

#1444 The Ongoing Coup and Other Ways to Destroy Democracy

[00:00:00] Intro 9-25-21

[00:00:00] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Welcome to this episode of the award-winning Best of the Left Podcast in which we shall take a look at the continuing efforts of Trump and his supporters to subvert and ultimately destroy democracy through conspiracy theories, gerrymandering and harassment campaigns.

Clips today are from the *David Pakman Show*, *the Bradcast*, *In the Thick*, *The Majority Report*, *the Rachel Maddow Show*, *The Chauncey DeVega Show*, *The Takeaway*, and *The Thom Hartmann Program*.

[00:00:29] **DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, DAVID PAKMAN SHOW:** Okay if [00:00:30] you want to get a sense of how long this election fraud stuff is going to be going on, Donald Trump just sent a letter to the Georgia Secretary of State, Brad Raffensperger, demanding that he be declared the winner of Georgia. Trump demanding that Trump be declared the winner of Georgia. Don't check your calendar, this isn't a repeat. It really is mid-September of 2021. It's not November of 2020, it's not December of a 2020, it's almost October of 2021, and Donald Trump is demanding [00:01:00] that he be given the state of Georgia in the November of 2020 election.

Donald Trump sent this letter on Friday. I fully expected when I saw this headline, I thought this must be from months ago, it must have just resurfaced, it can't be from now, but indeed it is. The letter is dated September 17th, 2021.

The letter says, "Dear secretary Raffensperger, large-scale voter fraud," -- random capitalization, I still don't understand it. His followers do it too--"large [00:01:30] scale voter fraud continues to be reported in Georgia. Enclosed is a report of 43,000 absentee ballot votes counted." Now, counted is capitalized guys! The counting is so important that he's put a capital C on it in the middle of a sentence--"absentee ballot votes counted in DeKalb county that violated the chain of custody rules, making them invalid. I would respectfully request that your department check this and if true, along with many other claims of voter fraud and voter irregularities, start the process of de [00:02:00] certifying the election, or whatever the correct legal remedy is and announce the true winner." He's saying announce me as the winner of Georgia. It's October. "As stated to

you previously, the number of false and or irregular votes is far greater than needed to change the Georgia election result. People do not understand why you and governor Brian Kemp adamantly refuse to acknowledge the now proven facts and fight so hard that the election truth not be told. You and governor Kemper doing a tremendous disservice to the great state,"--capitalized--"of Georgia [00:02:30] and to our capital and nation, which is systematically being destroyed by an illegitimate president and his administration. The truth must be allowed to come out. Thank you for your attention to this matter."

Their argument is that because some forms were dated a few hours late, I'm interpreting what is being said here okay, some forms were dated a few hours late, they want every result from all of [00:03:00] those ballot boxes thrown out and not counted. They want to disenfranchise tens of thousands of voters because of some messed up paperwork with some of these ballots. Now, the law that they cite is this emergency declaration, which has rules for ballot drop boxes. It doesn't say if any rule is violated, you throw all the ballots in the box into the trash. It doesn't actually say that. It doesn't say throw the votes out and don't count them. So all of this is [00:03:30] being signal boosted by articles being written that say, because it appears that maybe some ballots we're a few hours late in being certified you need to just throw out all the ballots from those ballot boxes. There's nothing in the law that suggests that should be happening.

So at this point, is this a mental health issue? Is this trolling? Is it grifting? This letter was released just before the Saturday rally in support of the Trump rioters, maybe it was an indirect way to try to rile people up. [00:04:00] Remember, Donald Trump... remember when he just asked for 11,000 votes to be found for him?

[00:04:06] **DONALD TRUMP:** I need 11,000 votes, give me a break.

[00:04:08] **DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, DAVID PAKMAN SHOW:** This guy seems willing to do anything, but again, the issue is the burden of proof. He says he has the evidence, but he wants Brad Raffensperger to prove that his allegations are true. What this may actually be is an attempt to preempt what increasingly seems is going to be an [00:04:30] investigation into Trump's attempt to overturn the Georgia results. This is an article from Friday, the same day as this letter came out. "Georgia criminal probe into Trump's attempt to overturn 2020 election quietly moves forward." So this may be Trump trying to argue. "Look, I wasn't trying to break the law when I asked for 11,000 votes, what I meant is what I said in this letter, which is **you** should investigate this [00:05:00] and **you** should investigate that." It's like that weasely mafioso type

speaking that we've become accustomed to from Donald Trump, but a delusional letter, I was convinced this letter must be six months old. No, it's from Friday.

[00:05:13] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** I've been referring to this recall as a stupid, ridiculous recall. Now, you see why. It cost about \$300 million to run, and we pretty much ended up with the same results that Gavin Newsom got back in 2018 when he [00:05:30] ran, when Donald Trump lost here in the state, just not even a year ago.

Yes, it was stupid. It was a waste of money. And anyone who refers to Republicans as conservative after they forced the state to shell out some, I think it was, \$269 million for this stupid recall, they are not conservatives.

Conservatives don't waste taxpayer dollars like that. At least not real ones.

[00:05:58] **DESI DOYEN:** Especially not when [00:06:00] there's a reelection campaign just next year.

[00:06:03] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** I know it's unbelievable. In fact, as we go to air with 70% of the ballots now tallied-- of course it'll take several weeks for the rest of the vote by mail and provisional ballots to be counted, and everything to be canvassed, et cetera-- as we go to air, "No" on the question of whether Newsom shall be removed is ahead by 64 to 36%. That is a blowout, at least for now, though I suspect that lead may [00:06:30] increase as more vote by mail ballots are actually tallied in the next few days and weeks.

That is a 28 point lead at the moment, or almost exactly what Joe Biden defeated Donald Trump by in 2020 in California. 29 points in that case.

We'll see if Newsom's lead widens in the coming days, as I think is likely, but in 2018, when Newsom was elected to his first term, he defeated Republican John [00:07:00] Cox by 34 points. If he's wildly unpopular in the state, as we have been told now for weeks on end, not just by Fox News, but by some in the actual real news media, who said that Gavin Newsom is... is in trouble, he's not popular in the state. Apparently he's still quite popular.

In any event, he did not lose many voters in a low turnout, special election, since the last time he won in a regular election.

Republican [00:07:30] talk radio host, Larry Elder, would have replaced Newsom had the recall succeeded, having easily won on the ballot's second question, which is moot, because Newsom one on the first question.

Newsom's campaign had instructed Democrats, not even to bother voting at all on that second question, which is a strategy that I certainly questioned. In this case, it apparently worked out. That after Elder had vowed to end [00:08:00] all masking and vaccine mandates and basically bring the polar opposite political worldview to Sacramento, which was rejected by Californians.

The recall turned on Newsom's approach to the pandemic, including mask and vaccine mandates, and Democrats cheered the outcome, says AP, as evidence that voters approve of that approach. The race was also a test of whether opposition to former president Donald Trump and his [00:08:30] right wing politics remain a motivating force for Democrats and independents, as the party looks ahead to midterm elections next year.

Republicans had hoped for proof that frustrations over. So pandemic precautions would somehow drive voters away from Democrats. Turns out, it didn't. Not by a long shot, at least not in a state where Democrats outnumber Republicans by nearly two to one. In his brief [00:09:00] victory remarks after the "No" vote to remove Newsom won the day, the governor told supporters that "No" is not the only thing that he wanted to focus on.

[00:09:11] **GOV. GAVIN NEWSOM:** Good evening. Appears that we are enjoying an overwhelmingly "No" vote tonight here in the state of California. But "No" is not the only thing that was expressed tonight.

I want to focus on what we said yes to as a state. We said "Yes" to science. We said "Yes" to [00:09:30] vaccines. We said "Yes" to ending this pandemic. We said "Yes" to people's right to vote without fear of fake fraud or voter suppression. We said "Yes" to women's fundamental constitutional right to decide for herself what she does with her body and her fate and future. We said "Yes" to diversity. We said "Yes" to inclusion. We said "Yes" to pluralism.

