# #1449 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, 2Spirit and Relatives (MMIWG2S+)

[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 flip side of the so-called missing white woman syndrome, and highlight the structural legacies of colonialism that have put indigenous communities in north America at the greatest risk of murder and rape among all demographics in the US and Canada.

Clips today are from *Al Jazeera English*, the *PBS News Hour*, *GBH News*, *Let's Talk Native* with John Kane, *AJ+*, *The Red Nation Podcast*, *Nonviolence International New York* and *Democracy Now!*

# The Search: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women | Fault Lines - Al Jazerra English - Air Date 5-8-19

[00:00:37] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** Tina Russell is showing us some of the places where she's gone to search for her niece, Alyssa.

[00:00:42] **TINA RUSSELL:** So then we had search parties do all this area over here, all these woods. Cause I actually had a dream I found her body back there.

[00:00:49] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** Why do you keep the flyers in the car?

[00:00:52] **TINA RUSSELL:** I never know when I need to make copies, I'll meet somebody and talk to them about Alyssa and hand them a flyer.

Sometimes it's just the beach in the park. Me and my cousins would go to the beach and just walk along the beach, and handed out flyers.

Real quick.

[00:01:05] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** It's been just over 10 years since Alyssa's family saw or heard from her. She was 21.

So you have the red dress?

[00:01:13] **TINA RUSSELL:** Yes. So I made this red dress. I'm eventually going to put a charm on it and put it on a skirt that I'm making for myself right now.

No teeth. And that is the cutest picture ever, as she did not like this picture. She did not appreciate that picture. Because of her teeth.

[00:01:29] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** It was a chaotic time for the family back then. Alyssa's mother was dying.

[00:01:33] **TINA RUSSELL:** Alyssa's mom is right here and this is Alyssa's brother, Corey, who lives in Arizona.

[00:01:38] **BARBARA MCLEMORE:** And we knew she wasn't going to be there much longer. And I told Alyssa, I talked to her on the phone. She's like, okay, grandma I'm on my way. And she, in all the years her mom was sick, she was always there. She wouldn't just go somewhere and not show up.

[00:02:04] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** That was the last time Barbara or anyone from the family spoke to her. A few days later, Alyssa's mother died and there was still no word from Alyssa.

[00:02:14] **TINA RUSSELL:** Everything happened so fast with my sister being sick and Alyssa -- it's like there were so many blurs.

[00:02:22] **BARBARA MCLEMORE:** We were just thrown into a turmoil.

[00:02:27] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** Did any witnesses come forward?

[00:02:29] **TINA RUSSELL:** There was a witness that said that they saw Alyssa talking to somebody in a green truck, with out of state plates.

[00:02:37] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** That was one of the only leads that turned up after Alyssa was last heard from. A witness said they saw her talking to a man in a green truck at this intersection.

Another important development in the case was that the Kent police received a 911 call from Alyssa's cell phone. Sergeant Tim Ford was one of the original detectives on Alyssa's case and heard the 911 call.

[00:03:01] **TIM FORD:** It almost sounded like she was saying help me.

[00:03:04] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** But the call cut, and police were unable to pinpoint a location.

[00:03:08] **TIM FORD:** It just really bothers me, especially with that 911 call. When you listen to it, you know, and you can hear her voice and you know, that's the last, maybe the last time she was ever spoken. And so it bothers me that we were never able to get any credible evidence pointing to anybody.

[00:03:26] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** With no answers from authorities, the family, including Alyssa's little brother Jamar are left wondering what happened.

[00:03:33] **TINA RUSSELL:** That's pretty. Whose dog is that?

[00:03:36] **JAMAL:** Mine. His name is Caesar. A little ankle biter.

[00:03:38] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** Is she still alive or gone.

[00:03:41] **TINA RUSSELL:** Every time, somebody, they find a body, every single time there's a body found on the news, there's a pause. It's literally like you're dead for a moment because you have to wonder, is it Alyssa?

I think I've called the coroner more than anybody should in their lifetime.

[00:03:59] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** The family can only search, wait and hope, including Alyssa's daughter, who was only three years old when she went missing.

[00:04:06] **BARBARA MCLEMORE:** She had this big string of beads and she would hang it on the door. So in case her mom came home, she could hear the beads rattling.

[00:04:18] **TINA RUSSELL:** We don't know what happened. So we can't heal.

[00:04:24] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** For relatives of people who go missing, finding closure is often impossible. And stories like Alyssa's are all too common in the United States, where Native Americans go missing at a disproportionately high rate.

Two hours away from where Alyssa was last seen is the Yakima nation.

[00:04:42] **UNIDENTIFIED COMMUNITY ELDER:** We have a very horrible thing that has come to our reservation. A lot of pain and hurt has been done with our people and our hope and our prayer is that the burden reaches those that need to put the necessary things in place to help those of you that are still looking down the road looking for your--

[00:05:04] **ROXANNE WHITE:** My name is Roxanne White, and I'm from here and I am Yakima and Nez Perce. And I'm the what you call the main organizer of this event. But I'm more than an organizer. I'm a survivor, I'm a family member. Today this is about our community, our families, our loved ones.

[00:05:24] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** People are meeting here to raise money for the search efforts of Rosenda Strong, a 31 year old mother of four who went missing in October.

[00:05:33] **CISSY STRONG REYES:** She's been missing since then. She'd never leave home without telling us. But I'm going to be her voice until I find her.

[00:05:44] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** Across the country, indigenous communities have been trying to draw attention to cases like Rosenda's. But advocates and family members have started to raise awareness about the high rates of violence that disproportionately impact indigenous communities.

Part of the problem is that government agencies don't have comprehensive data on how many people in the US are missing.

[00:06:08] **ANNITA LUCCHESI:** We can't solve problems we don't track. We can't prevent violence that we don't bother to pay attention to.

[00:06:15] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** Annita Luccesi is a doctoral student who has built a database to keep track of how many indigenous women in the U S and Canada are missing and have been murdered.

[00:06:24] **ANNITA LUCCHESI:** Whatever information we get it's just kind of handed to us with no context or explanation. And there's never any opportunity to include us in that data collection or analysis process. So really what we're trying to do is find and gather as much information as possible to support tribes and native communities in making effective data-driven decisions on how to protect our women and girls.

[00:06:48] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** Annita has documented over 1800 cases in the U S dating back to 1900. But 75% of the cases are just from the past two decades.

[00:06:58] **ANNITA LUCCHESI:** People ask me a lot, why are native women going missing or being murdered? What's the reason? And the reality is unfortunately there is no one reason. I think the one unifying factor would be colonialism and ongoing colonial occupation. It teaches people, whether Native or non-Native, it teaches folks to undervalue Native women, to see us as less than human, to see us as exotic and sexy and easy to use and abuse.

[00:07:25] **ALLISON HERRERA - CORRESPONDENT, AL JAZERRA ENGLISH:** When you talk to families, are there any commonalities in their experiences with law enforcement?

[00:07:31] **ANNITA LUCCHESI:** I think one general commonality that most families experience is that law enforcement are not helpful, especially in the beginning hours when it matters most. So whether someone has gone missing or has been killed, usually there's very little communication with families. Families are often not made to feel as if they're being heard.

