

#1422 Teach No Evil, Protest No Evil, Vote Not At All

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 take a look at the motivations behind legislation being introduced state houses around the country to ban the teaching of critical race theory, criminalize the right to protest and limit the right to vote. But first, just a quick thought to take with you.

Okay. The first clips up we're about to hear are on critical race theory, being taught in schools and the resistance to it. A lot of the emphasis of the pushback is about the flawed idea that white people are being made to feel guilty about being white. Maybe that's an idea you identify with, but even if it's not, you may struggle to identify exactly what it is white people are supposed to be feeling about confronting the deeply racist history of the country. So I wanted to share the best analogy I've heard so far on the idea for reference. I got this idea from Isabel Wilkerson in her book "Caste," which I highly recommend. So in this analogy, imagine that you are living in a family home built by your distant ancestors.

Now imagine that you learn from a home inspection, that the foundation of the house is faulty and it's causing the structural integrity of the building to be unsound.

Is the problem with your house your fault?

No.

Should you feel personally ashamed that your ancestor has built a house with a flawed foundation?

No.

Is it now your responsibility to deal with and fix the structural integrity of the home you inherited, and currently live in?

Of course!

So don't spend time sulking, or being defensive, and definitely don't ignore the problems that have been revealed just because you didn't cause them. Ignoring the damage only allows it to get worse over time.

And now onto the show. Clips today are from The Daily Show, Past Present, Counter Spin, On The Media, The Takeaway, Democracy Now, The Thom Hartmann Program, and Carlos Maza.

The War Over Teaching America's Racist History in Schools - The Daily Show with Trevor Noah - Air Date 5-5-21

TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW: [00:02:10] If history is taught by the winners, nobody in America is winning more than white people, which is why so much of what's in schools has been from their point of view.

UNKNOWN: [00:02:20] African-American history is not taught adequately. What we learned essentially is a whitewashed history. Studies have found less than 10% of class time is devoted to Black history. Only 8% of seniors can identify slavery as a central cause of the Civil War.

There is no national standard for what history is taught. Each state set standards, which outlines what students are expected to learn. Seven states do not directly mention slavery, and eight do not mention the civil rights movement. Only two states mentioned white supremacy.

The kids learn that slavery was bad, but we ended it. Some stuff happened, but Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks kind of fix that. And now look, Barack Obama, we had a Black president. Racism is over. We're done.

TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW: [00:03:04] Yeah. It's pretty crazy that most students in America are only taught about a handful of important Black Americans, because can you imagine if it were the other way round? "Welcome everybody to White History 101. We start off with Thomas Jefferson where it all began. And then, well, nothing really happened until Tom Hanks. Class dismissed." But yeah, basically America treats history the way most people treat their browser history, just delete all the embarrassing stuff and hope no one notices.

But the good news is that as society changes, they re-examine their pasts and ask themselves, should we keep telling ourselves what we wish happened? Or should we understand what actually happened? And that's what's happening in American schools right now.

UNKNOWN: [00:03:57] Students are asking their school administrators to incorporate anti-racist education into their curriculum.

The aim to have books written by a person of color and their life struggles are required part of the curriculum.

In North Carolina, a committee of social studies educators propose that the term "systemic racism" should be included in the state's curriculum standards.

California state board of education has created the nation's first statewide model for ethnic studies curriculum at the high school level. Education officials say that kids do need to learn about discrimination and oppression that textbooks often overlook.

A lot of times in school, you don't see a big representation of Black history. I see comments all the time saying I learned more on TikTok than I do from my own school.

TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW: [00:04:38] Yeah. That's how much education is lacking in America. Kids are going to TikTok to learn, which is insane. Social media isn't supposed to be a school. It's supposed to be where you post stuff that gets you suspended from school. And I'm not saying you can't learn about history on TikTok, please don't get me wrong. I'm just saying you gotta be careful not to mix up history with everything else happening on TikTok. "Wait! So Harriet Tubman started the underground railroad -- and the weight-loss dance? Pretty dope."

Now look. Re-examining your history is not easy to do, especially if it requires some self criticism. You know, in many ways, writing history is like a breakup. Each person wants to tell the story about how they were the one who was right and the other person was an asshole. You know, it feels better to say "she wasn't nice to my family," as opposed to "she found out about my secret second wife." And in the same way as American schools are starting to change what they teach about America's history with racism, it's causing a strong reaction from people who aren't comfortable with what their kids are learning.

UNKNOWN: [00:05:45] There's growing backlash tonight against what critics call the indoctrination of public school students in an anti-white curriculum that has to do with the teaching of what is called critical race theory.

Critical race theory teaches people and our children to judge one another, not based on the content of their character, but solely on the color of their skin. It would have our children growing up hating this country and hating one another.

It teaches more or less that America is inherently racist, stating more or less than that. If you're born white, you are necessarily racist.

Essentially every white person should apologize for being white and what happened 200 plus years ago.

We are tired of the continual drum beat of our educational system, as used to program our kids, to program our kids into thinking that America is a country of hate and division.

Just because I do not want critical race theory taught to my children in school does not mean I'm a racist, damn it!

TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW: [00:06:48] Bravo! Tearing up is like a white woman's go-to move for getting out of any sticky situation. "Well, if it got me out of a speeding ticket, let's see if it works on a historical reckoning."

Look, I get why these parents are upset. I mean, they don't want their children learning that white people are inherently racist. But that's not necessarily what teaching about racism does. For example, a big reason why American neighborhoods are segregated today is because historically the government made it almost impossible for Black people who try to move into white neighborhoods. It was called redlining. And it was a societal structure that still has racist effects. Even if no white people in those neighborhoods now are personally bigots. The point is that you can look at your history critically without believing that you are personally to blame for it.

And a good example of this is Germany, right? They teach the Holocaust in the schools. But little Klaus isn't walking home from class like "Ah, mama, mama, ich bin ein Nazi. They says that I was Hitler. Und I did the same thing as him, even though I'm five years old!" No, that doesn't happen because Germans understand that we learn from history to grow from it, not to wallow in it.

But you see what's happening right now is that in America, some people don't understand that and their hysteria is spilling into actual laws.

UNKNOWN: [00:08:17] Several states, including Florida, Idaho, and Iowa have worked to ban the 1619 Project and critical race theory from their core education plans.

Arkansas became the latest state where state agencies are barred from teaching any concept that the United States is an inherently racist nation.

TREVOR NOAH - HOST, THE DAILY SHOW: [00:08:35] The bigger issue that is being brought up with this controversy is, what is the point of teaching history? Like what is the actual point? Is it to make kids feel good that they live in a perfect country with no problems? Or is it to give them an unsparing assessment of how society got where it is so that they have the tools to change it in a better direction.

And I say it should be the latter. Because otherwise, as a wise person once said, those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it.

Critical Race Theory - Past Present - Air Date 5-25-21

NEIL YOUNG - CO-HOST, PAST PRESENT: [00:09:11] I want to talk a little bit more about the politics of this, because I think the state level implementation of Trumpism is the context in which this is happening, this is playing out. Obviously, Republicans aren't able to move Trumpism forward and because they don't control the White House or Congress, so they're not able to push it forward on a national level or federal level, but we're seeing huge inroads in state legislatures across this country of all sorts of different aspects of Trumpism and I think that, that's relevant here as well.

Just reading about some of this legislation in places like Idaho in Oklahoma, it is such expansive language that they are implementing in these bills, and I think partly it's a reflection of not actually looking at or understanding what critical race theory is, it's just become, as you were saying, Natalia, at the beginning, this kind of just blanket terminology, but the real danger of that is that I think almost anything will be able to be pulled into it in terms of how loosely defined it is in these laws. And so that's actually a huge political strategy going forward, that everything can fall under this huge umbrella of what has been deemed now illegal. It should concern everyone because I think the implications of this are not fully understood.