We said [00:10:00] "Yes" to all those things that we hold dear as Californians, and I would argue, as Americans: economic justice; social justice; racial justice; environmental justice; our values, where California's made so much progress. All of those things were on the ballot this evening.

And so I'm humbled and grateful to the millions and millions of Californians that exercised their fundamental right to vote and express [00:10:30] themselves

so overwhelmingly by rejecting the division, by rejecting the cynicism, by rejecting so much of the negativity that's defined our politics in this country over the course of so many years.

I just think of our kids watching all of this nightly news day in and day out. And I just wonder... I've got four young kids, oldest about to turn 12 this weekend, and what they're growing up to. We're [00:11:00] so divided. These kids increasingly fearful, isolated, disconnected, and we're teaching them that.

It doesn't have to be that way. I think we owe our kids a deeper sense of respect, and all of us... as adult... responsibility to disregard this false separateness. We're so much more in common as a state and a nation than we give ourselves credit for.

I've been all over the state of California [00:11:30] over the last many years, but notably in the last nine months. Conservative parts of the state, progressive parts of the state, folks that I know were gonna vote "No," and votes that I knew were going to vote "Yes" on this recall, and turned out to do just that.

But one thing that's universal: everybody wants to be respected. Everyone wants to feel some connection to one another. And we all, certainly, in this pandemic, wanna feel safe, protected. [00:12:00] Those are universal values.

And I think about,. Just in the last few days, and the former president put out, saying this election was rigged.

Democracy is not a football. You don't throw it around. It's more like a, I dunno, antique vase. You can drop it and smash it in a million different pieces. And that's what we're [00:12:30] capable of doing if we don't stand up to meet the moment and push back.

I said this many times on the campaign trail: we may have defeated Trump, but Trumpism is not dead in this country.

The Bie Lie; the January 6th insurrection; all the voting suppression efforts that are happening all across this country; what's happening to the assault on fundamental rights, constitutionally protected rights of women and girls. It's a remarkable moment in our nation's [00:13:00] history.

But I'm reminded of a, something. I don't know... a few decades ago, someone told me when describing a difficult and challenging moment, said "The world is too small. Our time is too short. And our wisdom is too limited to win fleeting

victories at other people's expenses." And he went on to say, "We must all triumph together."

So in that spirit of [00:13:30] recognizing and reconciling this moment, and trying to understand what's going on, not just here in the state, but all across the United States of America, I just want to say this: tonight, I'm humbled, grateful, but resolved in the spirit of my political hero, Robert Kennedy, to make more gentle the life of this world.

[00:13:55] **MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK:** All right, our first topic, people, is California's gubernatorial [00:14:00] recall election... not. Okay. So on Tuesday, a special election was held in a GOP-led attempt to remove governor Gavin Newsom from office. Which is really interesting, right? Because we're in New York and governor Cuomo is gone. And so on the other side of the country in California, something else happened: a resounding majority of Californians voted against the recall, effectively keeping Gavin Newsom in office. His leading opponent -- I know, I don't even understand how he could be that -- his [00:14:30] leading opponent was a Republican candidate, whose name is Larry Elder. If you don't know him --

[00:14:35] **JULIO RICARDO VARELA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK:** oh gosh. It's probably good that you don't know.

[00:14:38] **MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK:** It's probably okay for you. He is a black conservative radio talk show host, who is grossly anti-immigrant, super anti-black.

So the recall is basically like a culmination of a lot of hatred by right-wing conservatives towards Gavin Newsom. They don't like his progressive policies, [00:15:00] period, specifically things about education and immigration. So the recall actually was in the works before the shutdown, before the pandemic. I thought it was because of the pandemic. No. So they were organizing to recall Newsom, blaming him for the rise in houselessness, for the rise in homicide. And they were criticizing his handling later of the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically -- and get this -- they were pissed off because Gavin Newsom wanted [00:15:30] mask mandates.

At the root of this really is a white supremacist, right-wing-led response to essentially California's progressive policies. That by the way, we all benefit from because as goes California, then follows the rest of the country. So goes the nation. So our producer, Harsha Nahata, got on the phone with Jene

Guerrero, who's an opinion columnist for the Los Angeles Times. And she's been covering the recall and white nationalism. Here's what Jene had to say.

[00:15:58] **JENE GUERRERO:** I think one of the missing [00:16:00] pieces in the media coverage of this recall election is just how central white supremacy was in driving it. And then in spelling its doom, ultimately. There's a lot of talk about how California has been a leader on climate change and on COVID response and recovery. And both of those are racial justice issues. And Californians understood that what was being attacked, what governing style that actually [00:16:30] embraces racial justice and equal rights for all.

Just within months of Newsom being elected, Fox News launched an anti-California anti-Newsom campaign that was incredibly racially charged. They were talking about California as a quote, "third world state," renewing old ways of talking about California from the 1990s, when we saw Prop187 and all of these attacks on immigrant communities. They were talking about it as a place full of [00:17:00] zombies in the streets, showing our largely Black and Brown homeless population. In fact, that problem is due to moderates and conservatives and faux progressives who resist affordable housing. It's all kinds of really apocalyptic language. And tying that to progressive policies that embrace racial diversity and equal rights for everybody.

[00:17:23] **MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK:** If they were predicting this in the 1990s that the next century in California was going to be a disaster because of all those [00:17:30] Mexican immigrants and all those Latinos and all those Asian people coming in, all those progressives.

2021 California seems to be doing just fine.

[00:17:38] **JULIO RICARDO VARELA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK:** Exactly. Exactly. Yeah. I know Maria. Here we go again. It's, although I like the zombies, if you're going to get creative, you might as well go with zombies, to really -- if you want to, we went from Prop 187 if we're going to zombies in 2021, then -- but listen: Even with the success of the push to keep Newsom in office and all, Larry Elder and all that [00:18:00] crazy stuff, we do have to recognize a couple of things. Latino voters in this election made up at least 25% of all votes. And over half of those voted against the recall. But [makes news ticker sound; singing] Latinos are not a monolithic group. I'm going to start turning it into a musical and it's not.

[00:18:22] **MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK:** Latinos are not a monolithic group.

[00:18:25] **JULIO RICARDO VARELA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK:** So you wouldn't be surprised, Maria, that we're also seeing reports [00:18:30] that a majority of the Latino men who voted on the second question in the recall ballot actually chose Republican candidate Larry Elder. Surprise, surprise. I'm not surprised.

That's what you call like machismo right there. Like bro, I'm going to be a macho man and I'm going to vote for the Black guy who hates Black people and Latinos. I'm going to vote for him.

And zombies on the streets and so basically let's just be real: Latina women once again [00:19:00] deliver, and Latino men are voting for people who believe that zombies are taking over.

[00:19:04] **MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK:** Sounds familiar to Black men and Black women leading the way. I'm just saying.

[00:19:09] **JULIO RICARDO VARELA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK:** But that's the point. Because this is just another example of Trumpism not going away.

And then also, this Saturday in Washington, DC, there's going to be a quote "Justice for J6" rally -- J6 meaning January 6th -- planned by a former Trump campaign staffer, Matt Brainyard, to protest the charges brought against people who rioted at the [00:19:30] Capitol, the insurrectionists, on that fateful day in January. Maria, break it down because I don't want to turn this into " Oh, Latinos saved Gavin Newsom." People were worried that he was going to get recalled because he wasn't engaging Latinos. But then all of a sudden you find out that all these Latino dudes in California are with Larry Elder. What are your thoughts?

[00:19:48] **MARIA HINOJOSA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK:** I think that the question right there is why wasn't the Democratic party engaging Latino and Latina voters more intensely?

Come on Pete. This is where it gets so frustrating, Julio, because it's we've been saying this for [00:20:00] so long and it's not rocket science. It is science though. Okay. Because if you look at the demographics and you look at the population, you want to be engaging Latino and Latina voters everywhere, but specifically, hello, California.