[00:07:52] **CISSY STRONG REYES:** And I know that these banners are medicine. This making Rosenda visible and making people see her, this is why we do what we do, because we want all families to know that they're not alone.

[00:08:14] **ANNITA LUCCHESI:** Every family who has somebody who's missing or who has experienced that at one point or another, they know the

scale and the magnitude of that grief and confusion and frustration that comes with the process of trying to search and advocate for a missing loved one.

Imagine that 10-fold, 50-fold, a million, like we don't know. The ripple effect is so much bigger than any of us are even able to measure.

# How prejudice affects official search for missing Indigenous women other women of color - PBS NewsHour - Air Date 9-27-21

[00:08:42] **AMNA NAWAZ - HOST, PBS NEWSHOUR:** In Wyoming alone, 710 Indigenous people were reported missing between 2011 and 2020. In fact, although indigenous people make up only 3% of the state's population, they accounted for more than 21% of homicide victims over the last decade. And the problem is not limited to Wyoming.

Native women are murdered at rates 10 times the national average, a pattern that's reflected in a report from Abigail Echo-Hawk. She's the Chief Research Officer for the Seattle Indian Health Board and the Director of the Urban indian Health Institute. She joins me now.

Abigal, welcome to the *NewsHour*. Thank you for making the time. You have called it a crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, just give us a sense of scale and scope. What are we talking about?

[00:09:27] **ABIGAIL ECHO-HAWK:** We're talking about a crisis that didn't just start five years ago, ten years ago, but one that has started and has been going on for more than hundreds of years. We have seen native women go missing and murdered at astronomical rates, but despite knowing this within our communities and having the stories, we see an under-reporting of them in the data, which makes it harder for us to advocate for and to show the disparity very that exists in our communities and the loss of our loved ones.

[00:09:51] **AMNA NAWAZ - HOST, PBS NEWSHOUR:** Tell me why that under-reporting is happening. What part of the system is failing?

[00:09:55] **ABIGAIL ECHO-HAWK:** In 2018 my organization put out a report in which we found that law enforcement agencies were either not collecting race and ethnicity of victims, we found database systems that would

default to white if race and ethnicity wasn't collected, or they would visually look at somebody and decide what their race and ethnicity is.

As a result of that, we are finding a complete under-reporting, and in fact, I've actually seen native families having to fight to have their young relatives classified correctly because somebody mistook them for another race and they weren't reported as American Indian or Alaska Native. It's a systematic problem, and as a result of that, we have all of the stories of our communities but we fight to show it in the data.

[00:10:34] **AMNA NAWAZ - HOST, PBS NEWSHOUR:** Tell me about what you hear from families about their missing loved ones, their murdered loved ones. What kind of stories do you hear from them about the issues they run into in reporting this and in getting justice?

[00:10:44] **ABIGAIL ECHO-HAWK:** We often will hear stories of individuals who attempt to report their loved ones missing, and officers will tell them, "well, maybe she just ran away." "Was she out drinking?" "Does she do sex work?" We see the prejudices and stereotypes against Indigenous peoples and people of color play out in the under-reporting because nobody's listening to us.

We also see a maze of jurisdiction that exists only for Indigenous peoples in this country because of the laws that exist on tribal lands. I worked with a family where they actually spent three days with law enforcement trying to decide who had jurisdiction, and in that three days, their loved one remained missing and nobody was looking for them.

[00:11:21] **AMNA NAWAZ - HOST, PBS NEWSHOUR:** You mentioned these jurisdictional issues and a lot of people think, "well, that's just limited to when you're talking about tribal lands versus non tribal lands," but your report was based on 71 urban cities across 29 states, so is this an issue regardless of where you live?

[00:11:34] **ABIGAIL ECHO-HAWK:** Absolutely, and we see the systematic issue playing out as a result of institutional structural racism. In 2018, I put out another report related to high rates of sexual violence against American Indian/Alaska Native women in the city of Seattle. Out of the 94% of the women, we talked to 94% of them had been sexually assaulted in their lifetime, but only 8% of them saw conviction of their rapist within the justice systems.

We see a lack of accountability. We see a lack of investigation. And again, the systematic issues that place the blame of our victimization on our community, instead of looking at why are we being targeted and why are we being victimized at such high rates?

[00:12:14] **AMNA NAWAZ - HOST, PBS NEWSHOUR:** Abigail, we're talking about this because of this intense media interest in the case of Gabby Petito. It's part of what our late *NewsHour* anchor and colleague Gwen Ifill once referred to as missing white women's syndrome. This spotlight that's granted to white women but not often to women of color. Your organization has actually studied that, the comparison between how these stories are treated, what did you find?

[00:12:36] **ABIGAIL ECHO-HAWK:** In our report, we actually found of the cases that we looked at, 95% of them weren't covered in the media. And this didn't mean that there weren't videos, it didn't mean that there wasn't active ways to put this in the media, it's just nobody's cared. And I actually contributed to the report in Wyoming that showed more than 700 people missing, and that report, which came out in January of this year, again, had very little coverage. And as the Indigenous community, we mourn for the family of anybody whose loved one goes missing and murdered, but what we demand is equity in this kind of coverage because the lives of our women also matter.

[00:13:10] **AMNA NAWAZ - HOST, PBS NEWSHOUR:** In just a few seconds we have left, what does it take to fix this, to change this?

[00:13:14] **ABIGAIL ECHO-HAWK:** We need to see not only media coverage, but we need to see changes in policies. We need to see programming and interventions to understand that as Native women and Native people, we aren't higher risk of going missing and murdered because there's something wrong with us, we are at higher risk because there are systems of inequity in this country that place is at higher risk, and those are the systems we have to address. And it's going to take the entire community of the United States to come together and do that with us.

# Gabby Petito, ‘Missing White Woman Syndrome,’ And Misogynistic Violence - GBH News - Air Date 9-23-21

[00:13:40] **JIM BRAUDE - HOST, GBH NEWS:** I mentioned "Missing White Woman Syndrome," and you can pair it with, I guess, "Ignore-all-other-missing women syndrome." Is this a result of lack of diversity in newsrooms, giving the customers what they want, or just flat-out racism?

[00:13:56] **MOLLY JONG-FAST:** You know, I think it's lack of diversity in newsrooms.

I think it's a, sort of, I mean... Look, the Gabby Petito story didn't start in newsrooms, right? It started on the internet. So, I think the cause there is, you know, a culture that prizes beautiful, very thin, white women. Right?

But I also think it's a culture that prizes a certain kind of internet celebrity.

And so, I think those two things together, sort of, created a sensation. But it's an extremely good opportunity for us to say, "We should be looking at all of these other women who've disappeared." And the people, you know... that this is not a phenomenon, you know... that this is a larger phenomenon.

The thing I've been so struck by is, just, what a bad job the police have done. And, you know, that they are just not aware of what domestic violence looks like. I mean, if that's what's happened here. And so that's what strikes me.

[00:14:58] **JIM BRAUDE - HOST, GBH NEWS:** Uh, I want to get back to the cops in just a couple of seconds.

I have to say, Raquel, if I gave... I was given that list of three, I would have put racism at the top. And it's in part because-- we've all read the statistics now, coming out of Wyoming where Petito's body was found-- what, 710 indigenous women and girls missing in the last, uh, in the last decade.