NICOLE HEMMER - CO-HOST, PAST PRESENT: [00:10:25] Yeah, I think that's a really important point because one of the things that at these various state levels that people have been pushing back against are things like you wouldn't be able to teach that the Tulsa massacre in 1921 had long standing consequences because of the destruction of Black wealth and Black communities has consequences that lingered to this day in Tulsa, but the bills that have been passed say you can't teach those generational consequences to racist actions in the past.

And they're coupled with, like in Texas right now, and there's a real push to purge any sort of reference to anti-Black and anti-Latino actions in Texas history. How do you teach Texas history without including that? It's just, it's not...

NATALIA MEHLMAN PETRZELA - CO-HOST, PAST PRESENT: [00:11:15] ...historically accurate.

NICOLE HEMMER - CO-HOST, PAST PRESENT: [00:11:16] Yeah. And Natalia, I would love to bring you back into this because this does seem in a way not new at all. Feel like these battles over whether you tell the glorified story of American history or something, that's a little messier has been at the heart of these fights for a really long time.

NATALIA MEHLMAN PETRZELA - CO-HOST, PAST PRESENT: [00:11:32] Yeah. So it's so interesting in terms of curricular controversy, definitely there's so much about the attack on critical race theory, which doesn't just echo, but repeats this old language, whether it was attacking sex education, or bilingual education, or history curriculum, or even literacy in that so often the notion is that left-wing ideas, specifically socialism, are being forced on your children by left-leaning teachers, and they're doing it on your tax dollars, and that has just been a refrain. And it looks different in different ways. With sex ed, there was a lot specifically about these are attacks on the family or it's going to make your child a homosexual, and so it was very sort of cold war kind of thing, but effectively that same language has been used for a very long time.

One thing that I think is interesting and a little bit different that is coming out in these battles right now, which I find fascinating is that one of the big arguments that anti-CRT people make is that you're making White kids feel bad about themselves in the classroom. And they feel guilty that they're White because they had nothing to do with enslavement but you're making them feel that way.

Now I don't think any kid should feel bad in the classroom, but it's interesting to me that's the argument that some conservatives are articulating because for a long time, conservatives had the kind of eff your feelings approach to a very similar argument being made by minority children in the classroom, who were like, we want ethnic studies curricula where you talk about the successes and the great, wonderful, and proud traditions of various minority cultures, because children are meant to feel either that they didn't exist or that they were only enslaved, that they were only the losers in history. And conservatives usually responded to that with, "it doesn't matter how you feel, this is just history. It's the fact."

And I think there's both now a kind of offering of an alternative form of indoctrination, which is whitewashed and super patriotic, but also articulated in this idiom of you're making White kids feel bad. And that to me is a kind of appropriation of something of a language that had been used very much among progressives arguing for curriculum reform for a long time, and so to me, that's a really interesting turn.

NICOLE HEMMER - CO-HOST, PAST PRESENT: [00:13:53] Another place where you see that is actually around a new way of using the claim of reverse racism. Reverse racism was really big in the 1980s and the 1990s around Affirmative Action, but now you'll hear people like Andrew Sullivan talking about neo-racism, or Dan Bongino calls CRT critical racism theory. The idea that, because you're saying that there are differences in how Black people and White people are treated, and therefore how they should be treated in order to bring some equity inequality to the situation, that is actually being racist. So flipping the language, it's interesting to see how that language develops over time. Reverse racism feels like an older term, and so neo-racist for somebody like Sullivan just feels newer and edgier.

NEIL YOUNG - CO-HOST, PAST PRESENT: [00:14:40] Yeah, that is really interesting. I'm spending a lot of time with Andrew Sullivan these days, just in my project on gay conservatives.

NICOLE HEMMER - CO-HOST, PAST PRESENT: [00:14:47] Like hanging out in Provincetown?

NEIL YOUNG - CO-HOST, PAST PRESENT: [00:14:49] Not personally, hanging out, but wrestling with his ideas, and in the 80s and the 90s especially, he's at the forefront of developing Western civilization supremacy ideas. And I think that this is a retreading of that, but with the language of now. I think that's what you're pointing out, Nikki, is he's operating in the discourse of right now to maintain the ideas that he's had for decades -- super interesting.

I also wanted to point out that this, obviously, the battleground for this and the focus is mostly on public education, but this is also playing out in religious communities. Partly because it's starting to come in through seminaries, but I've been tracing this a little bit in the Southern Baptist Convention where it's become this flashpoint, and only a couple of people within the Southern Baptist Convention are receptive to this at all. But to the extent that they have been, this has become one of the new litmus test of orthodoxy in the Southern Baptist Convention and some other conservative Protestant denominations.

And so by litmus test of orthodoxy, I mean that if you are someone who is at all open to critical race theory, that this is putting you outside of the faith. This is actually a faith issue, and it calls into question your Christianity because I think, and I haven't totally followed this debate, but I think at the heart of it is this notion that God has created individual persons, and that the thing to understand is each individual's relationship to their creator and this sort of structural analysis is a secular theory.

And actually I saw someone on Twitter post the other day, I thought it was so smart, that critical race theory is the secular humanism of my childhood. And I think that again, goes back to, Natalia, your opening point of this blanket terminology or this blanket usage of something to cover everything and the way in which it can then be just so easily applied to anything that you oppose.

NATALIA MEHLMAN PETRZELA - CO-HOST, PAST PRESENT: [00:16:41] I think that's totally right, and I guess part of what really annoys me is that it is the reductiveness of these critiques and the idea that someone who is a critical race theorist thinks that individualism or individual agency doesn't exist at all, or that race is the only category of analysis.

And something that I think we need to add in here in understanding the vitriol of these attacks, which is that it's not just about what's going on in social studies class or history class, but it's also because so many institutions have implemented various forms of trainings, like diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings, workplaces, schools, etc. And I think I understand why these things get grouped together, because they seem to come out of the same identitarian waste-based view of the world, but I actually think what pisses off a lot of people more, and I understand this because I am a big fan of critical race theory as a body of work but give a real eye-roll to 99% of these stupid DEI trainings that I've been subjected to, I think a lot of the reason that people get so upset about it is because it's in those trainings where you actually get the very ham-fisted approach to these ideas.

It's there where, if you think people are made to feel bad about being White or being a man or whatever, it's there, usually not in social studies class as far as I understand, where it's, "okay, raise your hand if you're this identity, take three steps forward. Let's review the principles of White supremacy culture and everything you can and can't say." It's usually not

phrased exactly like that, but not that far from it. And so I think that both because people are getting those trainings in their workplaces not just hearing about it third hand through whatever's on their kid's history assignment that they may or may not do, but I think that's another level of intensity to this particular set of controversies.

And I will say it's not totally unprecedented, because in the 60s and 70s you heard a lot of concern about sensitivity training that was happening, and that was a little bit of an echo, but it wasn't as wide spread, and in my sense, that came more out of fear of what was happening in the counterculture and maybe filtering into schools, than actually there being like widespread sensitivity training in offices or in school houses.

So I don't know, do you think that is a meaningful connection?

NICOLE HEMMER - CO-HOST, PAST PRESENT: [00:19:01] I do. I think that there's one other thing that I want to bring in here because it helps us understand schools as the nexus and then all the fear I think, or the way that it is often put, particularly in conservative circles, that what has happening in the university seeps out into society. That's often the criticism of the training programs is the "universitification" of everyday life. So that's one example of it.