So you're right. I was like, is this possible? And I was preparing myself for the worst. And on the other hand, I think you're right. What we are talking about is white supremacy. Let's name it for what it is. I've done political reporting in California way [00:20:30] back when for America By the Numbers and in Orange County, that used to be a Republican stronghold. It went Democrat the last time around. California was Ronald Reagan, the Republican. It is not that any more.

[00:20:43] **RACHEL MADDOW - HOST, THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW:** Joining us now is MIT professor of political science, Charles Stewart III. He's co-director of the Caltech MIT Voting Technology Project and the Stanford MIT Healthy Elections Project. Professor Stewart, it's an honor to have you with us tonight. Thanks for taking time to be here.

[00:20:57] **CHARLES STEWART III:** It's great to be here. Thanks for having me.

[00:20:59] **RACHEL MADDOW - HOST, THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW:** [00:21:00] Let me just first ask you if I'm asking the right questions and looking at the right universe of concerns, the kind of framing that I've put on this and the way that I've set this up, do you think that's the right way to look at it?

[00:21:11] **CHARLES STEWART III:** There's a big concern here, which is the undermining of American democracy. And look, it's as a commonplace, but it's fundamentally important to note that we're a nation of laws, not a people, and we have ways of running elections and those are set in stone and we run elections by those laws.[00:21:30] And we've done this for hundreds of years, a couple of hundred years. And that's how democracies work, especially American democracies work. And what we're seeing right now is an attack on the rules by which we run our elections, and a systematic attempt to call into question the outcomes based on what? Based on no evidence, based on violating the [00:22:00] rules under which the elections were run. In trying to run around, I think the most important part of this last election, which is that elections are determined on the facts, and we've already had the facts determined.

The facts determined that Joe Biden was president, and this current set of audits, at best that are reviews, I don't know what they really are, they're not set in the facts, because the facts have been established. So they're really oriented around creating confusion [00:22:30] in the minds of a set of voters who are looking to political leaders for assurance about the nature of democracy, and they're not getting that assurance, and that's that's a big problem. Totally big problem.

[00:22:43] **RACHEL MADDOW - HOST, THE RACHEL MADDOW**

SHOW: Why should it matter to the average voter whether Republican lawmakers in one state or another want to engage in this sort of fact, free sham election review and create confusion around whether or not election results can be trusted? I mean, I can imagine plenty of people [00:23:00] saying, yeah, I recognize it's going to have that effect on other people, thinking people are not going to believe in the results of these weird partisan review exercises. The people who are going to be persuaded by whatever's announced as the result of these things, they were ready to believe anything anyway. What's the danger here? These are people who are already willing to be deluded or to just lie about what's going on.

[00:23:22] **CHARLES STEWART III:** Well you know, I think the danger is something that's oftentimes overlooked, that democracy depends on the trust of the people, but it also [00:23:30] depends on election officials, and the courts and, the people in charge to do their jobs and do their job according to the law. And doing that is a meticulous, fact-based process that's really hard to do, it takes a lot of energy, and you're not paid a whole lot for it. And so I think that the big story here is the relentless harassment of good people who are [00:24:00] following the law, who are not in it for the money, and that they are being hounded either to apparently do what Apple and Google did, which was acquiesce, or just to get out of the business. So democracy everywhere depends on people doing meticulous, boring things all the time. And to have this cacophony [00:24:30] of subpoenas, and doubts, and death threats thrown at you constantly is wearing on the people who are the stewards of democracy. And I think that's actually the big problem.

Imagine anybody trying to do their job honestly, and having your boss, or having somebody in the next cubicle, or somebody just down on the street, yelling at you constantly. What are you going to do? You're [00:25:00] going to get out of there. And that's what we worry about is that in the long-term this process could very well run out of the elections business people who have been conscientious, people who root for one team or the other in their spare time, but when they're on the job, they do their job well, and they do it as well as they can according to the law. And I think that the big story here is that they [00:25:30] are in the crosshairs, that's a bad term to use, but they're being targeted, and I worry that people who have been trying to do the right thing are going to be replaced by folks who are less experienced at best, and have wrong motives at worst.

[00:25:47] **RACHEL MADDOW - HOST, THE RACHEL MADDOW**

SHOW: That's a really important reminder that these systems that we talk

about, and that we treasure and depend on, and think of as our political inheritance, these are systems that are only made up of people, and that people are susceptible to all these pressures, [00:26:00] and they need to be protected.

[00:26:01] **SAM SEDER - HOST, MAJORITY REPORT W SAM SEDER:**

And you and I have spoken, I think, multiple times over the past several years, starting with your book, *RatF***ed*, which talked about the re-districting strategy of the Republican Party, in how it was injected with steroids-- I hate to use this type of vernacular-- but it was injected with steroids, it was basically the technological ability, changed the entire ball game back in 2010.

[00:26:30] So, let's start and work our way backwards a little bit. Let's talk about, you know, where we are in terms of the Democrats and the Republicans, and how tenuous the Democrats have, in terms of a majority in this country, and what kind of swing will actually change the balance of power, in the House at the very least.

[00:26:50] **DAVID DALEY:** You're right. Democrats have this control in Washington right now. They have the White House, and they have both branches of Congress, but their [00:27:00] control of the U. S. Senate is 50-50, and based on the tie breaker by the Vice-president. And their control of the U. S. House is a slender five seat majority. And that is despite the fact that Democratic candidates for the U. S. House in 2020 won 4.7 million more votes nationwide than Republican candidates. That is a really large bulge there.

And so, when you go back to the [00:27:30] previous time that a victory was as large as that, you have to look at the Republican victory back in 2014, when they won by a margin of about 4.4 million votes. That turned into 247 seats.

So, I think, really what you see here, is that Democrats have to win by huge majorities even to have slender advantages in the number of seats that they hold, and Republicans can win much bigger [00:28:00] majorities when they win, but they can also hold onto power even with fewer votes. And that's what's got to scare Democrats as they head into 2022. The redistri-- Yeah.

[00:28:12] **SAM SEDER - HOST, MAJORITY REPORT W SAM SEDER:**

I just want to, just, sit with this for a moment, because I think it's hard for people to conceptualize, because it seems so wrong that it's almost... feels like it's impossible. And so, just to be clear, Democrats won with over 4 million votes-- if you add up how many [00:28:30] people voted for Democrats for House races total across the country, 4 million people voted for someone with a

"D" behind their name-- and the Democrats have a four seat... uh, is it four seat majority? Five seat majority?

[00:28:45] **DAVID DALEY:** Five seat majority right now? Yes.

[00:28:46] **SAM SEDER - HOST, MAJORITY REPORT W SAM SEDER:** And that's, what? 223 seats, I think it is?

[00:28:51] **DAVID DALEY:** Yes.

[00:28:51] **SAM SEDER - HOST, MAJORITY REPORT W SAM SEDER:** Okay. And Republicans, when they won with a 4 million or so vote majority, they had [00:29:00] 247 seats. They picked up 25 more seats than the Democrats.

And, we have a dynamic like this in Wisconsin IQ. I always referenced to Wisconsin because it's such the perfect illustration of this. And it's mind-boggling! They have redistricted there, in their state legislature, and Democrats won, something like 52%, 55% of the vote in the Wisconsin, Democrats did. And yet, the Republicans control the [00:29:30] Wisconsin Senate 60 to 40%, uh, about, I mean, these are round numbers...

[00:29:33] **DAVID DALEY:** Even worse than that! Right! Democratic candidates won 203 000 more votes in Wisconsin in 2018. And yet they won 36 of 99 seats.

[00:29:43] **SAM SEDER - HOST, MAJORITY REPORT W SAM SEDER:** And so, this is extraordinary. It's one thing that people, I think understand, like, the electoral college, okay, that's anachronistic, and it was put in there to balance out-- who knows, I don't buy the arguments of the electoral college, but it is what it is.

But there is no provision [00:30:00] anywhere in any document, anywhere, that says "One party, if they win a vast majority of the votes still can't necessarily win in, some instances, a majority of the seats." That's just...

[00:30:12] **DAVID DALEY:** What Republicans did, after they won state legislatures in 2010, in the last decade of redistricting, is they had complete control over map-making in some of the most important states in the country. Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Michigan, [00:30:30] Ohio, Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina.