You know the parents of some of those women and girls, and the pain they've suffered from the loss, and the pain they've suffered from their loss being ignored. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

[00:15:33] **RAQUEL HALSEY:** Yeah, I think it's, um, it's an immeasurable amount of pain and frustration that we hear about, um, at centers like mine and across the country.

You know, there's... there's a lack of, um, awareness around who we are, the fact that we exist. So if we, you know, don't exist in, in somebody's world, how can our data being important? How can the hospitals and the police and the

other service centers know to ask whether or not a woman coming to them in crisis, or a person coming to them in crisis, is Native American?

And then, when you get to the part of... of working with police, there's very little tribal liaisons. Um, there are very little consultations with, um, uh, DVSA groups that can support the family through that trauma, um, as they... as they seek answers.

We've had, uh... uh, a woman in our service area, in Boston, whose daughter was murdered in 2018 and she still lacks answers. She can't an answer from the police, from the coroner's office, and she has written every office that she can think of. We've supported her in this, but yet there are still no answers.

And that's what it comes down to. Our families are doing the work of seeking, um, resolution to what's going on, and finding their loved ones before they end up murdered. Uh, and there's just no support.

[00:17:00] **JIM BRAUDE - HOST, GBH NEWS:** You know, Molly, you-- it's perfect segue. You wrote a piece on exactly that, saying that police are more interested in solving cases like this, that involve pretty white women. I mean, that is a fact, is it not?

[00:17:15] **MOLLY JONG-FAST:** Yeah. I think the policing in America is very, very racist. And I think we see that.

And we also see that it's very misogynistic, right? I mean, you see these traffic stop videos and you... they... he convinced the police that he was being abused. And then they let them go. I mean, that's preposterous.

[00:17:33] **JIM BRAUDE - HOST, GBH NEWS:** Well, I want to correct you, if I may, or amend what you say. When you say, "Let them go," their inability, even if there was not racism, to cope with a mental health crisis, when they determined that she may have been the aggressor, he gets to go to a hotel, and a woman who is in crisis is told to sleep by herself, in her van, in the middle of nowhere.

I think, making the argument that all of America has been talking about, do we need more mental health and less policing?

[00:18:03] **MOLLY JONG-FAST:** Yeah, no, clearly. Yeah. I mean, clearly, but I also think that what has happened to Indigenous women is an absolute travesty.

And if you look at, I mean, the area where she was found, where Gabby Petito was found is this area where hundreds of young-- and a lot of them are children, uh, younger children. And, you know, the return rate is about 20%. It's about... there's about 20% that never are returned.

So if you think about that, that's crazy numbers. And I've read more statistics that are even more upsetting. And our police are failing these women. I think it's very terrible.

[00:18:43] **JIM BRAUDE - HOST, GBH NEWS:** It is terrible.

Raquel, getting back to the mother of the family you mentioned a minute ago here, was there an attempt to reach out to the media, to say, because I think it's pretty clear, police may pay more attention when there's pressure, because they're more eyeballs on the story. Was there an effort to reach out to the media that was thwarted or was there not?

[00:19:06] **RAQUEL HALSEY:** I think there was some effort, but it's also really hard, I think, to capture the media's attention... attention. When you look at everything that's going on at any given point, um, you know, if... if one family is reaching out for help, that doesn't get them very far, um, through, through the newsroom, um...

[00:19:25] **JIM BRAUDE - HOST, GBH NEWS:** So... so, starting with you Raquel-- and then I'll go to somebody in the media, Molly-- how do we reform ourselves? I don't mean "You." I mean, "We." how do we become more sensitized to treating all women and girls equally when it comes to issues like that?

And I think a lot trickles down from that, including the police issues that Molly raised a minute ago. How do we reform ourselves Raquel?

[00:19:53] **RAQUEL HALSEY:** I think it starts with inclusion.

Yeah, Molly's absolutely right in that. Um, I actually grew up around, uh, news stations and, uh, know very well the hardships that people of color go through in those spaces. Um, and... and the lack of support and... and avenues that they have for correction when issues do come up.

And when you are coming into a space like that, um, and you're encountering racism in your workplace, if there are no supports, you're going to go elsewhere.

You're going to try to start your own publications. You're going to go into completely different sector.

Um, and... and that has happened. That's something that... that our media needs to reckon with and figure out. You know, how do we... how do we actually attract and fairly pay people of color.

[00:20:40] **JIM BRAUDE - HOST, GBH NEWS:** Are we getting better at that, Molly?

[00:20:42] **MOLLY JONG-FAST:** You know, I don't know, because I'm not... I mean, I... I hope we are. I think there's more effort towards it. But we have a really long way to go. I mean, it... I think it's really important when we talk about this Gabby Petito story, because there are so many women...

What I'm curious about, too, is, the new Secretary of the Interior has a new, uh, initiative to focus on indigenous women who have been kidnapped. I'm curious to know what you think about that?

[00:21:14] **RAQUEL HALSEY:** I think it's wonderful that we finally have representation at the leadership of, uh, the Department of the Interior. The fact that we haven't is, quite frankly, you know, a big part of why we're in this situation now.

But before, um, Deb Holland came into that position, the onus was on Native communities. There were people all across the country who were scrambling and had continued to scramble to get data, each... by each state and by each municipality.

And so, what Deb is doing, is trying to create that national... or trying to support the resourcing of a national framework that can capture that data.

# MMIW Day 2021 - Let's Talk Native with John Kane - Air Date 5-5-21

[00:21:51] **JOHN KANE - HOST, LET'S TALK NATIVE:** There are a lot of issues that are related to this historically. And of, course, you know, I've talked a lot about residential schools. But if you go back to the, again, the origins of colonization-- and in fact, even before colonization, what they considered the discovery era-- what is clear is that Native women in particular, uh, became really victimized. Uh, there was actually a rape culture that came... I mean, you

can find it detailed even in Columbus's journal, and some of the other folks who were along with.., with him, about the violence that they were perpetrating against women.

Uh, so beyond using women and men for... for slaves, there was, um, the women in particular. Columbus boasted about how much money he could get for girls as young as nine and... nine and 10, by taking them back to... to Spain, to be essentially, sex slaves..

I mean, Thomas Jefferson, you know, had... had children with his slaves. And what's oftentimes missed in the... in the conversation about chattel slavery, is how much, um, women were used, not just native men, but women, were used in that... in that... in that industry.

So I think it's really important that people understand the origins that bring us to the problem that we're now confronting, with missing and murdered indigenous women. And it's... and it's vast, and it's pervasive.

It's... much of this attention came from, uh, originally from... on the Canadian side. That's where most of the attention was... was brought to missing and murdered indigenous women. Because even... on the Canadian side, there was even more remoteness. There... there's actually one highway they call the highway of tears, um, because it... it was just known for... for women being kidnapped and taken across Alberta, and some of the areas of Western Canada.

But the remoteness of our territories-- and... and again, our territories are remote by design, we were pushed off to parcels of land that, you know, frankly, they, you know, the United States or Canada thought was... was worthless. And those... the remoteness of our communities actually made our... our women, actually, even more vulnerable than the men.