I think that the controversy over the 1619 Project and journalism is much the same in two ways. There was a lot of right-wing pushback, and not just right-wing but socialist pushback as well, to the 1619 Project, because it put race and racism at the heart of the American story in a way that made people whose focus is class-based uncomfortable and made people who don't like to think about racism, very unhappy as well. But one of the places where they really hooked in was that the 1619 Project had a curricular component and that it could be taught in schools. And that enabled a moral panic that was stronger than what was published in the New York Times, because most people don't really care that much about what's published in the New York Times, but the idea that it could be introduced in schools gave a way in for many on the right.

And I think that actually ties into to the current controversy around Nikole Hannah-Jones, who was appointed to the very prestigious Knight Chair at the University of North Carolina, an appointment that comes with tenure after an extensive year-long tenure review process, and the board of trustees, at the very end of the process, denied her tenure. And it was very clearly a political move because she was vastly, in many ways, overqualified for the position as a Pulitzer Prize Winner and a MacArthur Genius Grant winner. But she has become, as a Black woman, as somebody who writes about racial inequality, the target of so much of this ire, and again, it's happening in the university. It's in that school setting that the rubber meets the road in a way.

All right, we will not get fully into that controversy, but I do think it is interesting when we talk about Derrick Bell, and Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Nikole Hannah-Jones, and Barack Obama -- that this is not just about ideas -- this is about Black representation, this is about Black power, this is about Black ideas, and this is about racism. And that has to be understood in many ways is at the heart of a lot of what's happening in state houses and elsewhere today.

NEIL YOUNG - CO-HOST, PAST PRESENT: [00:21:40] If only we had a theory to make sense of all that.

NICOLE HEMMER - CO-HOST, PAST PRESENT: [00:21:43] We're just going to have to keep searching, keep doing the work.

Elly Page on Anti-Protest Bills - CounterSpin - Air Date 4-23-21

ELLY PAGE: [00:21:45] We have been, as you say, tracking these anti-protest laws and bills for over four years now. And really what we've seen since this last summer is a distinct escalation from prior years. We've seen over 90 bills introduced in 35 states since last summer and the killing of George Floyd, that would restrict or chill the right to peacefully assemble and protest. It's an unprecedented number, both in terms of the number of bills that have been introduced and the extreme lengths they go to repress protests and discourage people from turning out.

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: [00:22:24] Let's talk a little bit about more of that. The degree they go to is partly the way they define "riot," the way they define "violence," but it's also like the extension of what is going to be a crime. Talk a little bit more about that.

ELLY PAGE: [00:22:40] Absolutely. Yeah. A common thread throughout these bills is that they use vague, sweeping language to define new criminal offenses, or redefine existing ones related to conduct that may occur during a protest. So we've seen bills targeting taunting police in Ohio and Kentucky. The new law in Florida that contains this new criminal offense around mob intimidation, which is sweepingly defined—you only need three people who are trying to get another person to do something or to have a particular viewpoint, which sounds a lot like any kind of protest where you're trying to convince someone to do or think differently. Broad prohibitions on inciting or encouraging or aiding unlawful assemblies. Obviously those cast a wide net.

And in many cases, these new bills and laws are relying on states' existing definitions of "rioting," which in almost all states are already very broadly defined in ways that can capture a completely peaceful protest. In many cases, you only need a small number of people, whereas most of us conceive of a "riot" as a large group. In most instances, you don't actually have to cause any damage or injure anyone for it to be a riot. You only need to pose a threat or a danger of something, property being damaged or someone being injured. This is one of the many ways that these sweeping definitions can cover, again, completely peaceful non-violent protest activity.

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: [00:24:23] The problem that I think a lot of folks could see is the broad sweep of it. And yet at the same time—it's not a, but it's an "and"—and at the same time we see that they're actually specifically targeted. Florida's law is about Black Lives Matter. It's not about January 6th. We know that there are particular targets and we shouldn't pretend we don't know.

ELLY PAGE: [00:24:46] Right. And that's something that we've seen time and time again in this tracking project, that lawmakers are really introducing these anti-protest initiatives in the aftermath of distinct protest movements. And it's often clear from the text of the bills themselves, as well as from what lawmakers say what they're targeting. And that's true of certainly this wave of legislation. When you have bill after bill clearly targeting protests that

take place in the streets, over 40 bills that would increase the penalty for protests that block traffic. You have, I think 15 or so, that include provisions that create new protections for drivers who hit protesters with their cars. You have provisions that target protests where there's even nominal damage like graffiti or even chalking of public property, including monuments. So all these anti-protest provisions are often accompanied by provisions that would penalize local governments that try to decrease the budget for their police departments, sort of anti defund the police provisions.

It's easy to say that the target of these bills is pretty clear.

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: [00:25:56] I think folks are careful around the language of reform. I think a lot of folks are ready for a conversation about what public safety really means and really bigger vision, but that doesn't mean that there isn't material change that could happen that could be meaningful, that could maybe keep somebody alive. I'm wondering what legislatively as a response to the problems you track statewide, federalwide, what do you see as pushback on this wave of legislation?

ELLY PAGE: [00:26:28] Fortunately, we have seen initiatives, most often at the municipal level, that are trying to better protect protesters in some instances. So we've seen lots of proposals to restrict the use of lethal weapons, such as tear gas, projectiles, rubber bullets, these kinds of things. We have seen attempts both at the local and federal level, again addressing this issue of local police departments' access to military-grade weapons. There was a lot of concern last summer about the deployment of federal agents to respond to local protests. And so there are initiatives ongoing at the federal level to address that as well and restrict the ability of federal agents to intervene in certain circumstances in a protest that's completely local.

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: [00:27:17] I know that your work also involves an international focus and I think it's interesting that for a lot of US citizens, the idea is that the United States has -- you know, we have so much freedom, we export it. We model it around world. We're the shining city on the hill. Americans don't often see themselves as existing in an international context. But in terms of free speech or civil liberties, what would someone with a global perspective on this set of issues, say to that in 2021, in terms of the US seeing itself as a model of free expression?

ELLY PAGE: [00:27:56] Yeah, I think it's really important that Americans don't take these freedoms for granted and don't take for granted that they can freely exercise their First Amendment rights and protest. Working internationally, we've seen how using restrictive laws to suppress protests is really a favorite tactic of governments that are trying to minimize and repress dissent around the world.

So whether that's in Russia or in Egypt or in Hong Kong, when governments are looking disrupt or suppress opposition movements, banning or restricting protests is one of the first tools they reach for.

Not Ready For That Conversation - On The Media - Air
Date 4-23-21

BOB GARFIELD - HOST, ON THE MEDIA: [00:28:33] Let's begin with the status quo. In all these states where these bills that are under consideration, it's already illegal for rioters to injure police and civilians. It's illegal to damage property. Illegal to commit arson. Illegal to loot retail businesses. What's supposed to be gained by these redundant statutes?

TAMI ABDOLLAH: [00:28:56] They up with the penalties that rioters may face. They bring it up from a misdemeanor to a felony. They bring it from a citation to a misdemeanor. They also expand what is considered behavior included in that rioting. It adds in things like taunting police or throwing an object, or even potentially the intent to throw something, whether or not you've actually hit a person, as part of the rioting statute.

BOB GARFIELD - HOST, ON THE MEDIA: [00:29:30] Much of the attention is on Florida. What does the law that governor DeSantis signed provide?