These are the states that are changing. These are the states that the census data, the other day that was released, show continuing evolution of the demographics there. Republicans had complete control over how those state legislative and congressional maps were drawn in 2010.

Republicans did not surrender a single state legislative chamber in any of those states for the last decade, even in years when Democrats won hundreds of [00:31:00] thousands of more votes statewide, and Democrats, really, were only able to take back the U S House in 2018 after a series of court challenges in Pennsylvania and North Carolina and elsewhere won fairer maps.

Democrats picked up four seats in Pennsylvania off a fair map, and two seats in North Carolina off of a fair map in 2020. That's six. If the majority right now is five, if those two partisan gerrymandering cases are not brought, or go the other way, you're looking at [00:31:30] speaker Kevin McCarthy or potentially, right, Speaker Donald Trump, in this current Congress, right now, even though Democratic candidates won 4.7 million more votes.

[00:31:40] **SAM SEDER - HOST, MAJORITY REPORT W SAM SEDER:** I, you know, I had not realized that it was all contingent upon those seats, that one, particularly that case in Pennsylvania. And we should say that, that case in Pennsylvania, and I don't know why, I've never been able to really fully understand, reflects the congressional districts only, not the state legislative districts.

And [00:32:00] so, you still have a problem in Pennsylvania as well.

[00:32:03] **DAVID DALEY:** You very much do. And I think that is something... we talk a lot about the nature of Congress, and how gerrymandering has given Republicans built-in advantages now, as far as the U S house. It has also given Republicans huge advantages in state legislatures around the country, in all of those states we just talked about.

And they are using those gerrymandered advantages in state legislatures to [00:32:30] pass aggressive voter suppression bills in some of these quickly changing, closely contested states.

They're also using that power to assault labor rights, to assault reproductive rights, to ban the teaching of critical race theory in schools, to insert emergency manager laws in the state of Michigan, that the voters have vetoed via initiative, but a lawmakers put back into place anyway. And then the emergency manager

in [00:33:00] Flint switches the water supply to the Flint River and poisons the town.

All of this is gerrymandering, and all of this is the, kind of, deeply baked in minority rule that we are seeing a real crisis of, and as we head into this next redistricting cycle, it could get far worse.

[00:33:19] **SAM SEDER - HOST, MAJORITY REPORT W SAM SEDER:** I want to talk about this next redistricting cycle, and the data that's come out, and also what's happening with, you know, in places like Michigan, there's an independent commission, and I saw a breaking story from you [00:33:30] the other night, I think it was, on Twitter.

But first, let's just... I want to just address, and this wasn't, you know, an argument that you were met with when you wrote your book years ago. One of the argument that we sometimes hear, that... that this isn't all a function of redistricting, that it is, in part, a phenomena of self sorting that is going on. People of like-mind want to live next to people of like-mind. If I'm [00:34:00] looking at, I'm going to move from Asheville, North Carolina, I'm going to look at a place like Austin, or I'm going to look at a place like, I dunno, Cambridge, Massachusetts, or I'm going to go to Burlington, Vermont, or I'm going to go to different places... people are congregating with people who are more like-minded, it's a polarizing time. It's also become very cultural in terms of, our politics and our culture have really melded. What do you say to people say, "Look, this is not a nefarious thing. It's just the way that people have sorted [00:34:30] themselves."

[00:34:30] **DAVID DALEY:** There is a big sorting going on. We have sorted ourselves. But it has little or nothing to do with the advantages that Republicans have given themselves in the House, and in state legislatures, through to redistricting. And courts have continuously looked at the evidence on this, over the course of the last decade, and they have weighed the academic studies on sorting versus gerrymandering, and they have made it clear that, in a state like [00:35:00] Wisconsin, for example, they estimate that sorting is about 1% of the problem.

So there has certainly been a big sort, but that doesn't explain the fact, simply, some of the cities that you just mentioned, Asheville, North Carolina, has two Republican representatives in Congress because they drew the line directly through the middle of the city and cracked it in half. Austin, Texas is a blue oasis in the lone star [00:35:30] state. It has five representatives, four Republicans, because of the way that the lines were drawn, and they pizza

sliced the entire city up in order to attach a bunch of blue neighborhoods in Austin onto rural, conservative, whiter pieces of Texas.

So, if you look at the difference, really, between 2008 and 2012, I think you can really [00:36:00] see the difference that gerrymandering makes.

[00:36:02] **CHAUNCEY DEVEGA - HOST, THE CHAUNCEY DEVEGA SHOW:** The other day I wrote that piece where I basically said Joe Biden -- it's inevitable, it's obvious -- he's going to be impeached because they're going to win back the House. And the emails I received, I will assume from mostly Democrats, liberals, progressives and the like, I would say were more mean-spirited than anything I've received from Trumpists.

And I'm reading these emails and things people were saying on Facebook and elsewhere. And you tell me if I'm using the terminology correctly. I said, this looks and seems and feels [00:36:30] like a type of narcissistic injury. That tell them the truth about the situation has so upset them that it's almost personal because they're invested in a certain reality that doesn't exist.

And I'm still trying to process that anger. I would think people would want to know the truth or what I see the tea leaves -- it's not rocket science -- pointing to. But there's so much denial. How should I process this? How would you make sense of it?

[00:36:52] **MARY TRUMP:** I think people are terrified and people are stressed out of their minds.

A big part of it is that many of [00:37:00] us, maybe even most of us, believed that if Biden did indeed win, slowly over time, things would get back to normal, whatever that means, that the threat would pass and that we could start rebuilding.

And the fact that not only did that not happen, but this threat has increased. Threats on all sides. Threats from COVID, threats from our continuing economic crisis, threats to our way of governance, threats to our way of life. And I think that's overwhelmed a lot of people. [00:37:30] And to be reminded of a very obvious truth that if indeed we do lose the House, it's over. Overwhelmed people's ability to process it because it's unbearable.

I find it unbearable, even though I agree with you. I don't want to believe it. I don't want to have to think about it. That should be the evil genius of the tactics on the right. The stuff that demoralizes, enervates the chaos, the division, the

anger energizes them because it's all directed at [00:38:00] the people they hate and they seem to be immune from it. And that's something that I think came directly from Donald.

So the outcome of that of course, is that as you write in your piece today, people get complacent because they have to believe everything's just fine. And nothing is.

[00:38:20] **CHAUNCEY DEVEGA - HOST, THE CHAUNCEY DEVEGA SHOW:** The idea that there are people who want to hurt you. We have all the technical language. And Tim Snyder, myself, others. It's not a new idea. He calls it sadopolism. I call it political [00:38:30] sadism. And I keep wanting folk to wake up and grow the hell up. You are dealing with people who want to hurt you. You can look at the Texas Roe versus Wade, taking away people's rights to vote, putting babies in cages, unleashing the police, Donald Trump -- and Donald Trump, we talked about this last time. I was trying to explain this to somebody. I said, Donald Trump has permission. He's given people to be permission for their own ugly selves and to hurt people. And again, going back to denial. We keep trying to tell them, you got to grow up. These people want to hurt you.

But from the Democrats down to the [00:39:00] rank and file, it just seems like some folk -- and I will exclude Black and Brown folk, Jewish brothers and sisters, a room of others, I'd say Irish brothers and sisters who know their history. Some folk know about pain, right? They know their people who want to hurt you. Palestinian brothers and sisters. First nations. But you've got the mass public still live in this lie that it's politics is normal. It's like all this stuff happening, they want you to suffer. But we keep telling people and it just seems like it's that denial again. I don't know what else we can tell them. They're trying to hurt you and they love it.

[00:39:27] **MARY TRUMP:** That's really one of the reasons I [00:39:30] wrote the book, because if we, and by we, the majority white Americans, don't start to grapple with our role and our responsibility, then how can we expect anybody else to hang in there and keep fighting?