And not that our people aren't vulnerable because of that... the remoteness, anyway. Especially as it came to trying to eke out some sort of subsistence living. But the women in particular would be vulnerable, because the extractive industries, and some of the other industries, that would... would cause men to leave their families, and go into some of these more wilderness areas, once they were away from their families, it was like a whole nother world opened up to them. One where they weren't... didn't have to abide by the rules-- to the extent that they had rules of civil society-- those rules disappeared once they were "in Indian country."

So this development of man camps that went along with many of the extractive industries-- and not just, you know, extracting from the ground, whether we're talking about timber, logging-- there were some... such a prevalence of... of men who were working in these really male dominated industries, away from their families-- if they had families-- where the closest female companionship they could, uh, they could grab was... was from Native territories.

And it wasn't.. Look, it wasn't just companionship. It was... It was driven in that... in that same kind of rape culture.

But I think it's important that people realize just how much... how vulnerable women had become, because of the way industries pushed themselves into Native territories. And oftentimes these industries were very, very, uh, unregulated, both in terms of what they were actually doing with the industry, but... but their behavior in an area.

And of course there were also not going to be any law enforcement resources. One of the biggest problems that we have was the... was the pattern of, uh, of apathy that came from... from police, whether it was local police-- if there even was a local police force-- or whether it was state police, or whether it was federal law enforcement, like the FBI.

Many women... nobody would believe a story of a woman who would turn up missing. And they would always assume automatically, "Oh, that's just a runaway." And then when... when missing women's body... a body would show up, there would also be, um, an apathy amongst the... the... the, the coroners and... and those who would be investigating the death, and say, "Aww, it looks like an accident." So cause of death would oftentimes be listed as accidental.

This is really what has been the experience. I mean, oftentimes... the other thing would be the, uh, the race would also oftentimes be listed as just "other." You know, as an "other" race. So the giving... gath... Gathering the data associated with... with Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, became increasingly difficult.

And it wasn't just the apathy from the police that would contribute to some of this problem. Sometimes it would be the participation of police. Look, in most of the most violent circumstances that... that people... oppressed people experience, the law enforcement has oftentimes been complicit. And we've got case, after case, after case. on both the U. S. and Canadian side where... where the police themselves were part of the were... were... part of the... the perps involved in... in... in kidnappings, or the murder of, uh, of Indigenous women.

And I'm not going to say out of hand that, uh, that police are solely responsible, but there've been too many instances where the... where the police had participated in this.

So this is kind of where we're at. And let me just give you some basic numbers: Native women are 10 times more likely to be killed than the national average. And this is the United States. So you figure out the likelihood of being... being murdered. You know, or... or... or killed via manslaughter, or whatever; to be a victim of a homicide, Native women are 10 times more likely than anybody else in... in the United States. I mean, think about that! 10 times more likely!

Half of all Native women will have experienced some form of violence, domestic violence, or violence in their lives. And, and I think it's... it was... from what I recall, it was as high as 40% of all women will experience some form of sexual violence.

So, I mean, we live in an era where now there's been a lot more attention given to, like, "Me, Too," and some of the the sexual violence against women. But native women still aren't getting the attention.

# Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous women - AJ+ - Air Date 10-16-18

[00:28:38] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** Your sister went missing 10 years ago. Every time you come out to this river, do you wonder if you'll recover her body?

[00:28:45] **BERNADETTE SMITH:** Yeah. Yeah, definitely. That's... That's the reality. You know, you come across remains and you don't know if they're human or not, or if they're your sister. Like, it's an emotional rollercoaster because you just never know.

[00:29:04] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** Three other women in Bernadette's family have gone missing or been murdered. Only one case has been solved.

Should it be the police doing this?

[00:29:13] **BERNADETTE SMITH:** Absolutely, it should be. Policing is an issue in this country. We were on the streets, putting up posters, talking to people, going to different organizations, going to different places we knew Claudette went to. You know, we were basically doing the police's job for them. And no family should have to do that.

[00:29:31] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** The Winnipeg Police declined to speak with us on camera or give us a statement.

[00:29:35] **MICHAEL REDHEAD CHAMPAGNE:** Meet me at the Bell Tower is an anti-violence movement and we exist to build community.

[00:29:40] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** Michael Champagne is an activist who organizes weekly antiviolence rallies in Winnipeg's primarily Indigenous North End neighborhood. A new mural dedicated to missing and murdered women has just been painted in this weekly meeting place.

[00:29:54] **MICHAEL REDHEAD CHAMPAGNE:** So we have these beautiful images in our community, but it's frustrating that they have to be memorial images.

[00:30:01] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** I wanted to know why it was necessary to hold weekly anti-violence rallies here.

[00:30:06] **MICHAEL REDHEAD CHAMPAGNE:** There was a time when, in a year, we had over 52 vigils, funerals, hospital room visits, and are... the same group of people got together, but always centered around the negative thing.

We need to host weekly antiviolence here to send a message, not only to the community, but to the people that prey on our community. And our message is that we are united.

[00:30:29] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** Michael grew up in the child welfare system here, and says that one out of six children in this neighborhood are currently in the care of the system.

7% of children across Canada are Indigenous, but they make up nearly half of all foster children in the country. The government sites poverty, or lack of adequate food or housing, as reasons for separating them from their birth families.

What connections do you see between the child welfare system and the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women?

[00:30:56] **MICHAEL REDHEAD CHAMPAGNE:** In the child welfare system, often what ends up happening, is a devaluing of Indigenous life, Especially for Indigenous women and girls. As they age out of care, they turn 18, unequipped with life skills, severed from their biological families, or their home communities.

They are at risk of homelessness, harmful substance use, sexual exploitation.

Part of the reason why we have such difficulties in child welfare today is that many of those children right now are actually children, like me, of Indian Residential School survivors.

[00:31:25] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** From the 1840s to the mid 1990s, some 150,000 Indigenous children were removed from their families and sent to church and government run Indian Residential Schools.

Their aim was, "To kill the Indian in the child," by assimilating them into dominant Canadian culture. Many children suffered emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, while attending these schools.

[00:31:47] **MICHAEL REDHEAD CHAMPAGNE:** As we know now, Indian Residential Schools was a failed experiment that did a lot more harm than it did good. And, unfortunately, that... that history of family separation over so many generations continues to this day with child welfare.

[00:32:02] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** It's 12:30 AM, here in the North End neighborhood in Winnipeg, and we've joined this midnight medicine walk organized by the community to reach out to women here that are being sexually exploited. To offer them prayers and medicine, and let them know that they're being watched after. And also the March has to send a message to the men who prey on them, that they're being watched by the community.

Lauren Chopek is the founder of the walk. She was once a missing indigenous woman herself. Lauren ran away from home as a teenager, and was trafficked on these streets, where she narrowly escaped a serial killer.

How did the idea of the midnight medicine walk come about?

[00:32:38] **LAUREN CHOPEK:** Through my own experiences, um, of being exploited. I wanted to do something to acknowledge those people as who they actually really are, and acknowledge their spirits, honour their spirits, instead of just walking past them everyday, or just driving past them every day, thinking of them as homeless people, or as prostitutes, because that's not who they are.