TAMI ABDOLLAH: [00:29:37] There are several aspects. One it expands and really revises the definition of what is considered a riot, making it, a gathering of three or more people who are collectively intending to engage in "disorderly conduct" and participate in "a violent public disturbance that ends in property damage, injury, or," and this is the key part, "a danger of either of those things." It's really rather subjective as to what "danger of creating injury or property damage" might mean when you talk about a group of three people gathered together on the sidewalk or street.

It also adds in tougher penalties for mob intimidation, "inciting a riot", and defacing, damaging, or destroying a monument. That language is specifically geared toward protecting the Confederate statues that are scattered throughout the state.

BOB GARFIELD - HOST, ON THE MEDIA: [00:30:34] So if I am in a cluster of three or more people and someone from that cluster throws a Molotov cocktail or throws a rock at a cop, I am subject to be considered part of this three person plus conspiracy to commit mayhem?

TAMI ABDOLLAH: [00:30:51] Yeah. So that is what critics have a real problem with, but it's clumps people together and really leaves it up to the officer on the street to determine whether or not you are part of a collective, whether or not you're included in this, and I don't even think it needs to be a Molotov cocktail, it could be a plastic bottle. You throw it at a trash can to the side of the officers and you miss, it's up to them to decide whether or not there was an effort to cause them injury or perhaps cause property damage. So it really can be rather subjective.

BOB GARFIELD - HOST, ON THE MEDIA: [00:31:26] There's similar legislation in the hopper and Kentucky, Iowa, Minnesota. Are all these proposed laws using the same kinds of broad language?

TAMI ABDOLLAH: [00:31:36] There's a lot of it. There are tons of these bills that they want to become laws or have become laws that give drivers, for example, legal protections, civil immunity, if they unintentionally hit a protestor. In Oklahoma, the language, if you're "fleeing a riot" and you intentionally hit a protestor, then you are given legal protection. In other places, the language is a little more broad. That's notable because last summer there were more than a hundred incidents in which people drove their cars into a crowd of demonstrators.

Just to pull back for a second, we're talking about 93 similar bills that have been proposed in 35 states since George Floyd died in Minneapolis. Most of those bills have been introduced in Republican controlled legislatures, first and foremost, and they may or may not pass, but the political climate really favors them in places like Arizona, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, and of course Oklahoma, where we saw it already pass.

BOB GARFIELD - HOST, ON THE MEDIA: [00:32:40] Red states, not to put too fine a point on it.

TAMI ABDOLLAH: [00:32:43] Yes. There has been legislation introduced in New Jersey and in New York, so there's that.

BOB GARFIELD - HOST, ON THE MEDIA: [00:32:51] Okay, so passing bills and getting them signed into law is one thing, sanding off the rough edges of the first amendment though, is not likely to go unnoticed in courts. It is hard to imagine these laws not facing court challenges at the earliest opportunity, and even with the current state of the supreme court, surviving those court challenges. What should we expect?

TAMI ABDOLLAH: [00:33:16] I believe once we see these laws enacted in more places and as the next protests, Black lives matter protest or any other protests out there, once those occur, I think we will see that arrests under the statutes will be challenged. The folks I spoke with indicated that that for certain is the case, but they can't say for sure since nothing has yet happened. The verdict in the George Floyd case was potentially going to be a way to test these laws and challenge them as well, but given the verdict, we've not yet been able to see how things will work out.

BOB GARFIELD - HOST, ON THE MEDIA: [00:34:01] What has historically triggered so much violence has been miscarriages of justice. The Watts riots began because of a traffic stop that ended in police brutality. Scarcely need to discuss George Floyd's case. And as a consequence, most of the civil protest has been dominated by African-American protestors. Now certainly not exclusively, but it's this a protesting while Black set of laws?

TAMI ABDOLLAH: [00:34:34] Critics would say possibly yes, because, as we all know, there's implicit bias and because these laws and the bills that are trying to be passed include this vague language, it provides a lot of room for that bias to rise up and show. Now, one thing is notable. When you talk about this history of primarily Black communities rising up in response to what they view are problematic actions against their civil rights, that has been a very different case this past year. And it was noted to me by multiple folks I spoke with, civil rights attorneys, sociologist, that last summer was historic for a number of reasons. Not only may it have been the largest protest movement in US history, with 15 to 26 million people showing up and marching, but it was also the largest and most diverse group of protestors. Some communities primarily had White people protesting, which is not apparent in other civil rights protests and criminal justice reform marches as well.

GOP States Are Pushing for Stricter Penalties for Protesters - The Takeaway - Air Date 4-27-21

NANCY SOLOMON: [00:35:51] Elly, are people around the country challenging these laws? What's going on to fight back against them?

ELLY PAGE: [00:35:58] Yes. We know that where these laws have passed-- Already in Florida, where DeSantis signed their new law last week, already folks have brought constitutional challenges against the law. We know that advocates are gearing up in other states where these laws are threatening to pass to do the same, but it's risky. Litigation is not a sure thing, and I think the number one priority and challenge right now is ensuring that these bills don't pass in the first place.

We have an overwhelming wave of legislation. We've seen over 90 bills introduced in 35 states since last summer. It's an unprecedented wave both in terms of the number of bills introduced, the extent to which they're moving through legislatures and passing, and the extreme lengths they go to restrict and chill protest rights.

NANCY SOLOMON: [00:36:49] Nora, what are the First Amendment implications of these types of laws?

NORA BENAVIDEZ: [00:36:56] Everyone often feels like protest is an activity for people who feel otherwise that their voices aren't heard. I think it's important for us to take a step back and remember why we protest. We often come together, we express ourselves when we feel like our cause is one that is not getting attention or recognition.

It's important to see that our First Amendment rights, and specifically the freedom of assembly, is one that we really should be upholding, protecting, and viewing as sacred in this country, because it's so fundamental to the way that we conceive of how we engage with democracy. Yet, mostly, these proposals would, in some way, make it harder to come out and demonstrate.

Not all of these proposals, however, are, I would say, slam dunk unconstitutional proposals. They often are proposals where I'm worried about the way they will be applied. We do not know yet, given that only about 20% of the anti-protest bills proposed since 2017 have actually become law, we're still in a holding pattern. We're waiting to see how some of these bills will be applied by law enforcement.

Florida was so quick to pass this. The governor was so explicit in his saying that we are targeting the Black Lives Matter protests and George Floyd protests that I think it's really an easy conclusion to see how these proposals, even if they are, maybe, able to pass constitutional muster, they will actually be applied in incredibly uneven ways, targeting specific speech and specific movements.

NANCY SOLOMON: [00:38:43] When you say "waiting", I assume that means that there is no challenge that's yet working its way through the courts?

NORA BENAVIDEZ: [00:38:52] There are active lawsuits now in Florida challenging the Florida law on its face, to say that the way that this does a number of things violates our First Amendment rights. I am very hopeful that suit goes well because I think it's a really powerful one. Across the board, because there are so few of these bills that have become law, we're still just very worried about how they'll be applied and their differences.

You can try to challenge a law on its face the moment it becomes law, and then you can try to challenge something once it's been used. That's where I get concerned, of course, about

how law enforcement will pick and choose the kinds of speech that will be acceptable to them.

Weaponizing Trump's Big Lie: Ari Berman on GOP's War on Democracy & Voting Rights - Democracy Now! - Air Date 5-10-21

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:39:33] On Thursday, Florida's Republican Governor Ron DeSantis signed a sweeping voter suppression law that will make it harder to vote by mail, limit ballot drop boxes, impose new voter ID requirements and criminalize giving food and water to voters waiting in long lines at polling places. Governor DeSantis signed the bill in a private ceremony broadcast on Fox & Friends, after a spokesperson barred other reporters, telling one the event was a "Fox News exclusive." DeSantis was surrounded by a group of Republican lawmakers, none of them African American.