We're all exhausted to one degree or another. But you think we're exhausted? So look at the people who've been dealing with the horrors inflicted upon them for 400 years. Seriously. The generational trauma and the way it builds on the [00:40:00] one side, and on the other side, you have the generational privilege building.

Here we are. And white people just cannot look in the mirror, because they literally think that if they take responsibility for the fact that they benefited from this horrifically unfair and cruel system, then somehow they're responsible for slavery. We're adults, human beings. Act like it. Face it. Own it. Take responsibility for it. Otherwise, nothing changes. And the people [00:40:30] who have always suffered the most will continue to suffer the most.

[00:40:33] **CHAUNCEY DEVEGA - HOST, THE CHAUNCEY DEVEGA SHOW:** How do you make sense? Cause this gets to the book and just your work more generally. Therapy tires me cause I'm sure a lot of folks are struggling with this. How are you making sense? What feels like? And I think the empirical evidence is there. We've talked to public health experts looking at this mess. Other folks. This feels like a society that's coming apart at the seams. Normal was not normal anyway. Normal, people want to return to normal. I was like, no normal wasn't good. So that's the problem to begin with.

But as we watch this deluge, understanding that if it bleeds, it [00:41:00] leads to the distortions of the news media. I'm just talking about the feeling of the moment. Because this is a world historical moment, where so many things are happening -- Gramsci described it as interregnum -- that so many things are being made right now. But I try to crystallize it down because I trust my gut and I trust my mind together.

I was like, this was a sick society coming apart. And when I try to tell folk, you're going to wake up on a Monday and this happened with Trump's election. And on the next Monday, the world will be totally different. It's going to happen that fast. It's already happening quick. It's accelerating. But a series of things are going to happen that will literally [00:41:30] blow your mind.

[00:41:31] **MARY TRUMP:** Part of it is this long-term trend on the right to devalue human life, and to be willing to accept things that are really unacceptable. Ruth Ben-Ghiat, who's a scholar of authoritarianism, pointed out to me -- because I've been trying to make sense. Why are people going to his rallies and risking getting COVID? Why are people now refusing a safe, easily accessible, free vaccine and taking something that can [00:42:00] really make them ill like horse de-wormer instead. And she said that the gun culture has a big hand in it. Because slowly over time, people have become willing to accept the most horrific loss of life in exchange for the ability to hang onto a piece of metal. And if a bunch of six year olds need to die, so be it.

And the difference here, they are so much more at risk from COVID, their children are so much more at risk [00:42:30] from COVID, that I think a line has been crossed. And it's now that in order to prove their loyalty, in order to prove that they too are worthy, they need to be willing to sacrifice their lives.

And that's something you [undecipherable] is on the one hand making microaggressions against people that end up becoming very consequential. But he's also really good at getting micro concessions from people. You're at a rally and his plane is on the [00:43:00] tarmac and he says, Isn't that the most amazing, greatest, best place you've ever seen in your life? And you couldn't care less, but you say yes, because you don't want to be rude. And next thing you're willing to go to a rally in the middle of a pandemic without a mask on, standing shoulder to shoulder with unvaccinated people, screaming. It's extraordinary.

Alongside of that, or maybe foundationally, is the way in which the right in general and Donald in particular are really good [00:43:30] at using fear as a weapon to control people.

[00:43:33] **CHAUNCEY DEVEGA - HOST, THE CHAUNCEY DEVEGA SHOW:** You see all these articles, now we've had eight months of them, cause the coup attempt didn't even slow down these folks who were desperate to return to normal, who tell themselves all these fictions about this man and how bad the situation is. Why do you think some folks I would describe as reasonably intelligent, but profoundly either self-delusional in this regard, why did they actually think Trump would go away? Remember all those articles, people are still writing them. Why the hell would you think he would? This is collective pathology. Why would you think [00:44:00] the man would ever stop? Why do you think his people would stop? You've studied the man, you know him. Why did they convince themselves of this?

[00:44:05] **MARY TRUMP:** He's just the worst. He's the weakest. He's the most corrupt. He's the most cool. He's the most vindictive. And he's the most narcissistic baby, constantly needs attention. Just wishful thinking, please go away. And also in believing that was a thing that could happen.

The underestimation [00:44:30] of the hideousness of the Republican party. They weren't going to let him go away. Because he taught them something. He proved something to them. You keep being awful. You keep pushing the envelope. You keep getting away with it. And he keeps going further and getting away with more and getting away with more. So here we are in late 2021, looking at the very real possibility that in a year's time, [00:45:00] this

country is going to be a full blown autocracy, where there are no longer free and fair elections.

Yes, we will have two more years of a Biden presidency. But if anybody thinks after that, a Democrat would be able to win a federal election, he or she is kidding themselves.

[00:45:17] **CHAUNCEY DEVEGA - HOST, THE CHAUNCEY DEVEGA SHOW:** Because you hear it all the time. You get these emails: Ignore him. Stop talking about him. Why are you focusing on him? I got an email the other day. You're making it worse by writing things like this.

But again, go into your knowledge of the human mind, [00:45:30] what does the human mind do, or this sort of personality have to do to sustain such fantasies that it's childish. This is a childish society, I understand that. But to literally think if I close my eyes and ignore it, a problem will go away.

What is going on in the minds, of collective minds of folk who make these assertions, just ignore it?

[00:45:48] **MARY TRUMP:** It's affected all of us and taken a toll. And I think people are looking for an easy way out. Hey, we ignore him. He goes away. And when people don't [00:46:00] ignore him, because it would be irresponsible to, they get mad because they think that we're perpetuating the problem.

It's hard for decent, empathetic human beings to understand just how effective, allowing other people to express and act on their cruelty. Very difficult for some people to realize just how cruel a very large minority, maybe a majority, of human beings can be, [00:46:30] if, as you said earlier, they're given permission.

Donald did exactly that. He gave people permission to be their worst selves. And in the two years the Republicans had the House, Senate, the White House and the Supreme Court, the very worst people among us were not only represented by just about a hundred percent of the federal government, their beliefs were espoused by and championed by the guy in the oval office.

Metastasized. So it's a much [00:47:00] bigger problem now than it was functionally. Because it's so much or more out in the open, it's so much, it's like acceptable now.

[00:47:08] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** Lawmakers across the country are using 2020 census data to determine the boundaries of your political neighborhood over the next decade, and this year, it is Republicans who stand to gain the most. Republicans control 30 state legislatures, Democrats only 18, and then there are two that are split. And it is [00:47:30] in those state legislatures where most redistricting happens. Republicans only need to gain five seats to win a majority in the House of Representatives in the 2022 midterms. And here is Republican representative, Ronny Jackson from Texas at the Faith and Freedom Conference.

[00:47:48] **REP. RONNY JACKSON:** We have everything working in our favor right now. We have redistricting coming up and the Republicans control most of that process in most of the states around the country. That alone should get as the majority back.

[00:47:57] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** So, who are the people in your [00:48:00] neighborhood? That might be changing a lot in the next few months. Here with me is Ari Berman, senior reporter at Mother Jones, Ari, it's always great to have here.

[00:48:09] **ARI BERMAN:** Hey, Melissa, great to talk to you again. And that was one of the more lively intros to a discussion about redistricting.

[00:48:16] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** You got to keep the people in here with the neighborhood, but honestly I find it, and I know that you do cause we're nerds on this, deeply interesting, and compelling, and stressful. When I hear Ronny Jackson say that redistricting [00:48:30] alone can get the majority back, ah, that doesn't feel terribly democratic with the little a little D to me.

[00:48:36] **ARI BERMAN:** It doesn't feel terribly democratic, cause it feels like the election results have already been predetermined before the elections has even begun. And virtually every knowledgeable political commentator believes that Ronny Jackson is right, that Republicans will be able to gerrymander enough seats to take back the house from that alone, no matter what the national [00:49:00] environment is.

We published a story at Mother Jones a little while ago, based on analysis from a Democratic firm called TargetSmart, that found that Republicans could pick up anywhere from 6 to 13 seats in just four states alone, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, and Texas through redistricting. So Republicans are in major control of this process, and by all indications, they're going to be very aggressive in terms of the maps that they're going to draw in these states.

