they're the ones that are looking at climate change, understanding that they have to actually assess this as a risk. That they're, they're the ones that have to pay out for this. Um, and with banking institutions, many of them are forward facing.

And so the consumers can play a direct role in their reputation can play a direct role in what's actually held in the institution. I mean, Wells Fargo is a perfect example of that. You know, people. We're targeting Wells Fargo and still are all over the country and around the world looking at, you know, who can we, how do we help your situation here in, in North Dakota and in standing rock?

And it was Wells Fargo is one of the biggest lenders of this, of this project. Take your money out of Wells Fargo bank. And then on top of it, they were having all these consumer practices that they were violating. And so became a very easy target of. Here's the corporate actor, that's actually funding the company.

The company can operate without the money. So, you know, looking always to seeing what it is the most effective and what is actually landing within our movements. Isn't incredibly important. And I think in this moment, divestment is one that is certainly charging, causing large ripples of change.

Summary

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:03:27] We've just heard of clips today starting with Weathered nailing the prediction on the weird weather hitting the South. The David Pakman Show debunked the nonsense talking points coming out of right wing media and politicians. Chris Hayes explained the core of conservatism through the lens of Ted Cruz. Democracy Now! first spoke with the father of environmental justice about his experience in the failed state of Texas and then spoke to Naomi Klein about deadly deregulation. Then Warm Regards laid out an argument for embracing climate adaptation in addition to climate mitigation.

That's what everyone heard, but members also heard bonus clips from Strange Days with Fernand Amandi discussing more angles of adaptation, how to talk to your kids about the climate and the movement of climate refugees. Then For the Wild took aim at the corporate banks who act as the financial backers of polluting companies driving climate change.

For non-members, those bonus clips are linked in the show notes and are part of the transcript for today's episode so you can still find them 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 at bestoftheleft.com/support or request a financial hardship membership, because we don't make a lack of fund a barrier to hearing more information. Every request is granted; no questions asked. And now we'll hear from you.

The divide is more religious than political - V from Central New York

VOICEMAILER: V FROM CENTRAL NEW YORK: [01:05:01] Hello, Jay, this is V from central New York episode, 1398. Brought back to mind some clips you posted all the way back in 2008. I believe it was the summer in early autumn, the run-up to the, presidential election that year. Indeed. It was those very few clips and the pre-election show that you published, which if I could be very truthful for a moment, really hooked me to your podcast and brought me back week after week after week.

Now that statement that I just made, can I be truthful for a moment comes out of the black church? Uh, it is not meant to, uh, suggest that I am not being truthful most of the time. It is meant to suggest that I am speaking to a deeper reality, um, within myself that I'm bringing forward. but I digress. I was reminded of those clips.

Because recently I've been listening to a Frank Shaffer junior, S C H a F F E R M, the son of a prominent evangelical movement. Tarion who helped to literally build the evangelical power base that we are now dealing with today as kind of a pseudo fascist. Movement within the United States at that time, 2008, you posted several clips about the fragmentation that was starting to occur within the evangelical movement.

Specifically the younger evangelists, who wanted to concentrate more on problems that were afflicting their generation, and the environment. And how one of their prominent spokespersons at the time either pay the compliment to Barack Obama or maybe even talked about supporting Barack Obama?

I forget it's been that long, but he was literally kicked out of the movement because of his comment, which was seen as praiseworthy to one Barack Obama. this is quite important. Because Mr. Schaffer has posted several videos on his YouTube channel, which I think your audience would find interesting, including one, which he suggests what happened on the sixth is the beginning of a very, very long process that he likens to a second civil war.

We are already seeing.

Some signs that this may not be true, but I'm listening to Mr. Shaffer. And I am asking that your listeners, at least give him an ear, give him a listen and use their own judgment as to what they believe about the information which he provides. Um, second, second, second, second.

I've recently been reading a book or listening to it while I'm at work. As I often do called rule R U L E and ruin R U I N, which provides a very detailed and fascinating. , and concise if you can believe that, but it is very detailed and fascinating accounting of the Republican party's movement from a big tent party in the 1950s with Eisenhower to the right wing party that we are now dealing with today, the correlations, especially from the Goldwater era or the 1960s era to today, really, really need to be studied.

And indeed the conversations that we are witnessing happen with former Bush administration officials and even some Trump administration officials, too, some of the party is very reminiscent to someone. The thing that was being discussed in the 1960s, again, I would encourage your listeners to go and if not, listen to the book than to read the book it is very instructive to what we are experiencing today as always, I am always looking forward to your next episode. And again, I want to thank you. And, um the benefactor who provided me with a gifted, yearly subscription I will repay it someday. Thank you again, Jay peace.

Final comments on cancel culture

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:09:46] Thanks to all of those who called in to the voicemail line or wrote in their messages to be played as a 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.