[00:33:01] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** Tell me about some of the interactions you have with these women that you're reaching out to on the streets, and what really sticks with you.

[00:33:07] **LAUREN CHOPEK:** They tear up, this women, because they're finally being recognized. And they might not feel like they deserve that... that, kind of, standing ovation that we give them. And stop and we sing for them.

And offer them a smudge, and they feel like they don't deserve it. But they do. And they're finally being paid attention to.

[00:33:32] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** Is this process really healing for you?

[00:33:35] **LAUREN CHOPEK:** It is. It is really healing for me. Out of all those negative experiences I had as a young girl being sexually exploited, now people recognize me, and they respect me for those things, I guess, but like in a different way, because now I turn it into something beautiful, I guess.

[00:33:52] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** We're told that no one takes this road at night, unless looking for sex.

What message are you guys sending to the men out there, who prey on these vulnerable women?

[00:34:01] **LAUREN CHOPEK:** That we see what's going on, and that we don't believe that our people deserve it. I want them to see the community coming together.

[00:34:13] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** Because the police's response has been insufficient, Indigenous activists have been stepping up in various ways to ensure the safety of their community members and streets.

[00:34:22] **JAMES FAVEL:** Yep. When you have 14, right?

[00:34:26] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** James Favel is the executive director of the Bear Clan Patrol, a community safety patrol that operates in some of Winnipeg's toughest neighborhoods, five to six nights a week.

When we talk about the epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls here in this country, do you see your work as trying to put an end to that in the smallest things?

[00:34:45] **JAMES FAVEL:** That's exactly why we started. In the wake of what happened with Tina Fontaine, I just wasn't prepared to sit around and watch anymore. I had to do something, so that I could at least sleep at night and my conscience be clear. And so, uh, we started out with 12 volunteers, and, in 2014, and now we have 1200.

[00:34:59] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** How does that make you feel?

[00:35:00] **JAMES FAVEL:** Pretty [expletive deleted] good.

[00:35:02] **DENA TAKRURI - HOST, AJ+:** Tell me a little bit more about the sexual exploitation you see on the streets.

[00:35:05] **JAMES FAVEL:** Well, I mean, it's yeah, the prostitution here, it was pervasive for a very long time, and there was no... uh, nobody doing anything about it. It was, like, it was permitted in this area, you know, and for... for us and here in this community, that's not... that's not suitable.

Right? We have, uh... we have the... the... the exploited women, you know, standing up against buddy's fence. You know? And the kids are playing in the yard, and we've got John's coming. And these guys do not discriminate. They go after anybody and everybody. They don't care if you're 10 years old or if you're 40 years old.

# MMIWG2S+: No more red hand prints! - The Red Nation Podcast - Air Date 5-10-21

[00:35:34] **MELANIE YAZZIE - HOST, RED NATION PODCAST:** Biden issued a press release that morning from the White House, proclaiming it to be that day, I'm assuming he's probably gonna make it a national day every year, but he wrote a long press release about his commitment to addressing MMIWG2R and the kind of resources that his administration is going to be throwing at it.

I think Biden's response is probably an indication of the success of the grassroots mobilization over the last decade to 15 years. I would say that Native women have been doing on the ground around it, and so the state is now responding, which, you know, is always a good thing, but we're going to talk a bit more critically about these types of policy responses from on high just given the fact that the Red Nation is a grassroots Native-women-led organization, and we have, I think, a very particular perspective on this issue. But I just wanted to go through a few things that Biden has proposed.

He did talk about wanting to address the "underlying issues" that cause Native women, two-spirit and just our relatives, Native people, to go missing to disappear, and to be murdered at much higher rates than other demographics in so-called United States and Canada. So he listed, sexual violence, human trafficking, domestic violence, violent crime, systemic racism, economic disparities in substance use and addiction as underlying causes, and I'm like, yeah, but, you didn't use the word colonialism, first of all, so that is actually the underlying condition. Or what is it, when they were talking about the pandemic, that's the preexisting condition, that created the context for much higher rates of contraction and deaths from COVID-19 in Native communities, especially Cheyenne in my nation, the Navajo nation. And then I was also reading through it and I was like, you also didn't talk about Land Back, so if you're going to talk about the underlying conditions that cause MMIWG2R, you have to talk about colonialism, you have to talk about Land Back.

Of course, the largest settler empire in the history of the world is not going to come clean about the fact that those are the underlying and preexisting conditions. So yeah, I did not see that in here. I've also not seen really either of those two things in Deb Holland's PR about the murdered and the Missing and Murdered unit that she has established and the Department of the Interior. But yeah, Elena, go for it.

[00:37:50] **ELENA ORTIZ - HOST, RED NATION PODCAST:** The other thing that nobody wants to mention, including Deb Holland, she's mentioned it a couple of times, but nobody talks about resource extraction and the connection between resource extraction on Native land and the higher rates of murdered and missing Indigenous women. And particularly, Biden's not gonna mention that, because without resource extraction the US economy would simply grind to a halt. And that's capitalism, which is also part of colonialism and in opposition to the Land Back.

[00:38:21] **MELANIE YAZZIE - HOST, RED NATION PODCAST:** I think often when we talk about resource extraction, we still live in the era, I think we

live in a transitional era when it comes to the resources that are being extracted. So we're kind of in a transition from the extraction of so-called "dirty" resources like coal or oil and gas, for example, and transitioning to "green" or "clean" resources, but I keep bringing this up and it seems to be a revelation for non-Native people, so I'm just going to say it again, cause apparently it really just needs to be hammered home, but green energy or clean energies, the raw materials to create a solar panel or an electric car or whateverfucking Elon Musk is doing still needs to be extracted from somewhere to be turned into a commodity to be sold on the green capitalist market.

And so if something that was super recent this spring was the call out of San Carlos Apache to save Oak Flat, which has been going on for the last six years, since 2015, and the reason why they need to save Oak Flat is because Rio Tinto, which is a multinational copper mining corporation, wants to go in and desecrate Oak Flat in order to harvest copper. And copper is considered a clean energy resource that goes into things like, I don't even know car batteries, I don't know, it goes into the " renewable energy" products that are all the rage right now in this transition to green energy.

It doesn't matter if it's dirty energy or clean energy, it's still extraction, and it's still a violation of Indigenous treaty rights and land rights. We're still trying to protect sacred sites. Oh, it goes into solar shy, which are all the rage right now. Like the Navajo Nation just signed a deal, I think it was last year to construct a ginormous solar farm. So anyway, what this has to do with MMIWG2R is historically Native women who come from Indigenous communities that have bared the primary burden of the violence to the land that resource extraction brings, the total devastation, the pollution, the environmental racism, they are the women who started the movement for MMIWG2R, and they have always argued that the violence that happens to the land happens to our bodies and vice versa.

And so you can't talk about violence against Native women and against the bodies of our relatives if you're not going to talk about the violence against the land. And, for us, primarily that has happened in the form of resource extraction over the last, I would say about an 80 to 90 years. That's been the primary form of colonial and capitalist violence against Indigenous lands, so that's just why we wanted to bring that up.