[00:49:28] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** Help me understand this. Some of [00:49:30] those states that you named have additional seats allocated to them, additional congressional districts, and that allocation happened largely because of population change over the last 10 years. And that population change mostly had to do with the growth of populations that are typically pretty democratic. So how is it that Republicans are going to benefit from those new seats?

[00:49:53] **ARI BERMAN:** That's what gerrymandering is all about. It's about manipulating the data to achieve a certain outcome, [00:50:00] and there's a paradox here. The paradox is the country is growing because of communities of color. The white population actually shrank according to the latest census for the first time, since 1790. And you look at a state like Texas, 95% of the population growth is from communities of color. As a result, Texas gained two congressional seats, but everyone expects those seats, instead, are going to go to white Republicans.

So you have this paradox that growth is coming for communities of [00:50:30] color, therefore, those seats under fair maps should go to communities of color. Instead, they're going to go to white Republicans who are shrinking demographically, but increasing their numbers politically.

[00:50:43] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** Okay, that just seems counter to the point, right? So you're supposed to count every 10 years, figure out how many Americans there are, divvy up for fair maps. How can you have a fair process if a growing population of color turns into a growing [00:51:00] population of elected officials who are actually not from those communities, what are some of the alternative ways to draw maps so that they feel more fair?

[00:51:08] **ARI BERMAN:** Well that's the big difference between redistricting, which is just redrawing the maps to reflect population changes, and gerrymandering, which is manipulating the maps to achieve a partisan or other outcome. And so the alternatives to them are one, are independent redistricting commissions, which are meant to take the politics out of the process and have [00:51:30] been adopted in a number of states. Another thing would be state or federal legislation banning the kind of partisan or racial gerrymandering that is likely to be done in places like Texas.

The Freedom to Vote Act recently introduced by Senate Democrats, for example, would have criteria basically saying you can't draw maps to achieve an unfair partisan or racial advantage, meaning that if lawmakers engage in the [00:52:00] kind of gerrymandering that they're very likely to engage in, that would go before the courts and there would be metrics that the courts would be

able to enforce to block these kinds of maps. So the alternative is either to try to do it in a way that takes power out of the hands of politicians that are drawing the maps or puts limits on what the politicians in power can do.

[00:52:19] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** Okay, let's just walk through a few different possibilities. All right, let's say you're trying to increase the opportunity for African-Americans in any given state, or Latinos in any given [00:52:30] state, to elect representatives who reflect their community. Is it better in that scenario to A, have maps that mostly put Black folks, even if they're in various cities and not geographically tied to each other, to put them all together into one or maybe two districts, or is it better to spread those Black or Brown folks out and maybe get white Democrats or Democrats who are not as reflective of the community?

[00:52:57] **ARI BERMAN:** Well, This is a robust debate within the [00:53:00] Democratic party right now. For many years, the idea was that you needed a large percentage of minority voters to be able to elect minority candidates. Now there is a changing view but you don't need so many, that Black Democrats, Latino Democrats, can get elected from what are known as crossover districts, where there may be a majority of minority voters, but there may not be. It may be 40% Latino or 40% African-American or a mix. In Texas, for example, there's lots of districts that [00:53:30] are 15% Asian American, 20% Black, 20% Latino, and the rest white, and those are electing a minority lawmakers because the country is changing demographically, and we now have coalition districts, right Melissa? In places like Atlanta, in places like Houston, places like Dallas, it's not one race or ethnicity, it's lots of different ones living together and not just living in the cities, but now living in the suburbs, in some cases even the exurbs.

And so this is changing, and I think the future of America is [00:54:00] multi-racial and the future of districts in these places will also be multi-racial. The question is, when it comes to how the lines are drawn, will those communities be kept together or will they be split apart in such a way that minority voters are dispersed instead of being in one or two congressional districts, they're dispersed among 3, 4, 5 congressional districts so they don't really have influence in any of them to elect their candidates of choice?

[00:54:25] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** Are there a handful of states or districts that you are watching [00:54:30] most closely this time around?

[00:54:32] **ARI BERMAN:** Well, I'm watching the four southern states that the Brennan center for Justice says is at most at risk of extreme partisan and racial

gerrymandering, which, as I mentioned earlier, is Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, and Texas. These are states that have engaged in extreme racial and partisan gerrymandering in the past. It's also places where they have full control of the process by Republicans, and they're likely to be very aggressive. It's also [00:55:00] places where demographic changes should favor Democrats, but the maps are likely to be drawn in a way that favors Republicans.

So those aren't the only states that are going to be doing gerrymandering, there's going to be other Republican controlled states doing it. There's going to be other Democratic controlled states, like New York where I live, that are probably going to do it. But those four states in the south, I think are really the key to what ends up happening, both the state legislative level, and also what ends up happening in terms of control of the US House.

[00:55:26] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** So those states have this great impact both on [00:55:30] literally where people live in terms of the districts they're assigned to and then obviously who will be elected to Congress. What does that mean for public policy agendas, for the current members of Congress who are trying to get some things done before these midterms and of course, for President Biden?

[00:55:46] **ARI BERMAN:** Well, I think for the current members of Congress, they should realize they might not be in the majority much longer. Everyone believes that Republicans are going to take back the US House, probably just through [00:56:00] redistricting alone, and certainly redistricting combined with what is not a great national environment for Democrats, and they only have a five seat majority. It certainly seems like the likelihood now is that Democrats are going to lose the House. Meaning that Joe Biden won't be able to pass any major pieces of legislation, most likely.

So time is running out for Democrats. Time is running out for Democrats to pass legislation writ large. Time is also running out for Democrats to pass the kind of voting rights legislation that would stop the kind of gerrymandering [00:56:30] that we're talking about. Because, as I mentioned earlier, the Freedom to Vote Act introduced by Senate Democrats would stop this kind of gerrymandering, but it's only going to stop it if it passes. And it's only going to stop it if it passes before these maps go into effect, which some states have already passed redistricting maps, but most states are going to do it in the coming weeks and months.

[00:56:51] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** The likelihood that we can get that passed that Democrats get that passed?

[00:56:54] **ARI BERMAN:** Well, there's no likelihood if they don't alter a reform the filibuster in the Senate, and right [00:57:00] now there are not 50 Democratic votes in the Senate to do that, so there are not 50 Democratic votes to pass voting rights legislation or many other pieces of legislation as a result.

[00:57:09] **MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY:** Do you have any optimism about this for the future Ari?

[00:57:13] **ARI BERMAN:** I have optimism in that people are more aware of it, but that awareness has to translate into legislative action, and so far there's been an asymmetry between Republicans being very aggressive about their power on the local and state level, the Democrats not being as aggressive about using their power at the federal level.

[00:57:27] **THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM:** I want to start out with the GOP coup, the [00:57:30] Republican coup. People are like, "oh yeah, Trump didn't succeed in getting the election overturned." Well, A, it wasn't for want of trying and B, he's still working on it. This is going to set him up for 2024, and even if he loses again in 2024, let's say runs and he loses, you've got numerous states now that have changed the way that they count the votes so that what Trump tried to do last year, [00:58:00] [he can] pull off in 2024.

I got an email this morning from Donald Trump, the headline Official Presidential Announcement. Dear Fred. I hope you know how much your support means day after day. I know I can count on you, so when I scheduled my upcoming Trump rally on Saturday, August 21st, I knew exactly who I wanted to invite, you. In addition to attending what will be an epic rally I've asked my team to set aside some [00:58:30] time so we can meet backstage and take a photo together that I'll even sign for you. Note: this offer expires in the next three hours. Please contribute any amount immediately to be entered to win a trip to meet me at my epic rally on August 21st." Right.

But more seriously, I mean, not that that's not serious, that Donald Trump is still pretending that he's president. In fact there's a lawsuit right now to get him to stop using the Seal of the President at Bedminster, his golf course [00:59:00] in New Jersey. Only the acting president, the actual president, can use that seal, but Trump has got it's plastered all over his is a hotel and golf course.