GOV. RON DESANTIS: [00:40:14] Right now I have what we think is the strongest election integrity measures in the country. I'm actually going to sign it right here. It's going to take effect. So, there you go. The bill is signed.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:40:23] This comes as the Texas House of Representatives passed a Republican-backed voter suppression bill around 3 a.m. Friday morning after an all-night session. Republican Governor Greg Abbott is expected to sign the measure after it's reconciled with a Texas Senate voter suppression bill.

Meanwhile, Republicans in Ohio have introduced a bill to put severe restrictions on ballot drop boxes and absentee voting.

At the federal level, the sweeping voting rights and election overhaul bill known as the For the People Act goes before the Senate's Democratic-controlled Rules Committee Tuesday, where it faces changes aimed at winning support from the lone Democratic holdout, Senator Joe Manchin, and Republicans.

For more, we're joined by Mother Jones reporter Ari Berman, whose article in the March/April issue of the magazine is headlined "The Insurrection Was Put Down. The GOP Plan for Minority Rule Marches On."

Ari, welcome back to Democracy Now! First, describe what happened in Florida, then go to Texas, and talk about what these voter suppression laws have at their core, and the details.

ARI BERMAN: [00:41:29] Good morning, Amy. Thank you for having me back.

Well, first off, the Florida law really is a copycat of the Georgia voter suppression law. It does a lot of things that the Georgia law did. It bans drop boxes, or severely restricts them. It makes it a crime to give people food and water, makes it harder to get absentee ballots. It expands access for partisan poll watchers to observe ballot counting. It was signed, as you mentioned, as a Fox News exclusive, something I've never seen before, where the press and the public, by extension, were shut out — an example of democracy dying in the dark in the so-called Sunshine State.

And then you go to Texas, another state where democracy is dying in the dark, because they literally passed a voter suppression bill at 3 a.m. that will criminalize efforts to make it easier to vote, while legalize voter intimidation. And I say that because it criminalizes efforts to make it easier to vote, because if election officials, for example, will send out absentee ballot request forms to voters who don't request them, which is a standard thing in lots of states, they can now be charged with a criminal offense. At the same time, if election officials try to remove partisan poll watchers who might be trying to intimidate voters, they could themselves be charged with a criminal offense. basically what it's trying to do is legalize voter suppression.

I think, at the core, the Florida bill, the Texas bill, all of these bills, they are trying to weaponize the big lie that Trump told that the election was stolen. They're trying to make it harder for Democratic constituencies to be able to vote in future elections. And they are trying to institutionalize voter suppression in a way that they couldn't do in 2020. They were unable to overturn the election through litigation and intimidation in 2020, so now they're trying to change the rules to get the same outcome in 2022 and 2024.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:43:18] Ari Berman, can you talk about the Texas bill's statement of purpose initially stating the measure is designed to "preserve the purity of the ballot box"? Talk about the significance of that phrase.

ARI BERMAN: [00:43:34] That language about the "purity of the ballot box" is straight from the Jim Crow era. It was literally used to defend things like all-white primaries and to disenfranchise Black and Mexican American voters in Texas and other states. And a Texas Democratic rep, Rafael Anchía, asked the bill's sponsor about this. He said, "Did you know that the phrase 'purity at the ballot box' was used to disenfranchise African Americans and Mexican Americans in Texas and to justify Jim Crow?" And the bill's sponsor, Briscoe Cain, who, by the way, traveled to Pennsylvania after the election to try to overturn the election results there, said that he wasn't aware that "purity at the ballot box" had been used to justify Jim Crow. That was either shockingly ignorant or knowingly obtuse. But either way, the fact that Texas Republicans put language into their bill that was ripped straight from Jim Crow gives you an idea of what they're trying to do with these voter suppression bills.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:44:34] You've said, "The fact that GOP voter suppression efforts [are] still being described as partisan battle [rather than an] all-out assault on democracy is unconscionable." Talk about that. And also, if people aren't following what's happening in Arizona, the fourth counting by this ninja private company, that's being paid a fortune by Arizona, some of those counting participated in the insurrection?

ARI BERMAN: [00:45:04] Well, the point I was trying to make is that every single day you see headlines that basically say Republicans try to protect election integrity, and Democrats call it voter suppression. The media is still trying to do false equivalence in terms of how they cover voter suppression. The issue is not Democrats versus Republicans. The issue is Republicans versus democracy. They're making it harder for everybody to vote. And yes, this might fall harder on Democratic-leaning constituencies, but these are changes in Georgia, in Florida, in Texas, that are going to affect millions of voters. So this is not about partisan politics. This is about one party having an all-out assault on democracy, on the democratic process. And I think that's how it should be covered.

And if you look at Arizona, this is not a fourth counting of the votes. This is just a complete conspiratorial witch hunt, where they are trying to manufacture claims of fraud in order to build support for overturning future elections. Remember, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors in Arizona is dominated by Republicans. Every single member of that board is a Republican except for one Democrat. It was Republicans in Arizona that signed off on the election results. It was the Republican governor, the Republican attorney general, the Republican head of the Supreme Court. All of the people that signed off on the election results in Arizona were Republicans. But that's not enough for Republicans in the Legislature. They are basically trying to weaponize the insurrection through this audit, which is not really an audit. It's a witch hunt, actually. And I think it's going to have very detrimental effects, not just in Arizona, but in other states that are trying to export this audit now to other states. It's being led by someone that was a key member of the "Stop the Steal" movement.

So, it's very, very disturbing, what's happening here. And my worry is that in so many different ways, the big lie is being weaponized, whether it's the audit in Arizona, whether it's the new voter suppression laws, whether it's the attempt to oust Liz Cheney and put in place someone that backed overturning the election results in her place. I think this is all connected in terms of the fact that the Republican Party is just waging an all-out war on democracy.

Is the GOP Insanity Being Driven By Trump or 40 Years of Madness? - Thom Hartmann Program - Air Date 6-4-21

THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM: [00:47:17] So now this is what happened in Texas over the weekend: the Republicans proposed a law that said we can pick a district, let's say a black part of Houston, and we can decide that we're going to cut in half the number of voting polling places. And in those polling places, we're going to cut in half the number of voting machines.

So the lines are going to go from three hours to 10 hours. And then if you're still in line at 9:00 PM and that line may stretch for four or five hours worth of voting, you can't vote after 9:00 PM. So first we're going to create long lines. And then secondly, we're going to say to people who are still in line at 9:00 PM, sorry, you can't vote. It's just not going to happen.

And the Republicans are trying to pass this law, that would also criminalize a lot of other behavior like signing your voter ballot illegibly -- and it was just bizarre -- throwing criminal penalties for poll workers, for voters, and for people who are working to get out the vote -- putting criminal penalties in all three of those categories.

And the Republicans had the votes to pass it. But the Democrats walked out and they said, we're going to deny you a quorum. Okay. So that's what happened. Now, the narrative around this is that's happening because of Donald Trump's big lie that he actually won the 2020 election, and that even Republicans in Texas and in Georgia and Arizona are lying to you that Joe Biden won. In fact, what the Republican party is doing right now, they may do maybe a little more rapidly and a little more enthusiastically with a boost from Donald Trump, because Trump wants this stuff in place for 2024 so he can run for president again.

And frankly, Josh Hawley, Tom Cotton, Rick Scott, Ted Cruz, Rand Paul, any other right-wing fascist who wants to run for president in 2024, they want it in place too, just in case they lose the election, but want to be able to claim that they won the election. See, pretty straightforward stuff.