Related to how a lot of mainstream people who've popularized the MMIWGR2 movement, including government officials, have not addressed... So they haven't addressed resource extraction, but there's also this move, and so Biden's press release, but then also the Missing and Murdered Unit that Holland has

established, newly established in the Department of the Interior, it's all about throwing even more police. It's just throwing a bunch of cops at the issue, and it's just like, "we're not just going to have tribal cops, we're going to have tribal cops and federal cops and state cops and city cops and private cops, all kinds of cops working together to try to address this issue." and we're very critical of this move because it's literally all that's on offer is just more policing to try to end or to decrease the numbers of MMIWG2R.

And of course we know the police are part of the problem. When the police are in Native communities, they just, they escalate situations, they kill our people. Our people are killed by cops at higher rates than any other population and the entire country. We don't call the cops when people are struggling at home, even when we're having domestic violence situations, cause we know that if we call the cops the likelihood of them killing somebody in our family is really high.

They harass people on the street all the time. We actually just had a vigil for Jolene Nez who died in custody because the cops did not think her life was worth enough to take care of her while she was in custody. And so police simply, they just can't be the answer to this issue. They just can't.

# Understanding How the Laws Encourage Violence | History of MMIW - Nonviolence International New York - Air Date 4-22-21

[00:42:27] **JORDANA KAGAN:** Everyone knows Disney's Pocahontas, a movie that highlights some amazing portrayals of connections to nature with a strong female protagonist. While inspiring, this was not the case. Pocahontas, also known as Matoaka, in reality, was taken from her tribe and held for ransom as a bartering tool by English colonists at just 16 years old. To protect her tribe, she agreed to marry an Englishman as her last effort to keep the peace. She was then stripped of her culture, forced into Christianity, and murdered not long after bearing a child. This disregard for her life can be traced back to the basic prejudice against Indigenous lives, manifesting as a complete disregard for the value of Indigenous lives that the colonizers brought to this land from the beginning. This happened over 400 years ago, yet even now Indigenous women and girls are still going missing, and not much is being done to stop it.

Over 5,500 Indigenous women and girls are missing and murdered in the United States and Canada every year, and more than 84%, 1.5 million Indigenous women, experienced violence in their lifetimes because the laws that were set

up to govern them reflected those same inhumane attitudes and values, which the tribal governments had to abide by. They achieved this by making the tribes both sovereign, meaning they had their own government, and dependent, which means they were also controlled by federal law. Additionally, the US government created barriers, preventing justice for crimes committed on tribal land and to tribal citizens, which were hidden in jurisdictions of local, state, federal, and tribal law. Many of these laws are still in use today, and directly relate back to what is happening to these women and girls.

First, the Major Crimes Act of 1885 mandated that all violent crimes committed on tribal lands were to be prosecuted by the federal government, which means that the US government doesn't need to prioritize the tribes' needs and that the tribes can not make decisions without the US government.

Then there was Public Law 280 of 1953, which gave partial or total control to the state over tribes within their boundaries. This was a response to the tribes' pleas, but instead of giving control back to the Indigenous people, they gave the states control over their judicial and criminal system. It's important to remember that up until this point, the Indigenous people didn't have a guaranteed right to vote until the 1970s. They had no say over who was in the government that was controlling them.

The third law is the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968. This law states that Native governments cannot prosecute for more than $5,000 in fines and one year of jail time, a person of their own tribe, even for a violent crime. They can't prosecute a non-Native person at all, they have to hand the case back to the US government. By comparison, the average prison sentence for rape handed down by state or federal courts ranges from 8-13 years. This law was eventually combined with a new law called the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010, which included seven improvements to the Indian Civil Rights Act. These improvements finally gave Indigenous tribes the ability to prosecute criminals, but only of Indigenous descent.

These laws still prevented significant consequences for non-Native perpetrators. While these laws allowed prosecution of non-Native suspects, it's still had to be done at the state and federal level, and those courts rarely followed through. As a result, these criminals targeted Indigenous women living in these areas because they knew they could get away with their crimes in those jurisdictions. Because of strict laws, preventing high stakes consequences to non-Native persons, non-Native perpetrators target Indigenous women, specifically living in these areas. They know they can get away with their crimes in those jurisdictions.

In 2018 alone, the Urban Indian Health Institute reported 5,712 missing Indigenous women and girls with only 116 of them registered in the DOJ database, while the other 5,596 cases were turned into cold cases. The cases that were registered and transferred to state or federal court took years to get any form of justice, with only that three-year sentence, the same as a petty crime. Everyone deserves the right to safety.

The creation of a better, safer environment and livelihood is important. The US needs to start prioritizing the lives of these women. Tribal jurisdictions need full authority and resources in order to protect their people. And the determination of a crime being fully charged and prosecuted should be the same for non-Natives on and off of their lands.

[00:47:52] **MUSIC:** My mother's child dances in darkness, And sings heathen songs by the light of the moon, And watches the stars and renames the planets, And dreams she can reach them with a song and a broom.

I am my mother's savage daughter, The one who runs barefoot cursing sharp stones. I am my mother's savage daughter, I will not cut my hair, I will not lower my voice.

We all are brought forth out of darkness, into this world through blood and through pain, And deep in our bones, the old songs are wakening, So sing them with voices of thunder and rain.

We are our mother's savage daughters, The ones who runs barefoot cursing sharp stones. We are our mother's savage daughters, We will not cut our hair, We will not lower our voice.

# The Red Nation Slams Cooptation of Indigenous Peoples' Day Amid Global Colonial Resource Extraction - Democracy Now! - Air Date 10-11-21

[00:49:06] **JENNIFER MARLEY:** This year we're celebrating our sixth annual Indigenous People's Day march and rally, but it's much more than just a celebration. We're always reminding people that indigenous people's day is about creating space for people to recognize that colonization is ongoing, but our struggles for resistance are ongoing as well.

And this year, Biden signed this proclamation, and we were all looking at it yesterday morning when it came out and we were laughing at the irony that although he signed his proclamation, Columbus Day still is not abolished or redacted—it's still recognized. And so like Roxanne said, it's a contradiction.

And we also know that Indigenous People's days being co-opted not only by state governments and the federal government, but even city officials, and we're actually dealing with that this year locally. And again, there's irony because the city gave us such pushback when we were first trying to implement it back in 2015.

[00:50:04] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** So, can you talk about what you're doing in New Mexico? I mean, it's expected that thousands of people will be pressing on a fossil free America in Washington, DC. People versus fossil fuels is the major event. Thousands taking direct, non-violent action in the nation's Capitol to demand president Biden end the era of fossil fuels. Talk about that organizing and new Mexico's.

[00:50:35] **JENNIFER MARLEY:** Sure. So we're actually sending some Red Nation folks up to DC tomorrow to join that. And we always make sure that our struggles are connected to those that are happening not only throughout the nation, but throughout the world. Internationalism is a very important to us because when we're talking about resource extraction, we can't de-link it from the global chain of resource extraction. And so we know that this is a fight that indigenous peoples are at the forefront of all around the world. We know that Native lands are disproportionately used for resource extraction, and here in New Mexico, we really, we refer to in New Mexico as illegal resource colony, a contemporary resource colony, because of the way resources are extracted here at such high rates.