First, just a quick reminder that we are experimenting with a little game where the task is to write wildly misleading, yet true, headlines about real stories. The point is to help you recognize them in the real world by learning the mechanics of how they work. The three stories I'd suggested for fake headline writing are these: US officially joins the Paris climate accord. That was the first. Number two, South Carolina governor signed a bill banning abortion of fetus after heartbeat is detected. And the third, Biden approves major disaster declaration for Texas. And we've gotten some great entries already, but I'm going to let it run a little more. So you have a few more days to get yours in if you want to play.

Dave from Olympia has submitted enough headlines for about a dozen contestants. So word to the wise, if we ever turned this into a team sport, you're going to want Dave on your team. As I said, we'll have a longer discussion about these later on, but I wanted to give you just this one from Dave that's perfectly fitting for today's topic and is on the story about Biden approving a disaster declaration in Texas, and I'm sharing it because it made me laugh out loud. "Adding insult to injury: after an unprecedented winter storm, Biden call's the state of Texas 'a disaster'." So nice work, Dave. Wildly misleading, totally true, that is the art of it.

So if you want to get in on the fun, send me your headlines ASAP, but that's not even what I wanted to talk about today. I wanted to use V's voicemail as an excuse to jump to a discussion on cancel culture since he referenced The like decade old or more case of an evangelical getting kicked out of the movement for having said something slightly nice about Barack Obama.

Now, I've mostly been ignoring the concept of cancel culture entirely because it just seemed to me like mostly baseless right-wing garbage, which is true, but it wasn't until I read this article that I really had it clarified for me. And it's such a good article that I thought I would try and experiment and just have the robot, voice read most of it to you. I think it does a good enough job that it's not irritating. You can let me know if this is the worst thing I've ever done and to beg me to never do it again, but the content of the article is gold, I promise. So have a listen.

ARTICLE: [01:12:34] Right wing media helped usher in the age of cancel culture, but now pretend it's an invention of the Left from media matters by Parker Malloy from Roger Ailes to Andrew Breitbart, to James O'Keefe to Donald Trump, right wing media has been built on cancel culture for decades.

In an op-ed plastered across Monday's New York Post front page, Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO) calls for an end to the "muzzling of America." Hawley's essay makes a now-familiar argument against so-called "cancel culture," which naturally, came for him all because he tried to invalidate the votes of millions of Americans and maybe, sorta, kinda helped incite a deadly mob to attack the U.S. Capitol. Who among us hasn't had a brush with insurrection at one point or another?

That same morning, former White House press secretary Sarah Sanders announced her bid to become the next governor of Arkansas. In her announcement, she played on the same theme as Hawley, saying, "I took on the media, the radical left, and their cancel culture, and I won. As governor, I will be your voice and never let them silence you."

"Cancel culture" like "identity politics" and political correctness is an ill-defined concept that has been weaponized to shut down criticism of conservatives.

Are Hawley, Sanders, and the many other politicians and people in conservative media who regularly denounce "cancel culture" actually the steadfast supporters of radical freesppeech they make themselves out to be? No, of course not. They're mostly just raging hypocrites.

In Hawley's piece for the post. He denounced what he called censorship coming from companies. "But the Left and the corporations are challenging all of this now. Your "conservative" social platform isn't worth much when Amazon can shut it down. Your vote may still be yours, but if your party is denied the means to effectively organized by corporate

monopolies, it's not going to win. Your church, well, you can still attend for now, but go to the wrong church and you may not have a job in a few years."

Just as right-wing media have helped Republicans play up their opposition to "identity politics" while ignoring the role white and Christian identities play in conservative coalitions, and just as they denounce the concept of "political correctness" while promoting revisionist and sanitized versions of American history, the fight against "cancel culture" is another bundle of hypocrisy wrapped in the bow of a new buzzword.

The successful branding of "cancel culture" as the invention of the Left is both sad and remarkable - as well as factually incorrect. What was the purpose of the House Un-American Activities Committee or of the Army-McCarthy hearings if not to root out and "cancel" Communists? And what of the so-called "Lavender Scare" purge of gay employees within the federal government? The idea that "cancel culture" is newer limited to any particular political ideology is patently false.