So the narrative in the media is that this is all Trump, that Trump is the one who caused this. And we need to blow that narrative up. Eric Boehlert is writing about this. He's got a great newsletter by the way, it's called Press Run and you can easily find it, it's a subscription newsletter, there's a free version and a paid version. And he writes, "This grip narrative is nonsense and it needs to stop. The Republican party no longer adheres to the tenants of democracy. It is determined to permanently wound free and fair elections. Republicans are doing this because they want to, not because they're quivering at the sight of Trump," writes Eric Boehlert. "Emphasizing the idea that fear of Trump is motivating Republicans risks misleading people about the true nature of the threat posed by the Republican party's ongoing radicalization."

Now, this is not an idea that Eric Boehlert first came up with. First of all, it's simple reality, and you can just look around and see that ever since the Reagan revolution, Republicans have been working to defeat democracy. In fact, you could even go back to the Nixon election and see that this has been an effort to defeat democracy. This is -- I don't think, I don't know if I've got my LBJ clip here. I don't think I do on my 360. No I don't. And oh yeah, I do. Here it is -- this is 1968, LBJ learning that Richard Nixon is trying to blow up an election by cutting a deal with the South Vietnamese. Hey, if you just don't go along with LBJ's peace deal, which he had negotiated in August, 1968, which would have helped Hubert Humphrey, the vice president, get elected president. He was running against Richard Nixon in '68. But if the South Vietnamese would go along with that, that Nixon would make them rich. And the CIA wire tapped this and handed the wire tap off to LBJ. And here's what he had to say to Everett Dirksen, the most powerful Republican in America at the time.

LYNDON B JOHNSON: [00:51:31] Here the latest, latest information we got, the agent says that she's just, they just talked to the boss in New Mexico and that he says that you must hold out, just hold on until after election.

We know what Thiệu is saying to him out there. We're pretty well informed on both ends. Now I'm reading their hand, Everett. I don't want to get this in the campaign and they oughtn't to be doing this. This is treason. [Dirksen] I know.

THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM: [00:52:03] I know. It's treason. Republicans have been running this scam. I just got Abolhassan Banisadr's book yesterday. I had to buy a used copy because it's out of print and I think it's called My Turn to Speak. Banisadr was the president of Iran in 1980. And his book is about how he how the mullahs, the Ayatollahs in Iran had cut a deal with Ronald Reagan and his campaign to hold the American hostages so that Jimmy Carter would lose the election.

So you've got Nixon committing treason with a foreign government to win an election. Then you've got Reagan committing treason with a foreign government to win an election. And, I could go on, I'm going to stop at that point because basically what the Republicans are saying now is, we don't need to commit treason with foreign governments, well obviously you've got Trump committing treason with a foreign government in 2016 to win an election.

But now they're just saying, Hey, we don't need to count the votes. So you know, this law in Texas, that would have said, Hey, if the line is in 9:00 PM, that cuts off, the other provision of the law that nobody is pointing out, or very few people are pointing out, is that election judges could simply say, " I think there was some fraud in that black ward over there. We're not going to count their votes. We're just not going to count their votes. We're going to declare the election for the Republican." This law would give them the power to do that with no audit, no proof, no nothing. Just, Hey. The election judge can say this and the election judges are appointed Republicans.

Walk Out: Texas Democrats Block Passage of Voter Suppression Bill by Leaving Capitol Ahead of Vote - Democracy Now! - Air Date 6-1-21

JUAN GONZALEZ - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:53:44] And, Representative Martinez, I wanted to ask you, in terms of the demographic changes, for people across the country to understand the importance of Texas and expansion of voting rights there. The state currently is about 58% people of color — 40% Hispanic, 13% Black, 5% Asian? What would it mean for Texas to have full participation of all of its residents in voting? What would it mean at the national level in terms of politics?

REP. TREY MARTINEZ FISCHER: [00:54:23] Well, Juan, it's a game changer. I mean, you just hit the nail on the head. we have the largest African American population in the country, one of the largest Latino populations in the country. That's significant. we always said that S.B. 7, this voter suppression bill, is a solution looking for a problem. There is a problem out there, Juan. And the problem is Texans are voting. The problem is we are voting, but we're not voting for Republicans. And so, knowing what they know, they have made a decision to put a target on our backs, silence our voices, so that they can maintain that grip on power.

— it's ironic that we celebrated Memorial Day yesterday to honor soldiers who go defend freedom and democracy around the world, but yet when those soldiers come home to Texas, they cannot go to their church, participate in their faith, and then leave to go vote, because Senate Bill 7 would eliminate the Souls to the Polls program by limiting the time you could vote on a Sunday. And that's a shame.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:55:17] Representative Trey Martinez Fischer, can you talk about Greg Abbott saying he's calling for a special session? He didn't even do that during the massive storm, with the total electricity, failure. But he's going to do that for this? And what does this have to do with the election for governor in 2022?

REP. TREY MARTINEZ FISCHER: [00:55:38] the campaign season is already — it's already began here in Texas. And I think this is part of the script, part of the narrative. the governor threatening a special session — you're right, did not call a single special session for COVID, in the response to COVID. Of the 10 largest mass shootings in the country, four of them were in Texas. The governor didn't bring us back to deal with that. And then you're talking about Hurricane Harvey. You're talking about Winter Storm Uri, that gave four-and-a-half million people no electricity in their homes, 15 million people without water. And yet he wants to bring us back to play politics? That's his prerogative. That tells me that he sees something in

the polls that makes him a little nervous with his Republican base. But you're not going to play politics on the backs of Hispanics and African Americans. We will do everything in our power to stand up for our right to vote and to stand up for our constituents.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:56:26] At the same time that you had your walkout on Sunday, this weekend was the QAnon conference in Dallas, where former General Michael Flynn spoke and said there should be a military coup — though he denies that now, but it's on tape — and also said Trump won the election and the Electoral College vote. This is the atmosphere in Texas right now? And what are you going to do if there is a special session? What are Democrats going to do?

REP. TREY MARTINEZ FISCHER: [00:56:50] the same rules we have in the regular session apply in the special session, a quorum being one of them. We have been behind a closed door for 140 days. We are a citizen legislature, so people have jobs, people have families. And when you time that session, you better hope that you're going to have full attendance, because if you don't have a quorum, you can't meet.

And then, number two, there are lots of items on the table when it comes to how we engage in debate, how we use the use of parliamentary procedure. S.B. 7 is an ugly voting rights bill. It had a counterpart in the House in House Bill 6. Texas Democrats were able to take the sharp edges off of House Bill 6 and to push forward a policy that wouldn't put people in jail, and it wouldn't suppress the vote as severely as Senate Bill 7. I hope cooler heads prevail and that we can get in a room and talk. But if people don't want to talk, we're prepared to fight. And I hope you'll maintain a close eye on the deliberations once we go back to special session.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW: [00:57:44] And finally, you're calling on Biden to do more. You've got this issue of eliminating the filibuster, Manchin and Sinema — next door to you, in Arizona, Senator Sinema — saying they don't want it eliminated. This would also mean a protection of voting all over the country. Your final comment?

REP. TREY MARTINEZ FISCHER: [00:58:03] what we have seen in the past, whenever we have a unified Congress and the administration, time is limited. And so we need to put our priorities and put them at the forefront. I have seen a number of discussions about how you can eliminate or limit the filibuster. And I certainly hope — Senator Sinema would know. In her state of Arizona, a state law put a citizenship requirement on Arizona voters, and they saw a tremendous drop in voter turnout with Latinos.