But the really horrific thing I think is this whole thing around Jeffrey Clark. Jeffrey Clark was a functionary in the justice department. He was the then head of their civil division, so he was one of these department heads that's two steps

below the top of the justice department, the attorney general. And [00:59:30] Tuesday afternoon ABC news published this letter that Jeffrey Clark had written, that he wanted to go out over the signature of the acting attorney general Mr. Rosen, Jeffrey Rosen, and Rosen refused, but the letter basically said to the Georgia legislature and to the Georgia governor, and the governor at this point, by the way, this was in January, the governor had already, actually, this [01:00:00] was late December, the governor had already said the election is done. We've certified the election. We've had three recounts where there's no doubt about it. Georgia voted for Joe Biden. And what Jeffrey Clark was saying was well, call the legislature into session. See the constitution. Every state may determine how they choose or how they determine the electoral votes for the electors for president. And in the election of 1876 you had states [01:00:30] actually flip their electoral votes, ignore the will of their voters, so that's what Trump was trying to do here. That was the Hayes-Tilden, the Great Compromise or whatever they call that thing where they stabbed the African Americans in the back by ending reconstruction.

And Clark was saying to the governor, " we want you to know that we, the Department of Justice, think that there's fraud in this election, and you should call into session your legislature so that they can [01:01:00] select alternative electors." In other words, swing your vote from Biden to Trump. You can do it, you can do it legally. It's constitutional. And that's true by the way. And now Georgia has passed a law to make it very easy to have exactly that happen, but when Jeffrey Clark tried to push this up to Rosen and the attorney general and say do this, Rosen said no. And in fact, he had his number two guy Donahue said [01:01:30] you do this, we're going to resign.

There was this meeting in the White House on January 3rd, where they just had a knockdown drag out about this thing, and Trump backed down and Clark had to back down. But this was a serious attempt to use the justice department to steal the election for Donald Trump. This is, in my mind, one of the most mind-boggling crimes that Donald Trump committed. And this Jeffrey Rosen guy, who's now working [inaudible] tank, [01:02:00] the new civil rights something or other, I got an email actually from him a couple of days ago. He needs to be, labeled pariah number one. I mean, this was the guy, as Chris Hayes said yesterday in his show, he aimed a nuclear bomb at the heart of American democracy. This is on going.

[01:02:21] **VOICEDMAILER: ALYSON FROM BOULDER, CO:** Hi Jay!,

This is Alyson from Boulder Colorado. So, the thing about the "safe, legal, and rare" thing is that it is basically slut-shaming. It's all about [01:02:30] shaming

women for having an unwanted pregnancy in the first place, no matter how it happened. This is something that has really disgusted me for a long time about how certain, mostly white male, Democrats talk. I'm really glad to finally be hearing others address it as well.

Thanks for the awesome show!

[01:02:45] **VOICEDMAILER: MAUREEN FROM BOSTON:** Hi Jay, Maureen here, from Boston:

As the dust was still in the air on 9/11 2001, I realized, fearfully, that Bush the second would use this, somehow, as a reason to invade Iraq.

A loose network of like-minded emailers back then [01:03:00] assembled into the 2002 equivalent of social media. We kept one another aware of back-door political maneuverings. We wrote letters to Congress. As a spiritual person myself, I tried appealing to Bush's born-again side. I wrote to the Pope, who had declared himself against the war, asking him to visit and then stay in Baghdad because no one would bomb there with him in the way.

I had been behind John Kerry until he voted for the horror and for the Patriot Act. My sister-in-law said that if Billy Graham favored the war, so did she. I stopped going to church until I realized that [01:03:30] Episcopalians didn't agree with him.

I relived the treachery and lies of Rumsfeld and Cheney and the country's headlong descent into war, in a Slow Burn series about the lead up to the war, including Ahmed Chalabi's self-serving assurances that Saddam Hussein and friends were amassing nuclear weapons. And oh so many other terrible lies.

One aspect of that war, and most others, is the influence of the defense industry. Both Rumsfeld and Cheney had financial interests there.

Rachel Maddow, in her book **DRIFT: THE UNMOORING OF AMERICAN MILITARY POWER** calls out the military industrial [01:04:00] complex. So does the Oliver Stone Netflix documentary **THE UNTOLD HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES**, showing how that group undermined post World War Two efforts for peace.

Until we find a way to get rid of the financial incentives for elected officials, lobbyists, and rich donors, I fear we will drift from one military action to another.

And, until then, our health-care system, human services, schools, infrastructures will all be given leftovers while this country buys weapons and pays the human and financial costs of maintaining the military. Of course, sadly, there's never [01:04:30] a recognition of the costs to countries invaded and occupied.

As the bumper stickers say: I look forward to the day when schools will be fully funded and the Air Force will have to hold bake sales to buy new bombers.

[01:04:40] **VOICEMAILER: MAUREEN FROM BOSTON:** Hi, Jay, this is Maureen from Boston, Mass. I really enjoy the show and I've been listening since the early aughts. So, I'm one of your oldest fans in more ways than one.

I was listening to you today talk about Brian Williams [01:05:00] and I have no cause to back him. And I don't especially. But it made me think the way he said of the war prayer by Mark Twain. And in it, the preacher [gives] praise for the young men going out to war, and may they be victorious, such and so on. And then the stranger comes in and he says "I am commissioned by God to put into words the other parts [01:05:30] of it, the part which pastor and you in your hearts, fervently prayed silently." And it goes on and he says, "Lord, our father,

[01:05:42] **THE WAR PRAYER by MARK TWAIN:** ...our young patriots, idols of our hearts, go forth to battle, be Thou near them. With them in spirit, we also go forth in the sweet peace of our beloved firesides to SMITE THE FOE. Oh Lord our [01:06:00] God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells. Help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead. Help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded writhing in pain. Help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire. Help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief. Help us to turn them out, [01:06:30] roofless with their children, to wander unfriended the waste of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sport of the sudden flames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it. For our sakes who adore Thee: blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their steps, [01:07:00] water their way with their tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet.

We ask it in the spirit of love of Him who is the source of love, and who is the ever faithful refuge and friend of all who are sore beset and who seek His aid with humble and contrite hearts.

AAAAMen!

[01:07:28] **VOICEMAILER: MAUREEN FROM BOSTON:** And I thought [01:07:30] perhaps it was in this view of a beautiful war weapon that Brian Williams was trying to achieve this level of irony and failed.

So my 2 cents. Maureen Doyle, Boston. Thank you.

[01:07:51] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Thanks to all those who called into the voicemail line or wrote in their messages to be played as VoicedMails. If you'd like to leave a comment or question of your own to be played on the show, you can [01:08:00] record a message at 202 999 3991, or write me a message to jay@bestoftheleft.com,

Thanks to Alyson and Maurine for their comments by Voicedmail. That's when you email me and I turn it into audio. But then we heard from Maureen from Boston again, when she called in, and I am very glad to now be aware of "The War Prayer" by Mark Twain, I had not heard of that before. And it is a very generous interpretation [01:08:30] of Brian Williams's comments, but I don't think that's what he was going for.

Today though, I want to talk about 9/11 conspiracy theories, because we did an episode on 9/11, and so naturally that is the next step.

The big one that comes up, always, is World trade Center, Building Seven. And the story on that, that makes perfect sense to me, is that, debris falling from the collapse of the North Tower ignited fires on [01:09:00] several floors in the building. Those fires burned for a long time, all throughout the middle part of the day, weakening the structure of the building, and, even an hour before it collapsed, news agencies were already reporting on the possibility that it could collapse.

For instance, CNN said, "We're getting information that one of the other buildings, Building Seven, is on fire and has either collapsed or is collapsing. Now we're [01:09:30] told there is a fire there and that the building may collapse as well."

And to me, the fact that the reporter uses the phrase, "Has either collapsed or is collapsing," is a pretty good indicator of the total chaos and confusion happening that day. You know, people can try to do their best in a news agency on a day like 9/11 and not get everything right.