So there's gas and oil. We know that New Mexico became the second biggest oil producing state in the United States this past year, which really translates to being one of the biggest oil producers in the world. And we know that this is also the birthplace of the atomic bomb. Manhattan Project took place on my people's lands, and it's one of the only states where the entire resource or the entire supply chain for the construction of a bomb can take place within this one state, so much so that if New Mexico were to succeed as its own nation it would automatically be the world's third strongest nuclear superpower.

And so resource extraction literally shapes the economy of New Mexico. Lawmakers are constantly reminding us that we need to be in favor of a further resource extraction because it's what funds education, and it's what funds our

basic needs here as New Mexicans. And so we have been fighting a long fight against resource extraction here, especially as it pertains to the Dene community surrounding Chaco canyon and Chaco canyon itself, which is a site of ancestral significance for all of us here in New Mexico, all of us Indigenous people here.

And so that is a fight that continues, and it's going to be a long one, because right now, as it stands, state officials and government officials continue to look at New Mexico as a source of wealth because of the abundant resources here that exists primarily on Indigenous lands.

[00:52:46] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** I'd like to turn to a recent tweet from Nick Estes, a citizen of the lower Brule Sioux tribe, a member of the Red Nation assistant professor of American studies at the university of New Mexico, where you are, Jennifer. On Saturday he tweeted, "Biden didn't abolish the genocidal celebration of Columbus Day, which has been a primary demand of the Indigenous Peoples Day movement. He just 'all lives mattered' it."

If you can also talk about *The Red Deal*. As the Democratic party is fighting within itself to fight to the progressive's within it, to push for this $3.5 trillion, 10 year deal, that really focuses on the climate emergency. Can you talk about what Red Nation's demands are?

[00:53:36] **JENNIFER MARLEY:** So in *The Red Deal* we look at three areas of struggle. The first being End the occupation, so this is referring to the end of settler-colonial projects everywhere. Ending the occupation here, the occupation of Native lands here, but also ending the occupation of all Native lands everywhere. So we're talking about Palestine, we're looking at the global south. We're looking at everywhere, imperialism has touched. And we're also talking about the abolishment of the police. We're looking at the end of carceral justice. And we're looking at the end of ICE, immigration enforcement and CBP and border imperialism. And so that's any occupation.

The second part is heal our planet. And so with this, we're looking at the actual remediation of lands, which requires of course, first and foremost, land back. That's the big call that Native people have, and though, it's often misconstrued, unfortunately, even by the left it's something that has attached to it real material demands that are plausible. And it's also not unprecedented when we're looking at what colonization looks like globally.

The third area is a heal our bodies. So in order to heal our bodies, we know that we need to heal the earth. We need to make it so that the land we live on are not

irradiated or poisonous, and that we actually have access to land, to sustain ourselves. That we can control the distribution and selling of our resources. And that the people themselves have a stake in how our economies are created. And also course this relates to the assertion of sovereignty, true sovereignty for Native people. Our ability to engage in trade and commerce with other nations outside the US, and maybe create some kind of plurinationalism, as many of our Indigenous relatives in South America have.

And healing our bodies, of course, requires the reclamation of Indigenous food ways, waterways, ways of caring for the land, and our overall stewardship. We know that Indigenous people make up not a great population worldwide, I mean much more than in the United States, but we caretake 80% of the world's biodiversity. So it's very clear that when the land is in Indigenous people's hands it's able to thrive, the earth is able to thrive. And so *The Red Deal* calls for an end to imperialism an end to capitalism, an end to genocidal violence, and focuses on caretaking our earth, caretaking each other, and caretaking ourselves ultimately.

# r_Antiwork: Unemployment for all, not just the rich! - Anonymous

[00:56:06] **VOICEMAILER: ANONYMOUS:** Hi, I subscribed to a subreddit that has lately had some of its sentiment and contents spilling over into other realms of the internet. And since there are potentially many of you *Best of the Left* subscribers who might not frequent Reddit or social media in general, I want it to shine a spotlight on the growing movement of r/AntiWork.

Now just based on the name, there are some of you who would assume that the community must just want to be lazy and do nothing, but in actuality, the core principle behind r/AntiWork is that humans are not just meant to exist for work. It is normal, and in fact, totally reasonable for you to want to spend time outside of work, focusing on yourself, your hobbies, your family, or any other number of activities that don't include making money.

Furthermore, during the time that you do work, you are entitled to fair compensation and treatment. Essentially you and your time are worth more than what you can offer to an employer. For those of you who are not aware, there is something of an unorganized labor movement going on right now, as cost of living has inflated into a bloated late capitalist nightmare. Wages have not kept up. So when conditions at work become awful and the managers or owners ask

more and more of their employees, many people are simply walking away from it.

Some people are framing this as "people don't want to work," but I have personal experience to hopefully clarify this incorrect assumption. I worked for a company -- which I will not be naming for my own safety, but honestly, you could throw a dart at any corporate list and this would probably fit their description pretty well -- which over the last couple of decades has been trimming its employee benefits and working conditions. But it's been really since the start of the pandemic that it has really showcased their contempt for their workers.

We are chronically understaffed, but not because people don't want to work. The company has designed that narrative. In fact, they cut their hours during the last year. They have added more overall responsibilities and scheduled only the barest of bare bone staff. They have made a record profit. Can you guess what has happened to the pay?

Oh, they increased the starting pay just a little recently, but only to those who are just now starting and anyone who has been working before then won't be receiving a fair wage adjustment for experience or time.

Bonus: it's the retail sector where it has become the norm to expect yelling and cussing from customers daily, which has only added to mental health deterioration for most everyone working there.

Why wouldn't someone who has the ability to do so walk away and seek better pastures or at the very least demand, more. More pay, more benefits, more respect. Anything.

So why do I still work there? Well currently in my own personal situation, the benefits outweigh the negatives for me, but I can assure you, I am already making plans for hopefully the near future.

So if you were waiting on a moment where you want it to negotiate better terms for yourself, or maybe even organize, now might be that moment. I don't know how long this will last. And to those of you who feel like you don't deserve to ask for more, that's ridiculous. You have been conditioned to believe you should feel grateful for crumbs.

In truth, there is enough resources, productivity, and wealth that everyone's basic, basic needs could be met, and then some. But due to corporate greed and

government inaction, the cost of everything from housing to food to healthcare to childcare to education has become so prohibitively expensive that we have been forced into a modern-day serfdom.

You are worth so much more than this. Fight for yourself.

Thank you for listening.

# Summary General 10-19-21

[00:59:37] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with Al Jazeera English, telling the story of one missing person's search and the legacy of colonialism that led to it;

The PBS news hour discussed the reasons why missing Native persons go under reported;

GBH news explored the phenomenon of the missing white woman syndrome;

John Kane on Let's Talk Native gave the history and context of colonization, rape culture, and extractive industries, in the pattern of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls;

AJ+ made the connection between the legacy of residential schools, the modern child welfare system, and the need for ongoing anti-violence campaigns;

and The Red Nation podcast discussed the Biden administration's response to the MMIWG2S movement.

That's what everyone heard, but members also heard bonus clips from Non-violence International New York, explaining the complicated nature of jurisdictional law between the U S and tribal lands that actually incentivizes non-natives to commit crimes on tribal land;

[01:00:40] **JORDANA KAGAN:** Native governments cannot prosecute for more than $5,000 in fines, and one year of jail time, a person of their own tribe, even for a violent crime.