This is what's happening across the country, and we need a national response. This is the time to not think about our local politics or what bothers us as an individual. We need to think about what brings us together as a country. And bringing us together as a country is to make sure that every American, regardless of their color, regardless of who they love, regardless of where they live, they ought to have a right to vote, without being bothered or pestered or having suppression tactics thrown in their face. And so, with all due respect to Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema, it is time to have a national response to federal voting rights.

How Corporate Media Protects Violent Cops - Carlos Maza - Air Date 6-4-20

CARLOS MAZA: [00:58:57] Police departments across the country have spent the past week engaging in mass violence against peaceful protestors, ramming vehicles into pedestrians, using chemical weapons, to disperse crowds, and assaulting and arresting journalists who try to report on their abuse. That violence is a brutal reminder of how American police departments threaten and terrorize the communities that they're supposed to serve.

It's also a reminder of how corporate media often protects those departments and de-legitimizes people who protest against them. Here are six ways the media protects violent cops.

One: Repeating Police bullshit. Despite years of evidence documenting how police departments lie to and mislead the public, many news outlets continue to uncritically include police statements in their reporting.

NEWSCASTER 1: [00:59:38] "According to police officials..."

NEWSCASTER 2: [00:59:39] "According to police..."

NEWSCASTER 3: [00:59:40] "According to police, were throwing rocks and bottles..."

CARLOS MAZA: [00:59:43] Trusting police like this is always dangerous, but it's especially reckless when covering protests about the police. In the days after protest broke out over the murder of George Floyd, news outlets in Cleveland, Miami, and Minneapolis all published police reports claiming that many of their protestors were from out of town.

NEWSCASTER 4: [00:59:59] "Outside agitators, the police called them, anarchists..."

CARLOS MAZA: [01:00:03] In every city, that was a lie meant to turn the public against protesters. But by the time reporters could correct the record, it was too late. The police had already gotten the headlines that they wanted.

Two: Copaganda. If you've been watching the news, you've definitely seen a segment like this: a cop hugging protestors, taking the knee with protestors or voicing support for protestors.

NEWSCASTER 5: [01:00:22] "Glimpses of hope of breaking through the days of rage that somehow this time might be different."

CARLOS MAZA: [01:00:28] Corporate media loves shit like this because it gives them a feel good moment for their viewers who might not want to see their boys in blue gassing trapped protestors or beating the shit out of peaceful civilians.

But these segments are PR stunts. Protests about police brutality have nothing to do with how sweet or polite a few cops are. They're about what happens when that sweetness runs out. Cops stage these stunts to bait the media and go right back to gassing and assaulting the very protestors they were just playing nice with on TV.

Three: Shitty Experts. Every cable news network hires a handful of law enforcement analysts to comment on criminal justice stories. Those experts are almost always former police or FBI, and many of them run private security firms that still work with police departments. As a result, they tend to be overly deferential to the police and flood the airwaves with procop propaganda.

During the Baltimore uprising, the best example was CNN's Harry Hook, a former NYPD detective would derail every segment with racist bullshit about black crime.

HARRY HOOK: [01:01:25] "The black community, all right, is where there's most of the crime... let's say in New York City..." [talking over one another]

CARLOS MAZA: [01:01:30] Now, it's CNN's James Gagliano, a retired FBI agent whose Twitter feed is littered with pro cop propaganda, and who's already defended the police officers who drove an SUV into civilians.

JAMES GAGLIANO: [01:01:41] "They were nervous about what was happening... Things were being thrown at the vehicle... This... this... it... it's like a war zone in this country, Anna..."

CARLOS MAZA: [01:01:47] You wouldn't hire former tobacco executives to comment on the dangers of smoking. You shouldn't hire former cops to talk about the dangers of police brutality.

Four: Deference to Authority. When they're not relying on cops or former cops, news networks default the next worst thing: politicians and city officials. This is an easy shortcut for news outlets. Protest movements are typically driven by community activists who are unknown to national press, and don't spend a lot of time in network green rooms.

It's much easier to call city officials and politicians, who already have relationships with reporters, and can put on press conferences that protesters can't. But this deference to authority has a huge impact on coverage. City officials have close ties to police departments and are often responsible for the shitty conditions that spark uprisings in the first place.

They have an incentive to side with police over protestors because those protests challenge their legitimacy, too.

OFFICIAL: [01:02:36] "A lot of police officers showed amazing restraint last night..."

CARLOS MAZA: [01:02:39] Relying on government officials narrows the Overton window, focusing on people who are more interested in order than justice, while excluding the voices of protestors calling for real change. That exclusion doesn't happen neutrally: a 2017 study looked at what sources were quoted in protest coverage. Protests against anti-black racism were the least likely to include the voices of protestors and most likely to defer to those already in power

Five: Language Games. Here's a New York Times tweet that will live in infamy:

NY TIMES TWEET: [01:03:08] "A photographer was shot in the eye..."

"Protestors struck a journalist..."

"A reporter was hit by a pepper ball..."

CARLOS MAZA: [01:03:14] Notice a difference? The Times uses the active voice to describe protestors, but the passive voice to describe violence carried out by police. You can find sanitized language like that everywhere in corporate media.

This tweet says: "Pepper spray caused a short stampede at Lafayette Park..." but doesn't mention who fired it.

This Vox article catches an image of a cop pepper spraying people by saying it became a clash between police and protestors; and the CNN chyron describes protestors as storming the streets of Oakland.

Language games like this are subtle, but they always have the same effects.

Scrutinizing the actions of protestors while separating cops from the violence they enact.

Six: Whose peace? Look at any corporate news outlet right now, and you'll probably see images of broken windows and burning buildings. This isn't surprising. Corporate media's business model is built on sensationalism.

So images like this get played on a loop constantly, no matter how rare they are or how peaceful the rest of the protest is. It happened in Ferguson. It happened in Baltimore. And it's happening now. This kind of coverage is always shitty, but it's especially dangerous given what cops are doing right now. In city after city, footage shows police officers shoving into crowds, flying helicopters at low altitudes, brandishing military equipment and opening fire hours before curfew starts.

This shit is designed to provoke a response. It's a classic authoritarian tactic. Antagonize protestors, bait a reaction, then use that reaction to justify further crackdowns. And while it would be great if everyone getting tear gassed, and assaulted, and driven into, could just not react, violence and property damage are an inevitable response to police escalation, a response that's deeply embedded in America's moral fabric.

By focusing on protestors reactions, as opposed to the police and violence that triggers it. News outlets help give cops the pretext they need to engage in further aggression.

MAN 1: [01:05:02] They started out trying to do a light footprint. I don't know if that was the right move right up front, but now we're looking at it moving into a larger footprint.

CARLOS MAZA: [01:05:10] That focus on disorder also reveals a deeper bias about what corporate media finds newsworthy.

Anytime there's a protest like this, reporters will hound activists on the street, asking them to condemn violence and work for peace.

POLICE/PROTESTER CROSSTALK: [01:05:22] And what goes on. They understand people who are destroying cities, right? So

CARLOS MAZA: [01:05:26] That line of questioning badly misunderstands the problem. Technically police states are peaceful.

Prisons are peaceful. The whole point of these protests is that that's not real peace. That peace in America typically means living under constant threat of state violence by racist

cops, with leaders who don't take that violence seriously, police departments that aren't held accountable and news networks that don't find any of it interesting until something is on fire.

When corporate media talks about peace, they don't mean peace for those threatened by state violence. They mean peace for those who've never found that violence to be newsworthy... Until now.