So then it shouldn't actually be that much of a surprise when, a short time later, a BBC reporter went on air and gave the incorrect report [01:10:00] that the

building had in fact collapsed. But it wasn't until about 30 minutes later that the building did actually collapse.

And so, this strikes me as an obvious case of confusion, rather than conspiracy, but that false report has been used as evidence of foreknowledge of the buildings intentional demolition.

[01:10:23] **VOICEMAILER: DON FROM SEATTLE:** Hey, Jay, this is Don in Seattle. I'm a first time caller, long, long time listener. I discovered you about six months after [01:10:30] you first started Best of the Left, and you've been a calming, informing voice in my ear, every week, for the last decade and a half. And I can't thank you enough.

I just listened to 1443 legacies of nine 11.

I was actually very thrilled to at least hear a brief mention of "Architects" & "Engineers" for 9/11 "Truth." And I would beg everybody to do a quick Google search for "BBC reporter World Trade Center, Building [01:11:00] Number Seven."

In short, this BBC reporter apparently got a press release a little too early, and she is reporting that Building Number Seven has collapsed while the building is standing tall over her shoulder.

And, duh, about 15 minutes after she reports, it does collapse and the exact, just, perfect demolition mode that the Two Towers went down.

It's a smoking gun of the [01:11:30] real Big Lie, much bigger than the current big lie, or at least as big. Thank you so much.

[01:11:35] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Personally, my biggest reason for not believing that conspiracy theory is that it would be a really dumb thing to do. If you're smart enough to pull off a controlled demolition of three World Trade Center towers, and make it look like a terrorist attack, then why would you be so dumb as to pre-write a news bulletin about a building collapsing, before it collapsed, to hand out to the press?

I mean, the only thing [01:12:00] that could possibly do, is blow your cover. Whereas, if you don't write that press release, and just demolish the building as planned, then you can be sure that the news agencies will write their own reports about it for you. There's nothing to gain and everything to lose in your conspiracy by leaking that information ahead of time for some reason.

And that's before you even get to the possibility that someone along the line got confused between "might collapse" and "has collapsed," [01:12:30] which, given the chaos of the day, it seems pretty reasonable, and making that a much more palatable and reasonable explanation for that rather than, uh, reaching for something like foreknowledge.

But wait, we're not done.

There was another comment about that clip from the show. Keep in mind that the clip about 9/11 conspiracy theories didn't even attempt to explain or debunk any of the theories. That wasn't the point of the segment. The host was treating them as false and didn't feel the need to go into [01:13:00] detail, and that's relevant for this next message.

[01:13:02] **VOICEMAILER: MICHAEL:** Hi Jay, this is Michael.

Love your show and agree with you almost all of the time. However, in your 9/11 podcast, there was someone saying that the Twin Towers were not brought down by controlled demolition. They said the reason this notion was false was because it was a conspiracy, and conspiracies were promoted by the likes of Alex Jones and "Architects" & "Engineers" for 9/11 "Truth," and that's why it isn't true.

[01:13:27] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** So just to be clear, if what that caller [01:13:30] said was accurate, then the host in question would have been committing a logical fallacy by using "guilt by association," as proof of falsehood. That doesn't make sense. That wouldn't make sense.

However, that is not what the host was doing. And so we actually have a case of a different logical fallacy, called a "straw man argument." And that's being made by the color, which I got. Really doesn't help your case.

[01:13:54] **SONG:** 🎵 If a real discussion is too heavy a lift / You can make [01:14:00] an opponent that doesn't exist./ (You've built a) *Strawman!* It's easy to win / *Strawman!* In this argument./ *Strawman!* Oh, it's hard to trust you / When you misrepresent the opposing view. 🎵

[01:14:19] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** But there's more; this time about accepting low levels of a rigorous scientific evidence to support a conspiracy theory while requiring a much higher level of evidence to [01:14:30] debunk it.

And, as a side note, a steel structure building in Tehran collapsed in 2017 due to fire. Another part of the conspiracy theory that Michael doesn't mention is that no steel structure building, other than the ones that collapse on 9/11 have ever been brought down by fire. But that is no longer true.

[01:14:51] **VOICEDMAILER: MICHAEL:** Over the last 20 years, I have heard convincing scientific-based arguments supporting controlled demolition as the mechanism for bringing down the Towers. [01:15:00] I have NEVER heard a real argument disputing the notion. I have searched for a scientific, peer-reviewed argument against controlled demolition, but cannot find a single one.

I only want to know the truth, either way, and I continue to seek some peer-reviewed info supporting any conclusions, but have found none.

[01:15:17] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Now, again, just to be clear, although I may be reading between the lines a little bit, it sounds like Michael can't find a peer reviewed report on **either** side of the debate to support [01:15:30] **any** conclusions.

And everyone should just be aware that this is a really dangerous place to be: accepting conspiracy theories that are just generally convincing, but then requiring irrefutable, peer reviewed, blah, blah, blah, PROOF to dislodge that theory. That is a path that leads to conspiracy thinking.

Whereas it being open to differing theories, and judging them on their merit, while seeking hard science whenever possible, is [01:16:00] a much more balanced approach.

Last clip.

[01:16:02] **VOICEDMAILER: MICHAEL:** Do you have any credible sources about the actual mechanisms for bringing down the Towers, or Building Seven, which was neither hit by a plane or caught fire? Thanks.

[01:16:12] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Well, we already addressed the fact that Building Number Seven was on fire. So, that makes me wonder just how hard you've really been looking for different perspectives to question the conspiracy theories. But, if you're interested, you may want to check out the "Final Report on the Collapse of World Trade Center, Building Seven, [01:16:30] Federal Building and Fire Safety

Investigation of the World Trade Center Disaster," published November 20th, 2008 by the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Or, honestly, you could probably just Google "World Trade Center Demolition conspiracy theory, debunked," and find a treasure trove of information and articles breaking down what the researchers think happened, in addition to explanations of the various conspiracy [01:17:00] theories, and why they fall apart when you scratch just beneath the surface, I actually find that to be a very enjoyable, and enlightening activity.

I'm not just talking about 9/11. Few years ago, I went down the Flat Earth debunking rabbit hole, not because I needed to be convinced of the roundness of the Earth, but because I found it fascinating to hear what the conspiracy theories were, some of them even brought up concepts that I had never even thought of before, which gave me an excuse to learn [01:17:30] something new.

I mean, All kinds of things about light refraction, and atmospheric density, and how quickly the curve of the earth can be detected, and lots of other things, just by watching debunking videos. I mean, honestly, it was... it was kind of fun.

The big difference between looking up conspiracy theories and looking up debunkers is that the debunkers will happily explain both sides of the argument. They will explain the conspiracy, and then proceed to explain why it's [01:18:00] wrong. The conspiracy theorists are much less likely to do that.

So start with the debunkers, and you'll get to hear both sides, and judge the arguments for yourself. Otherwise, you'll end up in a fortress of confirmation bias, which we are all susceptible to.

And if you go too far down that path, you're in danger of beginning to reject any evidence that contradicts whatever you already believe. And once you're there, there is only one way out that I know of, which is [01:18:30] to ask yourself, "If what you believe to be true, isn't true, how would, you know?"

[01:18:38] **SONG:** 🎵 If what you believe to be true, it's not true, how would you know? / If you can't answer that, then you might believe a conspiracy theory, oh, oh. / You're trapped in a fortress of confirmation bias, that's true of us all to some degree. / [01:19:00] But is there any evidence anywhere in the world that would make you not believe? Oh oh oh. 🎵

[01:19:09] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** 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 and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to the Monosyllabic Transcriptionist Trio, Ben, Ken, and Scott 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 designing, web [01:19:30] mastering, and bonus show co-hosting. And thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at bestoftheleft.com/support or from right inside the Apple podcast app. Membership is how you get instant access to our incredibly good bonus episodes in addition to finding extra content and no ads in all of our regular episodes.

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 [01:20:00] notes on our website and likely right on the device you're using to listen.

So coming to 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](https://bestoftheleft.com).