Right-wing media try to portray this move as being driven primarily by the left, but just look at this at this (admittedly incomplete) list of conservative cancellation targets: ACORN, The Beatles, TV host Samantha Bee, Campbell's Soup, The Chicks (then known as the Dixie Chicks), New York Times reporter Sopot Deb, France, Gillette razors, comedian Kathy Griffin, Guinness, director James Gunn, Hallmark, CNN commentator Marc Lamont Hill, The Hunt, tech reporter Sarah Jeong, then-NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick, Kellogg's, Keurig, KitKat, Match.com, Mexico, The Muppets, The New York Times, Nike, Pepsi, Rachael Ray (and Dunkin Donuts), left-leaning college professors, a series of words that include "science-based" and "evidence-based," progressive commentator Sam Seder, former Department of Agriculture employee Shirley Sherrod, Starbucks, Target, transgender people, Washington Post reporter Dave Weigel (on more than one occasion), and even the White House Easter Egg roll.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:16:11] To this, I just want to interject with my own personal run-in with when conservatives canceled France. I actually worked at a coffee shop at the height of the "freedom fries" mania, and people would come in on French Roast Fridays, look at today's brews, get a disgusted look on their face and ask, "isn't there any coffee that isn't French?" And, you know, if you're not a coffee snob and you don't know this, don't worry about it, it's not the sort of thing that everyone needs to know. But I did have to explain several times that French roast coffee doesn't come from France because all coffee comes from the tropics where coffee grows and that French roast is just a style of roast, and even that usually wasn't enough to placate them.

ARTICLE: [01:17:02] Part of the reason the idea of "cancel culture" may seem like it comes more from the left than from the right is that conservative media outlets simply will not stop talking about it. The New York Post has an extensive list of stories tagged "cancel culture." The same is true of Breitbart, the Daily Caller, and the Daily Wire.

Cancel culture isn't real, but probably not for the reason you think. In short, the world is far more complicated than can be contained in a two word catch phrase. Conservatives have tried to stretch the meaning of "cancel culture" to include pretty much everything. Was it cancel culture for Amazon to cut ties with Parler after Parler refused to comply with requests to remove certain content? If anything, it seems more oppressive to suggest that people or

companies should be compelled to continue working with a company that hosts potentially illegal content.

Is it cancel culture to express disappointment when a popular author comes out against legal protections for a marginalized group? And if it is, how is it not also cancel culture for the author to advocate for their position in the first place, as, after all, they are trying to curtail someone else's freedoms.

There's a nuanced discussion to be had about who gets held accountable for their speech and actions, who doesn't, and why. Unfortunately, we're now at a point where Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) is calling the impeachment of Trump over his role in inciting violence at the Capitol on January 6 "the zenith of cancel culture." That probably does not bode well for anybody hoping for nuance.

Gaetz, who is a frequent Fox News guest, epitomizes the fundamental unseriousness that is "cancel culture." Saying Sean Hannity's show shouldn't be on TV? Cancel culture. Expressing disappointment that someone would endorse an anti-Muslim conspiracy theorist for Congress? Cancel culture. Someone saying they're not going to buy a certain brand of beans. Cancel culture. An imaginary war on the TV show Paw Patrol? Cancel culture.

It's OK to believe that social or professional consequences for things said or done are either too harsh or not harsh enough. And it's okay to be concerned about the outsized power tech companies like Facebook or Twitter have in the world, but using the framing of "cancel culture" to make these points will always come off as lazy and cowardly.

Instead of chalking something up to cancel culture, people should simply say what it is that they mean. Gaetz should just say that he doesn't believe Trump should be impeached for his role in the insurrection, and he should just say that he supported right wing conspiracy theorist Laura Loomer despite her views about Muslims. If Hawley and his right wing media allies were being honest, they would just come right out and defend the incitement of mob violence rather than hiding behind the "cancel culture" boogiemans. Until then it'll be hard to hear the words, "cancel culture" without thinking of cowardly hypocrisy.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:19:42] So I found that clarifying, I hope you did too. Especially the contextualizing of why, when a phrase means everything, it comes to mean nothing, and we are left with no choice but to demand that people just say what they actually mean rather than using a shorthand phrase that is literally meaningless because there is nothing resembling an agreed upon definition of it.

We had a really good discussion on the member's bonus show last week that was mostly about racism and classism, but it sort of skirted around the edges of cancel culture. So I'm thinking that in our next bonus episode, just a small piece of it, I'll tell the story of one of the latest right-wing cancel culture, freak outs over the very calm and nuanced way that English teachers are being encouraged to rethink and discuss with their students Dr. Seuss. So you're not gonna want to miss that.

Sign up for a membership to support the show and get that bonus episode and all of our bonus content in your feed when it comes out. Keep the comments coming in at (202) 999-3991 or by emailing me to jay@bestoftheleft.com.

That's going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to 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, activism, segments, graphic design, web, mastering, and so forth. And thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at bestoftheleft.com/support as that is absolutely how the program survives.

And now everyone can earn rewards and support the show just by telling everyone you know about it using our Refer-o-Matic system at bestoftheleft.com/refer. For details on the show itself, including links to all of the sources and music used in this and every episode, all of that information can always be found in the show notes on the blog and likely right on the device or using the 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.