They can't prosecute a non-native person at all. They have to hand the case back to the US government This law was eventually combined with a new law called The Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010, which included seven improvements to

the Indian Civil Rights Act. These improvements finally gave Indigenous tribes the ability to prosecute criminals; but only of Indigenous descent.

[01:01:17] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** And Democracy Now discussed the organization Red Nation's demands in the context of the federal infrastructure bill.

[01:01:25] **JENNIFER MARLEY:** So in the Red Deal, uh, we look at three areas of struggle. The first being End the Occupation. So, this is referring to the end of settler-colonial projects everywhere. Ending the occupation here, the occupation of Native lands here, but also ending the occupation of all Native lands everywhere.

So we're talking about Palestine; we're looking at the global south; we're looking at everywhere imperialism has touched.

[01:01:47] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** 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 we'll hear from you.

# Final comments on the impacts of pandemics on labor through the centuries

[01:02:07] **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 record a message at 202-999-3991, or write me a message to Jay@BestoftheLeft.com.

So thanks to our anonymous caller, who called in about the subreddit anti-work. I had not heard of that before, but did a little digging and enjoyed it immensely. It's full of lots of examples of mistreatment at work. For instance, the one that caught my eye immediately was one of the most classic cases of healthcare hostage taking I've ever seen. Like it's as explicit as I've ever seen it. Being a "healthcare hostage" is a term that I might have coined several years ago to describe being trapped in a job you hate because it provides health insurance. And if you didn't have to get your health insurance through your job, then you

could quit your job and move on to something else while maintaining that insurance like you could do in any other civilized nation, aside from the U S.

And usually that threat is implicit, but this one became explicit. And on that anti-worker subreddit, a lot of it is screen captures of text message threads between employees and their bosses when things start to go south. And as the conversation started to turn south about whether or not the employee was going to come in on their day off, the boss wrote, "Are you sure you want to do this? You really want to put your health insurance on the line?" And so, yeah, as I said, that's usually implicit. They decided to go ahead and make that explicit.

So what this reminded me of is to do a little bit more digging into labor in an age of pandemics. Because I've heard for years in broad strokes about how the black death plague impacted labor rights in Europe in really profound ways. But I finally just did some reading on the topic. So I have a couple excerpts from pretty decent articles for you. The first is very straightforward: "Pandemics have long created labor shortages. Here's why" from the Washington Post. And this just gives a quick overview of how the ruling class responded to labor shortages in the heart of a black death.

So from the article:

"In England, the crisis led to the introduction of the first national labor laws, a response to worker demands for higher wages and better conditions after enduring dangerous work during the pandemic." To which I thought, wow, labor protection laws in the 13 hundreds. That's great, I had no idea that they were so progressive and forward thinking back then. But, you know, pandemic was a big deal, had to respond to it. Uh, no. The article continues:

"In response to the pandemic, the elite found new ways to repress workers and maintain a class hierarchy." Oh shit. Okay. That does make more sense.

So here's what the upper class said about this situation at the time. Quote: "With so few workers left, survivors could scarcely be persuaded to serve the eminent unless for triple wages. Lords were forced to work their own fields and serve their own meals. The chronicler noted that laborers, meanwhile, could turn down employment offers thanks to the alms given out at funerals." Unquote.

And so now a mere 700 years later, our modern day ruling class defenders of the rich have been making the exact same arguments about the terrible consequences of giving money to the poor at a time of great hardship. Of course, we can't have unemployment insurance giving out enough for people to

live off of. They might decide to not work during a pandemic. So just to put a finer point on the fact that labor shortages were empowering workers, the article continues: "The Rochester Chronicler declared that the new situation was, quote, 'an inversion of the natural order. The lowly were exalted and the great suffered.' Another lamented that landlords were forced to, quote, 'pander to the arrogance and greed of the workers.'"

So what did they do? Of course, here are the. Labor laws, quote: "The 1349 ordinance of laborers mandated that all able-bodied workers under the age of 60 accept employment at the same wages they would have been paid before the plague in 1346. If they refused, they would be fined or jailed. It also forbaid giving arms to able-bodied beggars on pain of imprisonment."

So I guess we should just count ourselves lucky that all they want to do is abolish the minimum wage today rather than create an actual wage ceiling and make it illegal to not work for that wage.

So moving on to the next article, this is: "For hundreds of years, pandemics have reshaped the way we work," and this is from Jacobin magazine. And they start with the premise that, or the visualization that work should be added to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Quote: "When we imagine the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, we think of war, famine, pestilence, and death operating together to devastate human populations. But the current pandemic has shown there is a fifth rider in this malevolent troop: work."

And the article goes on to draw the connections between how the dynamics of labor have been manipulated by the powerful in the wake of various pandemics to maintain or expand their power. Quote: "While there are ongoing debates about how, when and where capitalism began, two commonly mentioned factors are the establishment of the plantation slavery system in the Americas, and the growth of a market-dependent working class in England, forced into the cities by the enclosures and other events. Both these new labor regimes came about in part through ruling class attempts to reassert their power over rebellious workers in the wake of pandemics." Unquote.

And now skipping forward quite a lot, toward the conclusion of the article after going through many examples from the black death in Europe to the plagues brought to the Americas through early colonialism and those distributed out of Asia during late colonialism, they get to this point, which actually ends up connecting quite nicely with the topic of our episode today. Quote: "It is in the health interests of urban workers to support the struggles of indigenous peoples living in tropical rainforest and other biodiverse regions to prevent the further

encroachment of commercial loggers and poachers into these areas. This means supporting indigenous groups who are still resisting incorporation into capitalist extraction regimes, who are refusing to work for the fifth Horseman. The COVID strikes and urban warehouses and the indigenous campaigns against mining in the Amazon are two sides of the same struggle over health and labor. We can take inspiration from how medieval peasants in England, Guarani communities in Paraguay, revolutionaries in Haiti, and dress makers in New York fought for both the right to better paid work and the right to not work at all, amid devastating disease outbreaks. The ongoing global wave of strikes by workers protecting their health amid the coronavirus pandemic, the campaign by Brazilian indigenous peoples to install checkpoints near their communities to maintain social isolation, along with international demands to de commercialize aged care, are the modern day continuation of this global tradition. Rather than forgetting these past generations, we can draw strength from their victories as we enter our own battle against the Five Horsemen of the Capitalist Apocalypse."

So, yes, the caller is absolutely right. Now is very much the time to demand our labor rights, join any campaign you can to demand better wages and working conditions and fundamentally change the way we design our labor system. Because if history can be our teacher in this case, what we know for sure, and it has already started, is that the ruling class is certainly going to try to use this opportunity to change our labor system for the worse to the detriment of the worker. And thanks to our knowledge of how pandemics work, I can say that it will be to the detriment of the health of every human being.

As always, I would love to hear your comments on this or anything else. Keep the comments coming in at 202-999-3991, or by emailing me to Jay@BestoftheLeft.com.

That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show 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 mastering, and a bonus show co-hosting.

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So coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC, my name is Jay!, and this has been the *Best of the Left* podcast coming to you twice weekly, thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from BestoftheLeft.com.