Summary

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:06:01] We've just heard clips today, starting with Trevor Noah on the Daily Show, breaking down what the point of learning history is; Past Present explored the ironic turn of conservatives complaining about their feelings being hurt to launch their moral panic over education about racism; Counter spin looked at the anti protest legislation, sweeping the country, and so did On The Media; The Takeaway focused on how people are fighting back against those bills, while Democracy Now spoke with Ari Berman about the weaponization of the big lie to fuel the push for anti voting legislation; and Tom Hartman explained that this is no where near a new phenomenon.

That's what everyone heard. But members also heard bonus clips from Democracy Now speaking with a Texas legislator about the walkout in Texas to block their anti voting bill, and Carlos Maza focused on the actions of police during protests and the coverage they get in corporate and media.

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 funds a barrier to hearing more information. Every request is granted, no questions asked. And now I have our third special lesson for you about content curation.

Lesson #3 The Value Proposition

We're talking more about content curation today in our third lesson of probably four, I think I have one more after this, and this was all spurred by a recent caller who said, among other things, this:

VOICEMAILER: COLIN FROM CLEVELAND: [01:07:46] Your show is an aggregator, right? You pull things from other shows. So why should I donate to your show? I would rather give my money to the actual people who are doing the original content themselves.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [01:07:57] And so, his personal preferences aside, which are perfectly valid because they're preferences, I got the sense that there was some misunderstanding and started doing some research on curation, so I could explain more fully to everyone. And I quickly found that it is a topic that really deserves exploration in terms of understanding the lay of the media landscape in general, on how it works, because, I don't actually spend a lot of time thinking about this stuff. I do it, I live it, but I don't think about it. And it turns out other people have been thinking about it.

So yes. People like you, listening, having a better understanding of curation as a concept should help curators like me, but it became really clear that it's worth exploring regardless of that.

So previously I explained the difference between aggregation and the much more in-depth process of curation. Then I explained that there is an alternative to human curation and that they're called algorithms. If you need any help understanding the downsides of algorithms, check out our surveillance capitalism episode.

Today, we look a little bit more closely at the value proposition offered by human curation. And to start here's a fun fact that I literally only realized today: Best of the Left, the Facebook newsfeed feature and Twitter as a company were all launched in 2006. Which was also the same year that Google bought YouTube.

So, do with that information, what you will, but to kick off, here's a quote from 2009. So few years later, the Facebook newsfeed and Twitter and YouTube are still pretty much in their infancy compared to today. And this article is manifesto for the content curator, the next big social media job of the future.

Quote: "To satisfy the people's hunger for great content on any topic imaginable, there will need to be a new category of individual working online, someone whose job it is to not create more content, but to make sense of all the content that others are creating to find the best and most relevant content and bring it forward.

The people who choose to take on this role will be known as "content curators." The future of the social web will be driven by these content curators who take it upon themselves to collect and share the best content online for others to consume and take on the role of citizen editors publishing highly valuable compilations of content created by others.

In time, these curators will bring more utility and order to the social web."

And now jumping ahead to 2018 after social media had taken over most media consumers' lives in an article titled: "Content Curation, the Future of Irrelevance," writing: "Online publishing is now ubiquitous and incessant with the consequence that we're often overwhelmed with raw unfiltered context free information.

This is fueling a demand for new content organization and consumption methods in order to find meaningful and relevant information in these fast moving data flows. The volume of digital information available makes it increasingly challenging to find the information you are interested in. Curation in a digital world isn't a luxury: it's a necessity. Taking a drink from the raw, unfiltered, context free, internet firehose, is no longer a viable option for any of us in today's world of content abundance, the skill of how to find, make sense of, and share content that we need to be effective in our work, is critical. Simply put, content curation provides a structure, a process, a system, and a discipline to help us find and use more relevant information."

So that's a bit more on the how and the why. Now, let's look at who these curators are. We're continuing to jump around in the five laws of the curation economy and here's the second law:

"Curators come in three shapes. There are curation experts, people whose background and depth of understanding makes their curational choices valid. If you're looking for medical advice, you want your video viewing curated by a doctor, not a patient. There are editorial curators who manage the voice and to the collections of the publications and sites they organize.

And there are passion driven curators. They love their particular area of focus and attention and bring that single-minded focus to every piece of content they touch."

And I would actually argue that I have a foot in each of these categories. I didn't start out as an expert, but I've been doing this for 15 years. So now I am.

I am definitely an editorial curator. That's where most of my energy goes. There are decisions about what to cover, how to cover it, which sources to use, the very fine grain decision-making about which specific clips to present, and in which order.

And lastly, there's passion too. Now admittedly, I'll be honest and say that I started a progressive podcast 10 years before anyone knew what a podcast was as a get rich quick scheme. But the passion came later, at least.

Speaking of getting rich quick, that brings us to the third of five laws of the curation economy:

"Curation, isn't a hobby. It's both a profession and a calling. Curators need to be paid to be part of the emerging ecosystem. What's a fair fee will depend on how critical the curator's output is in the category, but an economic basis is essential and inevitable"

As I've mentioned previously, I do not begrudge anyone who doesn't already know this, particularly because I didn't know it until relatively recently, I had insecurities about asking for money to support this show for the exact reasons the caller questioned.

And it was only within the past few years that I got a better grip on what exactly it is I'm doing, that's worth money to people, and only when I started doing this research did I find just how much value those who are thinking deeply on the subject put on the craft of curation. I mentioned previously that started to make me blush every once in a while.

So. Support your local neighborhood curator. They're adding more value than you may have previously imagined. And if you'd like to support us, you can do that at bestoftheleft.com/support. We're on Patreon for those who like Patreon; we have our own super simple system for those who like to keep it simple.

And if all goes right, we should be ready to go on day one, when Apple podcast subscriptions launch on June 15th, that's the latest news. If you use Apple podcasts, you should be able to become a member and access our bonus content without ever leaving the app in just a couple of taps, starting in a few days.

So let me know how that goes for you.

Final comments

And that is going to be it for today. As always keep the comments coming at (202) 999-3991. Or by emailing me to jay@bestoftheleft.com. I've been a little low on voice mails and VoicedMails recently. So, I mean, I guess I could just keep talking about curation over and over again, but... I, I would love to hear from you.

Thanks as always to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work that goes into the show and their participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to the monosyllabic, transcriptionist trio, Ben, Ken, and Scott, our new addition, who is taking Dan's place. We once again, thank Dan for his work over the past several months, and are grateful to Scott for stepping up to take his place. And, and additionally grateful that his name is Scott, and we didn't have to ask him to change his name so we could keep the monosyllabic moniker for the group. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism, segments, graphic design, web mastering, and bonus show co-hosting.

And thanks of course, 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. 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 luck podcast coming to you twice weekly. Thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from bestoftheleft.com.

As long as we're reminiscing about the ancient history of the internet, I, here's a quick addendum for you. I have been thinking to myself the past few weeks, as I, as I read those final credits about where you can find our show notes. And I say that you can find them on the blog. And within the past couple of weeks, I started wondering to myself, am I the last person still using the term blog? Do people even say that anymore? Does anyone know what that word means? Do young people know what it means or where it came from? And so I used Google trends to track the search term from January 1st, 2004 to today, and the peak usage of the term blog maxed out in the year 2009, and has been on a long, slow decline since then. Like, blogs came around in about 2003, 2004, like in, in that neighborhood. And they've been on a decline since 2009 and today they are at the same level of relevance, and widespread interest and usage, as they were in 2004, the very beginning of 2004, which I found fascinating.

So I'll probably retire that word in my closing credits going forward. I'll figure out something more modern to say.